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

ALLEN L. KEISWETTER

Interviewed By: David Ruther
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTERVIEW

Growing Up in Kansas, 1944-1962

Q: Can you give us some background, where are you from, when you were born?

KEISWETTER: I was born in Hastings, Nebraska and I grew up in Kansas, with the exception of a couple of years in Oklahoma. My father's family is from Kansas and my mother's family is from Nebraska. When it was time to deliver, she went home to her family in Nebraska, rather than stay in Kansas where my parents were living I was born in Hastings, Nebraska on June 3, 1944.

Q: What did your father do?

KEISWETTER: My father Noble did many things in his life. During World War II, he drove construction equipment and worked in Grand Island, Nebraska (near Hastings), where he met my mother Rogene Wakelin. He was helping to build an ammunition depot. Family legend has it that my parents met when my mother, who was in a car with friends, saw my dad on the street in Hastings and asked if he was tired of walking. When he said yes, they told him to run awhile. Sometime later they eloped to Hill City, Kansas, where they were married in the home of a minister in July, 1943. My father also worked in Colorado near Grand Junction. He was deaf in one ear and heard only with the assistance of a hearing aid in the other ear, due to scarlet fever when he was young. Thus, he was exempted from the draft, and my birth in 1944 predated the post-war baby boom by a couple of years.

My father's family is German in origin. My great grandfather Karl emigrated from Germany twice. First, when he was about 13, he arrived in New York as a stowaway on a ship and was sent back home. Then, later in his early 20s, he came a second time legally; he changed the spelling of his family name to confuse the records. So there are two branches of the Keiswetter family that you can trace; one of them spelled as I do,

Keiswetter, and some of his brothers and other relatives who emigrated and spell it correctly, Kiesewetter or Americanized to Kieswetter. There are three centers of the family: one in Kansas, another in Pittsburgh, and a third in Michigan.

For most of my father's life, he was a salesman for an oil-chemical company in Kansas. In the '50s and '60s and even '70s, Kansas was the third largest oil producing state in the nation. Kansas crude has various impurities that have to be separated out before it can be marketed. My father was a salesman for an oil field firm that sold chemicals to settle out the impurities.

Q: So where did you do most of your growing up?

KEISWETTER: Mostly in small towns in Kansas. My early years I spent in Alton, Stockton, and Woodston, towns of a few hundred people in northwest Kansas. My paternal grandparents Louis and Emma Keiswetter lived in Alton and I spent the first six or seven years of my life there. It was a wonderful, idyllic time. I remember walking to get the milk every night from my grandparents' small farm on the edge of town with a little milk pail and helping my grandmother pluck chickens and tend the garden.

We then moved to Woodston, which is a town 8 or 10 miles away, where my father operated a filling station. When I was in the sixth grade, we relocated to Oklahoma City for a couple of years, where he also operated and owned a filling station. Then we settled back in Kansas, this time in Great Bend, a town of 15,000, the 13th largest town in Kansas at the time and the center of Kansas' oil industry, where my father began his career in the oilfield business. My parents lived the rest of their lives there, and my brother still lives there.

My mother was from a prominent farm family in Fairfield, Nebraska, not far from Hastings. She was a stay-at-home mom until I was about 12, and then she started to work as a secretary at Western Power and Gas, which served the area around Great Bend. I have one brother, Doug, who is five years younger. My mother had a high school education. My father did not. He came from a family of nine children and he was truly a child of the Great Depression. After he graduated from the eighth grade, he had to stay home and help farm. He regretted not having further education and proudly kept his elementary school report cards showing he had straight A's'

Q: Do you recall what part of Germany the family is from?

KEISWETTER: My family comes from two communities called Oberlauter and Unterlauter near Coburg in northern Bavaria. I visited there in 1996. The phonebook is filled with pages of people named Kiesewetter spelled correctly. At the time we traveled there, I was serving in Belgium and I engaged an English-speaking graduate student who did research before we arrived. She took us around the various places associated with the Kiesewetter family. They were members of the Protestant church, where we visited the cemetery.

When my grandmother Emma Keiswetter died at the age 96 in the 1970s, we found among her papers a letter dated about 1910, stating that my great grandfather's father had died in Germany and the estate included a farm, a brew house, and a sausage plant. A second letter dated about a year later said: sorry, we have paid all the bills and there is nothing to pass on.

Q: So did your mother's family would have come to the States before World War I also?

KEISWETTER: My mother's side is the Wakelins. Her family line can be traced back to the Revolutionary War through her maternal grandfather's side – the Wilsons. My mother was a member of the DAR, although never to my knowledge did anything other than tell people about it once in a while. Her family largely lived in Nebraska.

Q: Generally we consider one of the formative periods as high school. Where did you attend high school?

KEISWETTER: I attended high school in Great Bend. We lived in small towns until I was in the sixth grade. I spent the sixth and seventh grade in Oklahoma City. We moved back to Great Bend for the eighth grade, so I went through my middle school and high school years in Great Bend. I recently was elected to the Great Bend High School Hall of Fame.

Getting straight A's? Well, not quite. My downfall was typing, and even though I did my best, I felt lucky to get a B. There were 212 people in my graduating class and there were two of us, myself and Karen Burns, who always vied for top academic honors. There was not a valedictorian but an honors group; but if there was one, I suspect she probably would have won. I doubt she ever got a B in typing.

The high school was rural, which meant its jurisdiction included not only the city of Great Bend, but also much of surrounding Barton County. As I look back on the period, the area was nearly all Caucasian. I think there were one or two black families and maybe one or two of Hispanic origin. I headed the debate team and I was president of something called High Y, which was the boys' high school organization. I was on the golf team but have not played golf since.

Q: Given the Norman Rockwell background that you are talking about, I thought you were going to say baseball.

KEISWETTER: No, no. I was never very good at baseball. My brother was very good at sports. The family euphemism was that I was the brains and he was the brawn, not quite true in either case.

Q: What were some of your better subjects?

KEISWETTER: Math, social sciences, English, history, and government. I especially liked the last two, which fed naturally into the debate team topics. We did go to the state finals in debate one year. We did not win; I think we got fourth, as I recall.

I should talk a little about how I ended up at Dartmouth from Great Bend. It was in part because my high school guidance counselor named Mrs. Snell always encouraged me to have high ambitions. I think we bonded because she taught a course to girls called 'family living' that included a unit on sex education. She administered a true and false test that included a question that roughly read: "During arousal, the male's penis becomes engorged with blood." Several parents complained against her and there was a hearing before the school board; so several of us lined up outside the school board room to show our solidarity. Basically what happened was she was reprimanded and at the end of the school year she found employment elsewhere. That shows how things have changed over the many years since.

Debate team was lots of fun. Bob Gingrich and I were debate partners. The debate squad traveled around the state and there were a few shenanigans that now after fifty years can be confessed. We were staying in the Aladdin hotel in the center of Kansas City. We decided it would be great fun to drop water balloons from our upper story window. A detective was on the ground, watching for such things. He knocked on our door just a few minutes after Bob's aunt and uncle who lived in Kansas City turned up to take us to dinner. They vouched: "Of course, it couldn't be these boys."

Q: Looking at the demonstrations for the teacher, there was a lot of that going on all over the country. You had a new atmosphere because you were still in high school when Kennedy was elected and became president. I would assume that election and the atmospherics around it gained your attention?

KEISWETTER: There were three of us, Chuck Davis, Bob Gingrich, and myself, who were constantly arguing about politics. Bob and I were on the side of Kennedy and Chuck favored Nixon. I remember the Nixon-Kennedy debates, which we watched at Chuck's house because the Davis's had the largest television set. Of course, Bob and I came away convinced that Kennedy had won, and Chuck came away convinced on substance, not appearance, Nixon had won.

Education: Dartmouth and Johns Hopkins SAIS in Bologna 1962-1967

Why did you decide to go to Dartmouth College?

Mrs. Snell was a motivator in my high school years. As a young child – maybe four years old - I would announce "I am going to college." When it came time to apply, I chose Dartmouth, Brown, Princeton, and the University of Kansas.

There was no problem with the University of Kansas. I had been there a couple of times, liked the place, and I knew I would be admitted. I applied to Dartmouth because there was a family in our church whose son had graduated from Dartmouth a couple of years

before, and I applied to Princeton and Brown because I liked their catalogs. I remember thinking I would not apply to Harvard because it seemed "too big-city like" to me. When it came time to choose, Dartmouth gave the largest scholarship and it was the obvious choice.

I remember well in April, 1962, sitting with my parents in our family living room talking about where I would go. My father and mother thought I should to go to the University of Kansas: after all, KU is only three hours away, why not go there? Why go 1,800 miles away to Dartmouth? They did not resist long, however, and when the discussion was over that evening, they were fully supportive of my going to Dartmouth.

It was a different time. Students "going back East to college" would be sent off to the airport or the train with fanfare. When I came home on vacation, I was sometimes interviewed by the local newspaper *The Great Bend Tribune.* For Dartmouth, it was a time when diversity and outreach meant admitting scholarship students from a small town in Kansas.

In September 1962, my parents drove me 280 miles to Kansas City where I caught a TWA non-stop flight to New York. It was the first time I had ever flown on a commercial aircraft, though my uncle, who was a pilot, had once taken me up in a private airplane. On arriving at Idlewild (now JFK) airport, I was greeted by my roommate at Dartmouth from Long Island. Dartmouth had written me that his name was Landon Heffers, but it was a typo; his real name was Landon Jeffers. Fortunately, he recognized me. I remember dinner with Landon's family that evening as a bit of a cultural shock. During dinner conversation, I made some grammatical error and Landon's father, who was a senior vice president of the First National City Bank, remarked, "Allen, are you really going to talk like that when you get to Dartmouth?" It was startling coming from being the first or second in one's high school class in Great Bend to a new much more competitive society in the East.

Landon's mother and grandmother drove Landon and me to Dartmouth in Hanover, New Hampshire, a five- or six-hour drive from Long Island. My parents had given me some money and said if we stopped for lunch on our trip I should offer to pay. This was in the era before credit cards. Well, we stopped at some beautiful New England inn and I could not afford even my own lunch, let alone the bill for four people.

My first year at Dartmouth was difficult for several reasons. One was French. I am not a gifted linguist and I had to fulfill my foreign language requirement. I was especially frightened of language lab. While doing my French exercises, admittedly badly, an unearthly voice would come through my earphones, "Mr. Keiswetter, that's not the way to say it." I was terrified, needless to say. The good news was "the voice of God" later became my French tutor.

Q: How did you hook up with your roommate? Had you been assigned before you got there?

KEISWETTER: That is right; Dartmouth sent us letters. Landon and I never were close although we spent a year and a half together as roommates in Cohen Hall, a brand-new dormitory with suite arrangements. There were seven of us in the suite.

In the first year, I struggled not only with French but also English. I had a professor named Dewing, whom I called 'De Wing'. He was well known for being a stickler for writing style. I remember receiving a D on my first essay, returned with the comment "Henceforth, less." I was never sure what that meant.

He and I had several counseling sessions. A specialist on Robert Frost, he assigned the class to write an interpretive essay on Frost's poem "Apple Picking." He objected to what he called my "original interpretation," but said he would ask Frost if my essay had any merit. To me it was a wrong approach because I thought my impression was valid as to what the poem meant to me whatever Frost intended.

Despite the agony of the time, Professor Dewing gave me a great gift of a straight-forward writing style that has served me well in my career. I remember one of my Foreign Service rating officers, a compulsive editor, commending my drafts as "crisp – it is hard to change a word." I thank Professor Dewing.

Q: While you were at the university, Kennedy was assassinated.

KEISWETTER: I heard the news when I was coming back to my dormitory from class. It was noon and one of my suitemates came running out swinging his arms, saying "Kennedy has been assassinated." He inadvertently hit me in the stomach as he was running in the other direction. I keeled over.

I also remember the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the fall of my freshman year. I was in a class on early European history when all of a sudden the sirens went off. Professor Williams, the chair of the History Department, did not know quite what to do, so he dismissed class. We all thought that maybe Hanover, New Hampshire was a target, as impossible as it may seem.

At Dartmouth there are two traditions, the Big Greeners and the Green Weenies. While they have taken on different nomenclature over the years, they are the jocks versus the intellectuals and this was something that played out in *The Dartmouth,* the daily college newspaper. I was distinctly a member of the Green Weenies.

Then, as a junior and senior, I moved first to Topliff Hall and then to an international student house dorm named Cutter Hall. I was an international relations major; so it all made sense.

Q: How did you go about picking that major?

KEISWETTER: It goes back to the fourth grade when I decided to write a report on the British crown jewels. I always thought that it would be nice to live abroad as a diplomat.

This was one strand. The other strand was I wanted to be an academic and study abroad and teach. Fortunately, I have been able to do both.

I decided to be an international relations major because it allowed me to dip into economics, history, and government, but still to specialize in Europe, a unifying interest. Out of my class at Dartmouth, there was about a half dozen IR majors. Two of us – Jim Cason and myself - became Foreign Service Officers.

Q: This is the period when things are heating up in Vietnam. I am not sure if student demonstrations came later than this period. Did Dartmouth even notice?

KEISWETTER: Dartmouth was aware. I remember having discussions over dinner in the dining hall about *Newsweek* stories on events in Vietnam but my class, the Class of '66, was the last at Dartmouth of what might be called the calm generation.

In the next few classes, marijuana use became common and protests much more prevalent. In my era, boys worried mainly about getting caught for sneaking girls into their dorms because at that time Dartmouth was still an all men's school and not co-ed. There were some demonstrations at Dartmouth, but nothing like those at Harvard where the university offices were taken over. Dartmouth did kick ROTC off campus.

Q: You graduated from Dartmouth in June of '66 and you go off to SAIS. How did you pick that? How did that come about? What career thoughts are now in your mind?

KEISWETTER: As I mentioned, I was interested in both a diplomatic and an academic career. I remember during an interview for a graduate fellowship at Dartmouth in my senior year, I was asked about my career aspirations. I replied I would like to get an advanced degree, spend a tour or two in the Foreign Service and then return to the academic world. A young academic on the panel commented, "Well, that doesn't make much sense." In his view, if I wanted an academic career, I should establish myself without a diversion through diplomacy. Obviously I did not take that advice and the diversion lasted 36 years until I returned to the academic world. However, I did get the fellowship.

I went to SAIS in Bologna because I had never been abroad. Moreover, I had written my senior thesis on the European Economic Community. Going to SAIS-Bologna seemed both the logical and exciting thing to do.

As background, I spent the two or three summers, including the one between Dartmouth and SAIS, working at the Theis Packing Company in Great Bend as a wienie peeler; the name is probably the most interesting thing about the job. Basically, wieners are put in plastic casings and tied at roughly six-inch intervals, then they are smoked and cooked. I helped run the machine that peeled and packaged them.

So I spent the summer before going to Europe doing that, earning money. I flew from Kansas City through New York to Milan. There I took a train to Bologna. From the jet

lag and exhaustion I fell asleep on the train. When I woke up, an Italian family had joined me in the compartment. I wanted to know where we were. As I did not speak any Italian, I kept saying "Bologna?" and finally they realized just as the train was getting ready to leave that I wanted to get off at Bologna. They said "Si" and I dashed outside and the family pushed my big suitcase out the train window. I arrived in Bologna!

I decided I would live with an Italian family, which was a mistake because I did not really learn much Italian and I was very lonely. This only lasted a month or two before I became sick with a high fever and decided at that time I needed the nurturing that comes from banding together with fellow students. I moved to a student apartment shared with three others, a German, an Italian, and a Brit named Richard Hitchman. He and I have remained close friends. He read classics at Oxford and is the only person I have known who would get up early on Sunday mornings to listen to Radio Vatican broadcasts in Latin.

Academically, SAIS was not more challenging than Dartmouth but different. Some professors lived in Italy, and some commuted from elsewhere in Europe. A particular favorite was Pierre Hassner, who lived in Paris but took the night train to teach one day a week in Bologna. Pierre is also a person with whom I have kept in touch over the years.

While Dartmouth changed my life more than any other experience, I have remained in touch with many more friends from my year in Bologna than from my four years at Dartmouth. Out of this group, there are about a half a dozen of us who get together with some regularity.

Q: Dartmouth made such an impression on you. What was that impression?

KEISWETTER: Dartmouth took a well-motivated and bright Kansas boy and gave him new horizons and a set of intellectual and personal skills that opened broad possibilities. I mentioned Professor Dewing and learning to write. It opened opportunities for learning about diversity. I shared a dorm room in Topliff Hall with a student who used braces and a wheel chair. One of the suite mates my freshman year in Cohen was from West Africa. Another came from a family with great wealth and a long tradition of going to Harvard. Several of my close friends were Jewish. I spend one summer teaching in Head Start teamed with Elijah Simmons from historically black Talladega College; part of the program was in Alabama and part in Vermont. So Dartmouth brought an exposure to diversity, a demand for high intellectual requirements, a fostering of dreams and ambitions, and an exposure to a more complicated, diverse world than the one I had come from.

Q: What did you think you would get out of the SAIS program?

KEISWETTER: Europe and a stepping stone to a career either as a diplomat or as an academic. SAIS prepared for both. Then, even more than now, SAIS was a feeder into the Department of State.

Entering the Foreign Service 1967-1968

Q: When had you made the decision to take the Foreign Service exam?

KEISWETTER: I had done that in my senior year.

Q: Had taken it?

KEISWETTER: I had taken the written exam in my senior year and I had my oral interview in June 1966 after graduation. My parents and my girlfriend Cindy Davis from Great Bend came with two aunts and an uncle from Nebraska to my graduation in New Hampshire. Afterward, we drove to Washington and they went sightseeing while I had my Foreign Service oral exam.

I had talked to several people who had taken the exam recently. There was not something as formal as today's study groups to prepare for it. I learned there was usually a question about contemporary American culture, an area in which I felt weak. So I had gone to concerts that featured modern American music, visited museums to look at contemporary American art, and reviewed reading lists of contemporary American literature to make sure I had something to say.

I remember three questions from the oral exam. First, an examiner asked me to imagine that I was assigned abroad with the responsibility to open the first American library in my host country. What ten books would I choose to best describe America? I had just read John Steinbeck's Travels with Charlie and I added three or four more titles before the panel decided to move on to the next question.

I was asked to pretend that I was Socrates reincarnated in 20th century America; what would I think? As I knew a lot about Plato, who wrote about Socrates, but not much about Socrates himself, I asked if I could respond about Plato instead. The questioner agreed. I can't remember what I said, but this was an example of reformulating the question to the information I knew. Similarly, I was asked to pretend I was a Russian diplomat assigned to Beijing: what would I report to Moscow about a recent visit of the Japanese Foreign Minister? The bottom line is: I passed.

Many years later an indiscreet personnel officer allowed me to look at my personnel folder. I discovered the recommendations that had been written for my entry to the Foreign Service and comments from my oral exam. The summary in recommending for entry said: "well qualified, good recommendations but no one gives him the highest marks." So I got in.

Q: So at the end to the interview they said, "You are in."

KEISWETTER: No. It was not instantaneous as it is now. I received a letter a few weeks later saying I had passed and requesting information for a security check and health clearance.

I stayed in Washington a week or two after my interview. I had received my draft notice and I walked into the draft national headquarters on F or G Street near the White House and asked to see someone about my case. The person turned out to be a retired general who was the deputy head of the national draft. I argued, "I am a poor boy from Kansas. I have two scholarships to go to SAIS in Bologna, I am about to be drafted instead. Can you help?" He agreed and I was given an educational deferment.

Two things happened while I was in Bologna simultaneously in the spring of 1967 to shape my fate. One was that I received notice that my draft deferment would not be renewed another year, and the second was I received my formal acceptance into the Foreign Service. I decided I would prefer to go to Vietnam as a diplomat than as a soldier.

Q: You entered the Foreign Service.

KEISWETTER: I entered the Foreign Service in June 1967. My entering class, the 79th, was largest ever at that time. Why? The Department was hiring people because they were needed for postings in Vietnam.

I remember well the swearing in ceremony by Director General John Steeves. He talked about dedication and patriotism. He said that Foreign Service Officers should feel a special thrill every time they saw the American flag and if we as entering officers did not, then we did not deserve to be in this class. This remark struck most of us as quaint. I vied with Tim Carney for the honor of being the youngest in the entering class.

Entrants submitted a list of preferred assignments and I, of course, chose posts in Europe. However, like all single male new officers, I was assigned to CORDS, an acronym for Civil Operations for Revolutionary Development Support. (Later the 'r' was changed from "revolution" to "rural.")

I attended an obligatory two-week course in Vietnamese language training. I told them at the beginning that I was tone deaf and I did not think I could learn a tonal language. On Friday at the end of the second week, three linguists told me, "We don't really think you can learn Vietnamese. We believe you may be tone deaf." The deputy director of the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) gave me two choices: I could go to Vietnam directly without language training or I could study French to get off language probation and then go to Vietnam. He recommended strongly that I go to Vietnam immediately and then take language training that related to whatever my assignment was after that. He suggested that I take a walk around the building and come back in half an hour and tell him my decision. I did and came back to tell him, "I want to study French."

I had studied French in college but I still found French challenging. I attribute my getting off language probation to FSI instructor Micha Ishkovski, a Polish countess whose family had immigrated in the '30s to Paris where she had been born. I was in my final week

when the Tet Offensive in early 1968 broke out in Vietnam. New arrivals were put on hold; so I ended up studying French for six months instead of three. I tested a 3/3.

In Vietnam, I used French occasionally, mainly with older Vietnamese local employees They spoke very funny French: for example "ouay" not "oui." Overall, choosing to study French first was the right choice. I got off language probation, meaning I could be promoted, which happened in Vietnam. Because of my relatively young age, I had entered at the lowest rank as an FSO 8, whereas most others who were in my A-100 class were 7s. I caught up.

Q: To go back to the A-100 class. You said the largest class. What was the training about at that time? What did they cover?

KEISWETTER: A lot was just what the Foreign Service is about. Secretary of State Dean Rusk spoke to our class. We were told we could ask the Secretary anything we wanted except about Vietnam.

Training included "T groups" of eight or ten persons where we shared our life stories. At the first session, we were directed to share something about another group member that usually would not be said. I remember a person looking across the circle at another man and saying, "You are really quite handsome. I don't want you near my wife." It was meant in jest, but I was unprepared to participate in such a full spirit. By my turn, I had the option to share something about myself that no one else knew. I revealed I had had speech therapy for stuttering even though I had been a championship debater.

Q: Do you have any sense of the guys you met, people you met in the group and this was another diverse group. Everybody passed the same exam, everybody passed the same oral. Did that make them more similar or more different?

KEISWETTER: Certainly by contemporary standards it was not a diverse group. It was largely male; there were only three or four women and no racial minorities. Age on entering ranged across a decade from early twenties to early thirties. By comparison, today I understand the average entering age is 32.

As I reflect, entry into the Foreign Service was much like my enrolling at Dartmouth. It was a new challenge and a new set of expectations, a new environment that would require me to grow if I wanted to be successful.

When I initially joined the Foreign Service, I was unsure about it as a career. I became enthusiastic about the Foreign Service, partially in Vietnam but then later when I returned to Washington to work on European affairs in Intelligence and Research (INR).

Vietnam 1968-1969

Q: When you went out to Vietnam did you go out with other people in your A-100 course?

KEISWETTER: No, and I should talk about the trip to Vietnam and the transition because it was really in some ways traumatic.

I left Kansas, where I had visited my family, and flew to Honolulu. I remember arriving at the airport lounge to see LBJ on TV announcing that he was not going to run for reelection. I felt the world was changing. In the first couple of weeks in Vietnam this feeling was intensified. From Martin Luther King Jr.'s and Bobby Kennedy's assassinations, I really had a very strong feeling that somehow things back home were all going to hell in a way that I did not understand. I had spent the summer between my junior and senior year working for then-Congressman Bob Dole, so I knew something about the geography of Washington. To see the pictures of the buildings going up in flames in the rioting reinforced the sense that things were really deteriorating.

Q: Let's get you from Honolulu to Saigon.

KEISWETTER: En route to Saigon, I was seated on the plane next to a USAID advisor who was returning from R&R. He was ten or fifteen years older than I was, and took me under his wing when no one met me at the airport. He said he would take me to where I should be in-processed, but wanted to pick up his vehicle at home first. I waited outside in his jeep sitting on the passenger side. Two Vietnamese boys on a motorcycle pulled up to the driver's window and the one in back aimed a gun at me. I ducked but he did not fire. I was shaken up a bit.

At the in-processing center, a young woman apologized for not meeting me at the airport, offering the lame explanation that she had a birthday lunch to attend. I thought, "These are the people who are supporting me?" I stayed at a hotel near the Rex, the quarters where American military officers stayed in central Saigon. Terrified by the events of the day, I recalled the counterterrorism training I had gone through at Fort Belvoir, where there was a display of instruments of sabotage and torture that included a pair of shears on the bottom side of a toilet seat aimed at castrating unsuspecting users. I remember searching every part of room, including inspecting the toilet seat. I was further terrified by a knock on my door. It turned out to be a lady of the night who wanted some business; I was not interested.

In Vietnam, I had interesting things to do. I worked in the Chieu Hoi Program, which encouraged defections from the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army; this was done through armed propaganda teams (APTs) made up of defectors who would go back and try to convince their friends to defect as well. After they defected, they were called Hoi Chanh, which means 'he who rallies'; officially they did not defect, they rallied. Hoi Chanh went through an indoctrination program and vocational training. They and their families lived in special guarded villages to protect them from the ever-vengeful Viet Cong.

Ogden Williams, a retired CIA officer in his fifties, recruited me to join the Chieu Hoi Program in Can Tho in the Delta. Ogden proved to be a lifelong friend. When I returned

to Washington after my Vietnam tour, he offered me a temporary place to stay at his home in Palisades near MacArthur Boulevard in DC. This led to many invitations over the years to his farm near Lost River, West Virginia.

Q: Let's talk about Can Tho and Nha Trang. Was there a team concept?

KEISWETTER: Can Tho was the Vietnamese military and civilian headquarters for IV Corps. The CORDS Chieu Hoi advisory unit included Rudy, a Filipino who had run a similar program during the Philippines insurgency, a US Army captain named Sanders from Puerto Rico, and myself. While the other two traveled to supervise the programs in the 13 provinces that made up IV Corps, I ran the office and wrote reports. This setup lasted two or three months until Wilber "Coal Bin Willy" Wilson arrived as the new IV Corps chief civilian advisor. Wilson was a legend in his own time, a protégé of John Paul Vann. Like Vann, he was profane, gruff, and ripped people up one side and down the other. I became his staff aide and office director.

I mainly prepared his travels and wrote routine messages on his behalf. Once he arrived at the airport in the provincial capital Sadeq and no one was there to greet him. When he got back, there was hell to pay. How could this happen? What did the messages say? It turned out that he was supposed to go to Phu Quoc, another province, that day but had mistakenly instructed his pilots to take him to Sadeq. This was a turning point because afterward he was much more tolerant of my own bureaucratic learning curve.

Why did I go from there to the Nha Tang? My good friend Ogden did not like his Chieu Hoi people being siphoned off for staff duty and so he found another job for me.

Q: Actually doing the Chieu Hoi Program?

KEISWETTER: Yes.

When I arrived at the airport in Nha Trang on Air America, flying overhead were US military airplanes broadcasting "Code Red," meaning take cover because an attack was imminent. Roy Hafterson, a housemate who had met me at the airport, and I took cover in the nearby villa which served as quarters shared by four of us. It turns out that nothing really happened, but during the Tet Offensive some months before a firefight had occurred in the house itself.

Few civilians were in Vietnam because the assignment was their preferred choice. Most were USAID contractors there under some sort of duress. Some like myself were just assigned there and really had no alternative. Some were there for financial reasons, usually stemming from divorce and debt. Quite a few were at least in part there because of sex. In preparation for a national Chieu Hoi conference, Ogden was asked the question, "Well, can 'Flowers of the Delta' come to the reception?" The answer was, "No, 'Night Blooming Flowers' are not allowed."

There were three times that I was actually shot at and felt in some fear for my life. One of them was in Vinh Long Province in the Delta. I went out with an American Chieu Hoi adviser on an APT mission. We walked several miles into the jungle where we had lunch at a Vietnamese house. Our hosts produced a Polaroid to take my picture supposedly because they were amused at my chopstick technique. In retrospect, it undoubtedly was an opportunity to take a picture for the Viet Cong.

As we walked further into the jungle after lunch, the houses become vacant. The interpretation was the Viet Cong had been there and the people had run away because they feared fighting. Some distance further we rested under a big lychee tree from which we picked fresh lychee nuts. Suddenly a firefight broke out. We took refuge behind the dikes of the rice fields near the tree. I lost one shoe when I sunk my feet into the mud. We had a choice either to wait where we were for someone to come by boat to rescue us with the idea that we would hold off the Viet Cong or we had to risk going back the same way we had come in, along the top of the rice field dikes. It was decided we would walk out and not stay where we were. I remember trying to be totally circumspect, looking for any sign, movement, or other advance warning so I could prostrate myself on the ground. I felt great relief as I saw the vanguard of the Vietnamese rescue force across the exposed girders of a desecrated bridge. I was grateful.

As for the other two times, one was when the Viet Cong mortared an airfield in Kon Tum in the central highlands when I was climbing off an Air America plane; we passengers took refuge in a ditch and the plane took off. During the same trip, I spent the night at an US Army outpost near Kon Tum that came under mortar and armed attack about midnight, and everybody was routed out of bed and down into the bunkers. The soldiers had the good sense not to give me a gun.

Q: In Vietnam were you given any weapons training?

KEISWETTER: Never. I did not request it but I am sure it could have been arranged.

Q: What was the Chieu Hoi Program, how was it organized and what techniques were they using?

KEISWETTER: Helicopters dropped brochures and broadcast messages on loud speakers encouraging defections. The APTs went on missions like the one I was on to spread the word. But the fact of the matter is the Hoi Chanh “rallied” when they were intimidated. When it was apparent a battle was imminent, there would be lots of defectors. Another major reason was major holidays or family emergencies. Before Tet, there was always a large number of Hoi Chanh because they wanted to spend the holidays with their family. Personal emergencies such as the illness of a parent, wife, or child would also motivate defections.

The re-defection rate was difficult to judge and the number who were double agents probably even higher than we thought. In the stories that have come out since, it is

apparent that an extraordinary number of Vietnamese, even a lot of those on whom CORDS and the Americans military relied on heavily, were in fact double agents.

My own Vietnamese counterparts in both Can Tho and Nha Trang were both accused of corruption, but the evidence was not clear and they both had political defenders. One was an intellectual in the sense that he wrote a book with graphics showing how historical forces made Vietnam the most prized place on Earth, and therefore whatever happened in Vietnam would determine the fate of the world.

Overall, I went to Vietnam thinking that the US commitment there was a mistake and I came back thinking that indeed my views had not changed. I just had more evidence. I found unconvincing the argument that the real reason for the US commitment in Vietnam was to contain the Chinese. In addition, after I returned to Washington, I took a course at SAIS in Washington with Professor Charles Osgood in which I developed the theory that bad implementation had compounded the mistakes of a misbegotten policy. As I look back on the Vietnam era, especially after a visit to Hanoi in 2008, I wonder how we could delude ourselves so.

Q: Talking about how Vietnam was administered, you are not a language officer so what is CORDS doing with you in this program? What was the value added?

KEISWETTER: In essence I was a reports officer. I had two functions. While the others traveled, I was the person who answered the mail, attended staff meetings, and wrote the monthly reports. So while I had the title of deputy, in essence, I was the home-based person.

I would like to comment again on exotica. My boss in Nha Trang was Major Richard Julian Arthur Ashley Little of the Australian army. He was the son of a British diplomat stationed in Germany when World War II broke out. His family was put in a sealed railcar and sent across Russia to Vladivostok, where they took a boat to Australia and then resettled there. He was in Vietnam because he had a very adventurous, risk-taking nature and a girlfriend in every place he visited, including in each of the provinces in II Corps. What I would like to convey about all of this is that Westerners in Vietnam had their own agendas that related to lifestyles and they were quite willing to take the risks to pursue them. This is Richard Julian Arthur Ashley Little, one of the most unusual people I have ever met.

While assigned to Nha Trang I had a Vietnamese local employee named Mr. Tran, who was an astrologer. He wanted to know exactly when and where I was born down to the minute: 3:45 pm in Hastings, Nebraska. From this information he wrote what can only be called a character study/prediction of my life. It goes on for 15 handwritten pages, part in English, part in French. He predicted that I would die at age 63 or 84 in the presence of a woman I love who is not my wife. I take that to be my daughter. It will be in a church or other religious place. While I will never be very rich, I will always have plenty of money. Mr. Tran also wanted me to marry his daughter on the grounds that Vietnamese and Americans make the most beautiful children. I did not take up his offer.

Another FSO who was assigned to Nha Trang was Alison Palmer, who was a decade older than I was. We became good friends and jokingly we referred to each other as 'the other intellectual" assigned to II Corps because we both were reports officers. I mention her because of her leading role for women in the Department, largely through a court case that found the Department had discriminated against her regarding an assignment to a DCMship in Africa. Later, when we both had returned to Washington, she asked me to write a letter of recommendation to support her application to be among the first women admitted to Episcopal seminary. She was admitted and studied part time while continuing to work at the Department. At lunch one day, she asked to interview me for a seminary assignment about the contributions of religion to the world. My answer was inspiration of great music and great art. I sensed it was not the right answer as far as Allison was concerned. After that we remained friends but we never talked about religion again. She was eventually ordained but continued in the Department of State until she retired.

Q: So you come out of Vietnam in the '69 period. This is your first tour in the Foreign Service. You avoided the draft.

KEISWETTER: Let's go back to the draft. While in Vietnam, I received a message from my draft board in Kansas that I was being drafted; please report at a certain place and time. I wrote back, "I am already in Vietnam with the Department of State. My subordinate is a non-commissioned officer. My boss is a major. You can recycle me but maybe it would be just as effective to leave me here."

In a few weeks, I got a reply saying that I was given a deferment on the basis of my Foreign Service assignment. The policy of the State Department was not to request a deferment on the grounds it was up to each officer to make his case to his own draft board as to whether his duties would warrant a deferment. I am sure that if I had gone to Paris the case would not have been nearly as strong. In many ways, it did count as military service because I did what military officers did. In other CORDS programs, a captain or a major filled similar positions.

Professionally, Vietnam jump-started my career through quick promotion and early responsibilities, even though I did not see the inside of a US Embassy as a diplomat until six years later. The assignment of Foreign Service Officers to political-military tasks in Vietnam set a pattern culminating in about half of the current Foreign Service having now served in similar situations in Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere, and the Department of State has created the Bureau for Conflict Stability Operations to plan for such contingencies. The fatality rate among US Foreign Service Officers exceeds that of military officers.

Politically, I went to Vietnam thinking that the US commitment there was a mistake and I came back still thinking it was but with first-hand experience to bolster my views. I remember recalling on the plane as I left Saigon the last line of Robert Frost's "Into My Own" as I considered what perceptions at home would be:

They would not find me changed from him they knew—

Only more sure of all I thought was true.

Working in Intelligence and Research (INR) 1969-1971

Q: But a Vietnam assignment is particularly nontraditional. What was the process for you to get your next assignment?

KEISWETTER: I came back unassigned. I had not even a reply to my telegrams expressing a preference for any assignment to a French-speaking post in Europe or a position working on Europe in the Department. While on home leave with my parents in Kansas, I was offered a job in Intelligence and Research (INR) in the Office of European Affairs. I became the Belgian analyst with responsibilities also for France in Africa. I grew to love the job both because my colleagues and bosses had a mix of academic and Foreign Service backgrounds and because I found the Intelligence Community intriguing.

I also did utility functions like preparations for early morning briefings for the Secretary. Someone from each regional INR office had to arrive at 5am to prepare the Director of INR to be ready at 7:30am to brief the Secretary on events overnight. I read all the overnight West European traffic and intelligence reporting, and at 6:30am the Director would arrive to review the materials I and others had sorted out along with our comments to help prepare the Secretary's briefing.

Q: You had read summaries and the cables?

KEISWETTER: Both. I would write summaries and comments at the top of cables and intel reports and underline the important points. Usually the summaries were only a couple of lines and not as extensive as in the current Secretary's Morning Summary.

INR was a formative period for me in several regards. I had exposure to the broader Intelligence Community as I participated in writing a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Belgium and later an NIE on France and Africa. As a neophyte, I enjoyed the learning, the intellectual exchange, and the bureaucratic play.

Q: NIE is an interagency document?

KEISWETTER: It is an interagency document. It has to be approved by all 16 agencies of the Intelligence Community.

While in INR I got in trouble for my naiveté about US politics. In the spring of 1970, somebody circulated a petition that said the US should get out of Cambodia. I thought the US incursion into Cambodia was a mistake and I signed when approached while walking around the building at lunchtime. Of course, all of this leaked immediately. The petition was on the front page of the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* the next day, the gist being "Foreign Service Officers protest Cambodia." Sick with a cold the next day, I got a phone call at home demanding that I turn up immediately for a meeting with the Under Secretary for Political Affairs U. Alexis Johnson if I valued my career in the

Foreign Service. Held in the Operations Center, the meeting was crowded with about 40-50 young officers there.

I remember Johnson saying he had just come from the White House and the President was very angry and disappointed. Johnson used the phrase that never in his long career had there been such a crisis of confidence between the Department of State and the White House. Then someone from my entering class, Dan Turnquist, responded that in his study of US history there had never been such a crisis of confidence between the government and the people. That did not go over very well, but it certainly reflected the sentiment of most of us in the room at the time.

Q: And in fact, wasn't that the incident in which President Nixon supposedly told Johnson to fire all those guys?

KEISWETTER: Yes, exactly. While Johnson admonished us, he probably saved me and others who signed the petition from being fired. The episode did show my naiveté, the temper of the times, and certainly the mood of the White House. I later learned that Secretary of State Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird both had opposed the incursion precisely because of the opposition it would engender at home.

I was not militant in any way on the Vietnam issue. During this period, I lived for a few weeks near DuPont Circle where protesters gathered shouting, 'Hell no, I won't go.' I thought "they do not understand. It is much more complicated than that." I certainly regarded the whole war movement as being intellectually right but uninformed in its perceptions. I also remember at that time rioters against the war broke windows on Connecticut Avenue and the police used tear gas. It drifted in the apartment where I was staying and burnt my eyes. It hurt!

In short, as I mentioned when talking about leaving Vietnam, I thought the war was a mistake, a conclusion reinforced by a trip back to Vietnam in January 2008. My wife Gerda and I took a cruise from Singapore that made four stops in Vietnam. Saigon in many ways seemed unchanged. The architecture is still there; the Rex is still standing. The Continental Hotel, the heart of colonial Vietnam and the gathering spot for foreigners during the war, had been spiffed up. The place now is filled with as many motorcycles as there are people. I could detect absolutely no resentment toward Americans.

We also went to Nha Trang. What a change! In the late 1960s, it had one of the most gorgeous beaches in the world with small islands offshore and grass huts scattered along the water's edge serving seafood in ornate ways. Now big hotels line the corniche and a formal sculpture garden dots the beach. Fancy restaurants have replaced the seafood huts at water's edge. Nha Trang was preparing for the Miss Universe contest to be held there. Forty years ago, a big Buddha on a mountaintop reigned over the city. It is still there but now you cannot see it from most parts of the city because of the tall buildings.

Q: You are in the cruel world of INR and you are covering France and Belgium. Coming across your desk are reports from other agencies. This is the central intel shop for State

so you are seeing reporting from various and sundry sources. What is your relationship with the desk, the French or Belgian desk? Did they ever make requests of you?

KEISWETTER: Yes. While the Director of INR>REA Martin Packman did the daily briefing of intelligence materials to EUR Front Office and officer directors, I sometimes fielded questions. However, since I wanted to get a job in Europe, I made a point of getting to know Richard Long, who was the Office Director for Western Europe (EUR/WE) covering France and the Benelux countries. I did odd jobs such as writing national day congratulatory messages and things that would fall beyond my normal kin. I remember sitting in on several staff meetings.

From this period came several good friends; in particular John Hirsch, who went on to be Ambassador to Sierra Leone and with whom I have remained close over the years. And Anton Deport, Deputy Director of INR/REU, who became a mentor to me and many others. He modeled a style of analysis and writing that sought to capture the nuances as well as to convey a concept and point of view. He once described writing as difficult because words had to be bent to show the nuances of reality. He wrote a book on the Fourth Republic of France and is now retired.

Q: It is interesting when you look at the Foreign Service skillset that at the front part of your career you are getting all this writing experience.

KEISWETTER: I had never thought of that but it is true. There were also bureaucratic coordination experiences and significant presentational opportunities as well.

Studying Atlantic Affairs at Harvard 1971-1972

Q: Following the INR assignment, where were you assigned?

KEISWETTER: I went to Harvard.

Q: You hadn't been able to stay out of school very long.

KEISWETTER: The choice goes back to dual ambitions – teaching and the Foreign Service. I was determined to get my Master's Degree after INR. I had applied and been admitted to the Kennedy School.

Q: Separately, on your own?

KEISWETTER: On my own, not through State. I did not know how I was going to pay for it. FSI had turned down my proposal to pay for the tuition under FSI's program underwriting after-hours courses. I was also ruled ineligible for mid-career training because I was too junior. However, Jim Gormley, with whom I had served in Vietnam, was the deputy director of the training office. When in August a person chosen for the mid-career training slot in Atlantic affairs suddenly dropped out, he proposed me as a replacement and sought an exception to the mid-career requirement; so I was off to

Harvard. I remember pondering my good luck as I walked in Harvard Yard the first time. I am grateful to Jim.

I loved Harvard and did very well academically; I got all A's except for one B+. Besides the official degree from the Kennedy School, I also got to know Stanley Hoffman and Joe Nye, both professors at Harvard, who greatly shaped my thinking about foreign policy. I was particularly interested in France and NATO and I wrote a long paper on French foreign policy for Hoffman entitled "President Pompidou's Triptych for Europe."

Q: What kind of classes did you take?

KEISWETTER: They were almost all about Europe. I had a year-long seminar on NATO and European unity. I took a class on European economics in which I wrote a paper applying economic theory to the riots in France in 1968. I also took a course at MIT on US defense policy in Europe.

Harvard and Boston also reinforced my interest in music. There is always something musical to go to on Harvard campus and once a week there was free admission to the Boston Symphony rehearsal. I was very much into that. The other thing I remember was it snowed on my birthday, which is June 3rd.

Q: Were there any other FSOs up there in the program at that time?

KEISWETTER: Yes, Bob Bentley, who was studying Latin American affairs, and Princeton Lyman, who was studying African affairs at MIT. My "home" on campus was the Center for European Studies led by Hoffman.

Q: This was a program that would have other academics as students.

KEISWETTER: Yes, there were graduate students in European affairs and visiting professors. Pierre Hassner turned up there for several months. He was the person with whom I had studied in Bologna. I took a couple of courses on France with sociologist Lawrence Wiley.

NATO Affairs 1972-1975

Q: So far you had a fairly unusual Foreign Service career; Vietnam first, then back in Washington, INR, education and out of the Atlantic year at Harvard you come back to Washington. So your only foreign assignment so far is Vietnam.

KEISWETTER: That is right. I came back and went to work in EUR/RPM, which is the NATO desk.

Q: How did you get that?

KEISWETTER: I interviewed. I talked to Ed Streator who was the deputy director. I was initially recruited to cover the civil emergency planning (CEP) portfolio, an obscure part of NATO activities. I chaired the interagency NATO Civil Emergency Planning Committee, which included representatives of the DoD, JCS, the predecessor to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and several other agencies and departments.

One specific task I had was to figure out what to do with NATO diplomats in the event of a nuclear attack on Washington. I frivolously suggested that we should just prepare a diplomatic note on asbestos saying we regretted the inconvenience of the recent nuclear war, signed by the Secretary of State. We ultimately decided they would be evacuated to a hollowed-out mountain in the Shenandoah. One consequence of being responsible for civil emergency planning was I ended up being involved with continuity-of-government exercises for much of my career.

My CEP responsibilities provided a chance to travel in Europe as well as learn how NATO works. As a relatively junior officer, I officially represented the United States at international meetings and participated in the diplomatic give-and-take of NATO committee work in Brussels. My skills in those areas came from that period. I was particularly grateful for the mentoring of my immediate boss, Woody Romine, and to Ed Streator, whose idea of training was to give me general instructions and then he and I would edit my drafts together. Another person was Eric Rehfeld, who sat on the NATO Administration Committee and made a career of collecting bits and pieces about NATO that nobody else wanted to do. He is an important reason I got an assignment to NATO as a Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs some years later.

Q: Again this looks like an assignment very similar to the INR one where you are bringing in inputs and negotiating with other people, other desks, other officers because NATO covers Europe.

KEISWETTER: That is right. My CEP responsibilities lasted a little more than a year and then after that I became the special projects officer. A first assignment was the care and feeding of Don Rumsfeld, at the time Counselor in the White House, whom President Nixon nominated to be Ambassador to NATO. This was the first time I really had firsthand exposure to a political personality and how differently political appointees sometimes operate than do career Foreign Service Officers.

For example, I spent a lot of time researching the congressional debates to approve the NATO Treaty in 1949 in preparation for Rumsfeld's confirmation hearings. He insisted that he fly economy class to post but had us badger the airlines to block two other seats in his row so he could sleep. When he came back for his first consultations, he sent a cable giving his views about US-NATO relations as an 'eyes only' message for Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs John Stoessel. When I met him at the airport, his first question was, "Well, have you coordinated my paper? What does the White House think?" He expressed dismay when I explained it had not been shared except very selectively in the Department because of the eyes-only caption.

At this time, Henry Kissinger became Secretary of State as well as remaining as National Security Advisor. He convened Foreign Service Officers in the courtyard and proclaimed that it was the job of each FSO to analyze the "objective circumstances" of a situation and then identify the opportunities and risks for US foreign policy. After he made these remarks, he tasked the regional Assistant Secretaries to submit a paper along these lines. In EUR, the job fell to me. Some forty years later, I heard Kissinger repeat this framework for analysis in a think tank discussion on Iran at the National Defense University. It is a framework that has stuck with me and I have used it often in the Foreign Service and in my teaching and writing afterwards.

While I was special projects officer, I also assisted a small core group including Vlad Lehovich in RPM and Leon Fuerth in the Political Military Bureau on preparations for Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) in Europe. Vlad continued on a career in European affairs and Leon resigned from the Department to work for Senator Gore and became his National Security Advisor when he became Vice President.

Q. You also worked on nuclear affairs, didn't you?

Yes, later I became the Nuclear Planning Officer, a position two grades higher than my rank. I followed the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG), and participated in its Ministerial meetings. Whereas the other NATO Ministerials were large meetings, the NPG Ministerial restricted attendance to the Defense Minister plus one other person. On the US side, that meant the Secretary of Defense Jim Schlesinger and a notetaker. For a couple Ministerials, I took my turn as part of a small team that had the task of producing near verbatim notes dictated as soon as we completed our turn. The Ministerials always ended with a black-tie dinner.

I would like to mention, too, relations with the Pentagon. My counterpart at the Pentagon was Colonel Jack Callaway, who was the office director for NATO affairs and my direct counterpart on nuclear planning. He resented very much that his counterpart in State was someone 15 or 20 years younger and several ranks his junior. Ultimately, he requested that I be replaced; what happened was the opposite. He had made enough people angry in the Pentagon that he was reassigned for his inability to get along. I codified what I learned about State-DoD relations and internecine Pentagon politics in a case study I wrote at Harvard as Diplomat in Residence several years later.

Q. When did you leave RPM? How did you get your next assignment?

After a six-month extension, I left RPM at the end of 1974. How I got my next assignment was complicated. Before 1980, there was not open bidding. Assignments were done secretly. Personnel prepared lists of candidates that were then proposed to ambassadors and bureaus. You had to keep in touch with your personnel officer, who might or might not know or share what was going on. The personnel system had proposed to Rumsfeld a whole slate of people including me to fill openings at USNATO, all of the candidates being experienced NATO hands. Rumsfeld rejected the entire list,

saying he wanted new blood and new thinking; so personnel prepared a new slate of African, Latin American, Asian hands who wanted a tour in Europe but had no NATO experience. This leads to where I did finally end up at my next assignment -- the six-month economics course and the Embassy in Beirut.

At this time, Secretary Kissinger announced globalization – called Global Outlook Program (GLOP). The story was he had gone to Mexico City and wanted to talk about SALT and somebody passed him the pepper too. According to the rules, I qualified for GLOP as I had three assignments in European affairs - INR, Atlantic Affairs training, and EUR despite the fact I lacked an assignment in Europe itself. I decided I would like to go to an econ job in Beirut via economics training because I spoke French and would have a chance to gain economic credentials. EUR pulled strings to get me the job. This was the beginning of my NEA career.

I would like to add a coda about the Rumsfeld story. When Nixon resigned in August 1974, President Ford called Rumsfeld to the White House to be his Chief of Staff and he left Brussels before the staff he had selected ever arrived. He was succeeded by David K. E. Bruce, who had served as Ambassador to Paris, London, Bonn, and Beijing before coming to Brussels at the age of 76. Bruce died a couple years later.

Economic Training 1975

Q: You had been assigned to a six-month economic training course.

KEISWETTER: Yes.

Q: That's a volunteer thing, right? You sought that out. Let me back up. What cone are you?

KEISWETTER: As was the practice then, I was un-coned when I entered the Foreign Service, and I was asked to choose my cone when I was in Vietnam. I picked the political cone. By 1975 when I went to the economics course, I thought political, political-military, and economic credentials made sense both in terms of my interests and because I would be eligible for promotion both in my cone and in the multifunctional track. The job I was hired for in Beirut was to work as an economic officer in the Economic Commercial Section. Because of timing more than anything else, I was given the six-month economics course in preparation for going out there. Although I had taken several economics courses, my knowledge was spotty.

Q: Who was in the economics course with you?

KEISWETTER: The course was headed by John Sprott, who has circulated back in my life since I retired. He created the Arlington Learning in Retirement Institute, now called Encore Learning. At his encouragement, I taught several courses there. As for other people in the FSI economics course, I remember Harry Kopp, who is serving as the lobbyist for the Filipino Sugar Association in his retirement. Also, Sam Keiter, with

whom I became good friends because we were assigned seats alphabetically when the course began. Sam had just returned from Saudi Arabia. When King Faisal was assassinated in the spring of 1975, Sam gave a special presentation as to its meaning and significance. For me, it was my first exposure to Middle East politics. Coming back from Vietnam I had stopped in Beirut where I was sick from eating an apple in India; otherwise, I had never been there. I had no academic training whatsoever in Middle East affairs.

Q: But you knew you were going to Beirut. He was a good resource for you.

KEISWETTER: That is exactly what happened.

The economics course was also the beginning of my IT literacy. I acquired my first computer to do economic regressions.

Q: I understand the course itself is fairly intensive. You are supposed to end up with a bachelor's degree in economics and so what might a semester be in a university environment was one week. So it is a lot of reading.

KEISWETTER: I thought it was excellent. At the end we took the GREs in economics, and everyone did quite well.

Embassy Beirut and Evacuation to Paris 1975-1976

Q: So that would have covered the first six months of 1975 and you go off to Beirut in August of '75. How did you get out there? What was life like at the Embassy?

KEISWETTER: I flew in from Paris. The security situation was problematic but dependents remained at post. Beirut was still the gem of the Middle East, and society hostesses would send their maids off to Paris to buy foodstuffs for their lavish parties. A daily society column featured diplomatic comings and goings.

I took one trip out of Beirut to Tripoli on a Sunday a couple of weeks after I arrived; it turned out to be the last time Embassy personnel could go outside Beirut before travel restrictions were imposed. When I arrived, the question was whether there would be a fourth round of fighting. In the next two months, the answer proved to be yes and it lasted 15 years. It was the beginning of the civil war in earnest and Beirut was on the cusp of disintegration.

I lived in Hamra on Adonis Street near Mrs. Smith's Market, a relatively peaceful part of the city where Muslims and Christians, the imams and the patriarchs, would parade down Hamra Street marching for peace. In West Beirut, where the Embassy was located and all US staff lived except the Ambassador, the major disturbance during this period was the nightly raids by Israeli planes that in a kind of psychological warfare buzzed the ground then rose sharply to break the sound barrier. The tactic increased as the fighting in the outskirts of Beirut intensified. In early November, the evacuation of dependents and

drawdown of non-essential personnel occurred after a night when Israeli planes kept most of the staff and families awake all night. By the end of following day, Ambassador Mac Godley had recommended and Washington had authorized the departures.

It fell to me to talk to American students at American University of Beirut (AUB). I had spoken to them before when their major concern was fear the Sixth Fleet would intervene in Lebanon as it had in 1958. This time they were alarmed ships were not offshore to evacuate them and that they had to make their own arrangements to leave the country.

After the early November departures in the period up to Christmas, I would hear occasional gunfire but saw no major street fighting. The major risk was being kidnapped or doing something foolish. For example, I would customarily walk to work across the AUB campus to the Corniche that led to the Embassy located on a scenic bend. I made a point each morning of listening to Israeli radio bulletins about the security situation in Beirut. One morning I was late and walked out my door without doing so. I got to AUB campus and there was no one around. I got to the Corniche and there was not a car in sight. I knew I was in trouble. When I reached the filling station that abutted the back of the Embassy, there tacked on a tree was a sign saying "Use Embassy back entrance. Sniper ahead." While it was risky, I did not particularly feel frightened as I had in Vietnam.

As the situation deteriorated, Lebanese authorities imposed a 7pm curfew. The banks also closed for prolonged periods, but we could still get cash through the Embassy cashier who would turn up periodically when circumstances permitted.

Not far from my apartment was a pet shop that had Persian kittens imported from England in the window. They cost some outrageous price but gradually the pet storeowner became desperate for cash because of the bank closures and I became lonely because of the nightly curfews, and we reached a deal. I bought a beautiful black Persian kitten for $150. I named him Ibn - Arabic for son. A gentle soul, Ibn purred instantly when I picked him up at the pet store and he died purring nearly twenty years later after having lived with us in Baghdad, Washington, Tunis, Sanaa, Riyadh, and Brussels.

I drove my car - a sporty Alfa Romeo I had bought cheaply from a businessman fleeing the country - to the office one day but I was unable to drive it home because of an outbreak of fighting. I spent the night in the Embassy and the next morning I looked out to see the wheels were stolen. Over the next two or three days, parts of it kept disappearing and finally it was set afire. I remember filing a claim with the Department of State and about a year later when I was in Baghdad, the Director General visited and asked if there were any complaints. I asked, "What about my car reimbursement?" After a few weeks, the claim was paid.

When we spent nights in the Embassy, we raided the Embassy commissary for a can of beans or whatever we could find to eat. There was one person who was seated on a toilet on the front side of the embassy when a sniper bullet tore through the newspaper he was reading. Afterwards, all the spaces on the front side of the Embassy were closed off.

The major substantive thing I did was to write the Economic Outlook for 1976, reporting that the fighting was destroying the Lebanese economy and Beirut's days as the economic capital of the Middle East were over. A fire had destroyed the major souk and virtually all international firms had departed. The report was never published. Otherwise we prepared daily situation reports; Ambassador Godley would send a brief personal report each morning when he arrived at the office aimed at making the early morning summaries in Washington, and the Embassy as a whole would send an end-of-the-day report after we had a chance to get in touch with contacts. This worked as long as the phones remained in service; frequently they were out.

Q: What were the circumstances of your evacuation?

KEISWETTER: At Christmas time, I spent a couple of weeks in Europe stopping in Paris and visiting Strasburg where my former boss in RPM Woody Romine was the Consul General. As flights to Beirut were cancelled, I was instructed to fly to Amman to await further instructions. After a week there, the decision was made that officers were allowed to return to post but families were not. When I arrived back in Beirut, the shelling and firefights were more intense. For a couple weeks, all staff lived at the Carlton Hotel on the Corniche and went back and forth to the Embassy wearing flak jackets and hunched down in the back of armored cars. Once at the Embassy, there was little work that could be done because even the telephones did not work.

Finally, in late January, ordered departure reduced the Embassy to a skeletal staff of eight or ten people. The logistical question was how to arrange transport to the airport, which was in PLO territory. Because of the Department's prohibition against dealing with the PLO, the Administrative Section cleverly contracted with a Palestinian travel agent with PLO connections for door-to-door service. It became then a Palestinian problem to get us safely out of the Embassy and onto the airplane. I am sure there were many clandestine contacts and arrangements to make sure the evacuation worked.

Q: For background purposes, how big was the Embassy before the evacuation? And how did you end up in Paris?

KEISWETTER: The Embassy was the largest in the Middle East and staffed like a European embassy with regional attaches and assistant attaches. It was a bit of Europe in the middle of the Middle East and therefore a haven for Europeanists like me.

As for the evacuation, the arrangements indirectly with the PLO worked well. A TV news crew filmed our departure, including a clip of me helping to load baggage on the bus taking us to the airport. It was broadcast in the US. My mother in Kansas saw it and it was the first news I was being evacuated. My family went out to the Great Bend television station, where they replayed the clip several times.

As for Paris, Athens was the evacuation point but evacuees there reported frustration due to lack of work. I decided I would like to be evacuated to Paris instead where I would

study French. The idea was approved because the flights to Athens and Paris left about the same time and Embassy Beirut had unused language training funds to pay for French training in Paris.

I would like to pay tribute to Bob Waring, my boss in Beirut. He was head of the Economic and Commercial Section but for most of the time I was in Beirut he was acting DCM or Chargé. In the Embassy, his wisdom prevailed in recommending Embassy drawdowns at a time when the Department was reluctant to do so for fear of offending the host government. Diplomatically, he took great risk to his own safety negotiating among the warring factions. Ultimately, Bob, our newly arrived Ambassador Francis Meloy, and their driver were killed by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) as they drove to the Presidential Palace for Ambassador Meloy to present his credentials. Bob was also a personal friend as he shared his large library and introduced me to the author P.G. Wodehouse, whose 117 books I have not only read but also mostly own.

I would also like to acknowledge the support that Colbert "Coke" Held and his family provided me as the war intensified. Coke was our Geographic Attaché traveling throughout the Middle East for decades. His knowledge is codified in his book *Patterns of the Middle Eas*t, now in its 6th edition. His daughter Joanne is still in the Foreign Service having served in several war-torn posts in the Middle East and is a close friend.

Q: How did things work out in Paris?

KEISWETTER: It was a wonderful life. For two months, I studied French for three hours a day in the morning and then I would spend the afternoons going to a French movie or to a museum where I would rent a headset. If I turned up in front of the right picture or exhibit to fit the narrative, I knew I had followed directions correctly. My language ability took a big leap forward on a trip to the beach at Deauville, where I spent hours translating between an American girl and her French boyfriend. In particular, she wanted to know whether the ring on his finger meant he was married or engaged. The answer was no, it was just a "friendship" ring.

I had a small apartment in the Marais and for once in my career people wanted to visit me. My parents came from Kansas and we traveled to Avignon and the south of France on the Midi Express train. It was the first time my parents had been outside the US.

Then Gerda visited for a long weekend. I had met Gerda in Washington where we lived in the same apartment building. She was an agent with Pan Am and could travel on passes. She arrived just after I had learned I was being assigned to the US Interests Section in Baghdad. According to the post report, the most entertaining things were outdoor movies and watching the geckos crawl on the wall. I did not find that at all amusing or attractive. If I was going to head this off, my personnel officer told me I would have to come personally to Washington to argue my case because "you're going to Baghdad otherwise." The alternative was to stay in Paris where I would have become the second of two Foreign Service Officers who would travel around France promoting

"America Days" at French department stores. In contrast, by going to Baghdad I would be one of two people in the Economic-Commercial Section and responsible for a whole country. While Gerda was visiting, I decided I would give up the luxurious life of Paris and the opportunity to perfect my French, and instead go off to the adventure of Baghdad.

US Interests Section Baghdad 1976-1978

Q: You have given into fate. And off to Baghdad. At this time the US diplomatic mission in Baghdad was called the US Interests Section. It is not the embassy. Why is that the case?

KEISWETTER: The Iraqis broke diplomatic relations with the US when the Israelis launched the Six Day War in 1967. Our protecting power was the Belgians; so officially we were the US Interests Section of the Belgian Embassy (USINT). We were located in a separate building about half a mile away from the Belgian Embassy and we outnumbered the Belgians 11 to 2.

Q: Were you in a building different from what had been the US Embassy in 1967? Who served at post with you?

KEISWETTER: Yes. We were in a different building. The Iraqis took over the former US Embassy and made it into the Iraqi Foreign Ministry. When I arrived, USINT was in a large old house in a part of Baghdad called Masbah, which means "swimming pool." With the arrival of additional staff reflecting expanding US-Iraqi relations, USINT rented another building nearby on the banks of the Tigris River that previously housed the Embassy of Romania. The Seabees spent months renovating the premises. After we moved in, our security officer posted signs throughout the building saying, "Remember, this is the former Romanian embassy."

Politically, Saddam Hussein was not the head of the country. His father-in-law Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr was both President of Iraq and Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC). Saddam Hussein, who really ran the country, was Vice President and Vice Chairman of the RCC.

When I arrived, Marshall Wiley headed USINT. Later he moved on to become DCM in Riyadh and then Ambassador in Oman. He finally resigned to protest what he thought were US policies in the Middle East too favorable to the Israelis.

David Mack, who was Political Officer and USINT Deputy Chief, and his wife Roz arrived some months after I did. Pat Killough, a superb commercial officer with a fiery temper, headed the Economic-Commercial Section. After a year, he transferred to Germany, I became head of the Economic Commercial Section, and David Robins arrived to take my slot. We also gained Administration and Communications Officers and Foreign Service Secretaries for both the Principal Officer and the Economic-Commercial Section. Ron Percival, also a bachelor and a friend from Beirut, arrived about when I did and was the Consular Officer.

The local staff was extraordinary. Jessie Jeridini, known as Madame Ambassador because she was the senior USINT employee during the five years when no American staff were in Baghdad, was Lebanese and had worked for the US Government for decades in both Beirut and Baghdad. Krikor Topakian, our chief local in the Economic-Commercial Section, was an Armenian whose parents had been driven out of Turkey in the 1920s. He had twice been nearly shot for working for the Americans in the 1960s but was saved at the last moment both times when coups overthrew the government. He and his two sons fled Baghdad to Amman in the aftermath of the 2003 US invasion. They finally resettled in Canada despite Krikor's US green card after his trying unsuccessfully for years to obtain US visas for his two sons, who at this point were in their forties.

Like Krikor, Abbas, who was the USINT driver, also had suffered a lot. A Kurd, he had been tortured, imprisoned for years, and buried in sand up to his neck for working for the US. Once when I was there, he had taken me to the Foreign Ministry and on the way back Iraqi authorities pulled our car over and took him into custody. I claimed diplomatic status and was released. Abbas was detained a week or so later with only minor maltreatment, no serious torture.

The most interesting character, however, was Khalid Talia. We had spread the word including an advertisement in the local press of a vacancy for a highly qualified Iraqi to help us in the Economic-Commercial Section; Khalid arrived on our doorstep shortly thereafter. The son of an Iraqi diplomat who had grown up in India, he was well educated, spoke and wrote perfect English, and knew an extraordinary amount about Iraqi business and economy. He was distinctly much, much better qualified than anybody else who applied. His only acknowledged deficiency was he only spoke and read Arabic but could not write it.

I decided to test him with an assignment before we hired him. The Department of Commerce had requested a market sector report for which I had been unable to obtain appointments or any data. So I assigned the task to him; three or four days later he provided an elaborate report with not only statistics but also specific opportunities for American business. We hired him, suspicious from the beginning that this sort of gold does not just turn up in a regime like this without many strings. Indeed, both Khalid's talents and the strings all turned out to be true.

Several months later at lunch after work (our work day was 7am to 2pm five days a week and 7am to 12pm one day a week), Khalid told me "You know, I am a rose, I am a plant. You understand?" I acknowledged that I did.

Khalid was especially helpful in making contacts. The major public place where diplomats could mingle with Iraqis was the Alwiya Club, a hub of colonial Iraq; it crawled with Iraqi agents purportedly there for protecting the foreigners. Otherwise, our private sector contacts centered on Abdullah Bunnia, a prominent businessman whom the regime had sanctioned to do business with US firms, and government officials responsible for tendering products of interest to US suppliers.

Khalid was also useful beyond drumming up commercial contacts. He, of course, constantly passed along tidbits about the regime. One night before USINT Chief Marshall Wiley was to leave for the United States, Khalid turned up at my bedroom window at 2 or 3am. He wanted to pass on the information that the Iraqis were ready to take major steps to improve US-Iraqi relations. I joined Marshall for breakfast before he departed for the airport. Neither Marshall nor I took the message all that seriously, but it was interesting that Khalid passed it on so dramatically either because he was truly asked to do it or because he saw some personal advantage in it.

Then there were other things, too. To travel outside of Baghdad, we had to get permission of the Foreign Ministry. We would apply almost every week to test the system but seldom was there a reply, let alone permission.

Khalid intervened to obtain Foreign Ministry permission for Ron Percival and me to go to Kurdistan on the condition that he would escort us. Our first stop was Erbil, where Ron and I decided we would go hiking in the mountains. Khalid stayed behind but directed us to a spot a few miles out of town. We chose a small mountain we thought we could conquer. When we got to the top, we found a military outpost. The startled young soldier there knew it was not a good thing to have two Americans diplomats turn up at his desolate post. Through lots of bad Arabic and broken English (I had not studied Arabic yet), we agreed we would just forget about the whole incident. In short, Ron and I would go back from where we had come and the soldier would ignore we had been there. As we were leaving, he asked, "Where is your car?" We pointed to it in the distance, and he was horrified, throwing his arms in the air saying "Boom! Boom!" It turned out that Ron and I had hiked across a minefield. He then showed us the safe way back. That episode says something about both our luck and Iraqi minefields.

When I was Chargé in the summer of 1977, Khalid alerted me I was about to be summoned to the Foreign Ministry. When I arrived, I was ushered into a special room that I suspected was bugged. It was not the usual room for diplomatic meetings and the Foreign Ministry officials were not ones I knew; they demanded payment for supposedly outstanding railroad bills from the 1940s for US Government shipments from the Port of Basra to the Embassy in Baghdad.

I explained any Embassy records would have likely been destroyed long ago or at least placed in storage; at a minimum, the State Department would require documentation, such as shipping documents and receipts, to even consider the claim. About three weeks later, I was called back to the Foreign Ministry and presented with four large boxes of printed receipts. After examining the contents, I commented that I did not see how these could be receipts from the 1940s because the receipt pads on which they were written said they were printed in 1976.

Another harassment was the relocation of our offices. Weeks after we occupied our new building, we did not have any water or electricity and the telephones did not work. Khalid came to me saying he had just received word that the Foreign Minister wanted to go to

New York urgently but did not have a visa. What could we do? After I talked to Marshall Wiley, it was agreed the Chief of Protocol would call us at a neighbor's house. In the conversation Marshall explained for lack of utilities USINT had only weekly pouch service through Kuwait. USINT would make sure the visa got into the next pouch and we could expect an answer in a month or so.

Suddenly things began to happen: we got telephone service, electricity, and water. The Foreign Minister got his visa because we used British Embassy communications channels to convey the request to Washington.

I was never sure if Khalid was an agent of the Iraqi intelligence services or a freelancer who used his skills to get employment with us while brokering his secrets at a certain price to Iraqi authorities. He seemed to have a sense of loyalty to us personally, and several times passed on information that avoided security incidents. He died not long after I left Iraq but it had nothing to do with security. He was a heavy smoker, drank a lot, and frequently stayed out all night. He died of cancer and heart problems from a raucous life style.

Q: Ed Peck came in and replaced Marshall Wiley, right?

KEISWETTER: That is right. Marshall was formal and an old school Arabist; under his leadership USINT won awards for its reporting and breakthroughs in commercial relations. Ed brought a far more flamboyant approach. I remember very well our first interview. He started out saying, "The most important thing you need to know about me is I am a man who takes risks. I am 48 years old and I am just about to have my first child."

At this time the economic/commercial ties were burgeoning. We had lots of trade missions. I gained access to the Directors General of the state enterprises that ran most of the Iraqi economy. We also developed the concept of partnering with Turkish companies as a strategy for US firms to enter the Iraqi market.

Q: The award that you just mentioned was that under Marshall Wiley or Ed Peck?

KEISWETTER: It was under Marshall.

Other comments along the way: One morning, Marshall called me in and told me that the International School needed to have an USINT officer on the school board so they could use our pouch to bring in school books and use our safe to safeguard some of their money. I was to be the candidate and should turn up for the election at the annual meeting that afternoon. I did. The nominees for the school board were announced: seven candidates for seven places. Someone raised his hand to ask, "I would like to know who Mr. Keiswetter's children are." The school board president replied jokingly, "I don't think he is telling."

A discussion followed as to whether it was appropriate for a person who had no children in the school to serve on the school board. The president explained the Americans provided services to the school that could not be done unless USINT had somebody on the board. The wife of the Danish ambassador put an end to the discussion saying, "In Denmark parents of children are prohibited from serving on school boards because they are thought to be biased and not to have an objective approach." The slate was accepted unanimously and I served.

About six months after I arrived, I had a fire in my house, an experience that says something about the public services in Baghdad. It started as an electrical fire in one of the bedrooms on a Friday afternoon (a day off work). I was awakened by smoke while sleeping on a sofa in the living room. As the telephone did not work, I ran down the street to where the landlady lived. She telephoned the fire department, and she and I stood at nearby intersections to direct the fire truck because there was not a settled street naming system. The fire department put out the fire with damage largely limited to the bedroom where it started. I moved in with Ron for the next several weeks while the repairs were done.

Gerda and I were married while I was assigned to Baghdad. I joked that Saddam Hussein drove me to marriage. In the year beforehand, we had not only met in Paris but also vacationed together in Greece and she had visited me in Baghdad. We got married in June 1977 in Kansas when I was on leave in the US. We celebrated our honeymoon at Christmas time by a visit to Cairo and a trip to the Upper Egypt; Ambassador Eilts kindly invited us to a reception at his residence honoring the visiting US delegation in town to help lay the ground for the Israeli-Egyptian working summit on Christmas Day. In Baghdad, Gerda taught French at the International School.

While we were in Baghdad, our house was broken into five times. Four times they were *authorized* break-ins. I'd come home and the lock would be broken and it was obvious someone had been rummaging around. I would play a game with the intruders: I had a large Zenith Oceanic radio the size of a small suitcase and I would enter items in the listener's log like "Radio Free Iraq." One time it was an *unauthorized* break in and the intruder stole several cases of booze, wine, and supplies. The supposed culprit was caught in a few days. I did not have to testify but I did provide a diplomatic note with a list of what was missing.

Q: Out of Baghdad you did do a fair amount of traveling? What was it like to drive to Tehran? How were the roads?

KEISWETTER: In Iraq, the roads were two-lane and paved but rough and full of potholes. In Iran, they were much better but more dangerous. The first trip that Gerda and I made was from Baghdad through Kermanshah to Tehran at Nowruz in 1978. Beyond Kermanshah, four lanes of traffic traveled at high speeds on a two-lane road with sharp drop offs. There were some moments I did not think we were going to live to tell the tale, especially approaching Tehran.

We also drove to Kuwait several times to service our Volkswagen Golf and to stock up on consumables. Once we saw on the Tigris the raft Kon Tiki whose crew was seeking to prove Mesopotamians could have settled islands in the Indian Ocean.

We also went to the marshes with friends -- a New Zealand neonatal nurse at Ibn Sina Hospital and the DCM at the Australian Embassy. We rented a flat top boat in the marshes and spent a day sitting on the top drinking champagne and eating caviar. It was decadent escapism and without doubt a puzzlement to the marsh Arab whom we visited.

Q: Boeing was trying to make quite an effort in Iraq at that time. I remember because I used to use their pouch to send tapes of football games to USINT.

KEISWETTER: Boeing was the largest American firm in country. We kept in close touch and as your question implies we socialized frequently. We had good friends at Boeing.

Through Boeing we also organized the 200th Independence Day celebrations in 1976. The event was held on British Embassy grounds. The Brits were up to their best. A squad of a dozen or so "Red Coats" dressed in 18th Century costumes marched in to read a proclamation from the Queen declaring that the 200-year American experiment had failed, and the Crown wanted its land back. Most Western expatriate social life revolved around the Brits because of their history and their connections. Gerda and I became enthusiastic members of the play reading group. In the Christmas pantomime the prompter sometimes had the most lines.

Q: Actually, you are describing the situation in Bangkok when I was there, which was pretty difficult. Our own building, we are starting all over, all these problems getting it going. Boeing is one of the first economic opportunities and they were trying to sell equipment to the Iraqis for their civilian air force.

KEISWETTER: Right. In addition to Boeing aircraft sales and training programs, the leading US exports to Iraq were agricultural, especially chickens. The US captured the chicken market from the Chinese who had sold the Iraqis chickens fed on fishmeal that strongly flavored the meat. A stream of US businessmen tested the Iraqi market, including American wine researchers, whom the Iraqis hired to see if they could make drinkable wine from dates. After a wine tasting, the answer was clearly no.

Q: It is clear that something is stirring. Your annual business opportunity report was probably a little more positive than the last one you wrote for Beirut.

KEISWETTER: Absolutely. Commercial relations were burgeoning. Also we were seeking to improve political relations. Still, Iraq was as near a totalitarian society as I have ever lived in. You could count on being overheard and you could count on security break-ins and people would shun Americans. We had American neighbors whom we invited several times to come over casually. After a while they explained to Gerda that they just could not do that because it was too much of a security risk.

Q: What was Baghdad like? Iraqi oil revenue was just beginning to flow.

KEISWETTER: Oil wealth was just beginning to transform the country. But as a Baathist socialist state, the government had a conscious policy of anti-consumerism; so the Iraqis were building roads, they were importing irrigation equipment, they were buying aircraft, and they were building their military. They were importing more foodstuffs, such as chickens, but still each USINT officer had 4,000-pound consumables allowance because of the lack of many basic supplies. Availability of local goods was impeded by a highly Stalinist type of economy. For example, the government imported irrigation equipment to rent to farmers to water their citrus groves. But it set irrigation pump rents so high and the prices of grapefruit and oranges so low that the farmers could not make any money. So they smuggled their produce to Kuwait. While you could not buy an orange or grapefruit in Baghdad, you could buy any number you wanted in the Kuwait souk.

Q: It sounds on the policy side it was a difficult process to have a viable dialogue with the Iraqi government counterparts.

KEISWETTER: We did not have a dialogue systematically except at the Foreign Ministry. Almost all the other contacts were on the commercial side, which is why my job was so interesting. Then we had all these nefarious contacts through Khalid. It was an interesting post. To give one final image: our first Economic/Commercial Foreign Service secretary was absolutely astonished she had to use a manual typewriter.

In retrospect, I went to Baghdad very reluctantly but it was the beginning of a specialty about Iraq and the Persian Gulf that suffused the remainder of my Foreign Service career and my teaching career afterwards. And I got married at age 33.

A Year on the Secretariat Staff in the Department 1978-1979

Q: After Baghdad, which sounds like it was at the end of the earth, you are assigned to the Department to the Secretariat, which has got to be the center of the earth. How did you get this assignment?

KEISWETTER: I truthfully do not know. I received a telegram and I also remember I had a phone call at home, one of those few times the telephone was working, and it was offered to me. I had the feeling that the position became suddenly available late in the assignment cycle and I was available. I was not the NEA officer but rather had a portfolio covering the Bureau of Oceans, Environment, and Science, as well as the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs and several other miscellaneous portfolios.

I enjoyed the year there.

Q: Why don't we describe what this S-S/S, or Secretariat Staff, because this was called the line and it was particularly assigned to support the Secretary whenever he moved.

KEISWETTER: It had two major functions: the processing of paper within the building, and secondly, supporting the secretary whenever he traveled. On the first, there were eight officers. We each had specific bureaus for which we were responsible for assigning and monitoring the taskings, and then making sure that the response was timely and met expected standards. Is the format right, is it in proper English, has it been coordinated with other interested bureaus, and especially does the response meet the question or requirement levied? S-S/S is separate from the Operations Center, which handles emergency situations and communications.

I traveled fairly widely. Since I did not have a geographic area, I was the person that could go to many areas. I particularly recall going to New York for the United Nations General Assembly. I remember one night awakening Secretary Vance at UN Plaza Hotel to tell him the President wanted to talk to him on the secure phone line. He put on his raincoat over his pajamas and went to take the call. I also made a couple of trips to Asia.

Our boss was Art Hughes, a NEA veteran who went on to be Ambassador to Yemen and an NEA Deputy Assistant Secretary and to head the Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai. He is now a colleague of mine at the Middle East Institute.

I remember the Secretariat for a couple of other reasons. First, this period was the beginning of serious computerization in the Department. We experimented with ways to produce letters in hundreds of copies but with different addressees, and experimented with various formats for keeping track electronically of the paper flow.

More importantly, I learned about politics within the building and with the White House. Frank Wisner was one of two deputies to Executive Secretary Peter Tarnoff, head of the Secretariat. We were preparing for a presidential visit to the Far East. S/S responsibilities for the economic preparations for the project had fallen to me, and the NSC person responsible was Nick Platt. State was chairing a group in which he was charged with preparing one of the briefing papers. The Economic and Business Bureau and the East Asia Bureau both complained that the lack of NSC contribution was delaying the preparations and asked if I could follow up with Platt. I called several times and left messages. Finally, at long last he called me back. I basically said, “Pony up. You’re holding up progress.” This caused him to call his good friend, Frank Wisner, who called me in to explain the facts of life about the White House, the Department of State, and my position in the world.

This episode came back in another way to haunt me because the position of Special Assistant to the Secretary was open and I had thrown my name into the hat for consideration. Needless to say, I did not get the job. Wisner called me in to say that my name had been considered in the process.

Jack Perry was the other deputy who directly supervised us; he was a big bear of a man, very gentle, and friendly. I liked him very much. This was also the time when I first came to know Tom Pickering, who at this point was Assistant Secretary for Oceans Environment, and Science (OES). He was a mentor to me in the Department and we have

worked together on several projects since retirement, including recently on a Brookings' conference on diplomacy and religion.

Arabic Language Training 1979-1981

Q: The assignment in S-S/S was a one-year assignment because it was always assumed that people burned-out very quickly in those jobs. So if you started in September of '78 you would have completed the assignment the summer of '79.

KEISWETTER: Out of this job I was assigned to Arabic language training. The experience in Baghdad and Beirut had whetted my interest. I could become either an Europeanist or an Arabist, and it just seemed to me the Middle East was more interesting and the career possibilities were much greater. The decision came in the form of a choice between two long-term language training assignments: Hungarian or Arabic. The Hungary desk officer, a friend from my NATO days, tried hard to recruit me. I spoke to the Hungarian linguist who explained that Hungarian has some overlap with Basque and Finnish – about the same relationship as English has to Russian! At that time there were only three Hungarian language-designated positions, two in Budapest and one in Hanoi because the Hungarians were on the International Regulatory Commission. It was an easy choice for me to decide to go to Arabic.

Q: Arabic being spoken in many more places. Arabic language training for FSI and hard language training-- it's Russian, Chinese, Japanese, and Arabic. It is a year in Washington and a year in the field. So at the end of your tour in S-S/S in '79 you would have gone to Arabic language training at FSI in Washington.

KEISWETTER: Right.

Gerda and I both studied Arabic together. We had decided before the first day of class that we wanted to be in separate classes so as to avoid the problems and rivalries of class from being played out at home. The FSI linguist Jim Snow agreed, "Sure. Classes are self -selected."

That turned out to be not quite true. There were about 30-40 new Arabic language students. On the first day, we were asked to mingle, and then choose our own classes of four. It turned out that Gerda and I and two others -- Barbara Bodine, also an FSO and later Ambassador to Yemen, and Roby Barrett, who worked for another agency -- were the only ones in the two-year program; it was natural the four of us should form our own class. This is another case of enduring friendships that continue to this day.

As for Arabic, I enjoyed it a lot and worked hard. I am not a gifted linguist, struggling for every word I learned. My wife, on the other hand, in the course of two years of studying Arabic had one and a half children and is at least as good an Arabist as I am. The major difference is that she speaks better and I read better. She is naturally gifted in languages.

Q: Arabic has regionalisms so who was on the FSI teaching staff in Washington?

KEISWETTER: The instructors spoke different dialects depending on their country of origin. The language of instruction is Modern Standard Arabic, which is basically Levantine. Our first instructor, Khalil Barhoum, was a Palestinian from Jordan. He did teach us some Palestinian dialect, which our subsequent teacher, who was a Syrian, was shocked to learn that we were using.

Our first child Sara was born in December of our first year of Arabic spent in Washington.

For the second year, we went to FSI-Tunis. Roby and his wife Cheryl and their daughter Tracy and our family with six-month old daughter Sara shared a house in Mensa Six. The Barretts lived on the second floor and we lived on the ground floor. Stephen Bosworth was the Ambassador and David Mack was DCM at the Embassy. The FSI Arabic Language School was headed by Margaret Omar Nydell, who went on to chair the Arabic Department at Georgetown University. Mary Ann Casey both studied Arabic and worked as a political officer at the Embassy. The Arabic program included several Army Major Foreign Area Officers and a couple of Marine helicopter pilots. Several of those people have now turned up at embassies where I was serving or had positions where I have worked with them since. One of them was Fred Hof, who has since made his reputation as a Syria expert. In Tunis, he and his wife had twins they called "Search" and "Destroy," young boys who were very energetic. Fred is now retired and a Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council.

Tunisians speak a North African dialect that clips most of the vowels. It is difficult for other Arabs to understand. They also co-mingle French and Arabic and expect foreigners to speak French not Arabic. In any conversation with Tunisians, I had to start in French. After the first word or two, it was all right to launch into Arabic.

One incident makes the point. One day, Gerda and I were lost while driving in the countryside to some ruins. We spotted a policeman on a motorcycle beside the road. We had diplomatic plates that identified us as Americans. Gerda asked for directions in her best Modern Standard Arabic. The policeman replied in French, "I know you are speaking English. Do you speak French?" Obviously, Modern Standard Arabic was not the vernacular!

Q: When you were evacuated out of Beirut in '76, the language school was there; so subsequent to events in Beirut it has moved to Tunisia. It had only been in Tunisia a couple of years when you attended.

KEISWETTER: So it had been there about five years. It had first been in a hotel along the seacoast and then moved to an old house and subsequently after we left the school moved to a renovated facility adjacent to the ambassador's residence in Sidi Bou Said.

Q: So Tunis was a good place to be?

KEISWETTER: Yes. It was one of few times when we had visitors from the US. Gerda's parents came to visit us in Tunisia.

Q: Teachers at the language school?

KEISWETTER: The teachers were all quite good. The core staff was Palestinian and Lebanese, who had been evacuated from Beirut. Sari Ansari and his wife Khaldiyya as well as Ziad Khayyal had taught at FSI for years. A couple of Tunisians Hashmi and Ahmad taught the Tunisian dialect and reading. Beside language skills, the faculty also imparted points of view. I remember asking Sari Ansari whether there would ever be a solution to Arab-Israeli problems. He replied, "Yes," explaining Arabic for the word "people" is *nasaa*, whose root means "to forget." Eventually generations would forget enough so that there would be peace but it would take a long time.

Q: You were mentioning the NEA Bureau had a different approach to the language study assignments. You were assigned to language and then later you were assigned to a job. At that same time in the Asian Pacific Bureau, I was assigned to a job via language.

KEISWETTER: Yes. Assignment to a post was not done until the second year of Arabic language training. When it came time for me to bid, the rules said that I had to list ten choices from the available assignments. The last one I chose was Khartoum. It may have been my tenth choice but it was number one on the assignments system's priorities and so I went to Sudan.

When we left Tunis, Gerda was pregnant with Emma, our second child; so in June she went back to Bethesda and stayed with her family, and I went directly to Khartoum with the idea I would return to the United States in September for the birth of our second child.

Q: You were in language training in Tunis from August '80 until you took up this assignment. Even though you had your head in the books, I am sure you were paying attention to wider things happening in the Middle East. This was the time in which Iraq invaded Iran. Did anybody notice that at the language school?

KEISWETTER: We talked about it. Students had to do presentations in language class at least once a day and thus current events were repeatedly discussed, but I do not have any specific recollections of what we said about the Iran-Iraq War. Since our teachers were Palestinian, we spent a lot of time on the Palestinian issues and Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations. I think we had the vocabulary to be negotiators at the end.

Assignment to Khartoum 1981-1983

Q: So you are starting your assignment in Khartoum. What did the embassy look like when you arrived there? Who was the ambassador?

KEISWETTER: Bill Kontos was the Ambassador and had been in Khartoum about a year. Jack Davison was the DCM, and he and I arrived at about the same time in the

summer of 1981. I headed the political section, which also had a junior officer and a Foreign Service secretary.

The Embassy was on the upper floors of a decrepit building in downtown Khartoum. The elevator did not work and the airshaft next to it was an open garbage pit. Truly this must have vied for the shabbiest embassy in the US Foreign Service. Several months after I arrived we moved to renovated quarters not far away.

The Embassy was a growing enterprise in those days. Jaafar Nimeiri, who had come to power by a military coup, was the President. We had a very strong AID relationship, giving the Sudanese nearly one hundred million dollars a year and a USAID mission staffed with a dozen or more Americans and a lot of local employees. The Embassy also included a sizeable US Military Training Mission and a significant intelligence presence.

Q: What was Ambassador Kontos like to work for?

KEISWETTER: He was a senior AID official before becoming ambassador and relished the chance to take on wider responsibilities. He was not charismatic, but he was thoughtful and decisive. I found him easy to work for but this was not true of some of the others. His knowledge of AID was probably the reason he was assigned there but it also caused him to fire the AID chief in a short period of time. The climatic event was the annual USAID program submission brought to him for final approval at a cocktail party at my house. He had only a few minutes to review the document before the pouch closed. It was the final straw. He also fired the head of the military assistance mission.

Q: Sudan was a hardship post. What were the living conditions like?

I went to Sudan reluctantly, and for our family it was without doubt the most difficult place we ever lived, even more difficult than Baghdad or Yemen. Dust was constant and dust blizzards called “haboobs” occurred at the height of the heat in May and June when the daily low temperature was frequently 90 degrees and high temperature about 110 degrees. We had two maids to care for a three-bedroom house not only because of the climate but also because we had to bake our own bread, make our dairy products from dried milk, and boil all our drinking water. Our large consumables allowance paid for an initial shipment from the US and helped subsidize periodic shipments from King’s Barn, a British supplier who flew fresh fruits and vegetables as well as essentials. One Christmas, we ordered boxes of grapes that we divided up to give as presents to friends.

Electricity was intermittent and most of the time our neighborhood resounded with the roar of generators. As the economic situation worsened, fuel was rationed, even for diplomatic personnel. At first we were allowed two gallons a week for personal cars, then one gallon and finally none, and the only way we could get around was via Embassy motor pool. Highest priority was to retain sufficient fuel to keep our individual generators running not only because of the heat but also because electricity was necessary to pump the water delivered by trucks to storage tanks on our roofs.

Communications were a problem. International phone lines seldom worked and pouch mail service was slow and haphazard. For example, Gerda returned from Tunis to the US in June for the birth of our second child in September. I went directly from Tunis to Khartoum. She and our two-year-old Sara stayed with her parents in Bethesda and went to visit my parents in Kansas. She arrived in Great Bend not long after my parents had been flooded out of their home. While there, she was rushed to the hospital for what was diagnosed as premature labor but turned out to be a kidney infection threatening our unborn child. Gerda's mother had flown to Kansas to escort Gerda and Sara back to Washington.

I knew only a little about my parent's flooding and nothing about Gerda's hospitalization until a letter through the pouch arrived from Gerda three or four weeks later saying she was safely back with her parents in Bethesda and my parents were still recovering from the flood. Her earlier letters and those from my mother awaited me in October when I returned after spending the month of September on home leave when our daughter Emma was born. I had tried several times unsuccessfully to call.

Local communications in Khartoum were not much better. The Embassy community communicated through a hand-held radio system because the local phone system seldom worked. The two phone calls I remember we received at home were a threat on Gerda's life and a call for our gate guard, who had never talked on a phone before. When we thought our daughter accidently swallowed some bleach, the Embassy nurse relayed directions via radio messages repeated by another Embassy home because of weak reception. Gerda coped bravely not only with the daily hardships but also saw unexpected situations, such as the time a monkey ran down bounding the stairs from the bedrooms where the children were napping to escape out the front door.

We escaped twice to the cool weather and pleasant ambience of Kenya. We took our young children on safari and to the beach.

Q: On your arrival, what was your impression of US interests in Sudan? Did you go back to Washington to get briefings?

I had briefings when I returned to Washington in September. My first impressions of US interests were that Sudan was rightly touted as having great potential. It had been in the past a granary for the Middle East and Africa and it could be again. This was the economic rationale for our large AID program.

Geographically, it is the largest country in Africa and was a mainstay of US policy. Sudan was key in opposing Qadhafi and in combating the Communist influence symbolized by Mengistu in Ethiopia. Today in Africa we have anchor countries: Kenya, South Africa, and Nigeria. It would be fair to call Sudan an anchor country at that time. It was a focus of US interests in Africa and had added political importance because of its ties to the Middle East.

Despite the hardships, I quickly became fascinated with the place professionally. Politically, the Arab north of Sudan was divided between the Ansar and the Khatmiyya, both Sunni Sufi sects. The non-Arab south had a strong independence movement that had erupted into a 17-year civil war brought to an end by the 1972 Addis Abba Agreement. The south was even more diverse than the north with more than 100 tribes and languages; the Dinka and Nuer – both having bovine-based cultures - dominated Southern politics. The British had arbitrarily merged the North and South as a matter of administrative convenience.

It is the Ansar, led by their Mahdi, who killed the British Governor General Charles Gordon in the siege of Khartoum in 1885. Their leader when I was there was Sadiq al-Mahdi, great grandson of the Mahdi, and leader of the Umma party founded by his father. He was Nimeiri's archrival, and had been in self-imposed exile in London for a few years when I arrived. The Khatmiyya, dominated by the al-Mirghani family, generally supported the Nimeiri regime, opposed Sadiq al Mahdi's Umma Party and had close ties to the Egyptians.

This situation got me in trouble towards the end of my tour. In the summer of 1982, Gerda and I and our two children returned to Khartoum from leave in the US on the same flight from London as Sadiq al-Mahdi, who had decided to end his self-imposed exile. I did not even know he was on the plane. We got off the back ramp and he was in first class and got off the front. This was part of the indictment against me later on.

Ambassador Kontos decided the Embassy should get to know Sadiq al-Mahdi now that he had returned. I established contact with Omar Nur al-Dayem, his chief aide. We spent hours drinking tea on the terrace of the Grand Hotel on the banks of the Blue Nile. Conversations were general and historical, touching on Sadiq's religious and political philosophy and featuring tidbits about the Ansar's siege of Gordon a century earlier. Perhaps my greatest sin was to arrange for Sadiq al-Mahdi to call on Ambassador Kontos at his residence. I was the one who greeted him at the gate and escorted him in. He spoke perfect English, so there was no need to interpret. Like my own conversations with Omar Nur al-Dayem, the content of the discussion with Sadiq was not particularly significant. It truly was sipping tea and good conversation.

While the Nimeiri regime did not feel comfortable taking on Ambassador Kontos himself, Vice President and head of State Security Omar al-Tayib threatened to PNG me in discussions with our Station Chief. Both he and Ambassador Kontos made clear that such action would be at the cost of liaison and assistance programs. So al-Tayib backed down in view of the fact that I would be transferred in any event within six months.

A few months later in the spring, I was supposed to be assigned to the Political Section in Cairo as my next assignment. It did not quite work out that way because the Egyptians asked the Sudanese "What about this guy, Keiswetter?" The answer was apparently not positive. The effect of all this was that the Department decided it to be more prudent for me not to go to Cairo. Instead, I became DCM in Yemen.

Q: That's not bad. You went from political counselor to DCM. How clever of you.

KEISWETTER: There were lots of other things in Khartoum. In my first year, I had several meetings with Hassan al-Turabi, the Muslim Brother leader who was Attorney General. Like Sadiq al-Mahdi, he too was a British and French trained intellectual and has written extensively in English, French, and Arabic. He favored strict implementation of Islamic law and frequently made exceedingly frank statements to US visitors asking, "You will protect me, won't you?"

Q: What kind of frank things?

KEISWETTER: He made personal comments about southern and regime leaders; he predicted that war with the South would break out again soon. He and Nimeiri were at best friendly enemies. A year after I arrived, Nimeiri relieved him of his post, and later he was arrested.

Q: You mentioned your fascination with the South. Did you visit there?

Once a quarter the DATT airplane from Cairo would fly down and for a week it would be ours to visit the country. We frequently went to the South because Ambassador Kontos too was fascinated with it. As we were circling to land at Malakal, the major city in the northern part of the South, I looked down to see thousands of tribesmen with spears and headdresses at the airport to greet us. I remarked to Ambassador Kontos, "I hope they are friendly." Communications within Sudan, particularly between the North and the South, were nearly non-existent, and even though we had sent several messages to the governor of Malakal, but we had never received a reply. We were never really sure of what was going to happen on these trips.

In a trip to Juba, the capital of the South, we learned about the spread of "green monkey disease." A form of HIV, it was characterized by breakdown of the body's immune system and bleeding from every orifice; experts came in to try to something do about this. We also had academics, who came in to advise us about the South generally. The best known was Bob Collins, who wrote a book called Shadows in the Grass about his experiences in southern Sudan.

On a trip to Darfur, we raced around the countryside in SUVs over the sand dunes to the border with Chad and trails to Libya. Governor Ahmad Diraige, a Fur educated in Germany, hosted a dinner in our honor that was memorable because there were no plates or utensils, just an oilcloth covering on the table. It was more than just polite for guests to wash their hands at a sink where a servant attended both before and after the meal. At the table we took pieces of bread or used two fingers to dig into whatever dish was before us placing the food on the oilcloth table. I avoided a local specialty of chopped raw camel's liver with crushed peanuts on the top.

Because of the worsening drought, Governor Diraige appealed for US assistance to revitalize water wells left unattended since the British had drilled them decades earlier.

He stressed Dafur's borders with Chad to the west and Libya to north gave it a strategic location for the US to support Chadian President Habré regime's efforts to oppose Qaddafi.

Historically, the most significant thing that happened while I was in Sudan was a speech Nimeiri gave on March 3rd, 1983, to parliament in honor of Unity Day marking the anniversary of the 1972 Addis Abba peace accord. He in essence abrogated the agreement by saying the laws of the north would also apply to the south – a way of saying that Sharia law would be applied to the south as well. Ambassador Kontos added a line to my cable on the event I attended; he quoted Shakespeare: "Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad." Nimeiri's remarks contributed to his downfall in 1985 and reignited the fighting between the North and South that continues today.

Q: Khartoum as you were saying is a difficult post to live in; so did you ever get any visitors?

KEISWETTER: Senator Chuck Percy, a Republican presidential hopeful from Illinois and Chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, visited with his wife. I was acting DCM at the time. We had just moved from the garbage heap that was the Embassy to a refurbished building in another part of town that stood alone largely. While the Percys were visiting the premises, rioters surrounded the building protesting an increase in bread prices. Mrs. Percy, whom I was charged to entertain, went from window to window on the upper floors proclaiming, "I want to get out of this place. I don't mean this Embassy, I mean this country." Within an hour or so the security forces dispersed the protesters.

Also, General Vernon Walters visited as the Secretary of State's Special Envoy. He came to discuss military assistance to counter the threat of Libya and Ethiopia. He had several other topics as well to discuss with Nimeiri, including Sudan's increasing dire financial straits. Air Sudan had just grounded its international flights because its planes were being legally detained abroad for non-payment of loans and fuel charges. Another issue, I would surmise in retrospect, must have been Sudanese assistance for "Operation Moses" to evacuate Jews from Ethiopia to Israel.

Q: What would you say were the main subjects of the political reporting?

KEISWETTER: Relations with the South, relations between Nimeiri and the military, and Sudan's relations with its neighbors. In retrospect, the most significant piece I wrote was an overview of stability and the threat to Nimeiri from the army. Even though he was an army general, there was discontent in the military. I spent considerable time with our Defense Attaché puzzling whether conversations he had had were attempts to sound us out about a possible coup.

Regarding neighbors, Ethiopia and Sudan are traditional enemies. At that time, Nimeiri had allied Sudan with the West in part to counter Mengistu, who had aligned Ethiopia with the Soviet Union, Libya, and Cuba.

With the Egyptians, Sudanese relations were good, as evidenced by their strong intelligence relationship. The relationship with Chad was troubled by border problems even though they shared a common interest in opposing Qadhafi.

With Kenya, Uganda, and the Congo, the borders were uncontrolled. These were areas where tribes raided into neighboring territories, particularly the bovine tribes because their cattle would stray into somebody else's watering hole across the border sparking violence. This was not only a border problem with other countries but also within Sudan.

I came away fascinated, having had experiences I would not have had in other circumstances and with a certain love for the Sudanese people, some of whom I maintained contact with for years.

Q: Was there an Ethiopian refugee problem in Sudan?

KEISWETTER: Yes, Eritrean refugees fled to Sudan because of the fighting between the Eritreans and the Ethiopians. Eritrea was fighting for its independence and so there was a large refugee village in the northwest part of Khartoum that spread out in the desert. Both our maids/nannies were Eritrean girls who had walked out of Eritrea because of the fighting. They claimed to be 21 but more likely were about 16. One of them, Letensa, stayed with us for seven years as we moved from Khartoum to Sanaa and Riyadh. We still stay in touch.

I would conclude tales of Sudan by just explaining that on the night we were to leave - all planes from Sudan going to Europe left in the middle of the night - our Sudanese neighbors whom we barely knew came over to say goodbye and brought us a farewell present --a frozen turkey. We gave it to the Embassy driver who took us to the airport.

Deputy Chief of Mission in Sanaa, 1983-1986

Q: Your next assignment was Sanaa instead of Cairo and so that assignment would be from August of '83 to when?

KEISWETTER: Three years.

Yemen is one of the most exotic places in the world. The country itself has whole mountainsides of terraced land like that of China. However, they grow qat, not tea, on these terraces. The scenery in some parts rivals the Grand Canyon in its spectacular sweep, especially at the place we called "the end of the earth," where a couple of vast canyons converged and then fell away to the coast.

The Old City of Sanaa is a world heritage site because of its architecture of three- or four-story slim brick buildings in a style unique to Yemen. North of Sanaa are smaller towns with the same style of architecture but made out of mud bricks. I referred to these towns that loom up on the desert horizon as "mud town Manhattan."

The Embassy and the Ambassador's residence were both located on a compound in two of these magnificent old Sanaa houses. They had been refurbished just before we arrived. The restoration was nominated for the Aga Khan Award given every four years to the best examples of Islamic architecture. For security reasons, the Department decided the Embassy and residence should be moved to a new site and I spent considerable time overseeing the preparations.

The DCM's residence occupied the back half of a city block about a half mile from the Embassy and residence. Previous DCM David Newton had renovated the one-story stone structure in Yemeni style, including beautiful stained-glass Yemeni windows.

Yemen was a country fraught with management challenges. As DCM, I spent as much time on management and coordination as on political, military, and economic issues.

Q: How big was the embassy? How many sections?

KEISWETTER: The Embassy itself had about a dozen core American staff. They included Nevin Woodford, my secretary; George Malik and Hollis Helms in the Political Section; Jim Serrano in the Economic Commercial Section; Lisa Piascik in Consular. and Lee Loman and then Georgia Debell in Administration. In addition, there were our Defense Attaché Bill Stoner and assistant Ray Hair, a large AID contingent, a significant military assistance mission headed Col Charley Goman, an US Information Service and English-language training school headed by Jack McCreary and a Peace Corps contingent under Joe Ghougassian and our regional doctor Paul Grundy .

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There were two Yemens at that time. North Yemen, formally the Republic of Yemen, with its capital in Sanaa, and South Yemen, formally the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, with its capital in Aden. The North Yemenis successfully played the West against the Soviets and Chinese with the result of large aid missions by many countries. Aden was a former British colony; and when the British moved out, the leftists took over and allied themselves with the Soviets. Both North and South Yemen are highly tribal. President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who came to power in 1978 in the North, described his job as "dancing on the head of snakes." I think that is an apt description.

Internally in the North, the Bakil and Hashid tribal confederations dominated the Zaidi mountainous regions constituting most of the country. The Tihama, which is the coastal strip along the Red Sea, has a large Somali influence in particular and a seafaring and agricultural economy. The South with the superb natural port of Aden has historically had an even stronger seafaring society and economy.

The Zaidi Imams ruled what was North Yemen from Sanaa for centuries, part of the time under the thumb of the Turks. Sanaa was a very isolated city until the 1930s when the first Western film ever shot there captured Western attention. It shows a city not much different in appearance from today and seemingly not much changed for centuries.

Diversity and isolation mark the country. Yemeni dialects differ widely because of the isolation of the various tribes. I would speak standard Arabic to my driver Abdul Wali and he would translate into dialect. Another example: when our chief guard at our residence Hajj Muhammad would go home, he would take a bus for four hours and then walk another four hours to the mountaintop where he lived. This was not uncommon.

Architecture and tribes all came together with the issue of acquiring land for a new Embassy. This was brought home when I and our Administrative Officer Lee Lohman and later Georgia Debell negotiated for a 13-acre site toward the northern edge of the city near the Sheraton Hotel. I learned a lot about Yemeni land measurements called "feddan," the distance between two outstretched hands; naturally, the measurement varies greatly depending on who does the measuring. In the end the Yemeni government intervened to impose an agreement with the dozen owners of various parcels of land constituting the site. The construction did not begin until after I left.

Q: The DCM position in any embassy, as you have already said, is a significant management position. How did you prepare for this tour? Did you go through the FSI course?

KEISWETTER: I had no training whatsoever. Ambassador Zweifel wanted me to arrive early in the summer to be Chargé; so we had a short home leave after Sudan and then we took more at Christmas. David Zweifel was ambassador for the first year but in the second year Bill Rugh and his wife Andréa, a noted anthropologist, arrived. We struck a friendship that continues because we are all scholars now at the Middle East Institute. A USIA officer, Bill has written widely on the Arab media, and Andrea has written a book on virtually every post where she and Bill have served.

As for management, the Embassy was inspected towards the end of my tour, and as a result we were selected as one of the ten best-managed embassies in the world. I ended up also getting a superior honor award and being nominated for the James Clement Dunn Award as best FSO-1 of the year.

Another part of the management challenges included numerous difficult security problems - kidnappings, hijackings of vehicles by tribes, periodic threats against the Embassy, and the attempted assassination of one of our staff.

The most galvanizing incident was the assassination attempt, which happened while I was Chargé in the summer of 1985. I got a phone call about noon one Friday, our day off, that Art, one of our communicators, had been shot. He had dropped his wife and daughter at church services in Hadda, a foreigner housing compound a short distance east of Sanaa. When he returned home afterward, a gunman fired on him as he was pulling into his driveway. He managed to struggle into his house and radio for help. This was a major issue immediately. Sanaa is a relatively small town. The government closed down the city for about 24 hours, and Yemeni security authorities replaced our diplomatic license plates with Yemeni ones that did not identify us as American diplomats.

At home, Gerda was planning to meet up with Embassy friends at a vantage point outside of Sanaa for a picnic in the mountains. After the incident, she drove to the rendezvous point to alert the others because they were beyond radio contact. They all returned to our compound, and our families lived together for several days. We had a platoon of Yemeni soldiers to guard us. The bored young soldiers largely amused themselves with our children's toys.

Art was taken to the hospital. Our Regional Medical Officer, stationed in Sanaa because Yemen had the greatest health risks in the region, was Dr. Paul Grundy. Paul in essence saved Art's life through his medical expertise and mustering of local medical resources until Art could be evacuated. Yemeni authorities later told us that Libyans and South Yemenis had carried out the operation. Rumor was that the perpetrator had died while he was in the toilet during interrogation.

Another problem was diplomatic pouches. Americans being Americans in a desolate place would look through a catalog and think "Ah, ha! Here is a cotton ball dispenser. I'll have one in green, blue, and yellow." The Yemenis could not understand why we would have bags and bags of diplomatic pouches and would hold up our diplomatic mail because of their suspicions. I spent so much time with the Prime Minister's office on the issue that I wore out my welcome. It, however, was an extremely important matter for morale.

The issue peaked at Christmas. We knew our packages were at the airport; so two US Air Force F-5 flight instructors took the matter into their hands. They discovered that the F-5 flight publications had expired, and they in effect grounded the planes by declaring it was too dangerous to fly without up-to-date flight "pubs" and stressed the new ones were in the pouches at the airport. Within a day or two, the Yemenis released our pouches. A big truck piled high with pouches drove into the Embassy compound a few days before Christmas with a local employee named Abdul Ghani dressed as Santa Claus on top waving to the cheering staff.

We tried evoking reciprocity by holding up the Embassy Yemeni pouches in Washington. Unfortunately, they had only one or two per year. I understand the pouch problem still persists.

Q: You were Chargé from June 20 to October 18, 1984 when Ambassador Rugh finally arrived to present his credentials. That's four or five months of Chargé time. Anything happen?

KEISWETTER: The most important development was Hunt Oil's discovery of exportable quantities of petroleum. Ray Hunt, the president of the company and a personal friend of then-Vice President George H.W. Bush, and his associate Tom Mueller, visited a couple of times. I toured Ma'rib where the oil was discovered and also the site where the Queen of Sheba supposedly had her palace.

In addition, the Foreign Ministry convoked Diplomatic Corps to Ma'rib for a ceremony marking the beginning of construction of a new dam financed by the Emirates. President Saleh hosted UAE President Sheikh Zayed bin Nahyan, and the Yemeni cabinet and military general staff attended. A general in the front row who had a broken chair lifted it above his head to get another one just as Saleh and Zayed arrived and band played the Yemeni and Emirati national anthems. So the front page pictured the next day the President, Sheikh Zayed, a few others including me and an unidentified Yemeni general holding a chair over his head. This is quirky Yemen.

This was probably our favorite post. We loved Yemen.

Q: But as you say, there was the conflict between the two Yemens. At that time it wasn't an insurgency in the South. The South was its own country.

KEISWETTER: Yes, there had been war between Yemens in 1970s, but by 1983 fighting was more or less quiescence. The two Yemens remained a flash point in the Cold War. The US and Saudi Arabia sponsored activities aimed at weakening South Yemen and embarrassing the Soviets there. In this regard, CIA Director William Casey visited three times, once when I was Chargé.

We sat in the lovely old Yemeni building that constituted the Ambassador's residence where he was staying. His personal assistant was John Brennan, who went on to be CIA Director during the Obama Administration. John's job included taking the points that would emerge from our conversations and put them in 'Casey-ese' for use in his appointments.

Most of these activities were undertaken in collaboration with the Saudis. When Casey came to Yemen, he would fly to Jeddah and then take a small Saudi VIP plane to Sanaa. When I got to the airport to greet him, I was surprised to see the Saudi Ambassador there as well. Apparently anytime a VIP plane departs from Jeddah to Yemen, the Saudi Embassy was automatically notified to meet and greet. The plane landed, the stairs came up and down walked Casey and John Brennan. The Saudi Ambassador turned to me, "I guess it's for you."

During this period of time, I also became acting station chief. I must be one of few FSOs to have this distinction. This does not mean I got to see any more of the secret traffic than I ever did, but I did call on the head of the Yemeni intelligence service Ghaleb al-Qamish to deliver a bag of money one time.

Q: The outside world is getting more and more involved with the Iraq-Iran War and the United States in March of '84 decides to launch Operation Staunch which was an attempt to cut down arms sales to the two combatants. Did any of the demarches or products of that wash up on your shores?

KEISWETTER: The Yemenis were not very involved in this. We spent much more time talking to the Yemenis about the Middle East Peace Process than we did about the Gulf

War. The relations between Yemen and Iraq were good. Many Yemenis studied at Iraqi universities. The Iraq-Iran war was not one of the centerpieces of discussion but we did talk about it in general terms.

Q: Could you describe the international community and its activities in this time interval?

KEISWETTER: Yes. The most important diplomatic missions in town were the Saudis, the Russians, and ourselves. The Yemenis, while they were willing to work with us against the South Yemenis and against the Russians, basically played the Russians and Chinese against the US to get what they could, while trying to keep the Saudis at bay. It was the type of balancing game the Yemenis have played for centuries.

The Saudis have historically played a major role in Yemeni affairs. In the early '60s, the Yemenis fought a civil war that led to the overthrow of the Imam. The Saudis sponsored the Monarchists and the Egyptians sponsored the Republicans. The Republicans won but the Saudis protected their interests in Yemen, as they have done for centuries, through bribing and manipulating the tribes. The Saudis joked that you cannot buy a Yemeni but you can rent him for a while.

There was a large international aid presence. The European programs totaled larger than our own. The situation was different then because a principal problem was a shortage of labor in Yemen, not surplus as today. About three million Yemenis – about half of the Yemeni male work force - were in Saudi Arabia and the other GCC states. One of our AID projects aimed at training women to do jobs left unfilled by the flight of Yemeni men to the Gulf.

The Russians had a large Embassy and large military assistance mission. They sold tanks and other military equipment. The Chinese also had a significant presence and were well known for building the "Chinese Road" linking Sanaa across the mountains to the north.

Q: There had been an earthquake in Yemen before you arrived. Were there any economic consequences from that?

KEISWETTER: It was in the central part of Yemen near Ibb. I arrived about a year after it occurred. I visited the demolished villages with the supposed mission of trying to reclaim the generators that we had 'loaned' the Yemenis immediately after the earthquake. Of course, there was no realistic chance of ever getting them back, but it did provide an excuse to visit.

Q: Ambassador Rugh was actually there for most of the time you were there. What was it like working for him?

KEISWETTER: Bill Rugh was the best boss I have ever had and we worked together very collegially. The division of labor was a classic one. He worried about policy and I worried about the American establishment.

Q: In this post like many others, did you get any high-level visitors?

KEISWETTER: Vice President Bush visited in April 1986. The visit served as an occasion to announce Hunt Oil's discoveries and to show American support for Yemen, both vis-a-vis the South and vis-a-vis the Soviets. He presented to our Administrative Officer Georgia Debell the Leamon R. Hunt Award as Administrative Officer of the Year. President Saleh met Vice President Bush at the airport. When the Yemeni band played the two national anthems, a Bush staffer asked me, "Which one was ours?" The Star Spangled Banner was unrecognizable.

The advance team insisted that the Vice President must have a Schwinn exercise bike in his guest quarters provided by the Yemeni Government. We scoured the town but could not find one. Finally, the Sheraton loaned us an exercise bike of another brand. It fell to me to escort the Vice President to his quarters. As we walked into his large reception area, he spotted the exercise bike and remarked, "I don't understand this. Everywhere I go there is an exercise bike. What's the meaning of this?" It was a classic example of an overly vigilant staff.

Q: A visit of the Vice President probably absorbed your staff for weeks on end.

KEISWETTER: Oh, it did. This was my first exposure to digital communication because the White House advance staff had a fax machine. This was new technology. Yemen we described as being dragged kicking and screaming into the 13th century, but in the middle of Yemen there was a fax machine, possibly the first in the country.

Q: Allen, last week we were finishing up with your tour at the embassy in Sanaa, Yemen. You were the DCM. You said you had another story or two about that time.

KEISWETTER: I think anybody who served there for any length of time in Yemen comes away changed because it is such a peculiar place. The men wear skirts and it is the one place in the Arab world where you really do have to speak Arabic, even if it is just to your driver so that he can translate into the local dialect.

Another story concerns Ernie, one of our Marine Guards. In an incident just before I arrived, an elderly Yemeni man accused the Marine Guards of molesting him when they went out for their morning run. After a while, Ambassador Zweifel agreed that the Marine Guards would go to the Foreign Ministry so the elderly gentleman could identify the Marine that he accused. The Marine he chose was Ernie. He was our only black Marine and he was the only one with an ironclad alibi; he was on duty at the time of the alleged incident.

Ernie is probably the only Marine who had previously been a ballet dancer. He was a member of the Joffrey Ballet but a fall injuring his knee ended his dancing career. But it was not so serious as to prevent him from joining the Marine Corps, or from performing breakdancing as entertainment at Embassy functions.

The story of Ernie goes on. While he was there, he fell in love with the daughter of a Yemeni-American family who had returned to Yemen. One night I was awakened to learn that several Marines were being held at the police station. What had happened was that Ernie had apparently deflowered his young lady and so her brothers had set up an occasion in which they invited Ernie and three other Marines to a party. It was a set-up and quickly became a brawl. The police came and took the Marines to the police station.

Needless to say, Ernie was on his way out of Sanaa as soon as we could arrange it. His new assignment was to the US Consulate in Jeddah. He customarily wore a heavy gold cross around his neck. About a year later, when I was acting DCM in Riyadh, my next assignment, I got a call again about Ernie because the mutawa, or religious police, had assaulted Ernie at a shopping center in Jeddah because of his gold cross. I guess the best way to put it is that one Marine is better than two *mutawa*. Once more he left the country in a hurry.

Q: What were US interests when you arrived and when you left?

KEISWETTER: Fundamental interests were much the same. They related first to the Cold War. We wanted to make sure that the North Yemenis did not end up on the wrong side, and North Yemen was also a staging ground for covert operations against the South Yemenis. In this regard, cooperation was closer at the end of my tour. Casey once remarked he spent more time in Yemen than any other place except Morocco.

US interests also related to the Saudis. We could provide help that the Saudis could not in the sense that we were much more acceptable to the Yemenis. The checkered pattern of Saudi-Yemeni relations included the fact the Saudis had sponsored the losing side in the Yemeni civil war. As in many cases in the Gulf, an outside power is more acceptable than the local regional hegemon. Still, we cooperated with the Saudis step by step. This was largely done in Washington through the Saudi Embassy where Bandar bin Sultan had become Ambassador and through the American Embassy in Riyadh.

Other interests were economic and geographic. An American company had found oil. It was of little importance to the US economy per se, but it bolstered Yemeni development prospects and figured in regional diplomatic machinations. Yemen was also important, and still is important, because of its geographical location. The major sea-lanes linking Europe to the Persian Gulf and Asia pass through the Bab al-Mandeb between Yemen and Djibouti.

Terrorism was not an issue in the sense that it is now because there was nothing like a terrorist organization with global reach. The threat was local tribal actions usually aimed at other tribes but in which foreigners, especially Westerners, got caught as targets of opportunity.

One lesson I drew from Yemen deals with the efficacy of development. I spent a lot of time as DCM on development issues. We had sizeable programs of $30-40 million per

year. We built water systems and dug wells, and we tried to do something about infant diarrhea and malnourishment. We sought to train women because there was a labor shortage. But the need was so great I am not sure what impact has been enduring. It is commonly observed that even the Saudis do not have enough money to fix Yemen.

More observable is the impact of the people we brought to the United States to train. Many have filled influential positions. The "Famous Forty" were students who studied in the US and elsewhere in the 1960s. Prime examples are Abdul Aziz Abdul Ghani, who studied at Colorado College and served as Prime Minister and later Vice President while I was there. Similarly, Abdul Karim al-Iryani, who got his PhD in biogenetics at Yale, served as Foreign Minister and later Prime Minister while I was DCM.
Supporting all of that was our English language program, which I think has now been grossly scaled back, if not abolished all together, because of the terrorist threat. I also understand that the Yemeni Air Force still flies the F-5 airplanes that we sold to them a long time ago.
I cannot comment on the enduring effect of intelligence cooperation, but I would note that the same man Ghaleb al-Qamish remained in place as intelligence chief until 2012. I would surmise the cooperation in those days against South Yemen helped build the foundation for our close collaboration since on terrorism.

Political Counselor in Riyadh 1986-1989

Q: As you are coming to the end of your tour in Yemen, how did you go about gaining the next assignment?

KEISWETTER: I was invited by my friend Ned Walker, who was DCM in Riyadh; we had entered the Foreign Service together. The Embassy was still in Jeddah at that point and he invited me to come up because he wanted me to be Political Counselor. Somewhat to his surprise, I accepted. My wife and I and our two children then revisited Saudi Arabia so they could get an idea of the place.

I had always been intrigued with the Saudis. Many people who go to Saudi Arabia come away not liking the Saudis. In all the prohibitions and strictures, they see arrogance. I became fascinated with the customs and problems of the impact of Westernization on the most Islamic of all countries. I admit that despite my service in five other Islamic countries, I did not really know Islam until after my three years in Saudi Arabia, where I had the chance to talk to people who made the Hajj and find out more how the *ulema* works.

I must say it was much more difficult for my wife, Gerda, than it was for me. She went to Saudi Arabia thinking, "I've been in Iraq, I've been in Tunis, I've been in Sudan, I've been in Yemen. I can speak Arabic. I can do this, no problem." If she were here, she probably would say the first year in Saudi Arabia was the most difficult part of our Foreign Service career. We initially had the house that the Ambassador used when he came to Riyadh while the Embassy was still in Jeddah. It was a nice place but it had its

peculiarities. There were alarms in every room that went off at the most inconvenient times and other exotic features aimed at the Ambassador's protection.

We moved after a few months to the Saudi-British Bank Compound where the children could run and play, and there was a possibility of greater social interaction. The residents of the compound were Americans and Brits, largely. Gerda also was offered a job teaching at the Saudi American School; so, after the first year things were much better for the family.

I would like to tell the most important story of my time in Saudi Arabia. Walt Cutler was the Ambassador when I first arrived. After my first year, he left and Hume Horan was named to replace him. Ambassador Horan had the reputation for being the best Arabist in the US Foreign Service. Saudis would say if they just heard him speak and did not see him - he looked like an Irishman - they would think he was a native speaker. He had served as DCM in the 1970s when the Embassy was in Jeddah.

The formalities for Ambassador Horan started out peculiarly. Usually the Saudis give consent to a request for agrément for an American ambassador quickly. In Horan's case, it dragged on for weeks before the Saudis finally said yes. Then, when he was sworn in at the Department of State in Washington, the Saudi Ambassador Bandar bin Sultan in Washington did not come back from his vacation home in Aspen to show up for the ceremony. Unusual.

Ambassador Horan was a wonderful man to work for. In his initial staff meeting, he told us he regarded himself as a captain whose job it was to get his ship with its crew safely across the sea. He also used the metaphor of a conductor directing an orchestra. For me, his arrival meant that the Ambassadorial conversations where I took notes shifted from being always in English to being almost entirely in Arabic. I would know he understood every word and sometimes I did not. All that said, he rarely corrected my draft reports of his conversations.

Q: Were you there when he presented his credentials?

KEISWETTER: I was at the Embassy.

Q: Did you go along?

KEISWETTER: No, I was not there when he presented his credentials to King Fahd. Ambassador Horan came to Saudi Arabia with a mission; he wanted to change in some ways Saudi society. His first effort was at his credentials ceremony. He was allowed two people besides himself and he decided to take DCM Ned Walker and Economic Counselor Anne Patterson. He apologized for not taking me but said he wanted to make a statement about the role of women. In the actual event, Royal Protocol excluded Anne because the ceremony was to be televised. The incident irritated Royal Protocol and did not curry favor with the King.

Q: Ambassador Horan presents his credentials in September of 1987

KEISWETTER: Yes, he was at post for about eight months from August until the following April.

The episode that led to Ambassador Horan's departure started with the Embassy's receiving a message asking what we knew about radio signals being beamed from the middle of the Saudi desert to the middle of China. This request coincided with recent Embassy sightings of Chinese personnel in the Riyadh souks, an unusual event because the Saudis had no diplomatic relations with China. Officially, the Chinese were an anathema, communists held in even lower regard than the Soviets. In addition, in an extraordinary stroke of luck, Embassy personnel camping in the desert had observed unusual activity near their camp site, and the Defense Attaché's office had followed up on this lead.

The situation became clearer after Washington let us know about conversations with Bandar: the Saudis were buying CSS-2 missiles from China. Significantly, these missiles had a range of about 1,500 miles - more than long enough to reach Israel - and they were dual capable, meaning they were designed to carry either a conventional or a nuclear warhead.

In March, Ambassador Horan received urgent instructions to see King Fahd to demand that work on the missiles be suspended. As he was unable to quickly to see the King, he presented an outline of the instructions to the King's secretary Mohammad Suleiman. There was no comment or reply.

Several days later Ambassador Phillip Habib, who was the US Special Envoy for the Middle East Peace Process, visited Riyadh to brief Fahd on his latest round of conversations. It was common not to have a firm appointment time until after a dignitary arrived; in this case, Ambassador Habib cooled his heels for more than a day with no word. After I explained that Ambassador Habib would have to leave soon, Royal Protocol confirmed his appointment with the King for the following morning.

Ambassador Habib, Ambassador Horan, Bill Kirby who was an assistant to Habib, and I went to see the King at al-Yamama Palace. The translator was my prime contact at Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mamoun Qabbani, the head of the Western Department who also encumbered a position at the Royal Diwan. The other Saudis present were not the usual ones who showed up at our conversations with King. After an hour discussing the Peace Process, the King appeared restless and we deemed it time to depart.

In closing. Ambassador Habib said that there was one more matter that he would like to raise – the CSS-2 missiles.

The King replied along the lines, "You think the work should be suspended. I have an idea. Why don't we send your Ambassador to inspect? He can do it." After a few whispers to the effect the King's proposal was a bit unusual but could be construed as a

positive response, Ambassador Habib responded that we would consider the idea and get back to His Majesty.

Then the King erupted, speaking very fast with great animation and anger for several minutes. Afterwards, Qabbani refused to translate.

Habib said, "I have known the King for 20 years. We are good friends. He wants me to know this. Tell me what he said."

Qabbani translated the King's outburst: "For all the time I have been in government, you have sent me ambassadors who worked for the best interests of Saudi Arabia and the United States. This time you sent me a person with Iranian blood in his veins! You can leave him here. I don't care. He can stay forever but I will never see him again."

After this barrage, Ambassador Habib replied he would convey this message to the Secretary and to the President.

And we left.

I remember the departure very well. We followed the custom of shaking the hand of the King as we walked out. Habib went first. Next was Ambassador Horan; as he approached the King, he clicked his heels slightly and saluted, sparing the King the embarrassment of either shaking his hand or not. It was just an extraordinary moment.

After we went back to the Embassy, Ambassador Habib spent a long time on the phone to Washington, and it was my duty to write an addendum recounting the sensitive last part of the conversation with the only copy to be given to Ambassador Habib.

Before Ambassador Habib departed, it was decided that Ambassador Horan should go back to Washington on consultations in a few days. Ambassador Horan first vowed he was going to write no messages of vindication but relented almost immediately and wrote three telegrams, which he asked me to review. In departing he commented that the strongest human instinct was not self-preservation but self-justification. As it was spring vacation, Ambassador Horan's wife Nancy was in Jeddah at the beach with their son. Ambassador Horan decided that he should not talk about this episode on the telephone with her and asked me to go to Jeddah to explain to Nancy. I recommended that he instead spend the night in Jeddah en route to Washington and tell Nancy himself. He agreed.

Since the DCM position was open, I became Chargé when Ambassador Horan left.

It quickly became apparent that the King was right in one regard: Ambassador Horan did have Iranian blood in his veins. Ambassador Horan was adopted and his biological father was a former Iranian foreign minister.

In the days afterward, the Washington backstory emerged. While we in Riyadh were figuring out what to do with our instructions about the CSS-2 missiles, the White House was having its own conversations with Bandar bin Sultan. Apparently, Bandar had been given a message from the White House more lenient in tone and substance from the very stiff instructions Ambassador Horan had received. In these circumstances, the King had concluded he had an anti-Saudi, rogue ambassador on his hands.

Q: Obviously, Bandar in Washington had very good connections at the White House. The State Department could be doing policy within its confines.

KEISWETTER: I do not know where the bureaucratic breakdown occurred. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy and NSC Advisor for the Middle East Bob Oakley were very good friends and worked together well. Both have told me they did not play a central role in this affair. Oakley related he only dealt with Bandar when Bandar was in the doghouse. In this case, after Bandar had seen President Reagan in a meeting prior to his return to Riyadh for periodic consultations, Oakley had been summoned to escort Bandar to his car and told to remind Bandar he should "fix the CSS-2 problem" because President Reagan had not raised it in the meeting. Murphy had no specific recollection of involvement in the instructions send to Ambassador Horan.

When Nancy Horan came back to Riyadh from Jeddah, she was extremely angry and I spent hours listening sympathetically to the injustice to Ambassador Horan. She threatened to speak to the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and BBC. One of the fears I had was that somehow a journalist would get through to the residence. To Nancy's credit, she never spoke to the press.

I recall rounding up the Embassy staff after the story broke on BBC's morning news to explain that I had become Chargé. The staff was extremely supportive.

From a policy point of view, the problem was in fact the Israelis, who said in essence, "you fix the CSS-2 problem or we will" because they feared the Saudis having a dual capable missile that could reach them. A month or six weeks after Ambassador Horan left, Secretary of State George Shultz visited Saudi Arabia to talk about the Peace Process and patch things up with the Saudis. In preparations for the visit, I recommended that the Secretary tell the Saudis that they should join the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a means of reassuring the Israelis.

Secretary Schultz came, he suggested it, and the Saudis agreed after a few weeks. The CSS-2 problem was defused and more-or-less swept under the rug afterward. It did reflect a major change in Saudi policy. Previously they had adhered to the standard Arab position that they would not join the NPT until the Israelis joined as a non-nuclear power.

Later, while I was still Chargé, we received instructions to request agrément as soon as possible for Walter Cutler, the previous Ambassador, to return. As I was on the way to the Foreign Ministry when the instruction arrived, I got Richard Murphy out of bed in the middle of the night Washington time to confirm them. Murphy assured me that it was a

go. When I presented the request for agrément, Ambassador Ismael Shura, Assistant Deputy Minister asked, "Is this standard practice? Do you usually send ambassadors back?"

I told him this was an unusual circumstance and that Ambassador Cutler was well and favorably known in the Kingdom and well-respected in the United States. The Saudis gave agrément in a few days. Afterward, Ambassador Horan came back to post for a week or so to say goodbye. The only courtesy call he paid was on Foreign Minister Saud.

In any event, the episode got me promoted across the senior threshold to Counselor.

Q: Let's back up a little.

Your assignment as Counselor for Political Affairs started in the summer of '86 and lasted until December of '90? Four years?

KEISWETTER: Three years, until the summer of '89.

Q: When you first arrived, who were the main staff and how large was the embassy? You were pointing out there was Riyadh and Jeddah.

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KEISWETTER: The Embassy had just moved from Jeddah where it occupied rather dilapidated quarters to a new purpose-built Embassy in the Diplomatic Quarter in Riyadh. It was the latest and most glorious of Embassies then and dedicated by Vice President George H. W. Bush just before I arrived. Now it does not meet security requirements and, I understand, is scheduled to be replaced.

As for personnel, I replaced Richard McKee as head of the Political Section. Matt Tueller was at the Embassy in the Political Section. Ned Walker was the DCM. Anne Patterson was the Economic Counselor. David Patterson, her husband, was my deputy.

Q: How did Ambassador Cutler run his mission? What was it like to work for him?

KEISWETTER: Unlike Ambassador Horan, who reviewed drafts with a light touch, Ambassador Cutler was very much involved in reporting and very interested in finding "le bon mot." Part of my mission was to become his scribe. This meant that anything for the Ambassador's signature dealing with political matters, I personally had to draft or spend a lot of time editing it into the right style and form.

Ambassador Cutler was also very much of a social animal. His parties were carefully thought out, and guest lists scrutinized. A major party would sometimes involve an hour with his senior staff figuring out the guest list with him and a full-time social secretary. He put a great value on entertaining.

Q: These social occasions would be mixed Saudi foreign audiences or diplomatic community?

KEISWETTER: Right. They would probably be in honor of some visiting dignitary. All that said, I respected Walt greatly. We still share views and insights on Saudi affairs. I learned a lot about how to run an Embassy and how to shape instructions to be effective with our host government. He had the respect of the Saudis. When he came back for his second stint, he did a splendid job. He delayed going to his new job as head of Meridian House for a year to fill in. I give him high marks.

You ask what he was like. Well, you had to be prepared to be a scribe and you had to be prepared to be a social secretary, as well as providing advice and information.

Q: How big was your Political Section?

KEISWETTER: There were four State Department officers in addition to myself. They included my deputy, David Patterson. He was replaced by Bernard Johns after two years. Nevin Woodford was my secretary; he could type faster than I could speak and took perfect dictation.

I would like to say a special word about Matt Tueller, who covered internal affairs. Unlike myself, who stumbled into being an Arabist, he was an Arabist with superb academic credentials. He covered the Royal Family, working closely with Muhammad Giraud, a local employee – the only Saudi on the entire Embassy staff – who had been educated with the youth of the Royal Court. Matt and Muhammad educated me in things Saudi like the Hajj, the *ulema,* and intricate relations among the Royal Family.

Another person was Tatiana Gfoeller, who was a junior officer whose husband Michael rotated into the Economic and Pol/Mil Sections. She spoke native French and native Russian and learned Arabic easily while at post. She was our first woman in the Political Section and she opened up whole new horizons as she cultivated female contacts. Both of the Gfoellers became Ambassadors.

There was another junior officer Chuck Forest who stood out. He had converted to Islam while in graduate school at the University of Michigan. In his six-month rotation in the Political Section, he made the Hajj pilgrimage. He had curly blonde hair and blue eyes, and thus, stood out as he traveled with Saudi Hajjis by bus from Riyadh to Mecca. He was a terrific writer and wrote a wonderful account of his experience. His piece was so compelling that I told him that we were going to make it LOU to prevent it from leaking immediately because of its high quality. I think he eventually did publish the piece in edited form after he resigned from the Foreign Service.

Q How did the Political Section fit in the Embassy?

KEISWETTER: I reported to the DCM – first Ned Walker and then David Dunford. Organizationally, there was a separate Pol/Mil Section that had three people in it. This reflected the major political-military relationship we had with Saudi Arabia largely through the United States Military Assistance and Training Mission (USMTM) and our

advisory mission to the Saudi National Guard. In fact, the latter was the original US military assistance program to the Kingdom.

For nearly a year of my tour, I was both the Political Chief and the Pol/Mil Chief because the Pol/Mil Chief was diagnosed with bone marrow cancer, evacuated, and died within a few months. Eventually, my good friend Bruce Clark took over as Pol/Mil Chief. In the interim, Gerry Feierstein, the Deputy Pol/Mil Chief, carried much of the burden. Later in his career, he became Ambassador to Yemen, as did Matt Tueller.

Q: Saudi Arabia is a major player in the Peninsula but also a major player in the Middle East. What kinds of subjects might the Embassy be reporting on at this time? Obviously, the Iran/Iraq War is going on. I assume the Saudis were very interested in that. The US policy at that time was 'Operation Staunch" among other things. How did the Saudis look at the Iran/Iraq War?

KEISWETTER: Relations with Saudi Arabia were bifurcated. Most sensitive issues were likely handled in Washington by Bandar directly with White House or senior levels of the State and Defense Departments. This was the way the Saudis preferred to handle relations, and Washington was certainly comfortable with this arrangement. The principal interlocutors of Bandar spanned the Cabinet and the lowest level he got down to was Assistant Secretaries; so Richard Murphy who was NEA Assistant Secretary at that time was a major conduit for feedback to us. Another was Richard Armitage who was Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. Ambassador Cutler spent hours on the phone to these people and others in Washington to keep up.

Even that being said, as I was reflecting on this in preparation for today's interview, I think we were in large part knowledgeable but not really involved in most of the big issues such as Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

On Afghanistan, I would say once a quarter there would be a visit by a prominent CIA official, not infrequently the Director, or on the State side by the DAS for Afghanistan. These briefings gave us a chance to find out what was going on.

On the Peace Process, that also was handled through Bandar who would make his plane available for Arafat and other Palestinians and reportedly on occasion undertook secret missions for the White House.

Then we had envoys such as Philip Habib who came through Riyadh regularly.

Among our regular Embassy contacts, a half dozen Saudis really counted. Taking notes when the Ambassador saw the King, Crown Prince Abdullah, or Foreign Minister Saud was a core part of my portfolio. Other prime Embassy contacts where I was not usually involved included Defense Minister Sultan, the heads of the economic and financial entities, and the head of General Intelligence Director Turki al Faisal (Foreign Minister Saud's brother).

The Ambassador saw the King once a month or so, the Crown Prince every three or four months, and Foreign Minister Saud every couple of weeks because we always had stacks of demarches to deliver. My own job was to prioritize these instructions, some doing myself at different levels. In the Saudi system, nearly anything with the Americans was important enough to go to the top even if presented at lower levels.

Let's talk about King Fahd first. Frequently the conversations were late at night and could go on for an hour or two. Afterward, if anything urgent came out of them, I would have to go back to the Embassy and write the cable in the middle of the night so it would be on Washington's desk as early as possible the next day.

Sometimes, it was humorous. I remember once we were talking with the King and all of a sudden the telephone rang next to him. You wonder what it is that has happened. I suspect he did not know that I understood Arabic; it turned out that the call was from one of his wives asking when he was coming home. The answer was as soon as I get rid of the Americans.

Another time the telephone rang and he answered and he slammed it down, saying sharply in Arabic "wrong number." Such calls were a persistent problem that everybody had in Saudi Arabia; in those days boys could not meet girls and vice versa very easily and so the younger crowd would just dial numbers at random hoping that some young voice would answer. At night, the problem was so bad that Gerda and I took our phone off the hook. It was humorous to see that even the King had this problem too.

We did talk about Afghanistan, we did talk about Iran, and we did talk about Iraq; all of them were major issues. We talked about the Peace Process. If there was anything important, it was done in Washington or by a special envoy. If the Secretary of State was in the region, he would drop by to present the talking points.

The King did not like the Iranians and he would frequently make derogatory references to them. I remember at one late-night session that took place in his palace in Dhahran, he asked us whether American slant drill technology could enable the Saudis to drill under the Gulf into the Iranian oil reserves. We told him we did not think so.

On the Iran-Iraq War, the Saudis were highly supportive of the Iraqis and loaned them tens of billions of dollars to underwrite the cost of the War. These loans have since been forgiven reluctantly after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

Q: As opposed to Yemen, Saudi Arabia is in the middle of Iran-Iraq War and watching it from Riyadh is probably a major piece of reporting that you were doing at the time.

KEISWETTER: Yes, we regularly reported on these issues but much of this reporting was not in State channels

Q: Do you think they had any particular affinity for Saddam Hussein or they just disliked the Iranians so much?

KEISWETTER: They did not have any affinity for Saddam. After all Saddam was largely secular and believed in Baathism, which is a combination of Nazi and Communist/socialist ideology with a little romanticism thrown in, not the Saudi thing. But against the Iranians, they were willing to write large checks and be very helpful. This financial part I knew about but it was not something the Political Section was involved in discussing with the Saudis.

Q: Who did the entertaining?

KEISWETTER: Most entertaining of Saudis was done by the Ambassador, frequently to meet visitors. We had a steady stream of visitors; Senators, Congressmen. We joked about the "house thobes," who were the Saudis we could count on to turn up for such events. This is a play on the Saudi word "thobe," which is the cape that Saudi men would wear for formal occasions. Ambassador Cutler and his wife Deedee had cultivated a large number of regulars that showed up.

Q. Who else did you see besides the King?

KEISWETTER: We also spent a considerable amount of time with Crown Prince Abdullah. These sessions were largely protocol calls to keep in touch. There were sometimes issues about the Saudi National Guard, which the Crown Prince commanded. In addition to formal appointments, we saw him occasionally on Tuesday night when he held a regular *majlis,* which was a gathering where Saudis as well as visitors could speak to him before or after evening prayers and go to dinner with him afterward. Frequently there would be five or six hundred people all praying together in ranks, and a dozen or more special guests such as ourselves sitting on the side.

After the prayers, people would go into the adjoining hall for dinner or join lines to speak with the Crown Prince. Many were petitioners with a grievance or in need of assistance. The Crown Prince would listen and give instructions to an aide standing beside him. Usually it was just to tell his aide to look into the matter. The petitions would typically concern debt, a family member who was in jail or had a problem with the government, or a dispute with a tribal chief.

I was intrigued to see the Saudi administrative justice system work in the classic tribal way. In earlier days, the Sheikh holding the *majlis* would have had a big chest from which he would take out the gold coins and say, "Here, go off and make good with this" or offer on the spot justice and say, "I command that your son be released." Well, it is much more sophisticated today, but the Crown Prince did have a policy that every petitioner would receive a response.

While the Crown Prince was receiving the petitioners, everyone else would file into the dining hall arranged with long parallel tables and a head table perpendicularly across the front where the Crown Prince and his honored guests would sit. There would be entertainment as the meal was being served. Featured were poets who would recite poems

written for the occasion, usually highly flattering to the Crown Prince and the al-Saud family in retelling the stories of Saudi Arabia and glories of Islam.

Because there were so many people, it would take some time for everyone to be served. He and the front table would be served first and then all the others of us would be served. As soon as the Crown Prince was through eating, he got up and left and everybody else got up and left too; so if you were in the back third of the room, there was a good chance you would not get your food before it was time to leave.

I would describe Crown Prince Abdullah as having an influential role in Saudi decision making but was not central to it when I served at the Embassy. I remember Embassy reporting describing him as "husbanding his health and his influence" for the years to come, and that is what happened. King Fahd had a stroke in 1996 and for nine years Abdullah was de facto regent and then became King in 2005 for another decade before his death in 2015.

Prince Saud al-Faisal, the Foreign Minister, we saw often. We always had stacks of demarches to deliver "at the highest appropriate level." Ambassador Cutler sometimes would tailor our instructions when he made the points. I remember talking to DCM Ned Walker about how I should report these variances. He advised, "Just report it like it is. Walt is old enough to take care of himself."

Saud was a favorite interlocutor. A graduate of Princeton, he understood America well and was good at explaining Saudi Arabia to us and visitors. Like the Crown Prince, he was eminently plugged in and had the power of his lineage as son of King Feisal. Still, he was not a member of the Sudairi brothers – the King, and his full brothers Sultan, the Minister of Defense, and Naif, the Minister of Interior – that constituted the innermost circle.

Beyond the Ambassador's calls on Saud, I also went to the Foreign Ministry at least once a week to make calls at the Director General level, roughly equivalent to the assistant secretaries in the State Department. They included Qabbani and his deputy and successor Nizar Medani in the Western Department, whom I could see on short notice; Ismael Shura, the Director General for Arab Affairs as well as Assistant Deputy Minister for Political Affairs; and Jaafar Allagany, the Director General for International Organizations. Occasionally, Ned Walker would see Deputy Minister Abdul Rahman Mansuri, who ranked second to Saud in protocol but seemed to have more administrative than political responsibilities.

As to the types of issues, frequently these calls were a mail drop for the Royal Diwan to seek approval or expedite the handling of visitors. Otherwise, they ran the gamut of US interests, and after three years, some subjects were ritualistic demarches. Every year, for example, we would make a worldwide demarche supporting a resolution at the UNGA in New York on religious tolerance. I remember the last year, Ismail Shura just looked at me and said, "Allen, you know we don't believe in this."

Q: Did you report on the Gulf Cooperation Council?

I followed the GCC closely. It had just moved into a magnificent new building in Riyadh when I was there. The Foreign Ministers would meet every three months. In addition, the heads of government/state would hold an elaborate two-or-three day meeting in a capital in December and a second one-day meeting held at GCC headquarters in Riyadh in June.

I spent a lot of time going to press conferences and talking to officials divining what was happening. I would say that overall the GCC is useful as a means of political cooperation, but they constantly would bump up against its limits. The GCC states are not really interested in going further toward some sort of political unity. It is not like the EU. A major topic I covered was always who was feuding with whom.

We talked about Iran earlier. It was classically the northern three GCC states – Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain - that favored a tough line inspired in large part by their large Shi'a populations, in Bahrain's case a majority. The southern three – Qatar, UAE, and Oman – were usually more lenient. The Qataris share the world's largest gas field with the Iranians and were always opportunistically trying to insert themselves into an intermediary role between Iran and the US. The UAE had mixed interests. This is because of the three islands off shore - Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tunbs - that the Iranians took in the 1970s. Of course, the UAE wanted them back so they were very tough on many issues. On the other hand, Dubai maintains a strong trading relationship with Iran and hosts a lot of Iranian nationals. There were, therefore, divisions within the GCC.

Q: You describe yourself as intrigued or fascinated by the Saudis. Why was that?

KEISWETTER: On the policy side, I suppose because of the palaces and the potentates. Even though I would describe us on the fringes of the policy-making issues, we did know what was going on through the NODISs or through visits. I do not think we were the major player on policy issues although our advice may have been sought.

As for Saudi society, it is not only the palaces and potentates but also their Bedouin and religious roots that were still very much in evidence. When I was at the Embassy, a Bedouin may have had a house in town because of government subsidies, but he still very much lived in the desert. Everyone from the King on down would spend weeks camping in the desert during the winter, and the strong religious traditions and values caught up in the Arab code of desert called the *muruwwah* still matter greatly in Saudi society.

An example is the role of the *mutawa,* the religious police. They enforced store closings at prayer time, and arrested people who are flagrant or even not so flagrant in violation of Islamic strictures in one way or another. There were constant problems with the *mutawa* and they usually fell to me if they could not be handled at the consular level.

In one case, we had a Marine Guard who got in trouble for kissing his wife. This Marine had fulfilled his Marine Guard Detachment commitments, got married and then was

brought back to Embassy duty temporarily to fill a vacancy. His condition for accepting the TDY was that his new wife could visit him while he was in Riyadh. When he and his new wife were together in the back seat of an embassy car on the way from the airport, he kissed her. A *mutawa* in a passing car saw this flagrant display of affection and tried to force the Embassy car off the road. There was nearly an accident.

Q: The car had diplomatic license plates.

KEISWETTER: Yes. So it was my job to go off to the Foreign Ministry to protest that this incident was a violation of diplomatic immunity.

There was another famous example of Swiss Night at one of the local hotels. The hotel displayed the Swiss flag at a large reception in honor of Swiss food and products. The *mutawa* raided it because there was the prominent display of the cross on the Swiss flag.

It was a tribute to King Fahd that he did his best to bring along the religious elements. Later, Foreign Minister Saud gave a speech at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York where he described the religious right in Saudi Arabia in American terms, saying that "if you combine the isolationists with the Puritans you would have some idea of what these people are like." I think that is true.

The foreign community adapted to Saudi societal constraints in many ways. Since no alcohol was legally available, many foreigners bought grape juice and sugar to make their own libations. On the Saudi British Bank Compound on which we lived, we would have every few months a tasting of home brews. As Gerda and I had access to the real thing, we brought the tasting standard to which the homebrew would be compared. There were two major prizes; one was the "piece de resistance," which was the winner for the best, and there was the "piss de resistance," which was for the worst.

Gerda and I were interested in play readings and we hosted a few at our home. There were also small theaters located in compounds for foreigners where performers also put on plays. The Saudi authorities, who did not even permit movie theaters, tolerated this until one time when a British troupe pushed the envelope too far; they staged a play about Christian homosexuality and religious police shut down the place for several months.

The same thing was true in a different way at the Diplomatic Club, which was supposedly only for diplomats but in reality only about half were diplomats and about half prominent Saudis. Its elegant facilities included a wave pool and a waterslide. The US Embassy led an effort to establish a family day where men, women, and children could all go together. This worked until a French diplomat's wife or daughter insisted on bare breasted sunbathing and family days disappeared. We never had those again.

I mentioned camping in the desert. It was one of the great pleasures of life in Saudi Arabia from December through February. The weather could be crystal clear, perfect for stargazing and there were a lot of amateur astronomers. There was also the risk of getting lost if you got off the beaten path. I remember a camel herder who milked one of his

camels to give us fresh milk, truly right from the camel. Generally, it was a refreshing, lovely experience.

This coincided roughly with the rainy season so you had to be careful to not camp in a gully because sudden rain caused many drownings every year. The other risk was fire. Every year there were also reports of fires that would sweep through tents and kill or maim campers.

Q: The organization of the Embassy, there are two consulates in Saudi Arabia in addition to the Embassy. What were their responsibilities and how were they plugged into the Embassy?

KEISWETTER: There were about 40,000 Americans in Saudi Arabia roughly spread equally among the three consular districts of the Embassy and the two consulates general.

Let's start with Dhahran. While I was at the Embassy, first John Eddy and then Brooks Wrampelmeier was Consul General. Besides consular services, Dhahran had two main functions. First was to look after Saudi ARAMCO and everything petroleum-related because Dhahran is the center of the oil producing area. The second was looking after contacts with the Shia as the Eastern Province not only has Saudi oil but also it is the region where most of the Saudi Shia live.

Q: The consulate in Jeddah?

KEISWETTER: Jay Frere was the Consul General for much of the time I was in Riyadh. The Consulate General's functions were to a large degree commercial because Jeddah is the commercial center of the Kingdom. In addition, Jeddah also is the summer home of the government, including the King from April to September. Thus, the Consulate had a major role in supporting the Ambassador and others of us who would visit often during this period. The Ambassador would be there as often as twice a week and I was down there at least once a week. The Embassy maintained the former Ambassador's residence on the Jeddah compound where we all stayed when we visited. This all complicated the US Consul General's life because he had to follow up when we could not do it from the Embassy.

Importantly, the ConGen also reported on the annual Hajj. The Jeddah consular district included the Asir, the cool mountainous province of Saudi Arabia where the US National Park Service had designed wonderful resort areas. It was fun to go to Jeddah and drive up in the mountains.

Q: At the end of your tour in 1989 how would you summarize what you had picked up from this three-year assignment?

KEISWETTER: I would contrast Yemen with Saudi Arabia. In Yemen, I learned administration and management skills in what might be called a tribal local environment in an exotic, end-of-the-world place. Still, Yemen had considerable significance because

of the rivalries between the communist South Yemen and American and Saudi-backed North Yemen. As long as we had the support of the Near East Bureau, the Embassy had considerable autonomy.

In contrast, Saudi Arabia was distinctly on the beaten path with lots of visitors and high-level interest. The Embassy did important things but I would not say they were policy decisive. The hub of policy making was clearly in Washington and we were a contributor.

Q: 1989 was a significant year. The Soviets leave Afghanistan. Ambassador Cutler departs Riyadh, June is Tiananmen Square and you go to the Senior Seminar. How did you get that assignment? That's a very complimentary notch on your career belt.

KEISWETTER: Personnel told me informally that I had a good chance at the Senior Seminar. A few days later I called up my personnel officer to ask if I had made the cut. He told me that my name was not on the list. About an hour later, he called back deeply apologetic to say he had made a mistake. Indeed, I had been chosen for the Senior Seminar. In fact, I was one of the leading candidates.

Senior Seminar 1989-1990

Q: Describe the Senior Seminar; it is run by State.

KEISWETTER: It was the most senior long-term training offered by the Department of State. I was in the 32nd seminar. About half of the class of 30 were the top-ranking Foreign Service Officers chosen for promotion into the Senior Foreign Service. The others are interagency equivalents from Defense, Treasury, STR, and the uniformed services.

The seminar was headed by Ambassador Bill Bodde who was a Europeanist but had been Ambassador to Tonga, Fuji, Tuvalu, and Kiribati. He had also been the DAS responsible for German Affairs in the European Bureau. He had a rather light hand and brought two innovations to the Senior Seminar.

One was that he accepted a participant from the Air National Guard in return for free airplanes to go anywhere we wanted once a month. We started the year with a trip to Alaska, the first time the seminar had ever gone there, where we spent a week. The second innovation was the students took large responsibility in planning the program of the year. The monthly pattern of the seminar our year was three weeks in Washington and one week of travel.

There were three major components to the program. One part was personal improvement, where we learned about nutrition, dressing for success, public speaking, financial management, and other tips for success as a leader. When in Washington we spent one day a week on these topics.

Another part was US domestic affairs and, finally, the third was foreign affairs. The class itself was responsible for designing the programs, inviting the speakers, and planning the field trips. For example, fellow FSO Doug Keene and I were responsible for a week on the Middle East. Doug's experience was in Jerusalem and the Peace Process side and he took care of that and I took care of the Persian Gulf area.

The Senior Seminar was a convivial group. We all liked each other. Of course, there were lots of stories that came out of this. Many went on to ambassadorships or equivalents in their agencies in the years afterward.

Q: Now would these people go to Senior Seminar because they had already been assigned as ambassadors?

KEISWETTER: No. I should qualify that. They did not go on to ambassadorships in their next assignment but it was a stepping stone to ambassadorships later in their careers. I think only two people actually went directly to be ambassadors-- Ed Brynn, who went to Burkina Faso, and Arlene Render, who went to Gambia. Most of us went on to office directorships.

Q: The State group recognized strong officers who probably were going to have an ongoing. . .

KEISWETTER: It was assumed we would be ambassadors, deputy assistant secretaries, and assistant secretaries someday.

Q: The other people that were there were also being honored by . . .

KEISWETTER: The other people there varied and I came to understand this later when I taught at the National War College. Every service, and this includes the Foreign Service, assigned its best to its own senior training. Then they sent their second best to other senior training programs.

Most people come out of this year wonderfully refreshed, and thoroughly knowledgeable about the US national scene because we have spent a substantial amount of time on it. There was a great deal of interest in poverty and inequality characterized as the "underclass." We visited the Supreme Court where we heard oral arguments and met with Justices Sandra Day O'Conner and Antony Scalia. We also spent a week in El Paso where we toured Border Patrol crossings and drove tanks and fired their guns at nearby Fort Bliss; we toured US Navy facilities in San Diego and landed on an aircraft carrier and stayed overnight off the coast; we visited Princeton to talk with George Kennan, and travelled to Dallas to see the working of the world's largest airport; we went to Chicago to learn about the commodity exchanges, and visited Seattle to learn about Boeing.

The greatest highlights of the class were the first trip of the year to Alaska and the last trip of the year in the spring when we went to Germany and to Berlin, thanks largely to Bill Bodde. The Berlin Wall had fallen the previous November and Bodde knew lots of

the right people. I even chipped off a piece of the Wall and it is still tucked away in our attic. Since my other string of my career is European affairs, I found all that very helpful.

For the month of February, each member of the Senior Seminar undertook a special project. One classmate, Charlie Reis, did a project that related to traffic management and smart cars. Another one traveled through the southwest US to examine whether a system for buying and selling housing futures was feasible.

I returned to Harvard, where I became a diplomat-in-residence and co-taught a seminar on the Middle East. I spent six weeks at Harvard principally through the auspices of Joe Nye, whom I had gotten to know previously when I was at Harvard and then when he was in the Department of State as a Special Assistant to the Undersecretary for Technology and Arms Control.

I chose Harvard over two other opportunities to teach at the college level. I could have gone to Barton County Junior College near Great Bend where I would have constituted the college's sole resource on foreign affairs. Initially, my first choice would have been to go to my alma mater Dartmouth. My contact there explained that such appointments were planned a year in advance and would be subject to a faculty vote; he asked if I would be interested in November or December of the next school year?

At this point, I called Joe Nye and he said, "Well, fax me a letter and I think I can arrange something." I did and a day or two later I got a reply: "Welcome, Allen. Please come." It did not cost them anything other than they had to provide me an office.

The time at Harvard was exciting. I could be a dilettante and audit any courses I wanted with the instructor's permission; I especially enjoyed Simon Schama's course on art history. There was obviously an active arts scene not only at Harvard but in Boston. In particular, I attended rehearsals of the Boston Symphony.

In my status as a visiting faculty member, I was invited to seminars for the Harvard foreign affairs faculty featuring outside speakers. The first one or two I did not quite understand what was happening but then I was clued in. These faculty seminars were lectures by candidates for tenured positions. A presentation by Lisa Anderson, with whom I had taken a course at Harvard in 1972 but now was at Columbia, sparked savage debate. One side asked very softball questions, "Dr. Anderson, what do you think about the course of European affairs today?" and the other was very critical: "You obviously haven't read my book that sets all this straight. How could you continue to believe such silly things?" She did not come to Harvard but continued her career at Columbia.

While at Harvard, I wrote a paper about the future of Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. I worked closely with Stanley Hoffman, my advisor from my earlier days at Harvard, who was working on a similar paper. He encouraged me to tidy up my draft and he would help me publish it. I am grateful I never did because when I reread it recently, it has been largely wrong.

Since I have gone on to do things academic after retirement, diplomat-in-residence at Harvard looks good on my resume.

Q: Going back to the Seminar itself when you started out was there a set curriculum and set speakers?

KEISWETTER: At the beginning, there were certain standard things to be incorporated such as an invitation for the Director General to speak to us and instruction on public speaking. After that, we created the curriculum and invited the speakers according to the format I described.

Q: What did you do when you went to Alaska?

KEISWETTER: We went to Juneau first where we met with Alaskan state officials. Then we flew to Fairbanks and went on to Port Barrow, the northernmost village in Alaska, where we stayed overnight at an oil producing facility. The highlight, however, was when we flew back and stopped along the coast where we went out on a Coast Guard cutter and spent the night. The Exxon Valdez spill that had occurred nearby some months before. We had a chance to go out and try to cleanse some of the shore and see how others did it. It was cold enough that we wore wetsuits because if we fell in we would otherwise have about two minutes to live. We were quite impressed.

Q: The Senior Seminar was more free flowing, if you will in terms of your interest and what you got out of it rather than you had to take this class and write that paper?

That is right, exactly. The Senior Seminar I would contrast with the National War College which is the nearest equivalent in my experience. The National War College is much more of a classroom experience where students write term reports and do voluminous reading. The Senior Seminar was not that. It truly was shaped by the students. I think Secretary Powell was probably wrong to abolish it; there is not anything else that fits this particular niche. It was a refreshing year, a learning year, a personal year whereas the National War College aims at producing a master's degree. Most, if not all, of the participants in the Senior Seminar already had advanced graduate degrees.

NEA Regional Affairs and the Gulf War 1990-1993

Q: How did you get your next assignment then?

KEISWETTER: John Kelly became Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs after President George H.W. Bush became President in 1989. His Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary was Jock Covey, who wanted me to head Regional Affairs. I thought at the time the logical thing was for me to be head of Arab Peninsula Affairs. I also talked to Skip Gnehm, who was the Deputy Assistant Secretary responsible for Arab Peninsula Affairs. Both Jock and Skip told me that I was their first choice. In the arm wrestling, Jock won and I went to Regional Affairs and Doug Keene (also in the Senior Seminar) became the head of Arab Peninsula Affairs.

In connection with my forthcoming responsibilities, I was asked in the last days of the Senior Seminar to take part in an exercise held in the Operations Center. David Mack, who had returned from the UAE as Ambassador to replace Skip, and I headed the team. The scenario was an Iranian invasion across the bottom of Iraq and sweeping into Kuwait. This was in June 1990. David and I had a chance to do it again, for real, in August when the Iraqis invaded Kuwait.

Q: This exercise was put together by the State Department INR?

KEISWETTER: It included military players but it was a State-run exercise.

Q: Let's pick up next time in the summer of 1990 as an office director in NEA.

You have been assigned now as director in NEA/RA, the regional affairs of the Bureau of Near East Affairs. With whom did you work?

Assistant Secretary John Kelly, not a Middle East hand, had been Ambassador to Lebanon. Like me, he had also worked on European affairs but was previously in Policy Planning (S/P). According to press reports, his nomination reflected an attempt by Secretary Baker and the Administration to get somebody with at least some Middle East experience but who would be acceptable politically to a broad spectrum in Congress. Basically, the new Administration sought to meet criticism that Arabists had too much sway.

Q: In part though, you know, foreign policy sometimes comes from the grassroots.

KEISWETTER: That was never a problem as far as I was concerned but what was a problem for everybody was John Kelly's temper. He was also very poorly organized. This led sometimes to chaotic staff meetings and there were various incidents, some of them humorous and some of them just hurtful and sad.

The assignment to RA was an important career juncture for me. After the Senior Seminar, I had aspired to an ambassadorship when I left RA. When that did not work out at the end of my two-year tour, NEA offered me a third year as RA Director. I accepted because I loved the job and it resulted in my being promoted from Counselor to Minister Counselor in three years. Kelly also left in my second year and was replaced by Ed Djerejian, whom I knew and wanted to work with.

Regarding Jock, I had never met anyone quite like him; he was extremely bright, very well organized but a micromanager in the extreme. Usually outside his office would be three or four people waiting to see him because he not only wanted to see things once and suggest changes, he wanted to see them again and again as they changed. If it were not urgent but still a priority project such as revamping plans to monitor NEA goals and objectives, he would block out Saturday morning where I could count on two or three

hours of intermittent attention as I sat in his office while he coped with the problems of day. I learned a lot about bureaucratic politics and management from him.

He maintained his style even in the height of the Gulf War and NEA's intense involvement in the Middle East Peace Process. As a practical bureaucratic adaptation, some NEA office directors concluded that while Jock may be sincere in wanting to review projects time and again, he was so busy that he usually did not miss it if you skipped out. I remember thinking they were right when Jock cited as an area for improvement in my performance review that sometimes I seemed to be hanging around for guidance. At that moment, I saw the wisdom of taking the risks of omission rather than commission in managing upward.

Q: Let's talk about this. You've been overseas all this time, even DCM and this is your first time back in Washington for some time and now you are an office director. You've described the people above you and the deputy assistant secretaries.

Let's describe your office in Near Eastern Affairs. You have a deputy, how many people and what kinds of topics do you cover?

KEISWETTER: I would like to come back to that. I would like to give a little more about the top level and then I will come back and describe the office.

The NEA Front Office was a fairly star-studded group. Skip Gnehm, who was appointed to Kuwait, was replaced by my good friend David Mack coming in from Abu Dhabi as DAS responsible for the Gulf. Dan Kurtzer was responsible for Israel, the Levant, Egypt, and the Middle East Peace Process.

I usually began my day by meeting with Jock and the staff aides, sometimes joining the DASs for their twice weekly meetings with Kelly, and finally attending David Mack's meeting with his office directors because of the great overlap I had with their responsibilities.

Why all this? Well, because as Regional Affairs we had crosscutting functions, including non-proliferation, sanctions, regional economic analysis, speech writing, and congressional relations. We backstopped the Multinational Force and Observers. At one point, there were 18 people in the office stemming from the demands of the Iraq War. We picked up the needed additional staffing from our normal 10 from personnel evacuated from US embassies in the Middle East.

I held my own staff meeting after the morning stint in the NEA Front Office. The RA deputy's job was a real one because of the size of the staff and my own travel and involvement in special assignments. The enduring backbone was the great expertise of the GS staff. Libby Ward was our non-proliferation specialist, Bob Krantz had worked on Multinational Force and Observers since its founding, and we added Chuck Lawson as our water expert. The remainder of the staff was FSOs on rotation. We had two superb secretaries who had also worked in NEA for years.

As the situation between Iraq and Kuwait was heating up in late July1990, I was drawing up lists of task force personnel who could be activated at short notice. I was in Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Bob Kimmitt's office on the Seventh Floor mid-afternoon, August 2, delivering the lists when the CIA called to say that the Iraqis would invade Kuwait within the next few hours.

I was a bit surprised that the senior interagency players did not convene in a CVTS (Classified Video Teleconference Session) until the evening. I spent the rest of the afternoon working with NEA/EX activating the initial taskforce. For the next 36 hours, I was the director responsible to David Mack and Under Secretary Kimmitt. About 8:30 pm, after the task force was up and running, I took a break to go home to pick up some things for was obviously going to a long stint. As I walked in the door at home, the phone was ringing. The Iraqis had invaded Kuwait.

Beside general coordination, I spent the night on secure lines to US ambassadors in the region, to the Canadian Operations Center, and to other allies keeping them abreast of developments. About 3am we began preparing for morning briefings and meetings. My stint ended in late afternoon the next day when we got word that a NSC Principals meeting would convene in a couple of hours. I no longer had the coherency to write a briefing for the Secretary. David Mack, who had had some rest overnight, did it and I went home to sleep and come back the next morning. For the next two weeks, I was the director of the task force 12 hours a day as well as managing RA. David became the coordinator who oversaw all task force activities.

The events of the first night were quite revealing. I was in and out of the CVTS, which Kimmitt was chairing when it was meeting at the Deputies level as the Washington Action Group. Later, it met at the Principals level with Secretary Baker and other Cabinet officials participating. Other participants around the State table included Under Secretary for Economic Affairs Robert McCormack, the Department's Legal Advisor, Principal DAS Robert Hormats of the EB bureau, and Assistant Secretary Dick Clark of the Pol/Mil Bureau. All had support staff tucked into cubby holes around the Operations Center. The videoconference lasted until the wee hours of August 3 and approved immediate imposition of economic sanctions on Iraq and the freezing of Iraqi funds in the US and elsewhere. While we were handling diplomatic and economic issues, a consular task force also in the Operations Center was dealing with consular matters, and a counterpart task force at the Pentagon was handling the military side.

The outbreak of the Gulf War set the stage for my three years as director of RA. The first year focused on Iraq. I became Mr. Sanctions and Mr. "Tin Cup" in NEA.

The "tin cup" efforts sought to raise money to pay for the war from the Gulf countries and the international community. On a Friday in September, the NSC decided to dispatch a team on Monday led by Secretary Baker to European and Gulf capitals and Deputy Secretary of State Eagleburger and his Treasury counterpart to Japan. A dozen of us representing State, Treasury, and Defense spent the weekend preparing for the trips to hit

up the Saudis, the Kuwaitis, the Europeans (especially the Germans), and the Japanese for a contribution for the cost of America's saving Gulf oil from the Iraqis. Bob Hormats, the PDAS in the Economic Bureau, headed the team. We had no guidance whatsoever as to the amount to be raised, the estimated costs of the war, or a formula for apportioning the "tin cup" assessments. When the travelling parties reviewed our proposals on the airplane, they multiplied the amounts by two, three, or four times. In the end the tin cup exercise raised more money than the war cost.

Skip Gnehm, our Ambassador to Kuwait, delivered the request to Kuwaiti Emir Jaber, who at that time was in Ta'if, Saudi Arabia, where the Kuwaiti government had sought refuge. Skip related that he presented the request on a piece of paper he passed to the Emir while they were walking in the gardens. Emir Jaber did not even look at it, and just stuck it in his pocket.

Q: Skip handed him a piece of paper….

KEISWETTER: Yes. Skip asked, "Aren't you going to look at it?" and the Emir replied, "Why? You think we won't pay?"

At least as far as the Saudis and the Kuwaitis were concerned, the asks hit the mark of what the Gulfies would pay. Later I learned that John Kelly, who had been unavailable during the weekend preparations, had personally upped the antes.

For the next year and beyond, RA prepared extensive testimony for John Kelly and other Department officials on Iraq sanctions, the tin cup exercise, and events in the Gulf and Middle East generally. A political appointee for congressional relations was assigned to RA to ease Kelly's skittishness about his relations with the Hill. He justifiably feared he would lose his temper while testifying as the Secretary and White House were watching his performance on TV. I also chaired and attended countless meetings on these subjects over that year.

I have a comment regarding April Glaspie, our Ambassador in Iraq, whom I had known for years. My involvement was largely as a bureaucratic spectator. I was among those eagerly waiting her NODIS cable reporting her July 25, 1990 conversation with Saddam Hussein. When I read it, I was politically naïve enough not to realize the trouble this message spelt for her. A debriefing with her was abruptly cancelled when she returned to the Department for consultations. Basically, April disappeared into internal exile for a period of several months before she testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in March 1991.

Q: One of the things was, of course, Congress wanted her head. Bush was smart enough to get her into internal exile. I think she went to the University of California, San Diego.

KEISWETTER: You are right. It was largely Deputy Secretary Eagleburger who managed this matter.

The other major issue that dominated my tenure in RA was the Middle East Peace Process; I was marginally involved until I received a call in late October 1991 from Paul Simon in Policy Planning explaining the delegation at the Madrid Peace Conference needed some help. Bill Burns, then Deputy Director of S/P, had called from Madrid to ask Paul and me to flesh out proposals for the US delegation to propose the next morning for the creation of a multilateral process to support the bilateral Middle East peace negotiations. Several of us discussed ideas before the delegation left.

So Paul and I in the course of the afternoon and evening further brainstormed based on guidance from the Madrid Delegation. Paul drafted and forwarded a proposal to the delegation embracing: 1) an overall steering group chaired by the US and Russia that would include the Arabs and Israelis as well as the Europeans and the Japanese; and 2) five substantive subordinate working groups on water resources, arms control and disarmament, refugees, economic development, and the environment. The Madrid Conference accepted these ideas at its meetings October 30-November 1 and decided that the multilaterals should convene in early 1992 in Moscow.

Edward Djerejian, who replaced John Kelly as NEA Assistant Secretary at the end of September, was in Madrid and was particularly interested in the multilaterals, especially the Water Resources Working Group. He authorized RA to hire Charles Lawson, a Middle East water resources expert, and we also organized an advisory group with representatives from the AID and Army Corps of Engineers and academics. Just after New Year's Day, Ed asked me to go to Moscow to prepare for the January 28-29 multilateral kickoff; while I was still in his office, he called Secretary Baker to confirm the arrangements. It was a go. When I arrived in Moscow a few days later, it was bitingly cold. It was also just a couple of weeks after the Soviet Union had collapsed and the Foreign Ministry was in disarray. I spent hours on the secure phone with Dan Kurtzer in the Department strategizing how to manage the disarray stemming from our recalcitrant Russian hosts.

Secretary Baker remained closely engaged as the Moscow meeting approached. An hour or so before the conference convened, he personally inspected the meeting site to check the seating arrangements and make a few changes. After the opening plenary meeting, Baker had an unscheduled meeting with the Russians that precluded his chairing the opening session of the Multilateral Working Group Steering Committee as we had planned. Djerejian, who was slated to chair the Water Resources Group, would do it instead, and I would replace Djerejian in the Water Resources Group.

Paul Simon, Chuck Lawson, and I headed off to the meeting. It was supposed to be a set piece. I would open the meeting because everybody agreed beforehand the Americans would chair. There would be statements by all parties and then we would announce success and all go home.

It did not happen that way. The Arabs objected immediately because they did not want the title of head of the committee to be anything that would translate as "rayees" (president or chairman) in Arabic. They had no objection to me; I knew most of these

people personally. At bottom, the Arabs sought to make a political point that they were not going along necessarily with what they thought were pre-cooked arrangements with the Israelis.

My inspiration was to declare a recess and appoint a "friends" group to consult with me as to what we could do. After about an hour's break, there was agreement on my proposal that I be called the "gavel holder." Not only did I become the gavel holder, my counterparts in the other working groups became gavel holders as well, including in the steering group. The title continues today. It is my most lasting contribution to the Middle East Peace Process.

Over the next two years, the Water Resources Working Group met every few months. There were two purposes; first was substantive - to discuss water issues, and on that I was surprised at how much people were willing to help. The EU offered money to finance projects and studies; the EU representative jokingly remarked, "that's why I am here." AID volunteered to do staff studies of the various proposals to deal with the Middle East water shortages. The Army Corps of Engineers generously lent Jerry Priscoli, a noted Middle East water expert, to help out. INR reached out to the academic community, which also was eager to write papers and give advice.

The most concrete outcome of the working group was to establish a water resources research center in Oman. Of the five working groups, the water group is the only one to continue in some way today. This is in part because it was technological rather than just political, and additionally because we could identify humanitarian common interests. While the multilateral working group itself no longer exists, the ideas behind it go on today in the form of the same countries, including both Israelis and Arabs, being represented on the board of directors of the water resources research center in Oman.

The second major purpose was socialization. The idea was we would get the Arabs and Israelis to know each other as people. We would arrange social events and excursions to this end. After Moscow, the next meeting of working group was held in Washington. We convinced the Tennessee Valley Authority to sponsor an elaborate luncheon on the Eighth Floor of the State Department. I remember it cost $8,000. The TVA representative in Washington balked until the chairman of the TVA intervened.

After the luncheon, a chartered aircraft paid for by the TVA flew the group to Tennessee where they spent an overnight visit touring TVA projects. We arranged so that the Arabs and Israelis sat next to each other on the plane and buses and mixed at social events. We were conniving all the way. To some extent it worked at least in the microcosm of the Water Resources Group. Twenty-some years later, however, you can doubt whether such efforts to build comity overall have had much lasting effect in view of the emphasis now on walls, separation, and isolation.

After Moscow and Washington, we met in Geneva, Vienna, Rome, and London and when I left RA, we were planning to meet in Japan. The Japanese representative said, "It

is the same distance from Tokyo to Washington as it is from Washington to Tokyo. It's your turn to come here."

The principal diplomatic problem I had in these meetings stemmed from the fact the Israelis refused to deal with any Palestinian who was a member of the PLO; and on the other hand, the Palestinians had designated the PLO as their official representative. This meant the credentialing of the Palestinian delegation was a source of high-level concern and on-the-ground difficulty. I remember at the meeting in Vienna the US Intelligence Community had checked the Palestinians the best it could to figure out their connections. Of course, the Israelis knew these people much better than we did and raised numerous objections. It was necessary to delay the opening session for a day while I brokered compromises about credentials.

The resulting Palestinian delegates were largely obscurities who had two characteristics. First they were technically well-qualified, such as being a hydraulic engineer, and spoke good English. The second was they had no authority. This meant that at any substantive point in the discussion the Palestinians would break away to get instructions because they had no leeway whatsoever.

On the other hand, the Israelis had their own problems. They had at least three lawyers on their delegation, and they could be either the greatest obstacle or the greatest help. If they wanted to help, they could find a way. If they did not want to help, it was impossible to proceed.

Since the Water Resources Working Group was regarded by the Israelis as the most important of the five, they also frequently had to check with the Prime Minister's Office. I remember spending most of one night going back and forth between the Israelis and Palestinians and thought I had brokered a compromise on next steps. I had the Palestinians on board. The Palestinians would give *gestalt* advice, saying, "Here is what our objectives are. Go off and get us the best deal you can."

The Israelis would have their three lawyers look at the text and provide detailed comments.

When I presented the proposal to the Israeli delegation for what I hoped was final approval, even they thought we were about to make a break through. Then one of the lawyers received a call from the Prime Minister's Office on his cell phone (it was the first cell phone I had ever seen) and the deal was off, period.

Q: This is the Israeli side?

KEISWETTER: The Israeli side. I was a bit crestfallen. The man who had received the call looked at me and said, "Haven't you ever negotiated a failure before?" My answer was "No, not really I haven't."

From this period, I would like to relate a few recollections of the Seventh Floor. Secretary Baker, with whom I worked fairly closely later after he was no longer Secretary of State, I saw twice in the entire period. Once was in Moscow and the second time was when he came down to NEA to present an award for our performance in support of the Iraq War and the Peace Process.

I got to know Deputy Secretary Eagleburger reasonably well from briefing him on various occasions. He became the Seventh Floor home for the tin-cup exercise. I remember he was Acting Secretary when Queen Elizabeth visited. And we cooled our heels in his outer office awaiting his return from the White House arrival ceremony. He related that a most embarrassing thing had happened. When the Chief of Protocol was introducing a guest to the Queen, the guest had passed gas. Eagleburger had taken the man aside and said, "How can you do that before the Queen?" The man replied, "I didn't know it was her turn." Obviously, Eagleburger had a sense of humor.

In my briefings of Kimmitt, I was very much impressed by his grasp of things. Before the Iraq War, the US had a policy of engagement. Driven by Kimmitt, the idea was to integrate Iraq into what was called the moderate Arab consensus. Under this policy, we had given the Iraqis a couple of billion dollars of credits, mainly for purchase of US agriculture products. Suddenly with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Kimmitt was very politically vulnerable and I think stricken with doubt about his advocacy of this policy. For ten days or two weeks it was impossible to get any decisions out of the Office of the Under Secretary for Political Affairs (P). He just found himself unable to decide. Not too long after that, Kimmitt was nominated to be Ambassador to Germany and Arnie Kanter from the White House staff became P.

Q: You are there up to the buildup of the Iraqi invasion. You set up the taskforce. Could you walk us through to the telephone calls you said you experienced? How serious were people? Where was the policy level, policy decisions on how to respond to Saddam's threats?

KEISWETTER: As I recollect, there was not a great deal of preparation at my level. David Mack, who was also greatly involved, would probably give a more elaborate account of the buildup. Basically, NEA/EX (Executive Directorate) was charged with the leg work of setting up the task force and contacting people for duty. We sought to ensure other agencies were there, particularly people from the Pentagon. At the policy level, I remember thinking that although I had wondered why the delay in setting the post-invasion meetings, it was obvious in the meetings that they had a good idea of what they wanted to do from previous discussions.

Personally, I quickly found myself occupied with keeping up with the cable traffic and events leaving the actual mechanics to EX. The high-level coordination fell to P.

Q: The State Department has gotten better and better putting together task forces. At the time you are talking about with the Iraq invasion, what was the physical space that you used?

KEISWETTER: I remember four rooms and a central secretarial space. One large room where I worked had a long table with a dozen telephones around it and the director at the end. There was another room like that but smaller used for the consular task force. There was a third room where three or four could meet and eventually became David Mack's office. There was a fourth room reserved for senior officials and included the CVTS connections. Finally, there was an open secretarial area that included several phone booths that I used to maintain open lines to the Canadians and Embassies in Kuwait and Baghdad.

Q: It is up around the Operations Center?

KEISWETTER: Yes. It was all in the Operations Center.

Q: That first night how was it set up? Who called in other people? Was there enough run up to the war that people had been evacuated from the area and you had separate bodies lying around?

KEISWETTER: Initially, this was very much a catch-as-catch-can arrangement and the reason I was there so long was because we were still institutionalizing the taskforce. The first evening two things were happening; one was supporting the principals, especially Kimmitt when he participated in the Washington Action Group. The other thing, of course, was taking care of the calls from the field and the liaison relationships.

Q: You mentioned the Canadians. What were they concerned about?

KEISWETTER: They were very much concerned about what was happening in Kuwait, especially about their diplomats. At one point in the evening, our Embassy in Kuwait feared the Iraqis may be coming over the walls and had destroyed our communications equipment, reducing communications to the very limited capability of an offsite CIA communication package.

Q: A task force is going to be set up. It is going to run 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That's why you were there for 36 hours straight so at first you were just pulling from the staff in Washington; somebody from PM, somebody from EB, everybody send a body.

KEISWETTER: This went on for at least a couple of weeks and maybe longer. Once the evacuation started, NEA put these people wherever they were needed and a lot of them ended up in the task force.

Q: The task force was feeding the seventh floor? Or feeding the principals?

KEISWETTER: Yes.

Q: Was there a regular reporting document that was generated?

KEISWETTER: Yes, there were two reporting documents; one that went up about 7am in the morning and another late afternoon one about 5pm. The idea was something when they arrived in the morning and something before the principals went home at night, a pattern that I suspect still continues.

Q: Once the initial set up is organized I assume there is a special, there is a decision as to who is supposed to be on the task force so that they can pull in from their sources so I suppose there is somebody from the military?

KEISWETTER: Yes, there was somebody from the military, somebody from Treasury. I think we had three persons from DOD in fact. We had somebody from Justice and the FBI at various points. PM of course was a large part of the task force and eventually created its own separate task force.

Q: Really? At what point?

KEISWETTER: I do not remember exactly. Initially, the task force was largely done out of NEA resources and other people we could dragoon in with P's help. Then after that, we would recruit from across the Department, especially other regional bureaus. About a month or so later, the task force became almost entirely a creature of the evacuees from our embassies in the region. I believe it was at that point that Ryan Crocker, then our Ambassador in Beirut, replaced David Mack as the supervisory director of the task force.

Q: Given the State Department's responsibility for American citizens overseas, I assume there was a separate consular task force?

KEISWETTER: Yes, there was one, which was in the smaller task force office and had the usual 800 number for finding out about friends and relatives.

Q: Peter Tomsen I think was still in NEA as a special envoy to the Afghan resistance. Was that issue still in play?

KEISWETTER: I remember talking to him about asking the Saudis to intervene with the Taliban to prevent them from defacing the big Buddhas in Afghanistan. The Saudis replied, "We can't control those guys. There isn't anything we can do about that."

Q: Now on the taskforce issues the Desert Storm air campaign starts on January 17, 1991. Were you on the task force at that time?

KEISWETTER: No, I was not. It was not commonly known that it was going to start on January 17th.

I have two anecdotes about that. I had been at the Pentagon where I had by inadvertence found out the date and I reported it to John Kelly. He told me to get the information immediately to the Secretary's office because he was not sure the Secretary knew.

I remember on the night of the 17th that I had gone up at the end of the day to talk to Kelly about the tin-cup exercise. I found it encouraging that things were in hand when at 7pm the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs was packing up his bags to go home as the attack was about to occur.

Q: The ground war started a little over a month later on February 23rd.

KEISWETTER: I remember doing such things as coordinating with various international agencies, especially UN representatives, about movements in and out of the war zone and trying to make sure US forces did not shoot down their aircraft by mistake.

At one point, Jock who told me, "You've got 45 minutes to get information about a UN flight to US forces; otherwise who knows what will happen? The airplane may be shot down."

I remember doing whatever I had to do as fast as I could praying for the best and then coming home wondering if there would be another phone call to say, "Sorry. There's a problem."

Q: In the midst of this after the Gulf War and as it settles down, Ed Djerejian becomes the Assistant Secretary. How was his leadership style particularly in the wake of these incredible events?

KEISWETTER: Easy, easy to work for and I would say forgiving of mistakes, which was a welcome turn. I remember one example. He was making his initial calls on the Hill and we were told that he had an appointment with Senator Kerry and so we had prepared the briefing materials for Senator Kerry of Massachusetts and the appointment turned out to be with Senator Kerry of Nebraska. Under John Kelly, there would have been people fired, heads would have rolled. Djerejian also had a strong personal relationship with Baker. He had been DCM in Jordan when I knew him first and was serving as Ambassador to Syria before he became NEA Assistant Secretary.

Besides the multilaterals and tin cup, our major collaboration with Ed was on speechwriting and preparation of testimony. He and I worked together to draft the first speech by a US official on political Islam, largely inspired by the Islamic insurgency in Algeria. It still stands up well and is available online (See "The US and the Middle East in a Changing World," *The DISAM Journal* (Summer 1992), http://www.disam.dsca.mil/pubs/ Vol 14_4/Djerejian.pdf)

In addition, Jock was replaced by Beth Jones. Beth is a born administrator, a great master of substance, and has my highest regards. With the coming of the new regime, I enjoyed my work environment much more.

Q: One of the interesting administrative things that happened to NEA during this time was it was split up. How did that affect your operation? I believe that it was split so that Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal became South Asia?

KEISWETTER: There was another DAS that I forgot to mention. This was Tezi Schafer. When there was an NEA/SA --that is, a combined Near East and South Asia Bureau -- she was the DAS in charge of South Asia. She and I always got along extremely well and I enjoyed working with her.

Now that you ask the question, RA continued to provide support to her when South Asia became a separate bureau, including support on congressional issues, speech writing, and non-proliferation issues. Eventually the new bureau created its own RA office after I left.

Q: What is your understanding of why the separation occurred?

KEISWETTER: It was congressionally mandated. NEA and the Department opposed it. There were periodically issues like this. Why is Canada no longer a part of EUR but a part of Western Hemisphere Affairs? Well, Congress wanted it that way. It was congressionally mandated in a budget bill.

Another related episode was Jock's nomination to be Assistant Secretary for the new bureau. He had been tagged to be Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, but the Saudis did not want a bureaucrat, preferring someone with personal connections to the President.

Q: A Bandar counterpart.

KEISWETTER: Right. Then there was the question of who lost Iraq. He had signed out for John Kelly reams of cables on Iraq and he had cleared for the bureau hundreds, thousands of cables. Sometimes his name would be on it and sometimes it would say John Kelly and then just say 'JC'.

Senator Helms, a Republican from North Carolina who chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, took after him. He blamed the State Department for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, holding Jock culpable as representative of the Arabists, who in Helms' view had gotten us into so much trouble.

Jock and I spent weeks going through his papers in preparation for a possible confirmation hearing for Ambassador to Saudi Arabia or other position. The task took so long because he had hundreds of notebooks; he would never go to a meeting without taking notes. Unfortunately, he also wrote quite legibly. When Helms was threatening to subpoena them, Jock moved them to RA for safekeeping. In the end, his nomination did not work out. It is the tragedy of his career.

Q: It is a tragedy too the interaction of the State Department and Helms. Chas Freeman was Ambassador to Saudi Arabia only because Helms made it clear that Chas was not to be allowed to have any ambassadorial jobs in Asia.

KEISWETTER: This was the beginning of my getting to know Danielle Pletka, Helms' top Middle East assistant on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and when I was

back as first ARP director and then as DAS I got to know Danny much better. She and I know, like, and say hello to each other but that was not always true.

Q: During this period, we had a change of administrations. The Clinton administration started with Warren Christopher. That means transition time, that means the desks generally have to sit down and prepare briefing materials for the incoming people. How would that have impacted your work?

KEISWETTER: What I remember about Warren Christopher is he decided to have a series of Saturday morning seminars each two or three hours long. When it was NEA's turn, I was responsible for organizing them. It also meant that I had an invitation to attend some of the others as well.

Q: These would be issue specific?

KEISWETTER: Yes. The sessions were organized in hour-long segments. The segments I was involved in included a Middle East overview, the multilateral Peace Process, and Iraq sanctions and the tin-cup exercise.

He chose Clifton Wharton as Deputy Secretary, who was conspicuous by his absence from the Saturday seminars as other Seventh Floor Principals regularly attended. The word soon was in the press, reportedly from Christopher, that Wharton is a fine man but just not a good fit in the Department of State.

When I had come to RA, I had come as one of the glory boys and thought to be in line for an ambassadorship but I did something that blotted my copybook. It related to the nature of Assistant Secretary John Kelly, who was a very mercurial person. I do not even remember what the issue was but I represented NEA at an interagency meeting. The senior staff director for the Under Secretary for Political Affairs also participated. It turned out that P had a different point of view from what John Kelly's was and so I after much discussion acquiesced to P's view. Afterwards, John Kelly was furious that I had not stood my ground. I never heard this outburst. He, however, vented very strongly to Jock Covey, who passed on to me that basically, any hopes I might have had for an ambassadorship were now gone. It is strange. I never fully perceived when I went into this meeting that, indeed, I was in a position of being adamant, whatever P and others thought.

NATO and Brussels 1993-1996

Q: Today is May 5, 2011. We are returning to our conversation with Allen Keiswetter.

When we last got together we finished your assignment as director of NEA Regional Affairs. After that you did something quite unique and moved on to a NATO assignment. How does one get that job?

KEISWETTER: When I joined the Foreign Service, I thought I was a Europeanist. I was always especially interested in NATO. I had in fact spent a year at Harvard in Atlantic Affairs at the State Department's expense. This led to an assignment on the NATO desk. While there I became good friends with Eric Rehfeld, who occupied the office next to mine. He was in charge of all the technical aspects US-NATO relations, including staffing of NATO International Staff positions.

When I was up for assignment, he called to ask whether I would like to be Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs on the NATO International Staff. Jobs were informally assigned by nationality and this was the second ranking US position on the NATO staff. When it became clear to me that there was not an ambassadorship in my future in NEA in this assignment cycle, I jumped enthusiastically for NATO. In many ways the job was a labor of love. It was an escape from the sandbox for so many years in Arab posts and family-wise it could not be better because my wife's family is from Holland. Her first language at home, even though she was born and raised in the United States, was Dutch. She is also a French teacher so she would go to Brussels speaking Dutch, English, and French, which are the principal languages of the country. It meant that we could see Gerda's relatives in Holland frequently. Parenthetically, the Brussels assignment coincided with the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Europe in World War II. Since many of Gerda's relatives were involved in the Dutch underground, it was an occasion for them to tell their stories.

Professionally, I loved the job. My weak point in competing for the job was my French. When I learned that I would have an interview for the position conducted in French as well as English, I began an intensive review for an hour a day with Madame Cossard, who was the retired head of the French language department at FSI and lived near us in Arlington. The interview was conducted at NATO Headquarters in Brussels by the man that turned out to be my boss, the Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs Gebhardt Moltke. I passed muster with no problems.

Gebhardt was one of the most extraordinary people I have ever worked for. His uncle had tried to blow up Hitler, and he was the great grandson and grandson of the von Moltke, famous in German military history during World War I and before. He was absolutely committed to the mission of unifying Europe and ending its Cold War divisions. He lived in Bonn but kept an apartment in Brussels. His idea of a work week would be to work about 12 hours a day with a break for a business lunch or tennis. Then nearly every Friday, he would fly out to some part of Europe for weekend conferences. I remember one weekend he flew out on Friday to a conference in Denmark, flew to another conference in Spain, and then flew from Spain back to Bonn, where he spent Sunday night with his wife, driving in early Monday morning to work at NATO Headquarters in Brussels.

The relevance to me is that since he travelled so much, it was my job to keep the office running. There was a staff of about 60 with representatives of each of the 16 NATO countries. While I had considerable scope in some ways, I knew Gebhardt had strong

views that had to be respected. He once remarked he felt comfortable traveling because he did not have to worry about his back while he was away.

Gebhardt was also known for his entertaining. The European system of entertainment allowances is entirely different than in the US Foreign Service. In our system we have strict rules, and expenditures have to be approved in advance. Under NATO rules and in fact in senior positions in most European governments, officials receive a certain allowance, period. In his case, it was 10 percent of his salary for entertainment. Since he came from an aristocratic German family, his idea of entertainment was to go to the best restaurants in Brussels. They would serve five-course lavish meals and he would choose the finest wines.

He established an informal coordinating group of 10 or 12 of his and my counterparts at the EU and the Western European Union (WEU) for monthly sessions over dinner. It was out of this group that many initiatives for coordination among NATO, EU, and the WEU came. I think it was productive use of NATO money. It is just a different style of diplomacy and accounting for things.

Q: What were the kinds of issues that this office dealt with?

KEISWETTER: First of all, I was chair of the Political Committee. This was my primary responsibility. This committee functioned at the Political Counselor level in the Missions. Major issues we dealt with included Bosnia, relations with Russia, and the expansion of NATO. It met weekly.

Gebhardt chaired what was called the Senior Political Committee, which was the DCMs. It met as called and did things like prepare for the NATO summits and established the basic ground rules for the expansion of NATO, looking at models from prior NATO expansions.

As to people, talking particularly about the Political Committee, the French representative was a lady in her mid 30s named Madame Aurelia Boucher. She had studied in the United States and spoke perfect English but she would go to great lengths to ensure that the NATO rules saying that everything will be in French as well as English were honored. When the NATO Political Committee made a field trip to the NATO naval base in Naples, the Joint Allied Force there had made no provisions to translate proceedings into French. Everyone, of course, on the committee spoke at least 4/4 English, including Madame Bouchez; she said to me, “Allen, you speak French. Translate.” So I translated for more than an hour, and every member of that Committee knew the strengths and weaknesses of my French when we got done.

I always liked her personally and we would sit together in briefings or while traveling. Once when the French were the only hold out on an issue, I called her up, “You are blocking consensus. Everybody else is on board and you are isolated.” She retorted, “Allen, you fail to understand. We like it.” I also had especially good relations with the

German and the UK delegations. Moreover, since Gebhardt was so busy, I frequently fielded the political complaints of the smaller NATO countries.

During my three years, there were three Secretaries General, plus an acting one. During my first year, Manfred Woerner was serving his sixth year as Secretary General. A former German Defense Minister and a flying ace, he claimed he had made more decisions in one minute of flying a fighter plane than he did in a year as the Secretary General of NATO. His assistant was Klaus Scharioth, US educated and later German Ambassador to the United States. In addition, both had close ties to my boss Gebhardt von Moltke, who later became German Ambassador to Great Britain and then German Ambassador to NATO.

Woerner died of cancer in August 1994, sometimes in the last months of life presiding over the North Atlantic Council with doctors in the wings and an ambulance at the door. Sergio Balanzino, an Italian diplomat, succeeded him as acting for several months until Willy Claes, a Belgian politician, was chosen. He lasted a year before resigning because of charges of bribery when he was Belgian economics minister. He was replaced by Spanish Foreign Minister Javier Solana in December 1995 before I left in the summer of 1996.

These rapid changes had surprisingly little effect on NATO's role in part because of the strong international staff and strong leadership by the US and other major countries. While each Secretary General brought his entourage, it was Woerner's that largely held sway held sway until Solano was well established.

I remember taking notes in a meeting in Geneva between NATO Secretary General Woerner and UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali. While the conversation was in French, I wrote up the notes in English in good Foreign Service style. It was not at all what Woerner wanted. Scharioth explained it as a clash of cultures and personal circumstance. Apparently Woerner thought it should have been in French; moreover, he had just begun a draconian diet as part of an unorthodox attempt to counter his cancer. Balanzino filled the gaps as Woerner declined and served as Acting Secretary General for several months on either end of Claes' tenure. Particularly when Von Moltke was traveling, I interacted with him.

On the US Mission side, Bob Hunter was the Ambassador. Bob Pearson, who later was our Ambassador to Turkey and the Director General of the Foreign Service, was the Deputy Chief of Mission.

The major issue shortly after I arrived was a NATO Summit, the first which President Bill Clinton would attend. The agenda included the approval of expansion of NATO and setting up mechanisms by which it could happen, approving an out-of-area role for NATO in Bosnia, and laying the ground work for guiding NATO's relations with Russia as NATO expanded and took on new missions.

From the visit itself, I have two or three strong personal impressions. One is I turned up four times in the receiving lines for President Clinton in various capacities as part of the US mission and as a senior member of NATO International Staff. At the final time, he said, "Oh, Allen, I know you."

Since I was the junior person on the NATO International Staff delegation to actually sit at the oval conference table, I was at the end of the delegation. This positioned me to sit next to the head of the US delegation – President Clinton during the summit but at other times the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Defense. While usually they were looking at their agenda papers, I remember Defense Secretary William Perry was reading T.S. Elliot poem "The Waste Land" hidden in the pages of his NATO briefing book.

I was also part of the delegation to welcome French President Mitterrand to the 1993 Summit. I walked into the NATO building immediately behind Mitterrand and NATO Secretary General Woerner. Mitterrand mentioned to Woerner that he looked nervous. The former fighter pilot fighter acknowledged that he was. To which, Mitterrand replied, "Well, there's no need for that. Do you think there is anyone here who doesn't want the meeting to be a success?"

This is a small story that I have found useful to tell others at times of tension. You assume people are there with a common purpose and good will. You might not achieve your highest aims but it is not going to fail.

I did travel occasionally. I went to Moscow three or four times because I negotiated the first six agreements between Russia and NATO. I do not want to mislead you; they dealt with such things as exchange of documents, office space in each other's headquarters, security arrangements, and similar details. I usually tried to combine a negotiating visit to Moscow with a speaking engagement at a think tank or a Ministry in Moscow.

The main action with Russia was handled by von Moltke. These diplomatic efforts culminated in the signing of the NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations some years later n 1997 but only after several misfires. The issue during my tenure was whether Russia would officially join the Partnership for Peace that included all the other former Soviet Union countries. Russia Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev met with the NATO Ambassadors in March 1994 supposedly for the purpose of signing entry documents. Before the meeting, there had been press reports that Kozyrev and President Yeltsin differed on the issue. At the North Atlantic Council session, Kozyrev deferred speaking several times. When all of the NATO Ambassadors had spoken, Secretary General Woerner remarked, "You are not going to sign are you?" Kozyrev acknowledged that he would not. Russia never did but as an outgrowth the 1997 NATO -Russia Founding Act, the NATO Russia Council was created in lieu of Russia's joining the Partnership for Peace.

I also traveled to Bulgaria, which was another part of my bailiwick, in my capacity as the Chair of the Committee for the Partnership for Peace. The Partnership for Peace was an organization created by NATO as a means of incorporating the former states of the Soviet

Union and Eastern Europe into NATO. It was well understood that for some of them this was as far as they would ever go, but for others like Hungary, Poland, and the Baltic states this was just one step on the way to become members of NATO.

Bulgaria wanted very much to make this step into the select group of obvious countries to move into NATO. I flew there as head of a NATO delegation. My basic instructions on the issue of NATO membership were not to promise anything at this point; in essence, the visit was the message.

The visit was typical. I arrived at the airport. There was a gaggle of press shouting, "When is Bulgaria getting into NATO?" I gave non-answers such as, "I am glad to be here to talk to the Bulgarian government about the issues of Bulgaria and NATO." It was not very satisfying for the Bulgarians.

From the three days in Bulgaria I came away with some observations. First, there were the signs of the past. We stayed in a large palace that had been built for a Warsaw Pact summit. Each of us had a suite intended for a head of state. I was impressed too by the long, long caravan including an ambulance that was organized for our protection. Second, I was impressed by the change. Many streets were blocked by striking workers whose protests shared top headlines along with my visit. Third, I remember is a visit to monastery in the mountains which kept a saint's penis as a relic.

Q: Working for NATO you are a member of the International Staff. What is the relationship between the American delegation, US/NATO and you as a NATO International Staff member?

KEISWETTER: In theory, there is not a relationship. In actuality, there is a strong one. I saw Bob Pearson at least weekly and had access to the NODIS and the EXDIS cables. Part of the expectation was I would in fact be a conduit with some discretion in getting the American message across. This always involved a discussion with Pearson about any possibly sensitive information. This role was not a major part of my job, but in many ways, it was an interesting and even vital part to help at times, in NATO language, to find consensus.

For example, it helped that I would usually know the American delegate's instructions before I got to a meeting of the Political Committee. Part of the chairman's duties in NATO forums is to summarize the results of the meeting hoping that it can find consensus. This was a skill that I honed. I would summarize the meeting, describing what I thought to be consensus; delegations would then report my summary back to their capitals and usually obtain permission to officially join consensus. I found this skill very useful in meetings in general, whether at NATO or later in my community service life. If you can come up with a summary that everybody agrees with, you have just shaped events.

Q: You were serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs. Did NATO have other offices in which there were American Foreign Service officers?

KEISWETTER: Yes, there was another FSO on the NATO IS and she worked for me. In addition, there were a few Americans from other parts of the US Government. While I was Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs, Greg Schulte was Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political-Military Affairs. He has since gone on to be the US Ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

He was not an FSO but rather had come up through the civilian side of the Defense Department. The two of us worked closely on NATO involvement in Bosnia. I remember especially that he and I along with my boss Gebhardt von Moltke and several others would gather in NATO's secure facility waiting out deadlines for the Serbs to comply with NATO ultimatums. Failure of the Serbs to comply meant initiation of NATO bombing raids. I remember thinking as one deadline was expiring that Gebhardt had such things in his blood given his family history.

Q: You were saying that Bosnia was one of the things that came up often during your time. How did it come up?

KEISWETTER: When I arrived in the summer of '93, the Europeans had decided it was the Year of Europe. Heading the EU at this time was Luxemburg, not the most powerful of its members, and the major issue was what to do about the situation in the former Yugoslavia, especially Bosnia and Serbia.

The Europeans decided they would take this problem on since it was in their bailiwick; the US reaction to this initiative was, "Fine, go to it." It, however, quickly became apparent, first, there was not much agreement among the Europeans as to what should be done; and, second, that Europe was not sufficiently organized militarily to be able to carry out whatever they might decide. Over the course of about six months, there was an evolution to devolve the responsibility to NATO. The position of NATO, led by US views, was, "Yes, NATO could do that but it would have to be done under UN auspices." This led to several conversations between NATO and the UN, for example, the one between NATO Secretary General Woerner and UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali in Geneva where I took notes. After several interactions, the UN Security Council approved a resolution that was not as strong as the United States would have liked but it did provide political cover for a series of NATO ultimatums and air strikes.

On these matters, there was an informal division of labor between Greg and myself with most of the responsibility falling to him. I remember his passing me at a senior staff meeting one morning the essence of the NATO strike plan for Serbia and Bosnia. In a small contribution, I scribbled at the bottom, "This is fine but what's the exit strategy? How do we end this?" This became a major theme as we went afterward.

Q: Let's look at the Bosnia thing from NATO's viewpoint. By the time you arrived, Yugoslavia had already broken up. All these ethnic conflicts had started. How did the Bosnia decision flow through NATO?

KEISWETTER: Difficultly. There were many late-night and weekend meetings of the ambassadorial-level North Atlantic Council and lower-level committees. First of all, there were issues of US policy, then issues between the Americans and the Europeans, and of course issues among the Europeans themselves. Frequently there were also questions of NATO liaison to the EU or to the Western European Union. It was extremely difficult at the beginning, and even once the policy decisions were made and NATO was in the lead, the decision making was still fraught.

Q: What was NATO supposed to do about Bosnia?

KEISWETTER: We had two mandates. First was a protection mandate. The mission actually caused the downfall of the Dutch government because Dutch troops were deployed to Bosnia and they failed to prevent the massacre at Srebrenica. The second part was of course the issue of bringing the Serbs to heel and that is where the ultimatums come in.

Q: The impression I get is that the national delegations were coordinating with NATO as the implementer.

KEISWETTER: Yes, as the implementer, but we were also making policy because there was not a common policy and you needed a common policy.

Implementation also brings up the issue of France and the military side of NATO. I should go back and explain the basic reason why the Political Committee was really involved in Bosnia/Herzegovina at all. This was because the French, who did not participate in the military side of NATO, had no representation on the military committee and did not participate in the political-military committee when it involved military issues.

So what happened was that issues that had to have involvement with the French would be sent to the Political Committee. We would do the work. It was a work-around.

The way things would go was the following: the ambassadors would authorize certain military planning. The military planning would be done by the NATO military committee, working with the military forces, that is, the NATO Supreme Allied Command, and then the report would come back up through the various channels to the ambassadors again. The Political Committee would be involved in this as a way of accommodating French participation before it got to the ambassadors.

Q: What other professional responsibilities did you have at NATO?

Just let me highlight a few things.

I made two trips to Norway in the context of my responsibilities for smaller NATO countries. I always liked the Norwegians and a person I got to know very well was the ranking Norwegian on the NATO staff who headed our information office. He had had a

heart attack and he was back at the office for a few days when he called me to say, "I am due now to go down to speak to a group but I just don't feel well. Can you step in for me?" So I did with no preparation. I started out explaining how much I loved Norway, and jokingly said I would give up my citizenship if I could just be made a Norwegian citizen. To my embarrassment, a man raised his hand in the question period to explain, "We are Swedish." Swedes, of course, are not members of NATO, and I had just assumed the audience was Norwegian. He then asked me if I knew how to find out if a person is Norwegian? The answer: You ask, are you Swedish?

Another task that fell to me was negotiating with the Swiss to transport military equipment by rail from Belgium across Switzerland to Bosnia. The Swiss had not allowed the transit of Switzerland by foreign military forces and materiel in 300 years. This involved two trips to Switzerland on my part. The Swiss Foreign Ministry initially cautioned that permission might require a parliamentary decision or even a national referendum. In the end, the Swiss Cabinet felt competent to agree on its own authority, but the route across Switzerland turned out to be not as useful as we had hoped because some of the tanks and other equipment were too big to pass through Swiss tunnels.

Another of my responsibilities was to supervise the speechwriting section and I spent a lot of time grappling with the perennial issue of why NATO should exist now the Cold War was over. We argued that if NATO did not exist, it would have to be created because of the great advantage that its political and military cooperation provided for members. Strategically, this included the Article 5 commitment to joint defense if attacked. Politically, the frequent political consultations allowed like-minded NATO countries to speak out with one voice. Militarily, the interoperability and integrated command structure of NATO forces magnified their political and military significances, especially for smaller states such as the Benelux countries. Moreover, in the context of the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO provided a security framework that eased the liberation of Eastern Europe and the transition of countries of the former Soviet Union. Just as the EU provided an economic bulwark, NATO provided a security bulwark.

Perhaps the most significant contribution we made to updating NATO's rationale was in a speech prepared for a visit of Secretary General Woerner to the United States; we coined the phrase "out of area or out of business." This was sparked in large part by Bosnia events. NATO, according to its charter, is supposed to be concerned with the security of the North Atlantic area. Taking a broad definition of that treaty commitment, we coined this phrase to mean we should take on new missions such as Bosnia. Of course, that has now led to other missions, such those in Afghanistan and Libya.

Q: Personally, what was it like having an assignment in Brussels?

KEISWETTER: Wonderful, we loved it. It was two hours by car to Amsterdam or Paris and we had lots of visitors. I perfected the one-day trip to London from Brussels. We could catch the 7am Eurostar chunnel train that would put us three or four hours later in London. There was a one-hour time difference so we would get there by 10 or 10:30am. Then you could go from the train station to Westminster, see the changing of the guard at

Buckingham Palace at noon, have lunch at some place in Piccadilly, then go off to see the crown jewels in the Tower of London and finally catch a ferry back up the Thames to the train station where you could catch the 5 o'clock train back to Brussels, getting in about 9 o'clock. I did that several times.

Our children at this point were young teenagers, Emma in seventh grade and Sesa in the ninth grade. They both went to the Brussels International School, an extremely good school. Emma took half of her classes where the language of instruction was in French; so her French still is very good. Sesa was in the process of discovering that she is gay and so that was also a major transition.

At the end of my three-year tour in Brussels, I was invited to stay on but did not because the children wanted to go home and "become Americans" as they put it. So I declined the extension. Since they were teenagers, as we were leaving the last week, their complaint was "How come you are taking us away from our friends? This is not fair." Still in retrospect, it was the right thing to do. They came back to be "Americanized" and I think did much better here career-wise than if we had stayed in Brussels.

Besides getting to know better Gerda's side of the family in Holland, just before we left Brussels, we also visited the Keiswetter family origins outside Coburg, Germany.

Q: What part of Germany is this?

KEISWETTER: The town is Lautertal, divided into Oberlauter and Unterlauter, located north of Coburg in the middle of Germany just on the West German side of the former border between the two Germanys. I wrote beforehand to the Chamber of Commerce in Coburg to say I would like to hire a researcher to search for historical records. They came up with a German graduate student who was studying English, and I paid her some hundreds of dollars and she spent time over several weeks researching church records and traced the family origins back 300 or 400 years. In the town where the family comes from, there were two churches; Catholic and Protestant. Our Keiswetter family was Protestant and we learned a few details about the Keiswetter family over the years. They had a very typical German existence. My forbearers made sausages, owned a brewery, or were farmers.

Q: When you are in the embassy, you have the American communication system. Does NATO have its own classified communication, telegrams?

KEISWETTER: Yes. They do. There is something called NATO confidential, NATO secret. It is basically organized on the American system.

Q: But it is a separate encrypted system run by the NATO offices themselves? It is not run by the embassies?

KEISWETTER: There is a difference between communications and classification. NATO did have classified communications networks but they were all military done through

NATO commands. Otherwise, it was a classification system using member communications. The recipients on the other end would have to have NATO clearances to read the communications.

INR/IL – Director of the Office of Intelligence Liaison, 1996-1998.

Q: In the summer of '96 you came back to Washington. How did you get this job as director of the INR office of Intelligence Liaison?

KEISWETTER: I got it through the assignment process. I had the choice of two office directorships. One was to go back to NEA to be the Office Director for the Levant (ARN) and the other one was to go to INR, where I would be the Director for Intelligence Liaison (IL). I chose INR because I thought it would broaden my horizons. I had previous experience in INR when I was a junior officer as an analyst and looked forward to learning about the operational side.

As Director of Intelligence Liaison, I was responsible for the State Department's coordination with the CIA and DIA. I was also the Department of State's representative on the interagency covert action committee and one or two other interagency committees. Also, when ambassadors could not get along with their station chief or their defense attaché, the problem was mine at least initially.

From these responsibilities I learned a lot about how the Intelligence Community (IC) operates. The rules governing the IC differ from the practices of diplomacy. Frequently the rules are set by law and require notification to Congress and/or findings by the President. I am grateful to my boss Jennifer Sims for my education in this regard. She had come from the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence staff. Her mentor was John Danforth, a liberal Republican Senator from Missouri. She was extremely bright with her PhD in intelligence studies.

Jennifer was a superb briefer and had many excellent ideas such as creating a corps of retired FSO and GS retirees who would serve as a surge capacity on intelligence issues. But she was grossly unorganized and a micromanager in the extreme. Papers piled up in her inbox sometimes for days even when they were urgent. In my introductory interview with Toby Gati, the Assistant Secretary of INR, she told me, "Your job is to be Jennifer's DCM." Unfortunately, Jennifer did not agree.

One of my most interesting problems involved China. In 1997, the British were giving back Hong Kong to China, and there was a policy question as to whether the Consul General Hong Kong should continue to report directly to Washington, or whether Hong Kong would now fall under the chief of mission authority of the US Ambassador in Beijing. I worked out a compromise with the Bureau of East Asian Affairs regarding the State view of the intelligence arrangements. The Intelligence Community also agreed. Jennifer was the single dissenting voice throughout the entire process. While she went on vacation, Under Secretary for Political Affairs Tom Pickering requested the long-stalled decision paper. Both the Assistant Secretary for INR and for East Asia concurred in the

interagency compromise. When Jennifer returned, she was furious and demanded the decision paper be returned so she could strengthen the arguments she supported. It went back up sometime later and Pickering still decided in favor of the compromise. The result, which appertains until the present, is that Consulate General of Hong Kong does not fall under the chief of mission authority of the US Ambassador in Beijing.

Things came to a head when Phyllis Oakley, a friend from NEA, replaced Toby Gati and named Ed Abington, previously Consul General in Jerusalem, to be PDAS. Jennifer did not get along well with either Phyllis or Ed. After a few months, Phyllis fired her in essence for non-performance.

The irony is that despite this history, Jennifer and I still liked each other. Several years later we both were in San Diego at the International Securities Association Conference where she was on a panel about ethics and intelligence. We talked beforehand. Then in her opening remarks, she mentioned, "Allen Keiswetter, a colleague from when we worked together in INR, is here. I would like to recognize him. He tried to teach me lessons I didn't learn. They related to good government." I was grateful for the remarks.

Q: It sounds like the work of this office put you right at a node where all the other intelligence agencies are coming together in addition to things like the Hong Kong thing. What other kinds of coordinating things might you have gotten involved in?

KEISWETTER: I would like to go back to covert action because I think I can talk about it in unclassified ways. We would meet in the Executive Office Building in a secure room that had lots of oak paneling. Many of these sessions were about Osama bin Laden, including proposals on some very fanciful James Bond ideas from outside the Intelligence Community. The CIA would never say an outright no to any of these things. They would just outline the pros and cons. I remember in one case, they commented, "Yes, we can do it. It would destroy the international banking system but other than that, we don't see a problem." The CIA would never say in this forum, "This is a dumb idea;" they would just weight the negatives to make sure the idea was rejected.

Q: Some of these interagency meetings that you attended, were they held in one place or you rotated DIA, CIA?

KEISWETTER: NSC committees were held at the White House or Executive Office Building. Others were held in the agencies most concerned. For example, a DATT in Latin America had done something unauthorized and had been caught by both the Ambassador and the host government. The Ambassador was furious, and the host government now was threatening to PNG the DATT and some members of his staff. Those meetings were largely held at the DIA.

I also had meetings at the CIA every couple of weeks; they became more frequent as Jennifer burnt bridges there. Contacts ranged from the deputy director of clandestine operations to staff officers. I remember once the person with whom I had an appointment had to sign a receipt for a "human source" before I was allowed in his office.

In another case, I flew to Hawaii to meet with an Ambassador who disagreed with the CIA over a covert action program.

Finally, the Secretary of State held weekly meetings with the head of the CIA when both were available. My office was responsible for writing the briefing papers. These meetings did not happen many more times than they did. The meetings were usually confirmed two days beforehand, leaving one day to prepare and clear the briefing memo so as to provide it to the Secretariat 24 hours in advance. My excellent deputy John Gibney usually wrote the memos and kept a running checklist of issues.

Once a meeting was confirmed, I would go up to the Secretary's office or call on the secure line to say what issues we intended to include and ask what else the Secretary might want to add. Frankly, we did not get a lot of feedback from these meetings. There was no notetaker present. That was always a problem, and the briefing memos were frequently a shot in the dark.

Q: I see this tour overlapped a change in Secretaries of State. Albright came in in January of '97. Did having a new Secretary of State impact on what your office did?

KEISWETTER: Yes. Initially, I recall it was a question of adding background to get Albright up to speed. Overall, Secretary Albright had little reaction to what INR did.

There was an incident regarding security procedures that caught her attention. The most sensitive materials were conveyed from INR to the Secretary's office in a special locked bag. One of these bags disappeared. The story broke in the press, and FBI and Diplomatic Security investigators talked to me and a lot of others in INR about what might have happened. To my knowledge, the mystery was never resolved.

Q: We don't often get people who cycle through INR at this level.

KEISWETTER: I have a great deal of admiration for the CIA and the DIA. The CIA in particular was quite frustrated during this period, particularly over Iraq. In their view, Clinton had adopted an official policy of regime change but there was no plan to carry it out. CIA contacts felt the policy makers had failed and were now trying to dump the problem on their doorstep.

Q: This was the time that Congress had passed Iraqi Freedom Act in which we were paying Iraqi exiles to generate intel.

KEISWETTER: Actually, I would like to deal with that in the next section because I became quite involved in that when I was a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State. At this stage I left the issue largely to my deputy John Gibney.

Q: In coming to the end of this assignment which would be mid-1998, did again you turn down an ambassadorship?

KEISWETTER: I was up for reassignment and David Welch, PDAS in NEA called me to say I was slated on NEA's list for Ambassador to Yemen. He thought the D committee, who decides the Department's ambassadorial nominees, would agree with no problem. I said I would have to talk to Gerda and mentioned our daughter Sara, then a junior in high school, had just come out as gay. She as well our younger daughter Emma, then a freshman, would also have to go to boarding school. I was not sure we were unwilling to send them to boarding school or alternatively splitting the family with my going to Yemen unaccompanied. A few days later, I told David our decision to decline for family reasons.

In the end, I was offered the directorship of the Arab Peninsula countries (ARP), and the Yemen ambassadorial nomination went to Barbara Bodine, with whom Gerda and I had studied Arabic. I had previously been also considered for Yemen at the end of my tour in Regional Affairs in 1993 but I had angered then-Assistant Secretary John Kelly and the nomination did not work out.

Director Arab Peninsula Affairs 1998-2000.

Q: Let's go on to the assignment in ARP. Tell us about coming on board then as the Director of NEA/ARP.

KEISWETTER: Ron Neumann, then DAS in NEA, hired me. Assistant Secretary Martin Indyk had a conscious policy of seeking experienced FSO Arabists as a counterweight to his own background. He was Jewish, came from the NSC staff, and was the founder of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, well known for its ties to Israel and the American Jewish community.

Ron and I worked well together, and I had succeeded him as DCM in Sanaa in 1983. Ron also played a key role in my succeeding him as DAS in NEA. We have been good friends for years.

Martin and I also worked well together. He would usher me into his office even though there would be several other people waiting to see him. He and I went to see Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi Ambassador, several times at Bandar's home on Rte. 123 in McLean. Bandar's preferred meeting around 6 or 7pm. His "majlis" was a long room with chairs at one end and a wall of televisions tuned to Arabic and English channels at the other. There were also sometimes visitors and phone calls that interrupted our conversations. At one meeting, Bahraini Crown Prince Hamid (now King Hamid) joined us for a few minutes, and at other times Bandar took calls from the Director of the CIA, the Director of the FBI, and various people at the White House. He drank scotch constantly.

Several conversations touched on the case of Hani al-Sayegh, who was the driver of the car that bombed the US Air Force barracks in Dhahran in June 1996. He had escaped arrest in Saudi Arabia and fled to Europe and then Canada. The Canadian Mounties picked him up and extradited him to the United States. The FBI had tried to get him to

confess but he had refused to cooperate. In consequence, the Justice Department sought to extradite him to Saudi Arabia with the hope he would confess on the tarmac for fear of having his head chopped off once back in Saudi Arabia.

The US intention to extradite al-Sayegh became public. Human Rights Watch and other human rights organizations protested; if he were to be extradited, they wanted both a guarantee that he would not be tortured and specific assurances that he would have a lawyer present during questioning and a fair and open trial by a jury of his peers. The first was doable because the Saudis had recently adhered to the International Convention Against Torture and were willing to provide assurances they would abide by it. The other assurances were much more complicated.

I consulted with an Islamic law expert at Georgetown University, who explained that Sharia law allows only two types of evidence: confession and witnesses. Circumstantial evidence is not permitted. In a case like al-Sayegh's, where there were no witnesses, the role of the judge, the Qadi, was crucial to obtaining a confession. While al-Sayegh might have the advice of a lawyer beforehand, the lawyer could not be present during the Qadi's questioning because it would disturb the chemistry that could lead to a truthful confession.

This guess proved to be right. The Saudis assured us that they would abide by their commitment to the anti-torture convention and would permit al-Sayegh to consult with a lawyer but no lawyer could be present during the Qadi's questioning, and of course a jury trial was out of the question because juries are not part of the Saudi judicial system.

Al-Sayegh did not confess on the tarmac. He went back to Saudi Arabia and the last I knew he was still alive. Reportedly, American Embassy representatives have visited him from time to time.

In addition to US public and diplomatic interest in al-Sayegh, another reason that the Saudis did not immediately execute him was that they were interested in improving relations with the Iranians at that moment and they were fearful that execution of al-Sayegh would antagonize the Iranians and incite their own Shia community.

The sprawling conversations about al-Sayegh included those with Bandar, Martin, and myself, but also some bilateral ones between Bandar's assistant Rihab Massoud and me. Wyche Fowler in Riyadh played an instrumental role in the initial stages but was angered when he found out that the action had devolved.

Q: Our Ambassador to Saudi Arabia?

KEISWETTER: Yes, Wyche was a former Democratic Senator from Georgia, who brought broad political contacts to his post. Unlike previous US Ambassadors in Riyadh, he developed close ties with Bandar, meeting with him in Europe as well as Washington and Riyadh. He thought the al-Sayegh case was being handled exclusively among

Bandar, Martin, FBI Director Webster, and CIA Director George Tenet. In fact, at State, I was the primary action officer.

The State Department's relations with Wyche were problematic because of another matter as well. Someone sent a letter to Secretary of State Albright complaining of his behavior on a flight while returning from Riyadh to Washington. The Secretariat had treated the letter as normal public correspondence, assigning it a tracking number and giving action to NEA. Wyche was outraged at its wide distribution. At one point when he returned to Washington for consultations, he sequestered himself in a spare office in the Executive Office Building rather than work out of the Department of State. It fell to me to repair relations. Ultimately, the Executive Secretariat agreed to ignore the letter.

Q: Along those lines, let's describe what NEA looked like at that time. You've got Martin Indyk as the Assistant Secretary of State for NEA and he is the only non-Foreign Service Officer that ever served in that position. It had always been a Foreign Service Officer to keep away the political image that the job was anything but a professional job. He is the first political appointee. Did that image impact on what you were saying? He therefore turned around and put Arabists at the deputy assistant secretary level?

KEISWETTER: Yes, there was Ron Neumann, my boss, with whom I worked closely, and David Welch, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary. Ron had responsibility for Iran, Iraq, and the Arab Peninsula as well as the Maghreb. David ran the bureau, had special responsibilities for personnel, and took a strong interest in Libya.

Q: Were there any other political appointees?

KEISWETTER: Yes, there was Tony Verstandig, who had the traditional political appointee DAS-ship and handled the Levant and the Middle East Peace Process. Martin also appointed as a staff aide the son of James Zogby, President of the Arab-American Association.

Martin's passion was the Peace Process and he aspired to partner closely with Dennis Ross, the Special Envoy for the Middle East Peace Process. This was I think one of the reasons that Martin was willing to delegate other things freely. He listened to advice. He would call me in before phone conversations with foreign ministers or US ambassadors, and afterward we would talk candidly about whether we had gotten our point across. Once in a while on a weekend or holiday, especially when I was DAS, he would invite me to his house in Chevy Chase to talk if there were breaking issues.

Also, when I was ARP Office Director and DAS, I had the responsibility to deliver letters from the President to visiting Gulf potentates. I remember in particular Sheikh Zayed of the UAE, Emir Hamad of Qatar, and Prime Minister Khalifa of Bahrain. These people would come to the United States for medical treatment, usually the Mayo Clinic, the Cleveland Clinic, or Johns Hopkins, respectively. Sometimes if there was important business, Martin or Under Secretary for Political Affair Pickering would go and I would

accompany them.. Usually, we delivered the message, and spent an hour or more in a casual, wide-ranging conversation.

A few anecdotes; one time when I flew to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, to see Shaikh Zayed, I was greeted at the airport by Sheikh Mansour, his youngest son who was also the chief of protocol. He was in his late 20s or early 30s. Flying out there, I saw a picture in the newspaper of a tie that Monica Lewinski had given to President Clinton. Mansour had on the same tie at the airport. When I asked about it, he smiled and said, "Yes, how do you think I got it?"

Another time I flew to Cleveland to deliver a letter to Emir Hamad of Qatar. His Foreign Minister, later Prime Minister, Hamid bin Jasim (HBJ) joined for the conversation. The two joked as to who was richer. They finally resolved that HBJ was richer because he gave away more money each year than the Emir did. When the Emir told me he was leaving in the afternoon, I asked where he was going. He said, "Oh, I don't know. I might go to France, I might go to England, I might go home. I will tell the pilot once we are up in the air. They are all in the same direction."

As to who else was in NEA: In the region, Jim Larocco was our Ambassador in Kuwait; Johnnie Young in Bahrain; Ted Kattouf in the UAE; Frances Cook in Oman; Barbara Bodine in Yemen; Liz McKune in Qatar; and, of course, Wyche Fowler in Saudi Arabia. I was in regular contact with all of them and visited two or three times when in ARP. ARP also did first drafts of the ambassadorial efficiency reports for signature by Martin.

In ARP itself, we had an excellent staff. First Rita Ragsdale and then Nancy Johnson were my deputies successively and desk officers included Greg Sullivan, Marc Desjardins, Greg Hicks, and several others. All maintained good contacts with embassies in Washington and US ambassadors at post. As Office Director for Arab Peninsula Affairs, I also was the primary contact for the Arab Peninsula ambassadors except Bandar. Two of them, Mohammad al-Sabah from Kuwait and Abdulwahab al-Harijji from Yemen, I have seen a few times since. For the Saudis, I dealt primarily with Rihab Massoud and Adel al-Jubeir in Bandar's office. Adel, of course, later became the Saudi Ambassador in Washington and then Saudi Foreign Minister.

As to other major issues, I helped negotiate the eight-billion-dollar sale of F-16s to the UAE. This consumed a lot of time with interagency meetings, briefings on the Hill, and conversations with the Emiratis. In the Emirati meetings, our interlocutor was usually Muhammad bin Zayed, Sheikh Zayed's favorite son who was responsible for UAE military affairs. We met several times around the United States and Europe as well as in Abu Dhabi. I observe the UAE is certainly one of the shrewdest negotiators you can imagine. In part it is because they have natural souk bargaining instincts, and they certainly have the money to obtain the best advice.

Q: This is your second time in ARP.

KEISWETTER: No, the first time. I was previously Office Director in NEA Regional Affairs.

Q: What was the atmospherics of the kinds of issues you were working on? You were in this position from '98 to 2000.

KEISWETTER: What do you mean by the atmospherics?

Q: What were the main issues that you were dealing with? You talked about Khobar Towers earlier.

KEISWETTER: And we talked about the airplane sales to the UAE. There were other important political-military issues as well. A constant NEA concern was Iraq's violations of UN sanctions especial regarding WMD and what the US could do about it. After several warnings, the Clinton Administration in the fall of 1998 decided on military action. Secretary of Defense Cohen in early November decided to tour the Gulf to solicit support of Desert Fox, a four-day campaign of air strikes. In an hundred hour trip the first week of November, Under Secretary Pickering and I joined Secretary Cohen and about a dozen DoD and JCS officers for an 11-stop blitz trip. We stopped in London, Paris, Ankara, Cairo, Riyadh, Kuwait, Manama, Doha, Abu Dhabi and Muscat plus London again on the way home. The London and Paris stops were airport consultations, and Muscat was a spin-off from Abu Dhabi on which only Cohen, Pickering, and one or two others went.

The big question was from where we could launch the "the shooters," that is, the strike aircraft. The Saudis turned us down and the alternatives were the Kuwaitis and the Qataris. In Kuwait, the Emir was supportive. In Doha, Foreign Minister Hamad bin Jasim met us at the airport and escorted us to the Emir's palace where we briefed him about what we wanted to tell the Emir. After about an hour, we were ushered into the Emir's majlis where the Emir Hamid, Crown Prince Jasim, and the Foreign Minister Hamad were already present. The Emir agreed to the strikes subject to several conditions including prior notification so Qatari boar hunters could evacuate from southern Iraq and that Emir's second wife Sheikha Musa could call on First Lady Hillary Clinton. We agreed instantly. In the end, Desert Fox was postponed from mid-November to mid-December and most of the Qatari conditions were overcome by events. Some months later, the Qatari Ambassador called me to cancel Sheikha Musa's visit with the First Lady on the grounds that it was too public of a role for her.

Overall, I remember ARP as an endless flow of briefing papers. One recurrent theme was ARP's making the point that the Saudis were not in a generous mood because low oil prices and high population growth had cut Saudi per capita income to $12,000 compared to the US's $42,000. In short, the Saudis were not going to be very receptive to requests that did not directly impact their interests. I was largely unsuccessful in my attempt to triage requests, but then on the other hand, the Saudis did not need protection. They could say no on their own and frequently did.

Q: What kinds of things were being raised?

KEISWETTER: In one case in particular in 1999, Wendy Sherman, who at the time was Counselor of the Department and in charge of the North Korea negotiations, thought the Saudis should contribute $500 million to an incentive package for North Korea to abolish its nuclear program. Predictably, the Saudis were reluctant. Initially, they replied that North Korea was not their problem. The US should talk to the Japanese, who had a direct interest in this. In the end I believe they contributed but I do not remember how much.

Another thing that happened is that King Fahd visited the United States. Substantively, the King promised downstream investment in US refineries and pledged to increase Saudi supply of crude to the US. The visit attracted attention particularly because of a lavish banquet by the King. Bandar insisted that he personally would do the seating, but he did not get around to it until the guests started arriving. Thus, the dinner began an hour late as Bandar was trying to figure out who outranked whom in protocol terms. Of course, in Saudi style, an hour's delay was not a big deal but still it made the pages of the *Washington Post*.

At the end of the tour, I was NEA's candidate to be Ambassador to either Yemen or UAE. The D Committee chose otherwise. As explained to me, the choices reflected a court-ordered directive in the so-called Allison Palmer case that instructed the Department to place more women in senior ranks. I was not unsympathetic because Allison and I were good friends in Vietnam and I had followed her grievance closely. As ARP Director, I helped prep the nominees for their assignments and confirmation hearings. Marcelle Wahba, an Egyptian American, was confirmed for Abu Dhabi. Marjorie Ransom, the nominee for Sanaa, eventually dropped out for personal reasons, and Edmund Hull because Ambassador. By the time of Edmund's nomination, I was DAS and quite happy to remain in Washington.

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near East Affairs 2000-2001

Q: How did you become a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Near East Bureau?

KEISWETTER. Ned Walker, who was Ambassador to Israel, switched places with Martin Indyk as NEA Assistant Secretary. Ned and I had entered the Foreign Service together and he was DCM when I was Political Counselor in Riyadh. When Ron Neumann was named ambassador to Bahrain, it was a natural secession that I would replace him. As DAS, both Ron and I had responsibilities for the Northern Gulf, the Arab Peninsula, and the Maghreb states. I joked that I was the DAS for miscreants because it included Iraq, Iran, and Libya.

Q: What were your major concerns?

There were two big issues on which I spent a lot of time; one was Iraq and the other was Iran. I also grew very fond of the Maghreb where I had more scope for initiative. Of course there were some personnel issues too.

Let me start with Iraq. When I arrived in the NEA Front Office, Frank Ricciardone was the Secretary's Special Representative for the Iraqi Opposition, an ambassadorial-level appointment. When he left to become Ambassador to the Philippines, his responsibilities fell to me.

Lots of interesting stories come out of this, most of them involving Ahmad Chalabi. He headed the Iraqi National Congress (INC) in London. He had houses in both Washington and London and commuted back and forth, spending about half his time in each place.

He had a long history of involvement with the CIA. The CIA had in fact washed their hands of him because in their view he could not adequately account for the funding they gave him, the operations he led had gone badly, and his group seemed penetrated by Saddam's agents. However, he also had some strong protectors in the US Government. On the Hill, they included Senator Helms, head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and later Ranking Member. In the new Bush 43 administration, Vice President Cheney and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's staffs sheltered strong Chalabi supporters. Doug Feith, who initially served in Vice President Cheney's office and later became Under Secretary for Policy at the Pentagon, was a great advocate.

At issue was about $30 million in funding under the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 that Congress had earmarked in the State Department budget for propaganda operations by Iraqi opposition groups against the Saddam regime. The State Department did not have a great deal of enthusiasm for the program, but we did agree that the funding could be used for radio and television broadcasts. Chalabi came up with a scheme for a media network that would broadcast into Iraq from surrounding countries and sought our help in getting the Jordanians and Turks to agree. Then, because the media network would need what he described as correspondents, he proposed to send teams into Iraq from these neighboring countries to gather news for broadcasting on this network.

As I looked into this proposal, Chalabi introduced me to Aras Habib Kareem, the man who would be heading the news teams. Aras and his teams turned out to be the same people that Chalabi had previously employed when funded by the CIA. Needless to say, the thought of trying to run covert operations overtly through the Department of State was not very attractive to me, particularly if the operations were done against the will of Jordanians and other Iraqi neighbors and with teams known to be heavily infiltrated.

This coincided with Secretary Powell's early days as Secretary of State. For two or three months after his confirmation unanimously in a special session of the Senate on Inauguration Day, he was the only confirmed official in the building. Richard Roth, previously Ned Walker's DCM in Israel and then his PDAS in Washington, was acting Assistant Secretary for NEA; there was no Under Secretary for Political Affairs because Pickering had left by this point. As a result, this foreshortened chain of command meant the Chalabi problem quickly escalated to the Secretary. Chalabi came into my office late on a Monday afternoon, telling me that he had just been on the Hill and Helms was going

to pillory the Department of State at a hearing on Wednesday unless the Iraq Liberation Act funds were released immediately for his information gathering teams.

The next morning, I called the Secretary's special assistant Larry Wilkerson and explained the problem. He set up an appointment to talk with the Secretary immediately after the Tuesday morning staff meetings. So Richard Roth and I for NEA and Richard Haass, newly appointed to head Policy Planning, joined the Secretary and Wilkerson in his inner office about 9:30. I explained the problem and recommended that we not give into Chalabi because we could not possibly run what amounted to a covert program overtly.

The Secretary told me to do it anyway but instructed, "I want you to build in as many check points as possible." The Secretary did not say it, but he obviously was not quite willing to take on Helms and all the political allies that Chalabi had mustered, such as Cheney and Doug Feith, so early in the administration. At the end of the meeting, I asked if I should check this out with the NSC. His answer was, "No, we don't want a cowboy decision." In retrospect, this was an early indicator of things to come.

On reflection, I would say Secretary Powell was right in his decision to go ahead but with check points. His plan worked. What we did was set up a system to reimburse the INC on presentation of receipts on a monthly basis. Chalabi and his associates had a lot of trouble meeting the requirements. After a couple of months, the IG sent an inspector to London and found that the INC was seeking reimbursement for such purchases as a $5,000 oil painting and payments for memberships in exclusive London clubs. About half the requests for reimbursement had no substantiation beyond "operations in Iraq." Do you know what? A miracle happened several months later. Chalabi and the INC decided it was just too much trouble to deal with the Department of State and they got the whole program transferred to the Defense Intelligence Agency.

I say to the Secretary of State, "Mission accomplished."

Another Chalabi story. A couple of months later when we had disagreements about implementation of the propaganda activities in Iraq's neighbors, Chalabi claimed to be siding with the US while the other five members of the INC executive committee were objecting. He invited us to London to meet with the full executive committee. Prince Sharif Ali bin al-Hussain, leader of the Constitutional Monarchist party, chaired the meetings held on a Saturday and Sunday. Our INC desk officer Matt Tueller accompanied me to the weekend meeting. Once the first session began, it became apparent immediately that there were five people who agreed with the US position and one person who did not, and that one person was Chalabi.

I had left Washington with instructions to report from London by phone to Deputy Secretary Rich Armitage's office. I called back a couple of times to report progress and seek guidance. The day I got back I was standing in my office, looking out the window at the Lincoln Memorial while talking on the phone. Suddenly I heard some noise behind

me and I turned around and there was Armitage in my doorway. He said, "I just want to compliment you on what a great job you did over the weekend."

Q: Let's circle back around a minute. The Deputy Assistant Secretary position is a very unique one in the way in which the State Department is organized. You have been a desk officer; you've been an office director. Now this Deputy Assistant Secretary slot, the next one up, if you will. How would you describe it to somebody from the outside?

KEISWETTER: It is the lowest level that you can really have much direct policy influence. You cannot make big policy, but you can make some decisions. The scope depends on what the topic is. If you are worrying about the Peace Process, you had better not change a comma without checking. In some other areas there are greater possibilities. For the most part on big issues, I as a DAS oversaw policy implementation.

One example of scope I had is the Maghreb. At this time former Secretary of State Baker had been convinced by the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to become the Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Western Sahara. In the Department of State, this is the type of issue that needs some attention but could be easily delegated to a DAS. Secretary Baker and I would meet once a month either in Washington or Houston. This involvement led to a request for me in September 2000 to testify on the Western Sahara before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa. Congressman Joseph Pitts (R-Pennsylvania) in particular stressed the plight of Moroccan POWs held for as long as 25 years by the Polisario. Shortly after I testified, the UN issued a scathing report describing them as the longest held POWs in the world and noting that a large percentage needed medical attention. A major roadblock had been that Moroccan King Hassan II, who had died a year before, had refused to take the prisoners back because some had been captured while drunk on duty at on outpost.

During Ramadan in December 2000, Assistant Secretary Ned Walker and I traveled to North Africa. I had the idea to take advantage of the tradition of Ramadan charity to try to negotiate the release of at least some of these prisoners. While we were in Rabat, I convinced Ned to raise the POW issue with the new King Muhammad VI. The King agreed to welcome the prisoners back and provided a special plane for us to fly to Algiers to request the Algerians intercede with the Polisario. The Algerians also agreed, and I cooled my heels for a couple of days in Algiers while the Algerians made the arrangements, including a plane for me to spin off separately from Ned to fly the 1,400 km southwest across the desert to Tinduf to meet with the Polisario leadership. I remember the two pilots assuring me they were exempt from Ramadan fasting in case I was concerned about my safety.

In Tinduf, I met in the afternoon with the Polisario President Mohammad Abdulaziz and about 20 chieftains. They listened to my humanitarian appeal but remained non-committal, promising an answer in a few days. I also toured the enormous defensive berms that the Moroccans had built but were now located in Polisario "liberated territory" near Tifariti. And in the evening, I dressed in tribal robes as the guest of honor at a ceremony of tribal dancing. The highlight was the presentation to me of a baby camel,

whose mother stood about 10 feet away non-too-pleased at the separation from her baby. I thanked my hosts profusely but said I could not take the baby camel away from its mother and the hospital herd to which it belonged. After the meal, I was shown to a guest tent where I spent the night. My tent had an armed guard whose duties included escorting me in the night to a spot designated for toilet use. The next morning a girl showed up to pour tea ceremoniously from varying heights into a small cup.

I learned the results of my trip a few days later as I continued on my travels to Tunisia. The Polisario announced the release of 201 prisoners. I drafted a press statement expressing deep appreciation; however, more than a thousand prisoners remained.

So what do DASs do. In NEA, many of the issues are truly elephantine. It is the White House and the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense who decide; so you play a supporting and implementing role. You can also carve out niches to make your own mark. I thoroughly enjoyed North Africa and made three trips there in the year I was DAS. Being a DAS also is a time when you learn new skills such as testifying before Congress, sometimes being the primary negotiator directly between parties, and frequently being involved closely with political figures and officials.

Another example from this period involves Iran. Muhammad Khatami had been elected President. This was in 1997 and he had given a speech in New York about the dialogue of civilizations. It was an opening to court the West. There were also various feelers put out largely through Johnnie Picco, who was on the UN Secretary General's staff in New York. His claim to fame was that he negotiated the ceasefire agreement that ended the Iran-Iraq War a decade before; so this gave him credence with the Iranians. In the year I was DAS in 2000-2001, the Iranians on three occasions indicated through him interest in meeting directly with us. The first time the meetings were supposed to be in Geneva, the second near London, and the third New York.

For example, the time when Ned and I went to Morocco, we were afterward supposed to go on to London where we would talk with the Iranians in a nearby country house provided by Saudi Prince Bandar.

All three cases had the same outcome. A few days before the meeting the message was passed that the Iranians would not be able to attend. President Clinton had a particular interest in trying to have something happen with the Iranians on his watch, but it did not turn out, of course.

I have talked to Johnnie Picco since this time and he agrees that what happened was that Khatami was interested in holding these meetings but when the matter finally reached Khamenei, the Supreme Leader, he nixed it. The episodes show that until the Supreme Leader is willing to go along, little is going to happen.

Q: In any country, domestic policy is the foundation for foreign policy. What you are saying is there was a group in the Iranian decision-making leadership at a fairly high level that was interested and would have proceeded but their domestic politics toppled it.

One thing I would like to go back to; Walker was appointed Assistant Secretary in January 18, 1999. Then you had a change of administrations and he left to be ambassador to Morocco and Bill Burns came in as the Assistant Secretary.

KEISWETTER: Let me talk about this. Ned did not leave to become Ambassador to Morocco. He retired from the Foreign Service and became the head of the Middle East Institute. You are right that Bill Burns, then Ambassador to Jordan, became Assistant Secretary of State for NEA.

Q: Burns came in June 4, 2001.

KEISWETTER: I admired Bill as probably the best Foreign Service Officer since Pickering, but I came out of a half-hour meeting with him unclear what his intentions were for me. Richard Roth later clarified, "Lest the conversation was unclear, he wants Ryan Crocker in your job. Don't feel bad, I am not staying either." No DASs were held over and James Larocco replaced Roth.

I had figured this out in any event. I had lined up what I wanted to do -- which was to go to the National War College faculty. I certainly had the credentials for it. It turned out to be an extremely competitive position. Finally, in June 2001, Director General Ruth Davis made the assignment.

Q: Before we get over to the NDU, is there anybody else on your DAS list that you haven't talked about?

KEISWETTER: Yes, I would like to talk a little about personnel. Philo Dibble was during this period the Director of the Office of Iran/Iraq Affairs. I worked closely with him and Matt Tueller, his deputy. When I wrote Philo's efficiency report, I described him as the best Foreign Service Officer with whom I had worked. He later became a DAS in NEA and then Principal DAS in the Bureau of International Organizations.. He retired from the Foreign Service when his wife was named to be DCM in Rome. Later, he was brought back from retirement to serve as DAS for Iran in NEA I also had the highest regard for Matt Tueller. I knew him from when he worked in the Political Section in Riyadh and he has gone on to ambassadorial ranks.

Margaret Scobey is another very talented star. When I became DAS, she replaced me as Director of ARP. We were having a hard time finding a DCM in Riyadh, who would be destined to be charge for a prolonged period until a new Ambassador was confirmed. Before the morning DAS's staff meeting, Margaret came to tell me, though she had been in ARP for only six months, she would be willing to go to Riyadh to be DCM. I immediately endorsed the idea and Ned also leaped at it. In the course of the morning, Director General Skip Gnehm agreed. About noon time I called up Margaret and said, "It is all arranged." Needless to say she was a bit surprised at the bureaucracy's alacrity. After Riyadh as DCM, she became our Ambassador to Syria and Egypt.

Another case is Gina Abercrombie Winstanley, a FSO whom I knew in several incarnations. She was at the NSC when I was a DAS. I arranged for her to go to the UN for four months as NEA's special adviser for the General Assembly and afterward she went on to be Consul General in Jeddah and Ambassador in Djibouti and Malta.

Q: Returning to our conversation, you were Deputy Assistant Secretary at the time there was a transition to the Bush administration. In fact, you were saying Bill Burns came in as the new Assistant Secretary. Transition time is transition papers and a whole bunch of paperwork. How did you see that unfold?

KEISWETTER: The transition in the Department of State was easy. I do not remember the transition papers specifically, although I am sure we wrote them.

What I do remember is a series of briefings for Secretary-designate Powell held on the first floor. They were quite informal affairs. Richard Roth and I spent an hour with him and it was more of a conversation about what he wanted to discuss rather than briefing him. He seemed quite up to speed.

I also remember well when he arrived on his first day as Secretary at the Department; he drove up to the C Street entrance in his PT Cruiser. He got out, and his security detail took the car away. Several hundred people greeted him in the C Street lobby. He made a few remarks and then disappeared in the special elevator to his office on the Seventh Floor.

In the next few days, he addressed the assembled masses in the Dean Acheson Auditorium. He explained that he had spent all his career building teams, and that was what he intended to do at the Department of State. Team building applied to everyone from the janitor to the person at the top; we were all in this together. While he was the team leader, we all had our responsibilities. He would delegate a lot but expected us "to stay within the ballpark." If we did not, we should keep in mind that "I am a military man and if you screw up, you will do pushups." He got his point across.

He was loved immediately. In contrast, his predecessor Madeleine Albright was not very popular in the Department. I actually had to round up people from NEA who would be willing to go up and shake her hand to say goodbye. Everybody seemed to have stories of prickly encounters with her staff. From the NEA policy perspective, she seemed right headed but hemmed in by Dennis Ross and others who worked directly with the White House. All that being said, I have heard her several times since then, including most recently at the US Islamic World Conference. I think her policy instincts are right. I particularly admire her book The Mighty and the Almighty about religion and diplomacy.

I think she did have an overly vigilant staff. Let me give you an example. A NEA deputy office director while duty officer over a weekend approved a VOA editorial, which some Jewish organizations construed as anti-Israeli and launched an email blast to the Hill. Secretary Albright's chief assistant saw this as a political vendetta aimed at embarrassing the Secretary and passed Ned a note to find and punish the culprit who had cleared it.

When I investigated, I confirmed who had cleared it and thought the text poorly written but did not breech policy. In response, Ned did something for which I respected him greatly. He wrote a short personal note to Secretary Albright, for whom he had worked in New York as her DCM at the US Mission to the UN, saying this was a problem in his bureau, and he would like to handle it in his own way. Then he called in this person for counseling and the problem was solved.

Q: Have we gone through the transition?

KEISWETTER: I would like to continue on the transition.

Richard Roth and I left NEA at the same time. There was a joint farewell party for us in the NEA conference room. Both Secretary Powell and Deputy Secretary Armitage showed up. There is no better way to go than to have the Secretary and Deputy Secretary show up to say goodbye and thank you.

The other point I would like to make is to contrast the transition at the State Department with what happened at the Pentagon. I had worked with Rumsfeld when he was Ambassador to NATO many years before and I had some idea of how he thinks and his personality. I had no direct contact with him during the transition. But his approach was entirely different than Powell's. He basically said to everybody, "I don't trust you," and then he installed half a dozen stalwarts that specialized in the various policy areas, all of them were outsiders and ideologues. The one responsible for NEA was Randy Scheunemann, who was a well-known neocon media commentator, President of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, and close associate of Chalabi.

As DAS, I chaired several interagency groups. Scheunemann turned up at a couple meetings. He bluntly told us we were all holdovers from a bygone administration that had gotten everything wrong and it was his responsibility to set things right.

There were some others in the new administration who were less disdainful and more polite in their strong neocon views. They included John Hannah and Eric Edelman (a Foreign Service Officer) who were on the Vice President's staff and Bill Luti who migrated from Cheney's office to a special intelligence unit in the Pentagon.

In a category apart was Zalmay Khalilzad, whom I had known for many years. In the new administration, he started out at the NSC after moving over from the RAND Corporation. When I briefed him on Iraq and Iran, he commented that he had written about these issues while at RAND, but he would have to temper his views because things were much more complicated than he had thought. Later he became Ambassador to Iraq, Afghanistan, and the United Nations.

My own response to the transition was whenever I would chair meetings on Iraq, I would always make sure to invite the Vice President's office and Rumsfeld's staff. As we got deeper into the murkiness of day-to-day affairs, they stopped coming. Some could have shared Khalilzad's reaction that things were really much more complicated than their

ideology would admit, but I think most found ways to safeguard their ideological views without taking into account discordant information. In short, the Department of Defense became very ideological on Middle East issues and particularly Iraq.

Ironically, the Powell/Armitage model of good, military-style teambuilding being applied to diplomacy strengthened morale among career officers in the Department of State. In contrast, at the Pentagon, many career employees left or sought sanctuary at places like the National Defense University, where I was going next.

I was not eligible for an ambassadorship at this juncture because I had only two years left time-in-grade; regulations required three. Besides, I loved the prospect of going to the National War College.

National War College 2001-2003

Q: This was an assignment as?

KEISWETTER: A member of the faculty. To me the National War College was a dream come true. When I joined the Foreign Service, I thought I wanted to be a professor and here I had achieved it without all the arduous ordeal of getting a PhD and going through the academic ranks. So I treasured the card that said Allen Keiswetter, Professor, National War College. I was assigned to the faculty as a regional expert. I taught two courses on the Middle East and several core courses that served as an introduction to international security issues. Initially, I co-taught with another professor, I.J. Singh, who was an economist. I am grateful to him for his tutelage.

The academic year began with 9/11. IJ and I were teaching an introductory international politics course when someone stuck his head in the door to say the World Trade Center in New York had been attacked and events were being carried live on the classroom video screens. We watched the second tower being struck. After the Pentagon was hit, Fort McNair, where the National War College is located, went on lockdown. It is just across the Potomac from the Pentagon and home to several high-ranking flag officers. The lockdown lasted for about an hour when it was decided that the National War College and other buildings could be targets as well, and we were locked out. We were, however, allowed bathroom privileges. At midday we were allowed to go home. It was a week or so before things returned to a normal schedule.

I really enjoyed giving intellectual structure to my thoughts and stories. Strange as it may seem, I really learned the history of the Middle East only after I had to teach it. I have had maybe two dozen university courses about Europe in my life, but I have never taken even one about the Middle East. I have read widely, lectured often, and taught graduate courses about the Middle East but I have never taken an academic course except for area studies at FSI that was part of my Arabic language training.

Q: Did you continue to be involved with Iraq?

In lots of ways, Iraq continued to be a major focus. When the National Intelligence Estimate about Iraq came out the fall of 2002, our CIA chair arranged for a special classified briefing for the National War College faculty. As the Iraq situation unwound, I volunteered to do a series of faculty seminars about Iraq. I also lectured to the full student body about Iraq.

In preparation for all of this, I talked to colleagues in the Department of State and elsewhere. I remember a conversation with my successor, Ryan Crocker. When I expressed incredulity about going to war, his answer was, "Allen, I don't know any more than you do but we are going to war." Since then, it has come to light that Ryan at about this time was writing memos to the Secretary of State saying war in Iraq makes no sense; it is Pandora's Box and we should not do it.

Later, in January 2003 as we were ramping up to invade Iraq in March, I received a call from Ryan inviting me to join the shadow cabinet for Iraq as either the minister of planning or the minister of economy.

Q: This was a simulation?

KEISWETTER: No. He called on Wednesday and he wanted me to leave on Saturday on a special plane that was assembling the shadow government team in Kuwait, where we would prepare for the invasion. I could not do that. My mother was very sick and in fact died in July. Also, Gerda was adamantly against it and I really had problems of conscience.

Since then, I have had a total of eight invitations to go to Iraq, which I have not accepted. Several were commercial, and this says something about how we have privatized things. After all, in Iraq there were more contractors than there were direct government employees. We may have had 150,000 troops at our peak, but we had more than that in terms of US contractors, not all of them Americans.

Q: Iraq contractors, yes.

KEISWETTER: Yes. For example, one Friday night as I was packing up to go home for the weekend, I got a call from RTI, a contracting company in North Carolina who was preparing a bid on a contract of some hundreds of millions of dollars to take over the hospital and medical system in Iraq. They wanted me to sign on to be the chief of party despite the fact I knew nothing about medicine or hospitals. They wanted somebody who could speak Arabic and knew something about the Department of State and Iraq. RTI would hire substantive experts to support me. I turned down this offer and several similar ones.

I also kept in touch with Tom Warrick. Just as I was leaving NEA, I had hired Tom to head a joint project with INR called the Future of Iraq Studies. The idea was to organize Iraqi exiles and experts into working groups that would address the current situation and recommend what needed to be done on more than a dozen topics ranging from defense

and energy to humanitarian needs and democratic development. In the end it encompassed 124 separate papers. Unfortunately, Rumsfeld personally banned Tom from serving in Iraq, and the Defense Department ignored the project in favor of its own frequently ideological-slanted expertise. The project was published in 2006 in 13 volumes.

On the prospect that I might join the Iraq team after my stint at the National War College, I was invited to participate in a series of meetings and briefings organized by Jay Gardner, who headed the civilian preparatory effort initially. The group met several times at the National War College and at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. Some of the events I attended but some of them I listened to the audio tapes to keep myself up to speed.

In an early meeting, groups broke down by specialty -- electricity, energy, governance issues, etc. -- to identify objectives and how to implement them. Each group was asked to also identify a "show stopper." In what now seems prophetic, all groups cited the same thing - insufficient security.

The general plan was for the civilian forces to send in assessment teams immediately after an area had been liberated to come up with projects that would make the local people see by no later than the end of the year a positive difference from Saddam's era. Based on a premise of quick reward, liberated areas would have a new school, a new road, additional generators, or a new hospital to point to as soon as possible. Unfortunately, there was no coordination whatsoever between this planning on the civilian side and what was happening on the military side. The military was not planning a strategy of seize and hold that would allow for the implementation of the civilian planning but rather had a strategy of maneuver to drive as quickly as possible to capture Baghdad.

What happened is the "shadow government" I was invited to join sat in Kuwait until June. The team was greatly frustrated and spent a lot of time studying the history of when the British had invaded Iraq in 1917. The British used the phrase, "military rule, indirect rule, and independence" to describe the governmental transition. In this pattern, the team used the phrase, "military, CPA and sovereignty."

All of this improved a little bit as lessons were learned. The military was also under the assumption that they would go there and easily liberate the Iraqi people. The neocon elements in the Pentagon held to Chalabi's theory that the Iraqi people would just rise up and welcome him and the Americans. In this view, the American problem would be how to hand over control to a popular Iraqi government.

That is not what happened, of course. The US was welcomed as a liberator, but the sentiment did not last long. Doug Feith dispatched Chalabi to southern Iraq on a special airplane, apparently without the knowledge, certainly without the consent, of the Department of State. Chalabi quickly found out that he had 200 supporters and he brought them all with him. He was grossly unpopular. The Department of State

succeeded in having the Department of Defense disown this attempt at imposing Chalabi's rule.

These were things that should have been nipped in the bud as being just unreasonable in the very beginning.

In the summer as I was leaving the National War College, the State Department had not named my replacement. I called Ryan Crocker, still DAS in NEA, to ask, "Is NEA pushing anybody and what can you find out?" He called me back a few days later and to say NEA had a candidate. While the person had good Foreign Service experience, he had no advanced academic degrees. He asked if I thought this person would stand a chance? I said I did not know. An advanced degree was not a prerequisite, but it really would depend on who the person was. He said, "Well, it's me."

I said I thought I could probably get approval in about 15 minutes if he would be patient. That is indeed what happened. He has succeeded me both as DAS in NEA and then at the National War College.

The National War College launched me in a new direction professionally. The courses I taught there have led to a second career at the University of Maryland, where I have taught a graduate seminar on Problems of Global Security. It also paved the way for my appointment as a Scholar at the Middle East Institute.

58th United Nations General Assembly 2003

Q: While you were at NDU you also went to the UN.

KEISWETTER: Actually, this was later. I retired in the summer from NDU.

Q: The summer of?

KEISWETTER: The summer of 2003. I took the retirement course. I was hired back immediately as a temporary employee and I spent four months in New York as the Senior Adviser for Middle East to the US Delegation to the 58th General Assembly. Ambassador John Negroponte was then the Permanent Representative at the US Mission to the United Nations (USUN). Jim Cunningham was the Deputy Permanent Representative. I took a rather wide view of my responsibilities and I also knew many people at USUN. I became another senior ambassadorial-level officer that dealt with Middle Eastern affairs, sometimes in the General Assembly but frequently also in the Security Council.

This too was a wonderful experience. I loved New York and lived on the Upper East Side on East 54th Street between First Avenue and the East River. My 30th floor apartment had a magnificent view of both the midtown skyline and the East River, overlooking the apartment where Henry Kissinger in a much nicer building lived. I would return to

Washington for the weekends or Gerda would occasionally come to New York to join me.

The job entailed lobbying for US positions with the ambassadors from Middle East countries. The first few weeks, I called on or had lunch with nearly all of them. When votes came in the General Assembly, I would then make my pitch on the phone or in the hallways. The newly arrived Syrian Ambassador Faisal Mekdad in particular took an interest in me because Syria represented the Arabs as a non-permanent member of the Security Council and he wanted to develop better relations with the US.

I also worked closely with my colleague Peter Vrooman, with whom I shared an office in the Political Section, on maintaining contacts with Arab delegations, as well as the Israeli and EU delegations on Middle East issues.

I learned quickly that the US did not do anything of significance that would affect Israel without talking to the Israelis first. I also received representatives of various US Arab and Jewish groups. In regard to the Arab delegations to the UN, we had close ties with the Jordanian Permanent Representative Prince Zaid Read Hussein and Egyptian Permanent Representative Ahmed Aboul Gheit. I remember lobbying Aboul Gheit in particular on a Middle East peace issue just before the vote in the General Assembly. He told me he had to vote against what the US favored. When Egypt voted yes, I was greatly surprised. I went up to the Egyptian Deputy Perm Rep who had cast the vote and said, "I am really surprised, you must have received new instructions." He replied, "No, I pushed the wrong button."

Q: When were you up at the UN?

KEISWETTER: I was there from roughly Labor Day, 2003, until the weekend before Christmas.

Q: What were the important Middle East issues you handled?

KEISWETTER: There were two big issues; one was Iraq and the other one was the separation wall that the Israelis were building.

The General Assembly begins with General Debate in the third week of September in which Heads of Delegation, usually Heads of Government or Foreign Ministers, make their statements. On the first day, President George W. Bush spoke endorsing a freedom agenda in the Middle East and elsewhere. Afterward he held a reception across town at the Museum of National History in the evening. It was my job to escort the newly-designated Foreign Minister of Iraq Hoshyar Zebari. While I had no difficulty introducing him to dignitaries and making sure he showed up for a pull-aside with Secretary of State Powell, the reception itself was marred by traffic jams that impeded about half the guests from making their way from UN Headquarters. Afterwards, it fell to me to write letters of apology to Middle east guests who were turned back by the police.

More importantly, in October, the UN Security Council took up UNSCR 1511 recognizing the transfer of governing authority from the Coalition Provisional Authority to the Iraqi Governing Council. We obviously lobbied hard across the board; my target was the Syrians as a rotating member of the Security Council. We thought we had the French lined up and in fact, we did; it was the Russians we were really unsure about. The Security Council was supposed to vote in the morning of October 16. When the Council convened at 10:30am, the French and the Russians requested a delay because their presidents were scheduled to talk later that day. When the vote came later, all voted yes, including the Syrians who called Ambassador Negroponte at 2am saying they had instructions to vote for the resolution.

On the Israeli separation wall, the UN is a very peculiar organization when it comes to Middle East peace issues. On the one hand, the Security Council is pro-Israeli because the Americans virtually without fail veto everything that is anti-Israeli; on the other hand, the General Assembly is pro-Palestinian, and the Israelis call it "Palestinian occupied territory." If you look at the resolutions voted each year, there are about a half a dozen that are just set pieces that are stridently anti-Israeli. They reflect the frustration of the Palestinians for not getting their due in the Security Council.

The issue at hand was whether the UN General Assembly should refer the legality of the Israeli separation wall to the International Court of Justice. The Israelis, of course, were adamantly against it. The Europeans were negotiating with the Russians and the Palestinians about drafts that could garner broad support. In a session that lasted more than 12 hours, the General Assembly convened under special "Uniting for Peace" rules; the chamber itself was nearly empty while a large shifting gaggle of diplomats in the lobby negotiated language. Finally, the resolution passed with 90 votes in favor, 8 against, and 74 abstentions. About a year later, the International Court of Justice declared that the wall was illegal. This episode joins the Palestinian narrative as another example of the justice of their cause, validated by the International Court of Justice. It joins the Israeli narrative as another example of the gross bias of the UN system.

Q. USUN in essence was your last post?

Yes, I think it was a fitting end to my diplomatic career. My 36 years in the Foreign Service provided many opportunities to influence policy. It also provided a very good, positive family experience. As a pattern, it is nice to be abroad when the kids are young, and we could have help if needed. I have no regrets about not being an ambassador confirmed by the Senate; in fact I held four positions customarily held by persons of ambassadorial rank. I think the Foreign Service was the right choice for me. I have been very fortunate.

The UN was a good, positive way to end.

Q: It sounds like it. Let me add one last thing. What would you list as prime skills that an American diplomat or Foreign Service Officer should have?

KEISWETTER: Writing skills would be at the top of the list. This is not only being able to say things simply and accurately but having the intellectual framework and cultural sensitivities so that you offer good advice and astute observations. This is the most important skill not only in diplomacy but also in similar professions such as in teaching, consulting, or think tank affiliations.

Oral expression would be second. Underwriting these are language skills. I am not a natural linguist and I struggled to learn every word of both French and Arabic. Besides the language qualifications, the results have been a life-long appreciation of Middle Eastern and European politics and culture.

Q: I want to thank you for your time, Allen. This has really been enjoyable having you share your experiences and your life. You will see this in paper.

KEISWETTER: Thank you.

Post Script

Since retiring from the Foreign Service in 2003, I have been a Scholar at the Middle East Institute, publishing regularly on Middle East topics and making media appearances.

I also co-chaired with Episcopal Bishop John Chane a three-day seminar as part of the US-Islamic World Forum sponsored by the Brookings Institution in Doha in 2013. Participants included a Cardinal, a Mufti, and a Rabbi, as well as diplomats and academics from the US, Europe and the4iddle East. The result was a paper on "Diplomacy and Religion: Seeking Common Interests and Engagement in a Dynamically Changing and Turbulent World."

Later, this paper led to an invitation to join the Department of State's Task Force on Foreign Policy and Religion. In particular, I participated in a working group addressing the topic of preventing and ameliorating violence in the name of religion.

I have also taught for more than a decade a graduate seminar on "Problems of Global Security" at School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland, including once in Accra to Ghanaian security professionals.

Finally, I have been a consultant on Gulf topics at C&O Resources and later at the law firm Dentons when the two merged.

End of interview