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

AMBASSADOR GEORGE M. LANE

Interviewed by: Richard Nethercut
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTERVIEW

Q: This interview is being conducted with Ambassador, Retired, George Lane on August 27, 1990 at Ambassador Lane's home in Westminster, Massachusetts. The interview is one in a series being conducted as part of the senior officer project of The Association for Diplomatic Studies. The interviewer is, a retired Foreign Service Officer. The purpose of

this interview is to provide background on Ambassador Lane's career in the Foreign Service, and on the experiences in the Mid- East which was his special area of interests.

To begin with, Ambassador Lane, would you give us a brief description of your career in the Foreign Service?

LANE: Okay. I entered the Foreign Service in September of 1957 out of the Fletcher School where I had spent a year, and spent the first two and a half years in Washington as a glorified office boy in the office of European Regional Affairs working on the OECD as it was then. I learned a lot working with some people who had very distinguished careers later on in the Foreign Service.

I went to Beirut in early 1960 and spent two years there studying Arabic and completed that course. I then spent basically the next eight years in the Arab world: two years in Saudi Arabia as a Commercial Officer; two years in Aleppo, Syria as an Economic Officer; two years in Morocco--in Rabat--as a Political Officer; and then two years in Benghazi, Libya as the Principal Officer in what was then the Embassy branch office. Then I went back to the States, for a four year tour as it turned out; two years as a Personnel Officer in the Bureau of African Affairs; then two years working on North African Affairs. In 1974 I was assigned to Swaziland, an out of area assignment. I was "glopped", as Henry Kissinger used to say at the time. I spent two years as the Chargé, basically, and then Resident DCM in our Embassy in Mbabane, Swaziland. From there I was transferred to Beirut, after Ambassador Frank Meloy was assassinated. I went into Beirut, first as Chargé for about six months, and then as the DCM to Ambassador Dick Parker for about a year and a half.

In 1978 I was appointed Ambassador in Yemen, (North Yemen, the Yemen Arab Republic) and was there from '78 to '81; '81 to '82 I was Diplomat in Residence at Portland State University in Oregon. From '82 until I retired in January of '86 I was the Political Adviser to the Deputy Commander in Chief of the United States European Command at Stuttgart, Germany. To use the military acronym I was the POLAD to the DCINC at EUCOM.

Q: Could you tell me what attracted you toward a career in foreign affairs in the first place?

LANE: I think probably it was largely the family I grew up in. My father was a medieval historian, and his field of interest was Venice. He was a great expert on the economic history of Venice. So I grew up in a house where there was a lot of talk and discussion about activities overseas, and world politics. My father was always interested in political activity in general. I frankly hadn't realized that I had decided, or had been thinking about a Foreign Service career so early. But I was talking with an old high school friend of mine not too long ago about this, and somebody asked me that question and I said, "Oh, I don't know." And he said, "I could tell you when, George, it was in high school because in the high school yearbook all those pictures they have of us, you know, and ambitions..."

Under my picture apparently it says, my ambition was "to be a diplomat." So I guess I'd been thinking about a Foreign Service-type career for a long time.

Q: How long after you got into the Foreign Service was it that you made the decision to get into Arabic training?

LANE: Well, when I joined the Foreign Service I decided that I wanted to work in the developing part of the world, that I wanted to work someplace around the Mediterranean basin, and I wanted to learn a language that would be useful in more than one country. The idea of learning Turkish, for example, which would sort of imply that I would spend most of my career either in Turkey or in the U.S., seemed to restricting. So if you look at those three conditions, one of the natural things to do would be to study Arabic. So I decided to volunteer for the Arabic Language School. All of my friends in EUR, where I was working at the time, told me I was crazy, because as a junior officer I'd been very lucky. They said I could spend the rest of my career in going from Washington, to Paris, to Brussels, to Bonn, to London and back to Washington, but I haven't really regretted it (the decision to study Arabic).

Q: Instead you opted for a career in the Mid-East and following language school in Lebanon were immediately put into some rather challenging sounding assignments in Jeddah, and Aleppo Syria, and then Morocco. Could you tell me your impressions then, after the two years in Beirut, and these three successive assignments? How did you view the Arab world at that time?

LANE: I didn't have any early special affinity, I don't think, for Arab culture or anything like that. I viewed it, I suppose, to be perfectly honest as a place to work, as a fascinating new area of the world, something very new. Saudi Arabia was just taking off at that point in the early '60s. The oil business in Saudi Arabia really exploded right after World War II, but the tremendous amounts of money were just beginning to show in Saudi Arabia. You could still see parts of old Jeddah, and the American Embassy compound was five miles out of town. Now it's buried in the middle of Jeddah, what is left of it. It was a fascinating assignment. I was Commercial Officer so my job was to run around and see as many of the business people as I could, and get them interested in representing American products, and helping out American businessmen who came to town. But I suppose the most interesting activity that I was involved in, in Jeddah, was being the liaison escort officer for the first American destroyer ever to visit the port of Yanbu. You hear a lot about Yanbu these days because it's the outlet for a pipeline from the oil fields in the Persian Gulf that goes all the way across the Arabian Peninsula and comes out in what is now a very modern port city of Yanbu--which I haven't seen since 1962. But in 1962 it was much as it had been for a thousand years. It's a long complicated story, so I won't go into it, but trying to be the escort officer for that destroyer was a real happening. Saudi Arabia was an interesting place to work at that time. It was very tough on the family. The climate in Jeddah is almost as bad as the climate in the Persian Gulf, but not quite.

Q: Then were your subsequent assignments in Syria and Morocco more hospitable in terms of climate?

LANE: Interestingly enough the assignment in Aleppo was much more hospitable in terms of climate. In terms of general physical ambience, Aleppo was a charming city, one of the most fascinating old cities in the world with miles and miles of underground passages, the old souk, the old market which had been there since Crusader times. But we got there in 1964, which was a year after the Baath Revolution in 1963 in Syria, so politically it was a time when Americans were not popular-- particularly official Americans were looked on with great suspicion. It was in a sense, just the opposite of Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabia the political ambience was very friendly. The Saudis were happy to have us there, and there was no problem doing your job at all. But the climate was terrible. In Syria the climate was very pleasant, fascinating things to see and do. But politically it was very tough to try to go around and see people. If as Economic Officer, I went to call on somebody I had to leave behind some brochures from some American company because otherwise the secret police, who would always follow me, and who would call on whoever I called on right after I left, would want to know why that person was consorting with the American Embassy--the American Consulate representatives. So that was a bit unpleasant as far as working conditions were concerned.

Q: Then Morocco?

LANE: Rabat was much better in the sense that the political situation was not unfriendly as it was in Syria, although the Moroccans are a very closed people. It's not very easy to get into Moroccan society, or to get to know people very well in Morocco. But it's a fascinating country; a combination of desert, and seashore. It combines both the African and Arab cultures, for example Fez, which is so Arab, and Marrakech, which is largely African. A nice place to live. My job there in the Political Section was to try to keep track of the opposition. Of course, King Hassan was not terribly pleased to have American Embassy officers running around talking to people who were opposed to what he was doing. But I was so low down on the totem pole that it didn't really make much difference from that point of view.

Q: I notice that you are both fluent in French, plus this training in Arabic. Did you find that, say at a post like Morocco, that you could establish more rapport in one particular language or another?

LANE: Yes. Basically, French was more useful in Morocco than Arabic was, because my Arabic was eastern Arabic--basically Palestinian, Lebanese type Arabic, which was useful in Syria without much difficulty, and quite useful in Saudi Arabia. But in Morocco, the spoken dialect was very, very different. So that really the only people that I spoke Arabic with on a regular basis were the members of the Istiqlal Party, which was very self-consciously Arab, as opposed to European or French, and the leaders of that party were very well educated in Arabic and therefore could adjust to my eastern Arabic, and adjust their own Arabic so I could understand it. But they didn't like to speak French. With the

diplomatic corps, and with most people in the Moroccan government who had been French educated, French was the language we used.

Q: In that series of assignments, including the language training in Lebanon, what perspective did you have of Israel?

LANE: Israel was a constant problem in the sense that obviously since the creation of the State of Israel, the United States had been the number one friend and supporter of Israel. Our military support for Israel didn't really start until after 1967. So that in this period we're talking about--although the '67 war occurred while I was in Morocco- -it wasn't that the U.S. was a major supplier of military equipment to Israel because we weren't at that point. But it was well understood that the United States was Israel's best friend, and as far as most of the Arab countries were concerned, Israel was the number one enemy. So this was a constant problem in terms of our trying to build closer relations with any Arab country.

Now, it was more or less of a problem depending on how important the Arab-Israeli problem was to the host government. For example, with the Syrians, it was a major problem. Had the United States policy towards Israel been different, our relationship with Syria might have been very different because it was a very major issue in U.S.-Syrian relations. In U.S.-Saudi relations, less so but still important. There was hardly any problem with Saudi relations other than Israel. With Morocco, probably least of all. Partly geographic, the Moroccans are an awfully long way from Palestine, and they really are not that concerned about the Palestinian problem in general. So, that they would pay lip service to it on the international political scale, and it was certainly a negative in our relationship, but it wasn't really a major problem.

Q: In that connection, at these different assignments, did you develop a view of the Arab League and the extent to which that was a political factor in these countries, the extent to which Arab League seem to be moving toward unity, or just unity?

LANE: No, I don't think the Arab League as an organization really counted much at all. It just wasn't a factor.

Q: Your next assignment, after Morocco, was in Libya at the time that of the Libyan revolution. Could you comment on that in terms of your experience there?

LANE: Yes. We were hoping to spend a third year in Morocco. We hadn't had any three year assignments overseas, and as you know two years is just about the minimum time to really feel like your working at the maximum. But suddenly, after we'd been in Morocco for two years, I got one of these calls from Personnel, "You're the only man available, George, and you've got to do this. We need somebody to take over the Embassy Office in Benghazi, Libya." So suddenly I was transferred to Benghazi in 1968, and was there for about a year before the revolution-- before Qadhafi's revolution--during the revolution, and then for about a year afterwards.

Q: I notice that you referred to it as the U.S. Embassy Office. What's the distinction between that and a full-fledged Embassy?

LANE: At this time King Idriss was on the throne in Libya. And King Idriss' basic home area was Cyrenaica, the area where Benghazi and Baida are located. So when the government sort of moved to Tripoli partly for political reasons, and partly for, I think, sentimental reasons, he maintained Benghazi as a co-capital and started building a new capital up in the so-called Jebel Akhdar, the Green Mountain area. So there were really three capitals in Libya at this point.

Q: And the Embassy?

LANE: The Ambassador and the main part of the Embassy were in Tripoli, where they had always been. But technically, rather than being a Consulate, Benghazi was a branch Embassy, as was Baida where there was one officer.

Q: At Benghazi then, how did that get involved in the Libyan revolution? Or how did that affect your job there?

LANE: Well, very dramatically, of course. Under King Idriss the people running Libya were really the Shalhi brothers; the two sons of the man who had been the number one counselor and adviser to King Idriss, and who had been murdered by other members of King Idriss' family. He was so angry when they assassinated his adviser Ibrahim Shalhi, that he made these two sons, rather than exile them, he made them his favorites. So that the Crown Prince, who was a nephew, was largely ignored and these two brothers were almost running the country. One of them was a colonel in the Signal Corps--a colonel in the Libyan military--he ran the Signal Corps; and the other one was really Mr. Five Percent, who had a finger in every commercial, economic deal that was going on in Libya. And there were a lot of them at that time because, of course, oil had been discovered in 1956, I think, and the oil boom was really going at this point in 1968. Armand Hammer, and Occidental Petroleum, were very active. It was not only the majors, it was the independents, and they were all going full blast with the oil business. And then King Idriss, in the summer of 1969, went off to take the baths in Turkey--in Bursa, I think. Everybody thought that these two young men, Omar and Abd al Aziz Shalhi, were going to pull a coup, and then the King was going to abdicate, and they would take over the government.

Apparently a 27-year-old First Lieutenant, Muammar Qadhafi heard this rumor also, so he decided to move up the timing for his coup which he'd been thinking about doing ever since he'd been in the military academy. And so, on the first of September, 1969 there was a sudden--I guess you'd have to call it a coup d'etat--simultaneously in Tripoli and Benghazi. And for two weeks nobody knew who was in charge. Qadhafi was very shrewd, and he knew that if he immediately announced that as a 27- year-old First Lieutenant he was taking over the country, opposition would spring up everywhere. So he

passed the word initially that somebody else was behind the coup--spread a rumor--that it was a Libyan colonel, who was--I think he was then the Libyan Military Attaché in Rome--who was then on vacation. When the world press tracked him down he said he didn't know a thing about the coup, he didn't know what they were talking about. But by spreading this kind of rumor, Qadhafi gave himself some time, and he and his revolutionary command council primarily, Abd Al Salam Jallud, who was number two, succeeded in arresting, or nullifying all the possible areas of opposition. So he was able to take over the country.

Q: What time frame does this--what years?

LANE: This is the first of September, 1969; from the first of September until about the 15th nobody knew who was in charge. Many of us diplomatic corps in Benghazi were meeting with somebody who had been a Lt. Colonel, we could tell, but he'd ripped all the insignia off his uniform when he met with us because those ranks, of course, no longer meant anything as far as the new revolutionary government was concerned, plus, of course, as we learned later, he outranked his leader, and you can't have that.

Q: So that meant that for about eight or nine months you were there after the coup d'etat, and while Qadhafi had acquired power, did that bring you into contact with him? Or affect your work there?

LANE: Well, it's funny, my first contact with Qadhafi was an interesting one. On the morning of the revolution, they, of course, announced a curfew, and they had taken over the TV station--in modern revolutions the first place you have to take control of is the TV stations, and that's where the revolutionary command council was meeting. So I decided I'd better go down there, and see if I couldn't get a pass which would enable me to move around during curfew hours because there were a lot of Americans working in eastern Libya in the Benghazi consular area in the oil fields. Tripoli was the headquarters for the American oil companies, but Benghazi was the headquarters for the roughnecks, and the guys that did the work in the oil fields, and if any of them got in trouble in this rather dicey situation, I was going to need something that would enable me to move around. So I drove down through innumerable fourteen year olds with Kalashnikovs trying to figure out what I was doing, to the headquarters of the TV station. And there was a first lieutenant standing out front directing traffic, and I went up to him and explained in my best Arabic who I was, and what I wanted, and that I needed to go inside, that I needed to get a pass so that I could move around and take care of American citizens, that was my responsibility as the man in charge of the Embassy Office in Benghazi. And he said, "I don't know anything about that." And I said, "Can you tell me where I should go to find out?" He said, "No, I don't know anything about that." So I was getting kind of desperate, and I said, "Can you tell me your name?" And he said, "Yes, my name is Muammar Qadhafi." And it was as I found out later, it was Qadhafi himself who was out directing traffic, and, of course, keeping an eye on what was going on, while the people who were really his subordinates, were inside trying to make policy for the new Revolutionary Command Council.

But very soon after that, Qadhafi, who had been in the Benghazi area during the coup--he had run the coup in Benghazi, and Jallud had run the coup in Tripoli--but very soon after that Qadhafi moved to Tripoli, where he took over the government, and started negotiating with Joe Palmer who was our Ambassador there at the time--well, first it was Jim Blake who was the Chargé, and then Joe Palmer, about the evacuation of Wheelus. So I didn't see Qadhafi very much in those nine months after the revolution because I was still in Benghazi, and he was in Tripoli. But, of course, it affected our operations enormously. During the time when King Idriss was on the throne, U.S. and Libya had very close relations. I think frankly our CIA people were declared to the Libyan government, which, of course, caused all sorts of consternation when the revolution took place and Qadhafi's people took over control of the files of the Libyan government. You can imagine some of the brouhaha that went on as a result of that.

But after Qadhafi's revolution came in, of course, then the Americans changed very quickly from being the number one friend, to the number one enemy. Because Qadhafi was motivated very much by two things: by a sense of Arab socialism as personified by Jamal Abd Al Nasser, who was his absolute hero; and a little bit of Islamic revivalism fundamentalism in the great tradition of the Arab reformers who sweep out of the desert to sweep away the corrupt people in the cities. You can see this in Morocco with Ibn Tunbal, in Saudi Arabia with Muhammad Ibn Abd Al Wahhab, and even in Libya with the Sanoussi. That was really a part of the Sanoussi movement.

Q: Now this early contact with Qadhafi must be unique in the Foreign Service, and I wonder what you would conclude from what has happened subsequently involving Libya, and the way in which Qadhafi has become almost personified as the arch enemy, and the way in which we have been responded to him, including the attack on Libya. Do you have some comments on that?

LANE: Yes. I claim to be one of the original Qadhafi watchers, and I've, of course, been fascinated by keeping track of him ever since 1969. I've been in other countries that he's visited, and in other places where its been fairly easy to keep track. Qadhafi, of course, is not crazy. I really find it sad that leading American politicians, and commentators, like to call our enemies crazy. It's an intellectual cop-out. If you don't want to spend the time and energy to think about why he's doing what's he's doing, and what are his motivations, then you just sit back and say, "Well, he's nuts." And that means you don't have to think about it.

Well, of course, from Qadhafi's point of view, he's erratic. He does some unusual things, he's not your average man. Your average man doesn't make a coup when he's 27 years old. He's a very unusual character. But to say he's crazy, is an intellectual cop-out. He became, of course, the great Beelzebub, particularly for the Reagan administration, although he'd caused us lots of troubles before that. It was one of those apocryphal stories, I guess, that Qadhafi was supposed to have said after Nasser died, "Egypt is a country without a leader, and I am a leader without a country." As you know, he spent

years trying to figure out ways to unite Libya with other countries to build a unified Arab state. He initially tried to unify immediately with Nasser's Egypt, and I suspect sometimes the Egyptians wish they'd taken him up on it, because they could have swallowed Libya very fast, I think, if they'd played their cards right. But, of course, Nasser died in 1970, and then Qadhafi sort of went off on his own trying to unite his country with various other Arab countries, trying to push himself as the heir of Jamal Nasser's, the only true believer, the one who is carrying the flame for Arab nationalism, the only true supporter of the Palestinians.

One of the reasons that he attracted so much attention in the United States, was that the American media made such a play for him. I can remember pictures of Ted Koppel, or some such person, interviewing Qadhafi as he drives a tractor through some part of Libya plowing up the soil to create a new green area. He loved that sort of thing. He got a lot of publicity, and he made a lot of outrageous statements. And that raid on Libya did not stop his support for what we called terrorism. What it did was to stop him from talking about it. I think that's what he learned; that is, it's silly to shoot your mouth off all the time because then you attract attention. There was an article in the Christian Science Monitor just a couple of weeks ago saying there's considerable evidence that Qadhafi's support of terrorism is just as strong, or more so, in the last three years than it was before that raid on his headquarters, which killed some innocent people, and some people in the French Embassy, as I recall.

Q: Right now, in the summer of 1990, there is considerable interest in the links that Saddam Hassan in Iraq has had with both Yasser Arafat and with Muammar Qadhafi. Is there a historical dimension to that? Is that a triangle, or a mini-alliance, that has had some historical roots?

LANE: I don't think so. I think that's a marriage of convenience, if you can call three people getting together a marriage. But it's a question of, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. The thing they all have in common is that they're all opposed to the United States.

Q: Does that transcend their enmity to Israel, or stem from it?

LANE: It stems from it, basically. The United States is the number one supporter for Israel. If Israel is your number one enemy, then you're looking around for somebody else who has the same enemy that you have. And that's what they have in common. The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

Q: Following your Libyan assignment, then you were in the State Department for four years, the second half of which assignment again concerned North Africa, and the Libyan, and Algerian desk. Is there any more to add? Did you get a new perspective working in the State Department? What would be your thoughts on that assignment?

LANE: I was the Libyan Desk Officer for a while, and the Algerian Desk Officer for a while. As far as Libya is concerned, this was a period where under the monarchy Libya

had bought a number of C- 130s, and the U.S. didn't want to send them to Qadhafi because, of course, we had immediate problems with Qadhafi over the evacuation of Wheelus Air Base. He threw out the Peace Corps, which was very prominent in Libya before that. So he was doing a lot of things that the U.S. Government didn't like. So the U.S. GOVERNMENT tried to find ways to avoid sending these airplanes that the Libyans had bought and paid for, to Libya. And the Libyans, of course, very much wanted them. So this was one of the issues that was on top of the agenda. I think even the Secretary was involved in that, as he was in the question of whether or not we were going to put a stamp in American passports that had Arabic in it because Qadhafi said, "I'm not going to let anymore people come into Libya if the only thing in their passports is English. Why English? Why not Arabic? Our language is as good as your language." And we had never done that before, so the issue became whether or not the United States was going to put an Arabic stamp in American passports so our people could go in and out of Libya, or whether we were simply not going to send any more people to Libya. And eventually we put the stamp in the passport. Dr. Kissinger decided we'd do that. So we did.

Q: I notice that after your tour in the Department, you were for a period Chargé at our Embassy in Mbabane, Swaziland in Southern Africa which would be your first Chargé experience. And then that was followed by a quick transfer to a similar position in our Embassy in Beirut. Could you explain how that came about?

LANE: Well, it may have been a similar position in name, but it was very, very different in fact. While I was in Swaziland, when I was first sent there, the so-called BLS countries--Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland--each had a resident Chargé. While I was there, the Department named an Ambassador who was resident in Botswana, but who was the Ambassador to all three posts, Dave Bolen. So my job there was sort of DCM for three-quarters of the time--no, DCM one-quarter of the time, and Chargé for three-quarters of the time. It was, again, a very small post, like Benghazi three or four officers. It was basically showing the flag. There were only about seven countries represented in Swaziland, a fascinating little country. I think Swaziland itself is smaller than the Krueger Park, the great game park in South Africa, and the population was about 500,000 people. But it was an experiment in multi-racialism, which was importance because there were some primarily British people, whites, who had lived there for a long, long time, and who had decided when Swaziland became independent to stay and become Swazis. So they were Swazi citizens, they were white Swazis, with very British background. All our children went to the Waterford School which was a dramatic example of trying to create a multi-racial co-educational school in Southern Africa where the land was given by King Sobhuza, and the school was designed free by a famous Portuguese architect, and various British philanthropic organizations put up the money. The student body was white South Africans, and black South Africans, and colored South Africans, and Swazis, and whites from various diplomatic groups and economic missions, and people from Malawi, and they were all mixed together in classes, and all studying a very rigorous program to prepare them for the British A- levels.

Then, again, while we were hoping for a third year in Swaziland--a pleasant place to live and work--there was the sudden assassination of Frank Meloy and Bob Waring in Beirut, and the Department sent me a telegram ordering me back to Washington on consultations. In fact, it was a flash telegram. I claim to be the only Officer in the Foreign Service who ever got consultation orders by flash telegram.

Q: Could you just elaborate when you said Frank Meloy and Waring. Could you identify their positions in the Embassy?

LANE: Frank Meloy was the Ambassador who had quite recently been assigned to Beirut. And Bob Waring was the Economic Counselor. He'd been there for quite a long time, and was very well connected with a lot people in Lebanon and was therefore the Ambassador's right hand man as he was learning his way around.

Q: You were then sent as Chargé d'Affaires. Had there been a Deputy Chief of Mission at the time?

LANE: What happened actually was, that I was ordered back to Washington on consultation, as was another officer, because as I understood it, the Secretary, that is, Dr. Kissinger, hadn't quite made up his mind whether or not he was going to close the post entirely, or whether he was going to try to keep the Embassy open in spite of the civil war that was then going on in Lebanon, and in spite of this disaster--this tragedy--with our Ambassador and Economic Counselor. The first person to go to head the mission was Talcott Seelye. Talcott Seelye was at that point Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. I think he was traveling in Africa, and he went in, I think, within about 48 hours just as a symbolic gesture to show that we were not going to be driven out of Lebanon by the assassination of our Ambassador. But it was a stop-gap measure because it was understood that Talcott was not going to go in as Ambassador. He had just taken on his AF responsibility, he had other things to do. But the question was, what do we do now with our Embassy in Beirut, having suffered this tragedy. So having gone back to Washington at breakneck speed in response to the flash telegram, and left Swaziland, of course, without saying goodbye to anybody, not even anybody in the Foreign Ministry, never mind anybody else in the diplomatic corps, or the general society, and with instructions not to tell anybody where I might be going next, I then sat in Washington for two weeks cooling my heels, and trying to read in on the Lebanese situation in case I was going to go. While the decision and the argument went back and forth, should we keep an Embassy open just as a presence to enable us to talk to some people in the Lebanese situation, or was it not worth it, should we simply close the Embassy and pull out. This argument went on for two weeks, as I understand it. Larry Eagleburger would be able to tell you a lot more about this than I can.

During this period, the situation got worse in Lebanon. It was impossible to get in by air because the airport was closed. It was impossible to get in by sea, and the overland route was very frequently blocked by the fighting between Damascus and Beirut, along that route. I can't remember the dates exactly, but it must have been mid-July--late July--

President Ford then ordered the second evacuation of Americans from Beirut--of American civilians. Of course, we had a lot of people living and working in Beirut. It was the central place for all sorts of American businessmen, and media. A lot of them had gone out in the earlier evacuation in June, but some had stayed, and some had even come back. So the second evacuation was ordered for July, and the USG suddenly realized that if they were going to send somebody in to be the Chargé, this was the time because it wouldn't be possible perhaps even to get anybody in if they didn't do it then. So it was a typical hurry-up and wait kind of a thing. It was hurry-up, and then wait, and then hurry-up again because they called me up on Saturday and said, "Be ready to go in three hours." The reason, I think, I was chosen was that the other fellow had been told--as I had been told--that we could both go away for the weekend, because no decision would be made. But I had decided not to come up here (to Westminster, Mass.) for the weekend because I didn't think there was time. So rather than do that I just stayed where I was in Washington. So I was available Saturday night. So I was the guy they sent.

Q: You were flown in, were you? And by yourself?

LANE: What happened was, that I went from Washington to Athens by commercial airline, from Athens to a U.S. aircraft carrier by Cob aircraft--it landed on the aircraft carrier; from the aircraft carrier to the landing ship by helicopter, and from the landing ship into Beirut--Bain Militaire--by landing craft (LST). I went in on the landing craft that was evacuating all the people coming out from the Bain Militaire area of Beirut. So there I was in my civilian clothes sitting on six pouch bags full of communication equipment which I was carrying in, with all these Navy guys in their flak suits and not sure what they were going to run into going into Beirut because at this point the State Department had organized the security on the beach with the PLO. The PLO was the organization that really had more control over West Beirut than any other organization. So, in fact, we worked with the PLO to organize the security so that the American civilians, who were moving to this area to get on the landing ship, wouldn't be shot at. That was one of our few examples of cooperation with the PLO.

Q: That was quite a baptism under fire in arriving at your first time as the Chargé in Beirut. Could you tell me how you established yourself, and how you conducted relations with the Lebanese authorities, or whoever were the persons that you ended up dealing with?

LANE: Yes. This was a time when we were operating with a real skeleton staff, if you'll pardon the expression, in Beirut. All dependents had been evacuated from the Embassy staff, and we cut down to the bare minimum, we thought, to keep the Embassy going including four Marine Guards and a Gunny. So we did have Marine Guards standing watch at all times. But we all lived, worked, and ate in the Embassy--in the chancellery building--for about six months, from about August of 1976 until about February 1977. For the first month, Ray Hunt was there and he outranked me, and so he was the Chargé. But then the road to Damascus opened, and he was able to get out. So basically from the end of August until February '77 when Dick Parker came in and took over as

Ambassador, I was the Chargé. And it was very difficult to establish any kind of contact with the official authorities in Lebanon because Beirut was split right down the middle by the so-called green line. The U.S. Embassy was located in West Beirut where the Muslim and Palestinian factions were in control. So the only people that I could go to see were basically the opponents of the government--the opponents of the president.

Q: The president at that time was...

LANE: ...was Elias Sarkis. Sarkis had just taken over as president during this period. In fact, Ambassador Meloy was on his way to see president-elect Sarkis of Lebanon when he was killed. Actually I think Sarkis took over in September officially but he'd been elected earlier. So everybody knew he was going to be the president, and the fellow who was actually in the office, Suleiman Franjieh, was a lame duck. Everybody wanted him to retire, resign, so Sarkis, who looked like a peacemaker could take over, but Suleiman Franjieh absolutely refused to do so and stayed on until the very last day of his mandate.

So what I did for the first several months at least, was go around and occasionally visit the leading Lebanese political figures who were available in the West Beirut. I did not initially try to cross that green line, which was where Ambassador Frank Meloy and Bob Waring had been killed. Actually, I think it was Christmas time of '76 I came home on leave--I managed to come out--and Bob Houghton came over and sat in for me for a while. It was also during this period when Bob Houghton and David Mack conducted a special mission out of Cyprus to visit the Christian leaders in East Beirut, because I wasn't able to get across to see them at that point.

Q: So it was easier to go from Cyprus to East Beirut than it was to go from West Beirut to East Beirut?

LANE: Exactly. Things improved towards the end of 1976. The Syrians came in--beginning really in June of '76--the Syrians started moving very slowly in taking control of various parts of Lebanon. And by the end of '76 they had established a kind of order, and there was a kind of truce. We thought the destruction that had gone on in late '76-'75 when it all started, April '75, was just horrendous, and things couldn't be worse, but they got steadily worse. In fact, my wife and I often reminisce that our life there, when she finally came out to join me in February of '77, from then until about July of '78 when we left, was really fairly pleasant. There were a lot of places we could go, a lot of places we couldn't, and were occasionally snipers would shoot at us. But compared to what has happened in Lebanon since, and what happened before, it really now in retrospect was the moment of calm and sanity compared to what has gone on since then.

During that time--it must have been early '77, January of '77 perhaps--when I finally did get permission from the Department to make a trip across the green line, and go visit myself some of the leaders, President Sarkis, ex-president Franjieh, former president Chamoun, and various other Christian leaders. But during that initial period in Beirut I used to say that I had the best private army in Lebanon, because after the assassination of

the previous Ambassador, of course, all sorts of security precautions had been beefed up. I was the only one really who got to leave the Embassy, and that was almost always only on official calls. I always traveled in a bullet proof car--an armored car with a lead car, and a follow car with four or five body guards in each car, carefully recruited from the elite of Lebanese security forces--one Druze, one Greek Orthodox, one Sunni, one Shia all the religions were represented in case we got into a situation where there was a religious problem there would be a co-religionist of each of the groups in Lebanon who was part of my team. One guy was the former karate champion of Lebanon, one was a weight-lifting champion of Lebanon, one was a famous member of their riot squad who had a patented technique for rendering people unconscious with one blow. It was quite a group.

Q: Were you ever threatened? Was there ever an attempt to attack you?

LANE: Not me, as me. I mean there were a couple of cases where I got fired at by snipers. There was at least one case where a stray 50 calibre round came sailing through the wooden shutter on the edge of the window of the apartment I was living in. But those are sort of accidents of living in a war zone, much more than somebody deciding, "We're going to go out and get the American Chargé." As I have often said, if the PLO had wanted to blow me away, they could have done it anytime they wanted to because they had all kinds of assets in West Beirut--far more than anybody else. They knew where I was going, I'm sure, even though we tried to keep that relatively quiet. But if I was making a call on the leader of the Druze, it wouldn't be very hard for the Palestinians to find out very quickly where I was, and follow me back. While I had this protection--the lead car, and me in the middle car, and a follow car, and armored plate and guns, and all that--still the Palestinians with the assets that they had, the PLO could have blown me away anytime they wanted to.

Q: Did that sort of situation, and possibility, affect the atmosphere of the staff, and of yourself? Would you characterize the living, and working conditions, and morale?

LANE: Yes. We were definitely under siege for three or four months, and it wasn't pleasant during this period when everybody had to live, work and eat in the chancellery building. When you really couldn't go out unless you had a very official appointment, and unless you had a body guard with you. One of the things that Ray Hunt did, was to organize a mess so that we were all eating together, and he hired a cook to set that up. Otherwise you'd find people eating peanut butter and jelly sandwiches in their rooms whenever they could, or trying to cook over a hot plate, and that's terrible. But before Ray left he had gotten this organized, so we basically met three times a day for meals.

Q: Were there medical problems of any type? Psychological problems? Did you have your own form of entertainment?

LANE: Not serious. We had a lot of movies that came in the pouch bag. That was the activity every night, everyone would watch movies and, of course, we were pretty busy,

we were all working which was the best thing to have happen. If you weren't working 12-14 hour days, you'd go crazy in a situation like that. But there was a lot to do, and we were never quite sure if and when a new battle would break out between the Christians and the Muslims, and the U.S. Embassy was located pretty close to no-man's land. So we could have very easily been in a war zone.

Q: Were some of the other Embassies located in East Beirut? Were you able to have any sort of social contact outside the Embassy at that time?

LANE: Very little. There weren't very many Embassies left at that point. The British were just down the road, and we saw a fair amount of the British both personally and professionally. As happens so often in the Foreign Service, but really has only happened to me once, the man who was my counterpart in Benghazi during Qadhafi's revolution, who had headed a much larger British Embassy office in Benghazi, was the British Ambassador in Beirut when I was there as Chargé. He is now Sir Peter Wakefield. So we obviously had some things in common, and talked to each other frequently. But during those three or four months, before things opened up, it was fairly tight.

Q: Then how did things change with the arrival of Ambassador Parker, and did that change the way in which the U.S. GOVERNMENT related to the Lebanese authorities?

LANE: Yes. By the time Ambassador Parker arrived, dependents were returning, and the situation had gotten better. You could move back and forth across the green line on a fairly regular basis. There were always incidents, but people moved around in West Beirut at night, social life resumed, people gave dinner parties, people went to and fro. Things were almost back to "normal" for almost a year there.

Q: So that when you left things were fairly normal, were they?

LANE: Yes, I guess it's fair to say that. It's hard to think back. Of course, there was the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in March of '78--Operation Litani--the first time the Israelis went in to try to wipe out the Palestinian PLO encampments in Southern Lebanon, which led to the creation of UNIFIL, and that sort of thing. That was in '78.

Q: Could you explain what UNIFIL is?

LANE: That was the United Nations force in Lebanon which was created by the United Nations as an attempt to put a buffer zone between the Israelis and the rest of Lebanon, so to speak. The Israelis always complained that there were occasional attacks across the border by Palestinian units who would sneak into south Lebanon and fire rockets into northern Israeli, and then retreat. They'd disappear. Very frustrating for the Israelis, very frustrating for the inhabitants of the area because what the Israelis would do in return, was to pound them. Of course, the people who did the dirty work were no longer there. The Palestinians would run in with a mortar or rocket launcher, fire off some rounds, disappear, and Israeli retaliation would come on the heads of the poor Shia farmers who

lived there. But this caused a very nasty situation, more dangerous politically for the Israelis than militarily, and particularly with the arrival of the Begin government in '77 in Israel. For the first time the Labor party and its allies were no longer in power in Israel and the more hardline, right wing government came into power, started meddling, if you will, dealing much more effectively with the Christian Lebanese against the Palestinians and the Muslims in Lebanon. So frankly, I think, things started to get worse at that point.

Q: Then with this increased Israeli activity concerning Southern Lebanon in early '78, how did that effect the Embassy's relations with the Lebanese authorities? Did that mean that a good deal of your attention and time was spent countering Lebanese concerns?

LANE: Our relationship with the Lebanese authorities was really very close beginning with the time when the security situation got better. We could move back and forth, and Ambassador Parker arrived, who was a brilliant Ambassador, and who had long experience in Lebanon and was able to take advantage of that. Basically the Lebanese were upset that obviously the Israelis were coming into their country, and they were counting on us, as their number one supporter, to get the Israelis out, and to do everything we could to really support the territorial integrity of Lebanon which we always said we supported. And they were disappointed, I think, that we weren't able to do more.

Q: Following your assignment in Beirut, you were posted as Ambassador to Yemen, and I suppose that was something of a consequence of your service in Lebanon. How did that take place?

LANE: Yes, I think you're probably right. People felt that since I'd gone in to replace Ambassador Frank Meloy, and held the fort until Dick Parker got there, that I should be rewarded. I think that's one reason I did get the job as Ambassador to Yemen. I understand later, too, that there was one fellow who turned it down, who was better qualified, frankly, so I've got no kick coming there. This was another example actually where things were such in Lebanon in March, April of '78 that we were sort of looking forward to a third year there. Lebanon, and Beirut, had been important in our lives. We were married in Beirut, my wife's parents were missionaries in Lebanon; we knew a lot of people there, and it's a fascinating place; and it was a fascinating professional problem. But, nevertheless, it was a great honor for me to be appointed Ambassador, and I was very honored to be able to go off to Sanaa as Ambassador.

As it turned out I was the first Ambassador to present credentials to the new president of the Yemen Arab Republic since his predecessor had been blown up by a suitcase bomb in June, and I got there in September. So the situation in Yemen was not exactly calm either.
Q: When you were appointed Ambassador to Yemen, this entails getting confirmation by the Senate, and often meeting with the President beforehand. What sort of charge were you given in that process."

LANE: Well, in theory all that may be true. But in fact I never met President Jimmy Carter. To this day I have never shaken hands with Jimmy Carter whose personal

representative, theoretically, I was, so that is more "honored in the breach than in the observance," I think, in these days. I don't recall being given any particular charge in Yemen. I think the idea was basically, hold the fort, and see what's happening. "Let us know what's happening, and what you think after you get there." I don't recall any particular charge in connection with the assignment. The confirmation process was pretty routine in my case. I was very fortunate, more colorless in the sense that I had not attracted any negative attention from anybody important on the Hill. At that stage, in 1978, there were no political appointees who were interested in being Ambassador to the Yemen Arab Republic. So there wasn't any problem there. At the confirmation hearings, I think, the only person who was in the room was Senator McGovern who asked me a couple of rather simple-minded questions that his staff had obviously given him. And that was it.

So I had a very uneventful confirmation process, and arrived in Yemen in September. And then while we were there, we had all the usual things one has in a Arab post. In October, about a month after we got there, there was an attempted coup against the new president--according to some stories, financed and inspired by Libya--which he was very lucky to be able to turn aside, to overcome.

And then early in the next year there was the Yemen mini-war in February and March of 1979, between the two Yemens, which turned out to be quite an important affair because the Saudis were concerned. There is a certain parallel between what recently happened in the Gulf and what happened in '79. Because South Yemen at this point was run by a very militant Marxist regime. One of the great ironies is how South Yemen of all places, became the most Marxist of the Arab governments. But it certainly did. It was run by a dedicated Marxist by the name of Abd al Fattah Ismail. And after a series of border skirmishes between North and South Yemen, the South Yemenis launched what looked like a fairly serious attack into North Yemen, probably designed to so embarrass the president of North Yemen that he would be forced out and someone sympathetic to South Yemen would take over. The Saudis were worried about this because obviously they don't want a Marxist Government on their border, and there happen to be more Yemenis who live in the Arabian peninsula, than there are Saudis. So the Yemenis are a potential threat to the Saudis.

So apparently what happened--of course, I'm not sure because I was in Sanaa and not in Washington, nor in Jeddah--was that the Saudis came to us and said, "Look, you've been saying for years that you'll take care of our security, you'll do what's necessary if there's a threat to our security. Well, we think there's a threat to our security down there, so we want you to waive the time frame in the Foreign Assistance Act, and we want you to send immediately 12 F-5 airplanes and 60 M-60 tanks, and 100 APCs"--all of which were part of a long run aid program which we'd all worked out, and had just notified Congress of but it's supposed to run 60 days before you do it. It gives Congress a chance to say "no." And the President at this time, Jimmy Carter--March of '79--remember what happened in March of '79? Anyway, it was a last ditch attempt to put together the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. It looked like it was falling apart. Jimmy Carter is in the Middle East--or

about to take off to the Middle East to try to pull together something so that Camp David won't be a total disaster. And as he's getting on the airplane at Andrews, somebody rushes up to him, and said, "Mr. President, you've got to sign this waiver. It's in the vital interest of the United States to send this stuff to Yemen or the Saudis are going to be mad at us, and if the Saudis get mad at us it could be serious." So Carter signs it and this huge airlift started into Yemen, and of course the Yemenis didn't know how to drive the tanks, the F-5s didn't arrive in time. But it was a psychological statement. It may have had some effect on the overall situation.

Q: Could you clarify this for me and for our listeners? You were accredited to the Yemen Arab Republic. Does that represent North Yemen.

LANE: Correct, yes. This was North Yemen. There is-- although as we speak--there is one Yemen.

Q: Yes. Could you explain what happened?

LANE: At that time there were two Yemens. There was the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen, which was the former Aden Colony, which the British had controlled since the 1840s, and which they had given its independence in 1967. And then there was North Yemen which was the traditional Yemeni highlands, a country which had been independent ever since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. And we had never had relations with South Yemen because from the moment the South Yemenis acquired their own independence, we had a Consul General in Aden, but it was with the British. After the South Yemen, or the PDRY, became independent, it was a Marxist state and we never...

Q: About when...

LANE: '67. And we never did have diplomatic relations with it. We were discussing the possibility of opening diplomatic relations with the PDRY in 1978 when the president of North Yemen was blown up with a suitcase bomb, as I mentioned. So there were these two Yemens which were constantly, during my time there, either fighting each other, or talking about unity. Sometimes doing both at the same time. So this was the battle that occurred then in 1979, which did have an effect because the President and the Secretary of State, and Dr. Brzezinski all got involved. The Saudis were concerned and somebody in Washington said, "If the Yemen crisis hadn't existed, we would have had to invent it in order to show the Soviets that we hadn't been completely demoralized by Vietnam, and that we're still prepared to protect our interest by sending military forces if we had to."

Q: So that suggests that during your time as Ambassador there, there were some rather extensive American political-military interests in the region if only in relation to Saudi Arabia.

LANE: Very definitely in the region, there was no question. Saudi Arabia...it's hard to--well, it's not so hard to remember anymore now--it was a year ago. But in 1979 and '80, Saudi Arabia was producing 10 million barrels of oil a day--365 days a year--and they were selling it for about $30.00 a barrel, that's what the price was in 1980. I think that's 100 billion dollars, and that's an awful lot of money. And, of course, because of the disruption caused by the fall of the Shah of Iran, that's the second oil crisis since 1973 that oil production has dropped precipitously. We had a real crisis in oil supply, and if the Saudis hadn't produced as much as we wanted, we would have had a real disaster in this country. Saudi Arabia was very important because of its swing position in the oil supply business, and because of what it did with all its oil money. If the Saudis don't put that money into U.S. GOVERNMENT bonds, we're in trouble. One of the reasons I suspect that we went into the Gulf earlier this month was because if somebody controls all those billions that the Kuwaitis had invested in U.S. Government bonds, and doesn't roll them over (as per their famous movie), the U.S. financial system, which is already in fragile state could suffer a very nasty blow. I'm no economist, but that's my guess.

Q: Were there direct economic interests in Yemen? Does it produce oil?

LANE: It does now. Ray Hunt, not to be confused with Nelson Bunker, but Ray Hunt Oil Company has in the last two years found some oil and is producing some oil, but its not important in the international oil trade. It's important to Yemen, but its not important to the international oil trade. No, we basically have no economic interests in Yemen.

Q: But I judge we had a rather extensive U.S. mission there. Will you describe how that came about, and how you functioned as head of the Country Team?

LANE: We had a sort of a typical U.S. presence, I think, of a medium sized nature. We had the Embassy, we had a USIS office, we had a Peace Corps, we had an Attaché...

Q: Attaché meaning military?

LANE: A military Attaché, and a small Office of Defense Cooperation, a small military assistance group. We had an A.I.D. mission. So we had basically the full package. Not nearly as big as in some countries, but a lot bigger than some others. And as you say, the Ambassador's job was to serve as the head of the Country Team, and we had Country Team meetings at least once a week. I did it once a week partly because the A.I.D. mission was here, and the Peace Corps was over there-- if we'd all been in the same building, I might have tried to have a short meeting every morning, but basically once a week was enough. And I tried to keep those meetings reasonably short because the purpose of that meeting was for each person in the meeting to tell everybody else in the meeting what they needed to know about what he had been doing the past week, and was planning to do in the next week. If one of those people had a major problem, they probably needed to come and see me separately, and not bring it up in this big meeting. So I used to tell people at the Country Team meeting, "I expect everyone of you to speak for at least three minutes, and none of you speak for more than ten." I always felt there

must be something that went on in their activities that they could talk about for three minutes, the Military Attaché could say something for that long anyway; that the Peace Corps Director would be interested in, and visa versa, but I didn't want them to get into a long harangue about some particular problem that they had and bore everybody else when it was basically something that probably that person and I could handle.

Q: Did you spend a lot of time focusing on the South Yemeni-North Yemeni relationship? And in that connection, how did you go about, in your political relations, with the Yemen government? And was that somewhat personalized because of the nature of the rulers of Yemen?

LANE: Yes, it was somewhat personalized, partly because of the nature of the situation. But mainly, I think, because of the Yemen mini-war, and the fact that the President of Yemen wanted a lot of things from the United States. So what he wanted to do--he wasn't used to working through the bureaucracy, and I'm not sure he really trusted very many of his Ministers. He was very new, they weren't his people, so when he wanted something, he would call up and have me come and see him. I saw an awful lot of the president of the Republic, and we spent an awful lot of time talking one-on-one in Arabic, which was a little dangerous-- not something that I would recommend. But if there were more than just the two of us in the room, he started to act, to posture, for whoever else was in the room, whether it was his interpreter, or one of his people, or my DCM--who was a super guy, he has just been named as Ambassador to Kuwait. So I tended to do it one-on-one, even though I would not recommend it to anybody else. Its not a good technique to use.

Q: Did that cause any incidents one way or another?

LANE: I don't think so. We had our problems, but I don't think there was a case where I came back from one of those meetings, and said the president told me this, and I told him that, and then the president...well, there was one case like that. I think, although I'm not sure, whether the president knew very well what I'd told him but pretended I'd said something different, to see if he could get away with it, and he didn't.

Q: Do you want to elaborate on that, or does that fall into the confidential category?

LANE: Well, no, I think I can...no, I probably better not at this stage.

Q: During the period you were at the Yemen Arab Republic there were the two Yemens. Now in the Security Council deliberations of the Mid-East crisis I notice that there is one Yemen, and it has taken the position at some variance with that of some other Arab countries, and of our own country. Could you elaborate on that please?

LANE: Sure. As I guess I mentioned, there were two Yemens for a long time in history, because of the British imperialism; the British went into Aden and then took as much of the hinterland as they thought they needed. Since the British gave it up in 1967, the two Yemens have been, as I guess I said, talking about unity, and/or fighting each other and

sometimes doing both at once. They realize that they're basically the same people, that they're the same nation, but they have had very different political systems and its been difficult therefore for them to get together. Also, of course, Saudi Arabia has not been anxious to have a united Yemen. There are more Yemenis in the Arabian Peninsula than there are Saudis, and if the two Yemens unite that makes the demographic imbalance even more dangerous from the Saudi point of view, particularly since there is a little bit of the southwest corner of Saudi Arabia that used to be part of Yemen and the Yemenis feel it should be part of Yemen again. So the Saudis have always worked in various ways to try to prevent the unification of the two Yemens.

But within the last year, as a result of a series of political moves on both sides of the border, the two Yemens have come closer, and closer together, and although I haven't been able to follow this very closely in the American press, it's obvious that within the last six months, the two Yemens have formally unified. Sanaa is now the capital of the united Yemen. The name is still Yemen, of course, and therefore they are switched to one country in the United Nations.

Now the reason that I think the Yemen has taken a very cautious position on this recent crisis in the Gulf--I hesitate to call it pro- Iraqi because I think that's too strong--but at the same time they clearly have abstained on two crucial Security Council votes. In fact, as an aside, I'll bet that Yemen wishes fervently it was not a member of the Security Council at this particular time. This is very awkward for them because on the one hand they don't want to antagonize Saddam Hussein and Iraq. The Iraqis played an important role back in 1979 in helping to solve the Yemen mini-war in a way that maintained the present president of Yemen, Ali Abdallah Salah, in his office as president. And I suspect he remembers that, so he doesn't want to be too negative on the Iraqis.

Q: Could I just interject--so that the present president of the unified Yemen is the former president of North Yemen; whereas the capitol is in the former capital of South Yemen. Is that correct?

LANE: No. The first half is correct. The president of North Yemen is now the president of all of Yemen. And the capital of North Yemen is now the capital of all Yemen. You hear a lot about Aden, and Aden is certainly the famous port, but Sanaa is the capital. And the man who became the president of North Yemen, with Saudi support incidentally in 1978, is Ali Abdallah Salah, and in spite of many predictions that he would be overthrown, or removed, or something, and that he'd never last, here he is twelve years later still very much in office, and not only that, but apparently the man who has succeeded in unifying the two Yemens. Now, it could still come apart, but every day that goes by, I think, makes unity more likely.

Q: It is very possible it would seem to me--this leader of a united Yemen--may play quite an important role. At least he may figure in this present crisis perhaps in the future, and I think your relationship with him gives you a good chance to comment on how he might relate to the United States, or the style in which he might rule his country.

LANE: He's an interesting man. He's a simple soldier in the sense that he comes from a tribe in Yemen; he does not have a lot of foreign experience; he does not have very much of an education; he is a forceful, dynamic man; he impressed some people obviously early on or he would not have become president when he did. Interestingly enough, Vice President Bush paid a visit to the Yemen, and met President Salah, and President Salah liked him very much, and I guess President Bush liked Salah well enough to invite him back for a State visit earlier this year, although it was practically not reported in the American press. President Salah did come to Washington, and there was a White House dinner for him. Then he went down to Texas and had quite a time with Ray Hunt, I understand. And I would guess that President Bush is very unhappy at this moment with his friend, President Salah, who is not standing up to be counted and voting the way we'd like to have him vote in the UN. I suspect relations have cooled considerably between the United States and the Yemen as a result of this crisis. And, as I said, I think the Yemen is doing this because they need Iraq as a counterweight against Saudi Arabia. There may be more Yemenis than Saudis but if you talk military or economic power, there's no question that the Saudis are much stronger, and the Yemenis know that. And the Yemenis are fearful that the Saudis may try to do something, political-military, to break up the unity of the two Yemens, and therefore its very helpful, I guess, from their point of view, to have a nice counterweight like Iraq on the other side which they can count on to be friendly.

Q: Politically, and economically, it sounds as though Yemen now is perhaps moderate in its politics. In terms of its economy has it been a sort of poor neighbor to Saudi Arabia, and to Kuwait, supplying workers for the oil fields? And does that play into the political mix?

LANE: Exactly. The major foreign exchange earner of Yemen for years has been remittances from Yemenis working in Saudi Arabia, primarily in construction. But there are just hundreds of thousands literally of Yemenis who work in Saudi Arabia in all aspects doing all the dirty work--an awful lot of the dirty work. And it's traditional almost for the Yemeni male to go to Saudi Arabia to work for a year, to live four or five in a room, to save all their money, and then to buy a Land Rover just before they are about to come home, drive it across the desert, and around the border post to evade the custom duties, and then set up as taxi drivers in the Yemen. They're very enterprising people. They work very hard when they go abroad, they don't work so hard at home because they spend too much time chewing this mildly narcotic leaf called ghat.

I should mention too that one of the strong factors for Yemenis is that they have two or three very bright, well educated people now at the top of their government. The Foreign Minister is Abd Al Karim Iryani has a Ph.D. from Yale in agricultural economics, I think. But, nevertheless, as you can see from that a very well educated man who spent some time working at the Kuwait Development Bank, and various such organizations. One of the Vice Presidents is Abd Al Aziz Abd Al Ghani, who went to Colorado College, and then the University of Colorado, and was the head of their central bank for a while, and has been sort of a stabilizing force at the top of their government bureaucracy for years.

So they have this dynamic man of the people soldier who is the president, but they also have some other men who come from very distinguished Yemenis families, and who are very well educated. I mentioned just two, but there are others who can run various parts of their government.

Q: You mentioned that Saddam Hussein had played a constructive role, from the Yemeni point of view, in the civil war--or the impending war in '79--does he also have a good image in Yemen because of his politics, and policies, in Iraq?

LANE: That's hard for me to say. Saddam Hussein, as an individual, was not a factor in Yemen when I was there. I mean, from '78 to '81 one talked about Iraq, one didn't talk about Saddam Hussein. I don't know whether as an individual--I would guess that he doesn't have much impact. The Yemenis are a proud and ancient people. They had a great civilization in Yemen, not as soon as the Sumerians did, but they've had one there for a long time going back to the age of David and Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. So they don't get overly impressed with these leaders who arise in other countries. I wouldn't think they'd be terribly impressed.

Q: This is an interview with Ambassador George Lane, on August 27, 1990 at his home in Westminster, Massachusetts. We will continue with a question on the preceding tape concerning the relationship between Iraq and Yemen, and particularly between Saddam Hussein and the Yemenis leadership or people.

LANE: Given the geopolitical factors, I think it's much more a question of the Yemen being interested, as I said, in having Iraq as a counterbalance against Saudi Arabia, rather than any great appeal Saddam Hussein may have in Yemen.

Q: Returning to your time as Ambassador to Yemen, to the time in 1979, it was a difficult time for an American envoy to be in an Islamic country because there had been riots after the attempted takeover of the mosque in Mecca against the U.S. for supposedly involvement, and our Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan was burned. Dependents in some posts were ordered evacuated. How was the situation for you at that time?

LANE: This was a very difficult moment, both personally and professionally in the Yemen because what happened was, that the Department sent out a telegram saying, "You should organize a voluntary evacuation. And anybody who wants to leave, should be able to leave and we want to be able to cut down the number of Americans we have in Muslim countries, and particularly in Shia Muslim countries." This was again because of the problems in...not only those two that you mentioned, but, of course, the problems in Iran. And many of us sent back telegrams saying, "There really doesn't look like there's going to be any problem in this country, and we have polled all the people in the Embassy and none of the people, and none of the dependents, want to leave." And then the Department sent out a telegram saying, in effect, "You misunderstood. What we were telling you was, you <u>will</u> reduce the numbers `voluntarily'. We're not telling you everybody has to leave, but we are telling you some people have to leave." So basically every Ambassador was faced with having to try to figure out how to reduce the number of

dependents, and how do you do that if nobody wants to go? Well, it was a very awkward and tough situation, and particularly, of course, the host countries were absolutely insulted in all cases. This originally, it is my understanding--I may be getting into classified stuff here--but this went to all countries, including Saudi Arabia. The Embassy in Saudi Arabia basically went back and said, "If you apply this to Saudi Arabia, you are going to destroy a relationship which we have worked years to build. You're telling the Saudis that they're the same as the Iranians. You're telling the Saudis you don't trust them. Maybe we can get away with this, or maybe it doesn't matter if you do it in the Yemen, but it sure as hell matters if you do it in Saudi Arabia in 1979."

So the order was modified and changed, and limited, but some Ambassadors went in and said, "None of my people want to go." And the Department came out and said, as I just mentioned, "They will go." This caused a lot of bitterness.

Q: Was it accepted in Yemen?

LANE: The Military Attaché wanted to send his wife out, and the Assistant Military Attaché was basically ordered by the Military Attachés to send his wife out--his wife and children. Some of the AID people left. My wife did not leave. We didn't have any dependent children there; it obviously made a difference if you had small children. So some people went, some people didn't. Basically I didn't have a dramatic problem because I didn't have to order anybody out while letting my wife stay, which would have been a very awkward position because there were some who wanted to leave anyway. But, I can still remember the Under Secretary in the Foreign Ministry saying, "Ambassador Lane, you understand this country. You've been here long enough to know we're not like the Iranians, or the Pakistanis. We're not going to burn your schools down, or burn your Embassy down. You'll get protests from us if you do things we don't like but, for heaven's sake..." and I didn't think they were either. Half the Yemenis are Shiites, but they don't belong to the same Shia sect as the Iranians, they all thought Khomeini was crazy. They have no religious bond there at all, which many people in Washington seemed to think there was. It was a very tough situation. I understand that Jimmy Carter, and Cyrus Vance sitting in Washington looking out at the world...it's their responsibility, all those people out there, "Are you just going to do nothing, and watch Embassies get burned down?" You feel like you've got to do something. Yet, you do something like this, and of course, it's terrible for morale in the Embassy, and it terrible for relationships between the United States and the host country. So it was a very tough thing.

The other really tough thing that I had in Yemen which people might be interested in, was during the Yemen mini-war. We had an initial report, this is March of '79, that the South Yemenis had made a breakthrough, and were about to occupy the city of Taiz in southern Yemen, and that the Yemenis troops were falling back--the North Yemen troops. At this same time the North Yemen government was telling us that the situation was terrible, "You've got to send us all sorts of military help because if you don't, we're going to collapse." As a result of that I ordered all the Peace Corps volunteers who were in the Taiz area, to move to Sanaa and this caused a real panic in that area because, of course,

all the Yemenis said, "Oh, my God, the Americans are leaving, so things must be terrible." The Prime Minister called me in, and said, "Do you realize you may have brought down the Yemeni government?" And I said, "I'm sorry if that happens. I hope it doesn't happen, but my primary responsibility has got to be for the American citizens in this country, not for the Yemeni government, and I hear these reports that the South Yemenis are coming in, and I hear from every source in your government that you desperately need help, that you're not sure you can hold the line. I've got to do that." Well, as it turned out it wasn't necessary, because they (the South Yemeni) didn't break through. It turned out that the North Yemenis were exaggerating their difficulties in order to get military help from us. So, in one sense, it turned out that I made the wrong decision; but I'm not sure it was the wrong decision. I'm not sure that I wouldn't do the same thing again if faced with the same situation. But, you know, in miniature, this is the sort of thing that happened in Saigon. You know, what was his name--it's just slipped my mind.

Q: Graham Martin, our Ambassador.

LANE: Graham Martin--felt, if I pull the Americans out, it's the end of the Government. Well, we didn't have the position in Yemen that the U.S. had in South Vietnam, and I'm not trying to equate the two situations but it is a situation that I suspect faces the American in charge, the Ambassador, and it may happen again.

Q: There is a certain parallel with the situation in Kuwait and Iraq at the present time in that some decisions had to be made about reducing the number of American personnel, how it could be reduced, the way in which this would factor into the whole political-military dilemma.

LANE: Yes, it's a little different there because the tough situation that the Department, and maybe Nat Howell who is an old friend, have been facing in Kuwait was, "Okay, who's essential?" You have to tell somebody, "You're not an essential person now, so you leave." This business of who is the essential is delicate.

Q: During your period in Yemen, I would be interested as to the degree of Congressional interest in the post. Did you have visitors?

LANE: That's a good question. In two and a half, almost three years in Yemen, we had two Congressional visitors that I can remember. One was Senator Percy who came early on, primarily I think, because his brother-in-law was head of the Save The Children Fund--the American Save The Children Fund headquartered in Connecticut, and Save The Children was doing some things in Yemen. So he heard about the Yemen that way, and he and his wife came out to visit on Thanksgiving with us, as I recall, the first year we were there. Very pleasant people, very nice.

The other Congressional visitor was Congressman Solarz from Brooklyn who came with a staff of several people who were interested in the Jews in Yemen--how many Jews were there left, where were they, how did they live, were they being persecuted, could he and

his staff go visit them? That was less pleasant because the Yemenis were not about to roll out the red carpet for the Solarz group to go visit the Jews of Yemen. There weren't very many left. Almost all of the Yemenis Jews went to Israel in 1948 as the result of the famous Operation Flying Carpet which was mounted at that time. There may be three or four hundred living in certain isolated villages, and I really do believe that they're no more maltreated than anybody else. Their life is no different. There is sort of a tradition in some Yemeni villages that the Jews are the peace-makers because the Muslim tribes won't trust each other but they trust a Jew to be fair between the two Muslim tribes. But those were the only two Congressional visitors really in two and a half years, and this was the period when they were just flooding into Saudi Arabia. In '78 to '81 Saudi Arabia was the place to go.

Q: What about relations with the U.S. military? Were there U.S. Naval visits? Were there any active sort of military programs?

LANE: Yes. We had a Military Assistance Advisory Group, which was called the ODC, the Office of Defense Cooperation; a couple of people, and then there were some more people who came on TDY. For a while there in 1979, we had two Air Force pilots teaching the Yemenis how to fly the F-5 at Sanaa airport in the morning, and the Soviets were teaching them how to fly the Sukoy in the afternoon--at same airport, different pilots. That program, I think, still goes on. I think the F-5 program...the F-5 was a good airplane, a good plane for the Yemenis to have. And we had some people also working with their ground forces; not much in the way of Naval visits. We had a couple but not a lot.

Q: Now you mentioned the Soviets having a military assistance program, a training program there. Was there any dimension of the cold war during your tenure there?

LANE: Yes, yes, very much so really. The first Soviet Ambassador, when I first arrived, was a wonderful old Bolshevik, who looked like a combination of Khrushchev, and a dissipated W.C. Fields--a short stocky guy who drank too much, and was a real aggressive fellow. The Soviets had had a long relationship with the Yemen, supplying weapons, and helping the Egyptians who helped the Yemenis in the Yemeni civil war. So they had 200 military advisers or so in the Yemen.

Q: This would be in North Yemen?

LANE: In North Yemen, not to mention what they had in South Yemen which was even bigger. The U.S. military relationship with North Yemen was almost entirely through the Saudis, which made the Yemenis furious because they wanted direct relationship with the United States and not one dependent on the Saudis. But the Yemenis didn't have any money. The Saudis were paying for everything, and he who pays the piper, calls the tune. So we basically worked fairly closely with the Saudis, as well as with the Yemenis and the Yemenis didn't like it a bit. But we did have these U.S. F-5 pilots training the

Yemenis...one of them just sent me a card. He's just been made a Squadron Commander of a fighter wing in Germany, he's now a Lieutenant Colonel--he was a Captain then.

Q: You said the first Soviet Ambassador was rather charming?

LANE: Not really, I mean he spoke nothing but Russian. The second Soviet Ambassador was about 30 years younger, and definitely the second generation of Soviet diplomats. I don't know whether you've read Charles Thayer's book, Diplomat? But the first generation of Soviet diplomats were guys who came right out of the revolution, really tough old Bolsheviks. The second generation hardly...well, the Gorbachevs, well, not Gorbachev, of course, but Dobrynin maybe. But well educated, speak three or four languages. This fellow had written a Ph.D. thesis on the Yemen. He spoke Arabic and English as well as Russian. He was still pretty arrogant, but a much smoother character, a much different type. The first Soviet Ambassador used to go to these formal diplomatic things we have to go to--he always carried a hip flask and nipped at it in the course of the event, whatever it was.

Q: After Yemen you were a Diplomat in Residence for a year, and then your final Foreign Service assignment was as Political Adviser to the Headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany, of the U.S. European Command which ostensibly would seem to be out of area from your Mid-East expertise and assignments, but in fact had some bearing on that. Could you elaborate, please?

LANE: Yes. Despite the name of the U.S. European Command, in fact that command is responsible for all U.S. military activities, not only in Europe, but in most of Africa, and also in Lebanon, Syria and Israel, interestingly enough. The command structure was changed a few years ago when they created CENTCOM. They wanted to focus it (CENTCOM) on the Persian Gulf, and not on the Arab-Israeli problem. So they took Syria, Lebanon and Israel, and left them with the old European command. So as it turned out my experience in Lebanon and in Africa was very useful, I think, to the command.

Q: Were there some crises that took place in these areas while you were at the command?

LANE: Yes. As you remember the big crisis in Lebanon was in 1982 with the Israeli invasion, followed by the deployment of the multi- national force, the U.S. troops, French troops, Italian troops, and eventually, I think, some British, who first went to Beirut to oversee the evacuation of the PLO fighters from Beirut in 1982 after the Israelis had invested the city. Then after the assassination of the Lebanese President Bashir Gemayel there was the massacre at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut, and a multi-national force was sent back in to try to establish a presence which would assist, in some way, the Lebanese government in gaining control of the situation, and facilitate the Israeli evacuation of Lebanon. A long tangled tale which resulted in basically disaster for U.S. foreign policy with the blowing up of the Marine barracks in October of '83, and killing 243 Marines and sailors. So in my position...the command was very much involved in all that because the chain of command ran from the Marines on the beach, through the Sixth

Fleet, through U.S. Navy Europe headquarters, and then through U.S. military headquarters in Europe--that is, Stuttgart--and then back to the Pentagon. So the ultimate responsibility in the field for that operation was with General Rogers, who was both the NATO commander and the U.S. only commander, and his deputy, General Lawson, who was the de facto commander of the U.S. military operations in the command because even though General Rogers officially wears two hats. (He's the NATO commander, and he's the U.S. only commander.) In fact, he spent so much of his time being NATO commander that he delegates almost all of his U.S. only responsibilities to his deputy in Stuttgart, who in this case was General Lawson. And since the Lebanese operation was clearly not a NATO operation, this was a very important responsibility for the command to try to figure out how best to position, and use the U.S. Marines who were sent in there.

In some ways interesting, and some very frustrating because this was a job (POLAD) where I was involved in everything, and responsible for nothing. Unlike something like Yemen where you're involved in a very small part of the world, but you have the ultimate responsibility for it in the field. And almost all the policy in this case was being made in Washington. My role was basically writing memos to my boss in the field, and working with the officers there in Stuttgart. But we weren't making policy, and there weren't very many people in Washington who were listening to anything we were saying about policy.

Q: Did you go back into the area in connection with that assignment?

LANE: I did. I visited Beirut a couple of times. The last time I visited Beirut, I guess, was a week before the Embassy was blown up in April of '83. I was sitting in Bob Dillon's office with General Smith, who was then the commander...

Q: Bob Dillon being?

LANE: Was the Ambassador to Lebanon at that point. And a week after that they had that horrendous explosion of the suicide bomb in front of the U.S. Embassy, which killed something like 23 Americans and 50 Lebanese employees. The Ambassador wasn't killed, but he was hurt--he was cut up a little bit. And that was the explosion in which Bob Ames was killed. He was the CIA expert on Middle East and Lebanon, and many other CIA people were meeting with him in the office directly above where that explosion took place. It was a real disaster because Bob Ames was a very bright, very smart, and very experienced guy, and he had the confidence of the Secretary and some high ranking people in Washington. Who knows, things might have been a little different if Bob had lived. It was a real tragedy.

I visited Egypt later on with the boss, but that was the last time in Lebanon.

Q: Was there another major activity that you were involved with in EUCOM?

LANE: The two major activities going on during the three years plus that I was in EUCOM were, the question of INF deployment in Europe, and this problem in Lebanon

that I mentioned. The INF deployment in Europe grew out of the dual track decision of 1979, that we were going to negotiate with the Soviets about reducing nuclear weapons in Europe, but if that didn't succeed we were going to begin to deploy a whole new generation of intermediate range nuclear weapons in Europe to counter the Soviet's SS-20s. And this was a very controversial political move. This was a period when...particularly when Reagan came into office in early 1981, because this was the time when this decision was to be implemented. And there was great opposition in Europe to the idea of any more nuclear weapons going into Europe, particularly with U.S. finger on the trigger. And particularly, as seen from Europe, with this cowboy who was talking about the evil empire and that sort of thing, in charge of U.S. foreign policy. So for three or four years it was a major political-military operation getting ready the places where all these intermediate weapons were going to be deployed. Getting the U.S. installations organized in Belgium, in Germany, in the UK, Greenham Common, in Italy, Comiso. Coordinating all of this very closely between the U.S. military and the U.S. Embassies, making sure that the people in Washington didn't send us instructions that were impossible, or stupid, to implement in the field. I've often said, I think it was the only foreign policy success in the first Reagan administration, as far as I'm concerned, that we succeeded in doing it. One of the great ironies, of course, is that it is now all being undone. As part of the INF treaty, all that has been taken out. Which is a good thing. I mean I think the INF treaty is a good thing to do. But the contrast between that operation, and the Beirut operation, was really dramatic because in the one we had very close political- military cooperation in the INF deployment in Europe. Both the Embassies and my boss in Stuttgart, and in Washington too, to some extent, went out of their way to try to coordinate and be sure that everybody knew what the other fellow was doing, make sure that the guys in the Embassies know what the military problems are so they can keep those in mind when they negotiate with their counterparts, and make sure the military guys understand the political sensitivities so they don't go charging around like bulls in a China shop messing everything up and causing problems they don't have to cause.

Q: Was your Embassy Bonn?

LANE: No, my Embassy--I didn't have an Embassy--I worked for the General. And the Ambassador in Bonn at this time was Arthur Burns for most of this period. Arthur Burns occasionally thought I worked for him, so it did require some diplomacy on my part.
Q: When you talked about the Embassies being kept in very close coordination with our military authorities, which Embassies were you referring to?

LANE: Basically the Embassies in the deployment countries: that is, London, Bonn, Brussels, Rome. But also all of them, every NATO Embassy. It was important that our Ambassador in Denmark know what was going on with this military deployment so if the Foreign Minister called him, he could reassure the Foreign Minister even though nothing was going on in Denmark. Again, it's a long story and I would like sometime...it's one of those things I would like to write up some day, is the story of that INF deployment, because I think it would make a fascinating article on political-military cooperation, and how it can work. I think the kind of cooperation that we developed, and one of the people

who started all this was Ed Streator who was the DCM in London in 1982, I guess, because it was very shortly after I got there. He sent a telegram into Washington saying, "Look, as I look at the schedule here we're supposed to be deploying these things in Europe one year from now as part of what we've said we're going to do, as part of our policy. We don't have plans to do this. We haven't talked about it among ourselves, among the Embassies, or traded ideas about where the problems are. We haven't talked to the military, we've got to sit down and do this." London organized a conference, and got all these people together, and my boss...

Q: This would be Americans, and there would be people from the Embassies, and be the political advisers such as yourself?

LANE: This was Americans only, including the military. A lot of the key Generals and Colonels who were doing this. Get everybody in the same room talking about what their problems are.

Q: So you went with your General?

LANE: Not my General, but two or three of his people. But I went, the other POLADS were there, the political advisers from the Embassies, the political-military officers from the Embassies, Political Counselors, and they did the same kind of a thing with Public Affairs people. How are we going to sell this? There was a lot of opposition in Europe to having more American nuclear weapons, with American fingers on the trigger. Not surprising if you were a European.

Q: Yes. I was thinking you went from the green line in Beirut to the Green Party in Germany.

LANE: In a sense, that's true. The Greens were certainly symbolic at this point. You know, Germans camped out in front of the compound in Stuttgart, and sort of in effect saying, "Why do we need more nuclear weapons?" And trying to explain to the American GIs, "These guys are not anti-American, they are anti-nukes. If we were trying to do this outside your hometown, it might be your sister out there." Well try to get this point across. But, anyway, it worked well. We had problems of course. They are, of course, strong minded people, and you've got a military guy who comes in and says, "God damn it, my orders are to do this. Get out of my way." Sometimes you get the State Department, or political types who say, "Oh, my, you mustn't do that. You might ruffle somebody's feathers." You have to try to balance these out. But anyway, it was a classic example of good cooperation, whereas the Lebanon operation was just the opposite. We had five different special Presidential envoys, I think, who were trying to manage that Lebanese problem: Phil Habib, Morris Draper, Rumsfeld, McFarlane, and Fairbanks, I think. Not one of them ever came to Stuttgart. Rumsfeld, I think, went through Brussels to talk to Bernie Rogers, and my boss went up there to see him, unfortunately I didn't get to go. But that's the sort of thing...I'm not saying if they had come it would have solved all the problems, but it would have made things easier.

Another thing that was really important in all this, was during the INF deployment my boss, a four-star General who was acting in charge in Stuttgart, invited every single U.S. Ambassador in Western Europe to come visit him, spend 24-hours, sit in on a briefing, and have dinner with him at his residence. So we'd give them a briefing with a dog and pony show that the military always puts on, and then he would get to talk for as long as he wanted to about the problems in his country, and some of us would ask him questions. And then the boss would throw a big dinner party for him with some leading people from Stuttgart, and some from elsewhere. And at the end of 24 hours if there was a problem in the Embassy two months later, General Lawson could pick up the phone and he knew the Ambassador, they'd had dinner together. It was a big help. It made a difference.

Q: What was your role in that?

LANE: I basically don't claim much credit myself. I think this was General Lawson's idea before he came. I did a lot of facilitating--my office did--of setting up the Ambassadorial visits. I'd talk with the Ambassador's staff, when is a good time for him to come, and explain to the Ambassador's people what we did in EUCOM. They were talking with somebody who's from the Foreign Service, as they were, so that made it easier. And a lot of these people I did know from some post or other. The first visitor we had, I think, was Harry Bergold, who was the Ambassador in Hungary. Harry and I came into the Foreign Service together in the same class. I played a facilitating role but I don't claim to have organized it.

Q: But that assignment clearly gave you an opportunity to appreciate the diplomatic-military aspects of a problem, and I think in my own experience that I've seen instances where the U.S. military and Foreign Service corps did not work well together. We're not comfortable with each other. Do you have some general observations of your impressions of this problem, and what can be done about it.

LANE: I think you're right. I think there very much is a problem. They do tend not to be comfortable with each other. I used to say once in a while, a little facetiously, that every Foreign Service Officer seems to think that every U.S. military officer is a dumb cluck who can't say anything except, "nuke them until they glow." And every military officer seems to think every Foreign Service Officer is an effete slob, if not a homosexual, and will give away the whole store if given half a chance. And the trouble is that about one out of a hundred they're right in each case. But the other 99, of course, it's totally wrong, and if you go to places like the War College you discover that sometimes the Foreign Service people are much more hawkish than the military in terms of using force. How do you get around it? Things like the War College are good, cross-cultural assignments, getting Foreign Service Officers into the military academies, getting military guys into the State Department. We need as much of that as we can get because, of course, those cliches are way off. There are some very bright Colonels that I met with EUCOM--I say Colonels, because they were mostly Majors and Colonels by the time they reached that staff. And there are some dumb Generals and we've got some dumb Ambassadors, and

some bright people in our Service too, and some dumb people. I don't know quite how you get around the problem except as much cross fertilization as you can get.

Q: Now our staff at NATO was playing perhaps preponderantly a military role initially, but now with the ending of the cold war there are indications that NATO may have more of a political coloration and orientation. Do you sense how that might work with regard to the American presence at U.S. NATO?

LANE: I think you're right. I think it is going to be more political. I think it may also be that NATO will become de facto the place where the U.S. and the major European countries coordinate their military policies worldwide. We've never done that in NATO before because NATO was so concerned with the so-called "out of area problems." NATO has a specific area of responsibility, and if the U.S. would say, "Well, let's talk about what our policies should be in the Persian Gulf," or something like that, the other NATO countries would say, "That's not a NATO problem. We do not discuss that in this forum." So we didn't have any place where we could discuss that, really. And my boss was trying to develop that a little bit through EUCOM because that was U.S. only. But the natural place to do it is NATO.

Q: It is, although in this present Gulf crisis Germany has stated that it feels limited because of its NATO membership and constraints to playing any role.

LANE: Well, that's fine. I'm not saying everybody has to play exactly the same role, or march in lockstep at all. But where do we consult about who can do what? NATO, it seems to me, is the obvious place and I don't think we're ever going to get to the point of changing the official area of responsibility of NATO because that would make it much too complicated, and it might stir up some opposition from various other people for various reasons. But as a matter of practice, why can't the Germans say that? Everybody understands that. People don't want the Germans to start throwing their weight around. So I think the military won't disappear entirely, but if we get the military-political coordination, why not?

Q: From your EUCOM position you then retired from the Foreign Service, returned to Massachusetts where you had ties. Looking back over your career, what would you consider the highlights personally in terms of what you felt you accomplished, and secondly, maybe as being an eye witness to something you considered to be of an historic moment?

LANE: Personally the high point has to be Yemen simply because I was the Ambassador, and I was in charge, and it was an interesting time- -a lot of things going on. Much to my surprise really, the Yemen did become sort of headline activity when I was there. The top people in the U.S. Government were interested in what was happening. I remember a long one hour trying to explain Yemen to Bud McFarlane when he was Counselor in the Department.

In terms of observing, I guess, it would clearly be the last assignment in EUCOM. As I mentioned, those two activities that the headquarters was very much involved in, and therefore that I was very much involved in. The deployment of INF weapons in Europe, and the U.S. military involvement in Lebanon from 1982 to '84 were things that we followed very closely, and were active in, in the command. And I played a role on the edge of that, as I mentioned to you. I think there are some lessons to be learned from what we did right on the INF deployment, and what we did wrong in Lebanon, which could be expanded on.

Q: Well, now, taking Lebanon as one case and amplified by the present Persian Gulf crisis, do you feel looking back on your career as an Arab specialist, that the Foreign Service has less voice now in these matters and within the State Department it is more difficult to be effective as an Arab specialist?

LANE: I have always felt that if you wanted to make foreign policy, you don't join the Foreign Service. What we do in the Foreign Service is to study foreign countries, to report about foreign countries, to make recommendations about foreign policy, and to implement foreign policy. But the final decisions about foreign policy, of course, are made by the President and the people he appoints, and that's the way it ought to be. That's the way the system works. A wonderful statement that Warren Rudman made to Ollie North during the hearings when Colonel North was explaining the way things should have been done; and Senator Rudman stood up and looked at him and said, "Colonel North, you've got to understand that the American people have the right to be wrong." I may disagree with what the policy is, but you, you know, you were in the game, you know the rules. You either carry out the policy or you quit. I always felt you get one chance to say "no." I mean this happened to me a couple of times where you get instructions from Washington, "Go see the Foreign Minister and tell him this..." And you go back and you say, "I think it would be a great mistake if I were to do that. Here's why I think it's a mistake, here's what I think we ought to do." And then they come back and say, "Okay, we agree with you. Try it your way. When they say `no', you carry out your previous instructions."

Q: You have the one chance to make an input.

LANE: You've had your shot, and then you go ahead and do it. If you can't do it, you quit. I'm not sure it hasn't always been that way. I mean you begin to read about Truman, and the decision to recognize Israel, and all of that. The Foreign Service people were unanimously opposed to it at that point apparently, and the decision was influenced by domestic politics, by Truman's personal feelings, and by some non-Foreign Service type advisers. And I think that's been true all along as long as I've been in the Foreign Service. There are, of course, a few career people in the Foreign Service who have very special positions--Llewellyn Thompson, or someone like that. But most of us, as I say, if you want to make foreign policy, join a Congressman's staff or pick the right man that's going to be president. It's very rare that a Foreign Service Officer really makes policy on any important issues, I think.

Q: I understand that one concern of potential applicants for the Foreign Service nowadays, is with personal security, that this has changed so dramatically over the space of 20 or 30 years. You certainly experienced that yourself in your assignments in Lebanon, and elsewhere. And I've also noticed myself with some concern the way in which we have hardened Embassies in order to make them theoretically more secure, perhaps at the cost of shutting out meaningful contacts with the countries to which we're assigned. Do you have some observations on that?

LANE: Yes. I think you're absolutely right. The simple, the short way to say this, is that in order to get perfect security, you have to have perfect isolation. In which case, as a Foreign Service Officer, you're perfectly useless and we've been moving in that direction. It's easy to understand why. There have been far more Ambassadors killed in the last ten years than there have been Generals. We've lost...you can probably name them as quickly as I could--Cleo Noel and Curt Moore in Khartoum.

Q: Adolph Dubs in Afghanistan.

LANE: ...Spike Dubs in Afghanistan, Frank Meloy, I've talked about. Rodger Davies in Cyprus, I think it was. Its become a very dangerous profession. I would argue it's more dangerous than being in the military these days. A friend of mine at the local Rotary Club said the other day, "What is it with you guys? The President is on vacation telling the Ambassador, as a career Foreign Service Officer, `Just hang in there in Kuwait.'" And I said, "That's what I've been trying to tell you fellows for years. We are not a bunch of striped pants cookie pushers. It's a tough job out there." But I think you're right, it has clearly affected the job, and it must be inhibiting for anyone coming in. Not only that it's more dangerous, I suppose you wouldn't be normal if you weren't a little worried about getting shot up or getting kidnapped, but it makes it so much less fun, and so much less interesting if you can't move around on your own in a country. It's bad enough, as you say, if we turn all of our Embassies into fortresses. But then most of us, you know, we didn't see very many people in our offices in the Embassy anyway, unless it was Americans. If you wanted to see the host country people, you went out to call on them. But if you can't go out on the street without a personal bodyguard, and if you can't go see somebody without having your bodyguard stand by his front door, he's not very anxious to have you come. It certainly is terribly inhibiting for the business as a whole. I hope we can find some way to get away from it.

Q: I do think that this hardening of the Embassies does make an impact on the overall impression foreigners have of the U.S., whether they would be frequent visitors at the Embassy, for political or economic reasons is this whole paradox that the U.S. claims it's the land of freedom and second opportunity and democracy, and yet we button up and hunker down at our installations overseas.

LANE: And yet what would you recommend? Given the number of people who have been killed, or the number of hostages who have been taken, can we afford to have a totally open Embassy anymore?

Q: That's a good question.

LANE: It's a tough dilemma, a very tough dilemma.

Q: Let me ask you this. Were you to do it all over again under the present circumstances, do you think you would opt for a career in the Foreign Service?

LANE: That's a tough question. Without the security problem, yes, in the sense that I don't feel frustrated because I didn't make foreign policy, or I don't feel that I got a rotten deal from the Foreign Service. You must never, never trust a bureaucracy, and I never did unless I had to, unless I really didn't have any choice. I know some people I think did feel terribly let down by the "Service." They felt they had given up all sorts of things for the Service, and that the Service didn't respond, didn't repay. I'm sure that's the case, but I don't have any complaints on that score. But knowing how tough the security situation is, and the regulations are now in many parts of the world, boy, I don't know. I'm not sure.

Q: One follow-on question about your life in retirement which has certainly been a very active one. Do you feel that you are continuing to serve U.S. interests, and maybe your own personal interests, by being a former representative of the Foreign Service, and being one who has had experience and some knowledge on areas of vital interest to the U.S.?

LANE: Yes, I do. I feel I'm very, very lucky in this regard. I am now, as you know, teaching one course each semester at both Clark and Holy Cross in Worcester. So that's about a half-time teaching load. I'm teaching a course on the U.S. in Middle East, and a course on arms control. So those are both subjects I think are important. They are both subjects on which I can bring to the students a slightly different perspective than they get from their more academic professors who know the literature much better than I do, but who haven't had the practical experience. So I think, from the point of view of the students, it's useful to get both perspectives. And I think it is helpful when I give my course on the U.S. in the Middle East, I tell some stories about Qadhafi, or things in the Yemen, and that does make it come alive for the students, I think, and it does, I hope, get across the idea that the Foreign Service is not all striped pants. I think I wore striped pants once in 30 years, and that was at a National Day in Lebanon when President Sarkis wanted to make an impression that everything was normal. So I think that is helpful. I hope it serves the country a little bit, but I know I find great satisfaction in being able to do it.

Q: I think it's important since the State Department has so relatively few people compared to other government departments, and particularly the military, to be active and out where people can see one. I know I was at an elder hostel recently and talked to

a man in his eighties who said I was the first Foreign Service Officer he had ever met, and it had changed his opinion somewhat of the State Department.

LANE: Well, you're right. There aren't very many of us, and it would be good if more people could get over this awful cliche image which is deliberately promoted, of course, by some people in the press who disagree with our positions on some issues, and so is one of the things they try to do to discredit us is to sort of suggest that we're all effete slobs and don't really know what's going on, and are either out of touch with what the American people want and need, and that sort of thing.

Q: I think we've covered the waterfront, but before closing, is there anything that occurs to you now that we should have addressed and haven't yet?

LANE: I may think of something tomorrow, but I can't think of anything right now.

Q: Thank you very much, Ambassador Lane, for taking the time to allow us to interview you. This interview, along with the others that we will gather, will be placed with The Association for Diplomatic Studies world history materials, and it will be a very valuable resource for countless historians and scholars in the future. Thank you very much.

LANE: You're quite welcome.

End of interview