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Foreign Assistance Series

AMBASSADOR LEWIS LUCKE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Worked on Senegal and Gambia River Development Programs
Significant assistance from University of Michigan contractors

-- 1986 **Third Assignment: San Jose, Costa Rica**
Economic restructuring, diversification, and private-sector based economic growth.

-- 1991 **Tour in Tunisia** only 6 months due to evacuation during first Gulf War.

-- 1991 **Review of USAID programs in Eastern Europe** to develop free markets and economic governance receives kudos from congressional oversight committee.

-- 1992 **Fourth Assignment: La Paz, Bolivia**
Worked on replacing coca cultivation with higher-value crops.
Improving Administration of Justice

-- 1996 **Fifth Assignment: Mission Director: Amman, Jordan**
Increased size of mission budget from $7 million to $400 million
Major development in additional water supplies

-- 2000 **Sixth Assignment: Mission Director, Port-au-Prince, Haiti**
Separation from Family

-- 2001 **First Retirement from USAID**

-- 2002 **Return to Lead Initial USAID Team in Iraq Reconstruction**
Initial planning with Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance
Overcoming difficulties in establishing workplace for USAID in Baghdad
-- Space and equipment
-- Communications
-- Security of personnel
Renovating all sectors simultaneously: electricity, water, currency, education, etc.
Engaging Iraqi municipal councils in decision making
Difficulties with Coalition Provisional Authority
Handling Public Affairs and VIP visits
End of tour reflections

--2004 Departure from Iraq

--2004 **Ambassador to Swaziland**
Identifying all sources of funding
Working effectively with other donors
Education, prevention, and treatment of HIV/AIDS
Rural and agricultural development
Role of South Africa
Using humor effectively

--2006 **Departure from Swaziland and Second retirement**

<u>Private Sector Activities and Temporary USAID Assignments</u>

-- 2006 Collaboration with private sector company providing affordable housing/small scale construction

-- 2008 USAID deployment as Acting Mission Director in Brasilia, Brazil.

-- 2009 USAID temporary duty as Team Leader of joint State Department/USAID experts examining economic governance in the Democratic Republic of Congo: investment climate, mineral exports and other sectors.

-- 2010 USAID deployment as USG lead on Haiti earthquake relief

-- 2010 - 2014 Private sector consulting
-- 2014 USAID deployment to Jordan to assist with refugee management
-- 2015 USAID deployment to Mauritania to head USAID's office in Nouakchott
-- 2016 USAID deployment as USAID Officer in U.S. Embassy in Yemen located in Jeddah, KSA; Yemen peace talks in Kuwait.

INTERVIEW

Early Life and Family

Q: Today is November 16, 2016 and we are beginning our interview with Ambassador Lewis Lucke. Ambassador we always begin our interviews with where you were born and raised.

LUCKE: I was born in 1951 in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and was raised in a small city also in North Carolina, Burlington, in the Piedmont between Greensboro and Chapel Hill.

Q: How large a town was it?

LUCKE: Burlington was about 40,000 when I was growing up and is about 50,000 now.

Q: What was the principal employer or the principal commercial activity that sustained the town?

LUCKE: At the time, it was textiles though now that has really changed. Burlington Industries got started there for example and a lot of other textile companies used to have operations there; most of that has moved overseas or otherwise gone away. My father worked as an engineer for Western Electric--then part of AT&T-- which was the "high tech" industry of the city doing defense contracting among other work. I think Western Electric became Lucent.

Q: When did your family first arrive in the U.S., or the colonies before that.

LUCKE: It seems that all sides of the family arrived in either Virginia or North Carolina in the early 1700s. My maternal grandmother was well informed on the subject and wrote some of the history on her side of the family. She was a Dalton and apparently the Daltons came from Yorkshire in England. The original Dalton in the US was Samuel Dalton, born in York, England and landed, so the story goes, in Alexandria, Virginia, then making his way south. Samuel is said to have been born in 1699 and died about 1803, meaning he lived in three centuries. Apparently there were planters and early settlers on all side of the family coming down to North Carolina from Virginia. One ancestor, James Hunter, led the so-called Regulators in a small rebellion against the British Governor, fighting at the Battle of Alamance in 1771. That was a precursor to the

Revolutionary War. Hunter went on to fight under General Nathaniel Greene during the Revolution at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse against Cornwallis.

Q: Were some family members also involved in in the Civil War?

LUCKE: Yes, all sides fought for the South as far as I know. The Daltons were Confederate officers. The rest of my grandparents' surnames-- Luck ("e" added later), Dickens and King, were probably more of the enlisted types-- privates, corporals etc.in the Confederate Army.

Q: Turning to your immediate family, how many children besides yourself?

LUCKE: Just one other, my sister, now a dentist in Arizona.

Q: And then you went to school in Burlington as well.

LUCKE: I graduated from high school there before leaving for college in Chapel Hill.

Q: Was there just one high school in the town, or because the population was some 40-50 thousand people, were there more?

LUCKE: There were three high schools in the city then, two for whites and one for blacks though integration was in progress so my graduating class had a medium number of black students. That segregation/integration thing seems like long, long ago.

Q: About how large was your high school?

LUCKE: It was about 1500 kids with I think a little less than 500 in my graduating class if I recall correctly.

Q: Had integration taken place? How would you describe it?

LUCKE: Integration had started but it wasn't complete. Complete consolidation came a little after my graduation. There was in fact a "riot" in my town following an incident that began with the election of cheerleaders at my high school which grew into a full scale riot where the National Guard was called in. That was a very different time but I recall well the tension all around.

Q: In high school were you involved in any extracurricular activities or travel that put you in touch with the wider world, the international world?

First International Travel: Archeological Dig in Israel

LUCKE: Lots of things. Sports--I played on the tennis team. I was in the band, Student Council, debating team. I remember my senior year having the debating state championship falling the same weekend as the tennis playoffs, so I had to choose. What

got me focused on international subjects was my passion for biblical archaeology what got me interested in that was church. Being from the South, church was important to us and the stories from the Bible got me interested in archaeology. I was able to join an archaeology expedition in Israel prior to my senior year in high school. That's what initially got me hooked on the international life.

Q: What year was that?

LUCKE: It was in 1968, and it was the year after the Six Day War and obviously, it was a very interesting time to be there. Since I had been reading about Egypt and ancient Israel since I was a kid, I jumped at the chance to join a group from UNC-Chapel Hill led by a well-known Biblical scholar and archaeologist from the University. Dr. Bernard Boyd came to speak at my church and for some reason I can't recall I was asked to introduce him so I did. After the presentation was over---he spoke about his last year's dig in Israel--I asked him a few question afterwards. He asked me something like "How come you know about this stuff?" about the archaeology and then asked if I would like to accompany him on the next summer's dig. We dug at a former Judean city called Lachish that is mentioned in several Old Testament chapters and is located south of Jerusalem. It was a pretty amazing experience and I can truthfully say I came home transformed-- and so skinny because of the heat and work that I almost had to be hospitalized. Anyway, I had the international bug then and it never went away.

Q: Before we leave Burlington did your mother also work?

LUCKE: Yes, she was a secretary at my high school. She was a college graduate but came up at a time when most "respectable" women were not expected to work. But she eventually decided she wanted to work anyway and did so.

Q: Often, parents play a role in sparking an interest in international relations either through stories of their own travel/work, or through the books or periodicals they have around the house. Did that also happen for you?

LUCKE: My parents were not an influence on my international life. My father had been a WWII pilot in England, France and Belgium but wouldn't talk about it. My mother would later fall in love with Switzerland but had never been abroad until I was into college. We traveled and went hiking and camping a lot when I was young but it was all in the region. I got my international interest from studying, reading, church and eventually the archaeological dig to Israel.

Q: And every once in a while, church groups or faith communities get involved because they have counterparts in foreign countries and joint voluntary activities. Was that any part of your upbringing?

LUCKE: No. It is now but it wasn't then. I will fill that in later if you want. I am supporting Iraqi Christians living in Jordan who are victims of ISIS, but that began in 2014

Q: One of the things we are always trying to understand in doing an oral history is where the motivation arose to become involved in international relations. Looking back, where did it begin for you?

LUCKE: For a time I thought I was going to be a lawyer, basically because at that stage I really didn't know anything else to say. Once I completed my senior of college year in France and returned home, and on top of my Israel experience, I had pretty much concluded that becoming a lawyer was about the last thing on my list. I had become focused on doing something international but at the time I had no idea what that would become or how I would get there.

Q: That is fine. So, you are now graduating from your high school in Burlington and I imagine your parents are talking to you about college. What were the sort of parameters of that discussion? Were they also just trying to encourage you to do something that would keep you in the U.S., more or less local?

University Education at UNC-Chapel Hill and Continued International Experience

LUCKE: They knew I was going to go to college--it was expected by us all. They reasonably wanted me to go to a good school and one that was affordable. I had won a debating tournament in high school at Duke so I looked at Duke. I was also offered a scholarship at a Quaker school nearby, Guilford College, but that didn't feel right. I looked at Brown for archaeology as well. My father dismissed Brown as too expensive and both Brown and Duke with "I'm not paying for you to go to school with all those Yankees." I ultimately decided to go where I really wanted to attend--the University of North Carolina. I never regretted it at all, valued my college experience and love UNC-CH with all my heart still today. Even though my father had attended a rival school, it also made sense for being more affordable than most of the alternatives.

Q: By choosing Chapel Hill I imagine in-state tuition was reasonable?

LUCKE: Not onerous. It was very affordable then especially for in-state students. Their policy was to stick it financially to the out-of-staters but even that could have been far worse. It's still considered a bargain: top rate education, some top-ranked departments, great sports and a drop-dead beautiful campus.

Q: So you begin Chapel Hill in 1969, did you commute?

LUCKE: No, I lived in Chapel Hill, first in a dorm, then in a fraternity and then an apartment. When I returned from my year abroad in France, I lived in a rural country home outside of town with huge trees and a front porch swing.

Q: Because of course once you are on the campus, even though you are only 25 miles from home you are still in a bit of a different world.

Q: Totally different world. As arch-conservative Senator Helms used to say, "They ought to put a fence around that place for the protection of the rest of North Carolina.".

Q: [Laughter] It is the late 60's. The Vietnam war was still going on. Was there a lot of political or social ferment on the Chapel Hill campus?

LUCKE: Yes indeed, absolutely. The Kent State shooting was in the fall of my freshman year along with the Cambodia incursion, so the whole school basically shut down for a while. There were marches, strikes, cancelled classes and other drastic things. That was spring of 1970. The whole country was in a uproar.

Q: Did you get involved or did your views change about the U.S. involvement there or the U.S. generally?

LUCKE: Yes, my views were changing and evolving. I was an Eagle Scout and thought more or less like one until the Kent State shooting happened and I began to question what the US was doing in Vietnam. It took a lot to turn me against anything our country would be doing militarily but I ultimately decided that the war there was not worth it. I became strongly against the war but I never was one of those who held any rancor against our troops following their orders and doing their duty.

I was from a conservative place with a straight, pro-military upbringing and military service so I was initially conflicted by it all. I almost joined the military myself after I graduated from UNC but by then Vietnam was over and the troops were home. In any case, I was very interested in international relations already given travel, my Israel experience and my overseas studies. So I was already inclined that way.

I became interested in international economic development as a career as a result of wanting an interesting, fulfilling career that could make a bit of difference and positive contribution to the world. I had no idea at the time how to get there but such a career ambition that eventually led to USAID was being formed in my mind. I wanted to do something important with my life and not waste a second. I suppose too that I wanted to give something back for the privilege of being born comfortable and in the U.S. Maybe that sounded naive but I meant it then and still do.

Q: Regarding your major, where are you going to focus your time. What did you choose?

LUCKE: I settled on Global Studies which was a great fit. GS was a combination of economics, political science, geography and languages so it was a natural for me. I took so much French that I almost ended up with a major in that as well. The year abroad was interesting as the French students were on strike much of the year so I got a lot of traveling done too, mostly in rural France, the Cote d'Azur and Provence. That ended up pretty well, I would say. I loved France then as today, a very beautiful place.

Q: Before we leave college what about the other activities on campus? Were you involved again in student government or other things that created networks for you that would subsequently draw upon in your life after college?

LUCKE: I regret I did not take full advantage of the range of college activities I could have. I concentrated on school, a girl friend and then finally made the decision to join the UNC Year Abroad program. I went to Europe with a backpack, a Eurail Pass and some friends one college summer before my year abroad and that was a tremendous addition to my knowledge and experience. I learned more through travel than campus activities.

Q: Did your university also attract a fair number of international students? Did you have any interaction with them?

LUCKE: There were international students but I am sorry to admit I did not know many or maybe even any. That was a wasted opportunity. I did become friends with one of my professors who was a young French woman teaching an advanced French course that I took. I ended up seeing her in Lyon during my year overseas there. One of my classmates who also ultimately became an Ambassador moved into the international dorm at UNC. I should have done something similar.

Q: Now you mentioned travel during college. Let's go back to that for a minute. What was the travel, when did it take place?

LUCKE: It was the summer of '71 and I joined legions of US backpackers running around Europe. We landed in Brussels, I think, headed up through the Netherlands and up to Scandinavia. The stayed for a while in the home of a Norwegian family my companion knew and then wound our way down through Germany, Austria, Italy and more. I went to Yugoslavia and rode the train down the Adriatic coast. Tito was still in power. It was a great summer. I learned a lot, fell in love a few times, didn't die, didn't hurt anyone and made it home eventually perhaps a bit wiser. It was fascinating and I was very happy to have had this opportunity. I think my old hometown was pretty much in my rear-view mirror by then.

Q: That is quite a tour. But you also mentioned that you spent your senior year in France.

LUCKE: Yes.

Q: Was that on an exchange program or were you essentially finished with your studies and you now had the time to devote.

LUCKE: It was my senior scholastic year. I had taken a lot of French courses so I thought I would be fluent upon arrival but the truth was pretty ugly-- I could barely order off a menu in the beginning. After about three months I was doing much better and even had a French friend tell me I had Lyonnaise accent. I'm not so sure. However, the academic year was a bust because the French students, as I said, were on strike. Our professor from

UNC, French himself, told us to "learn French" whether in the classroom, the beach or wherever. Just learn it and I will give you an exam at the end of the year and fix your grade then. I ended up speaking pretty decent French and later discovered that this ability would be a big plus to my career.

Q: That is a pretty fortunate kind of situation. So even though it might have been difficult to follow everything in classes, on the other hand the experience not only gave you some fluency in French but it also must have given you a fair amount of new skills and resourcefulness.

LUCKE: It was a great opportunity and I savor a lot of memories of that period still today.

Q: Many American students find that a year abroad gives them a lot more maturity and understanding of how to thrive in a foreign culture and get stuff done.

LUCKE: Yes, that is right. Everyone should study abroad for at least a semester I think. This is more the norm now in colleges, I think, than was the norm in my day. Or join the Peace Corps, or both.

Q: With these international experiences under your belt, what were you thinking as you were approaching the end of college about what you would do next?

LUCKE: I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I told myself after college I would either travel around the world and see what happened, join the Air Force or go to graduate school. For all but the military option, I needed to work and make some money. Asking the parents for more financing was not in my plans. So, I helped a few friends run a restaurant in Chapel Hill. I had more fun, made some decent money especially for a college town and decided, probably wisely, to choose the graduate school option.

Graduate School at Thunderbird School of Global Management, Application to USAID, Marriage

Q: Before we go on to graduate school, you ran the restaurant for how long?

LUCKE: About a year and a half.

Q: How did you end up deciding on restaurant management?

LUCKE: I had been a waiter in a nice inn/restaurant on Cape Cod one summer and previously a waiter for a nice University-owned inn in Chapel Hill when I was an undergraduate. So I was experienced, enjoyed it and made almost enough money to finance my entire way through graduate school.

Q: OK, so you were thinking that this was going to be a temporary job while you earned the money for graduate school. What graduate school in the end were you most interested in?

LUCKE: I applied to only one program, a Master in International Management from the Thunderbird School of Global Management outside Phoenix, Arizona. It was a combination of international business, international studies and languages. Our degree was later converted to a MBA. I took one last French course and then started studying Arabic. I had by this time decided I wanted to get somehow into an international development career and this kind of master's program would give me better academic credentials to do so. A footnote is that I also applied to join the Peace Corps--twice--and they lost my paperwork both times and I never heard back from them. As they would say in French, "tant mieux", all the better. God evidently did not want me to join the Peace Corps.

Q: So you pull up stakes and what year do you go out to Thunderbird?

LUCKE: It was 1976.

Q: And you didn't run into problems with the draft. It was late enough that you were not swept up in it.

LUCKE: There is a story. It was 1971 I think it was when President Nixon said if one drops one's student deferment by the end of the year, you would be reclassified 1-A but the promise was no one would be drafted for three months at which time one's eligibility for the draft would be over. That worked for me. I had received a low draft number in the lottery and would have been drafted under the previous system. So I escaped the draft but the irony is that I took all the tests and passed them for Air Force Intelligence and was one signature away from joining anyway.

Q: OK, in 1976 you had never really been out to that area of the country. What did you make of it when you arrived?

LUCKE: I thought it was a bizarre place for the first six months as I had been surrounded by trees in Carolina and this was a desert. Then I fell in love with the place. I just thought it was wide-open, beautiful and often stunning. I was happy to add Arizona, like NC and Texas, to my list of favorite states.

Q: What sort of coursework did Thunderbird offer at that time to prepare people for business?

LUCKE: There was basic business curriculum of core subjects like finance, economics, accounting, management and then a bevy of additional upper level business courses. Then there were many "international studies" courses covering the world plus the language studies. It was a pretty practical curriculum and international firms recruited at

Thunderbird. It was and I think still is the top-rated international business school in the US. The total program was 18 months -- three semesters.

Q: It is not that much time before you are out in sort of the real world. Were you beginning to think about where you were going to apply for work or begin to network towards that?

LUCKE: I was not sure what I was going to do but at least I knew I didn't want to be either a lawyer or banker. I was far from Washington DC and the Foreign Service kind of stuff. I had taken the foreign service exam and I guess I had passed the written part. In fact, I was interested in learning more about USAID and I discovered this was really a field I was really interested in. So, I tried and I was at first rejected. So I reapplied.

When I was in France in school, some friends and I went on a ferry to Tunisia where we had taken a bus to rural, southern Tunisia to visit the family of a Tunisian friend we knew in Lyon. They were very rural people so this was really my first authentic "third world" experience and I was intrigued by it. After graduate school, I had job offers from banks in New York but I really didn't want to be a banker either. I stopped in Washington DC on the way back from interviews in New York and ended up getting a job offer from the international part of the Department of Agriculture. So, when I graduated from school instead of going right to work for the Foreign Service I went to Washington with USDA while I resubmitted my application to USAID.

Q: So you had basically eliminated from consideration the Foreign Service, per se, once you learned about USAID and its mission.

LUCKE: The USAID Foreign Service was what I was attracted to. I had applied as well to the State Department but didn't take the oral exam part. Ironically, my USDA job was located in the same building in Rosslyn that handled the USAID applications for their intern programs so I got to periodically check on the progress of my application. My credentials were better than before because USDA sent me on three international trips--one to France, the second to Algeria--since I was the only French speaker in my division and these trips made my resume stronger--and the third one to the Dominican Republic. I then got myself assigned to USAID on loan from USDA to work on the Sahel development program in the Africa Bureau. So I sailed through this time, got an offer from USAID and gladly accepted. I joined a group of about thirty in USAID's International Development Intern program.

Q: Let's pause here one second and go back. You mentioned that you met your wife in the cafeteria line in Thunderbird. Did you get married before you left for Washington?

LUCKE: I got married in Austin, Texas, where she is from, right after school. We both graduated in 1977 and moved soon after to DC.

Q: What did she major in or what were her career aspirations.?

LUCKE: She had majored in the same business degree at Thunderbird and had a degree in physical anthropology from the University of Texas. So, her original plan was to do something related to maternal child health in Mexico but then she ran into me and USAID and that all changed. So, we ended up going to Washington where it became very quickly obvious that I would be pointed toward West Africa because of my French. So, she went to work for Georgetown University and I started to work for USAID. They really needed to assign people to West Africa because of the Sahel drought so since I didn't have to learn French, I was able to be one of the first of my intern group to be assigned and actually depart. I remember telling my wife, "It looks like we are going to be assigned to Mali." She said, "Bali?" "No, Mali." "Maui?" "No, Mali, you know, where Timbuktu is." So as of March, '79, we landed in Mali for my first posting with USAID.

1978: Beginning work at USAID:
First Assignment: Bamako, Mali

Q: [Laughter] As you enter USAID in 1978 was there any training or introduction orientation that you went through?

LUCKE: Yes, there were several rotations through various offices in Washington. The Latin American bureau tried to get me assigned to them but I had my mind set on Mali and since it was hard to recruit for that country mission they were happy to take me. We were off to Bamako.

I did have some acquaintance with Africa from my travel to Algeria and Tunisia and had worked in the Africa Bureau, so I had some inkling of what working in Africa would look like. Also, as I said, we were mentally pretty much set on Mali by that time. I had interviewed with the Mission Deputy Director while he was in Washington on TDY and had accepted to go to Mali to him so I felt committed.

Q: What were the key USAID objectives or mission goals for the Sahel at that time?

LUCKE: We were designing and implementing a number of projects related to rural development, agriculture, health and so forth. There was a big push to increase the amount of funding and USAID's presence throughout the Sahel to address the effects of a major and recent regional drought. My job in Mali was to be a design and evaluation officer. I had done some prior economic analyses of Mali agricultural projects in DC so I was looking forward to seeing what the projects were in fact doing in the field. I wasn't very experienced of course but I loved the subject matter. It was all very interesting.

Q: How would you describe Mali's basic political-economic situation when you arrived.

LUCKE: Well, Mali was my first USAID country and first post. It was also one of the poorest countries in the world. It is a very shocking and eye opening experience to arrive there and look around. It was a dirt poor, one-party state trying to implement the response to a major drought that had damaged an already weak economy made worse by terrible

policies related to agricultural pricing controlled by the government. Farmers were vulnerable to start with and received too little for their products since the government decided to keep prices artificially low to favor buyers in the cities. We eventually spent a lot of energy on that issue. I went into this at some length in the book I eventually wrote about Mali called "Waiting for Rain: Life and Development in Mali, West Africa". I'm still waiting for the movie to be made but it's for sale on Amazon.

Q: To what extent did the differences between the northern part of Mali and the southern part of Mali play at all?

LUCKE: We were increasingly becoming more aware to all this kind of thing. It is not politically correct to refer to "tribes" but there were plenty of different ethnic groups in Mali. There were Tuaregs in the north, and Songhai, Peul, Dogons and others further south, and Bambara--the largest group--scattered all around the country. Bambara was the major spoken local language in Mali. Unlike many other African countries, there was mostly ethnic harmony in Mali though the Tuaregs would rebel occasionally. That conflict got much more serious in 2012, I think it was, when Al Qaeda stirred things up in the north and the French had to intervene but that was far in the future. In our time there was mostly ethnic harmony though there was a lot of joke telling between the different ethnic groups in Mali done in a good natured way. Except for the Tuaregs in the north, Mali was blessed to not have many ethnic tensions at all.

Q: Did you find that the training USAID had given you reasonable preparation or how would you characterize that?

LUCKE: There was only so much a "non-technical" person like myself could apply except for possibly economics. I mean academically you knew how to do an economic analysis or evaluate a project but much more of the preparation came about as a result of practical, on the ground experience. I learned a lot about agriculture for example and I certainly had no formal schooling in that area. There really was only so much you could do in advance to prepare for being dropped into one of the poorest countries on the planet with a per capita income of about $300 a year. That was a real shock and there was only so much you could do to prepare. Being resourceful, interested in learning and hardworking were probably the best preparations. I learned tons of Mali lessons from one particular colleague who was an anthropologist who had lived in Mali for many years, spoke Bambara and was willing to teach me many things about Mali, the culture, traditions and so forth. He was the right guy to know and become friends with. He is still one of my best friends today.

Q: While we are on the topic of anthropology, did your wife also find an opportunity to use her degree there?

LUCKE: Not per se. She got a job with the Mission in the management office where she was an effective manager and a real asset. She later worked for a livestock project we were implementing with a DC based contractor. She did a few field trip in the hinterlands too but soon we had our first daughter so she was plenty busy with that obligation in

addition to the USAID work. She was very flexible, got along with Malians and even had learned enough French to get along pretty well. I was lucky to have such a flexible partner as Mali was a shock to many spouses and more than a few marriages would not survive such tough situations.

Q: OK, at that time how large was the USAID mission in Mali?

LUCKE: I would say we had about 20 US foreign service officers and some 60 or so local employees. We counted on the FSNs for everything. All in all the FSNs were an impressive group.

Q: It was a big group and in comparison to the embassy obviously, I would imagine quite a bit larger.

LUCKE: I would guess USAID had a few more FSOs than the Embassy and a lot more FSNs. It would be correct to say however that we were ALL Embassy people as we all worked under the Ambassador. The USAID Mission was physically separated from the Embassy in those days which was not ideal I suppose but it worked. Our first Ambassador was Patricia Byrnes and she was wonderful--traveled everywhere, knew everyone, loved to visit USAID projects in the field. The next one--a political appointee--was pretty weak and actually was sent home for bouncing too many checks, if you can believe that. The last Ambassador we had was Parker Borg who was a great guy and a real pro as an Ambassador.

Q: In terms of your actual mission activities was there any interaction with the Embassy? Was the Embassy interested and involved? Did they periodically go out with you to project sites, or was it pretty much separate?

LUCKE: The two good Ambassadors were interested and involved. USAID was the biggest US thing going on in Mali so it was natural for them to care and be involved. There was also the little fact that at the end of the day we were one team and we tried not to forget that. I recall one of the junior officers at the Embassy was offended when Washington decided USAID officers would have diplomatic passports as opposed to official passports. I think there may have been some resentment that USAID had the money and the motive to travel throughout the country but I never thought much about it. For the most part, we all got along, entertained each other outside of work and saw ourselves as colleagues and friends.

Q: And the AID mission did it rely on the embassy for its housing and all that or did AID have its own?

LUCKE: At the time, it was all separate. We had our own motor pool and our own housing. We took care of ourselves mostly but relied on the Embassy for access to medical care at the Health Unit, check cashing and the like.

Q: I imagine also that you had to rely on FSNs to a certain degree to navigate the culture and geography of the country and who could give you some good advice about how to direct your efforts.

LUCKE: We relied on them to a huge degree. I mean without the FSNs I think we would have often been totally lost. So, we could have more FSNs than State and they tended to be higher ranked since we used them often for their technical and professional skills. We needed them and valued them..

Q: Were there other elements of the mission plan that were also going on?

LUCKE: There were a number of agriculture and rural development projects, health projects, forestry, environment, small community-based programs like well digging. We built a road or two and even designed and implemented a resettlement project to move and reinstall 12,000 rural villages in the far western Mali away from the effects of a dam being built there. I was to be very involved with this project later in my Mali stay.

Q: Did you supervise many local or U.S. employees?

LUCKE: I was too junior then to supervise much of anybody. I had a secretary and a number of close colleagues throughout the Mission not under my supervision. Also we worked with a number of USAID contractors helping implement projects. That is not to say I did not have real responsibilities. I was dealing with projects and programs that totaled a lot of money and that was a major obligation and responsibility.

Q: Yes. And was the Mission management there more or less effective separate from the embassy?

LUCKE: Our first Mission Director was a strong leader and personality who spoke excellent French and intimidated a lot of people. I liked him fine and we always got along. Our second director had come from the Chad mission, spoke French less well, but was an effective manager and one of the boys especially when it came to sports. I played some competitive tennis with the second Director and we became friends.

Q: But now all the work you did was with direct hires or FSNs or were there also contractors there?

LUCKE: We worked with contractors as well. Since my job was to design and evaluate projects I worked across the spectrum of projects. For each different project, we would have different contractors, universities or NGOs on them.

Q: In general, how would you compare the practice of project management by direct hire officers versus contractors?

LUCKE: Is it better the way it is now?

Q: Yes.

LUCKE: Well, I think we gave up an awful lot when we decided to basically stop implementing programs directly and gave it mostly all up to contractors or NGOs. To me the fun and most interesting part of the job was being in the field making projects succeed. Today most of USAID's work is done by others we fund and hire. We call our NGOs and contractors "partners" and that is the reality. We reply on them and but I think they're now having more fun and more impact than most USAID direct hires. .

Q: What would be an ideal outcome at the time you were there? What would be the project that particularly succeeded, at least in its own terms?

LUCKE: Well, I can give you a negative example and a positive example. A negative example would be when we evaluated a rice production project where we had built dikes and water control systems in order to increase rice yields. We found that yields were lower than expected because the fields were not properly leveled and the dikes and other water control systems were not adequately maintained. Yields therefore suffered. That was a negative example. The positive example would be the design and implementation of the Manantali resettlement project in western Mali where we successfully resettled 12,000 rural villagers from the impoundment area near a new dam being built. There really wasn't any such thing as a successful forced resettlement project in Africa before, but this one worked because we knew the "lessons learned" from prior failures and completed a very thorough design with the help of our Malian colleagues. You can read all about it in my book.

Subsequent Book on Experiences in Mali

Q: Yes, and those interested in your book can see it via this hyperlink *Waiting for Rain* https://www.amazon.com/Waiting-Rain-Life-Development-Africa/dp/0815805292/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1490819276&sr=1-1&keywords=waiting+for+rain+life

LUCKE: We studied all of the negative examples of resettlement failures all over the Africa including Mali--- what had gone wrong and why it had gone wrong. We applied those lessons to Manantali. If we hadn't done it correctly, we would have all likely ended up on "60 Minutes". At the end of the day, the villagers were resettled, no one drowned and their rural economic production was reestablished. We got some crucial help from other donors along the way--the Germans and UNDP for example--and we helped turn the entire project into one that was led and implemented by Malians. That's the way it's supposed to work and in this case it did.

Q: How was the relationship between the mission and the government there? What did you need to do in order to work with the government effectively?

LUCKE: We tried to be full partners with our counterparts in the government. For example, when we started designing the Manantali resettlement project we approached

the Ministry of Hydrology, the water agency, to get then to name good and qualified counterparts we could work with for the duration of the project. They set an implementation unit and staffed it. So we tried to be good partners. After all, it's their country.

Q: Was part of the reason you had a good relationship with the government due to the connections of your FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals)?

LUCKE: I suppose so. The government at the time was a one-ruler, one-party state and you would never confuse Mali's leader at the time with Thomas Jefferson. After I had departed Mali, there were a succession of elected presidents and it was good to see that improvement, though they went through another coup when al Qaeda launched its attack on south in 2012, I think it was.

Q: Yes, because I imagine when you are hiring an FSN, you consider the networks they bring as part of the expertise they can offer.

LUCKE: Sure. We had a couple of stalwart Malian FSNs who were friendly, gregarious, experienced, smart, friends with everybody and we thought they were gold. We relied on those good folks a lot.

Q: Is there a particular when an FSN who really made the difference that you can recall?

LUCKE: I am sure there are many examples but I can't think of one right now. Often times, when we had an issue that needed ironing out with government, the FSNs could make the first contact and smooth the way for us, or in fact get the desired result themselves.

Q: Can you comment on the sustainability of the projects you were involved in?

LUCKE: One of our agriculture projects was designed to develop more drought resistant varieties of millet and sorghum that the Malians consumed along with rice. The research and trials eventually resulted in more drought-resistant varieties just as had been planned. That protected Malians from the cycle of drought and hunger and I am sure these varieties are still being used today. I would call that a sustainable success. Sustainability was a function of properly and intelligently conceiving programs that made sense, were not convoluted or overly complicated, that used technology properly, that had good local counterparts who could eventually run the show and take ownership and therefore have many of the aspects of that would amount to something that would last and therefore be sustainable. There were some project failures of course and some successes. Mali was in fact a tough place to live and work though we were young enough and energetic enough to keep trying hard to make it work. Most of us came to love Mali despite all the hardships.

Q: Were there any particular difficulties that stand out?

LUCKE: Well, we always tried to treat allies and colleagues correctly and with respect but some things were out of our control. I recall our wheat irrigation project outside of Timbuktu at a town called Dire. Wheat was being grown but we had a devil of a time getting pumps there and keeping them operational. Also, it didn't help that the Malian project director took off one day with the project vehicle and all the petty cash, He was last seen disappearing over the horizon into Upper Volta as Burkina Faso used to be called. Sometimes things would work and sometimes things fell apart. Sometime counterparts were great but occasionally a few were not. You had to deal with it.

Q: So, before we leave Mali, what would you say were the high points of the tour there?

LUCKE: I guess on the existential level, my wife and I could live and work there happily and productively and that apparently I had not made a terrible career choice with USAID. Au contraire, I had picked something that I could be possibly good at. So, that is one answer. Also from the point of view of a specific success and high point, I would look to the Manantali resettlement project that turned out pretty well.

Q: Now as you are approaching the end of the Mali tour you are obviously thinking about where you are going to be going next. How did you communicate that to Washington and how did Washington respond?

LUCKE: I didn't at all.

Q: Oh.

LUCKE: That's not always the way it would work with USAID, at least back then. I can honestly say that I never bid on a position that I had not already been offered previously by another Mission or by Mission management. State is different, I guess. It has to do with one's reputation and the openings you knew about or came about. My move to Senegal happened because the Manantali project was part of a bigger River Basin Development portfolio run out of our Dakar Mission, so we got to know each other, a job was open to run a new river basin project, they decided they wanted me and the paperwork got done to reflect that mutual decision. That's the way it worked or at least it used to. It is much more formalized now, I think.

Q: Before we get into Senegal, your next tour, while you were in Mali did you receive any mentoring or career counseling?

LUCKE: Yes, I guess so. I got to be pretty good friends with my boss, the Mission Director, the second Mission Director we had in Mali who had a lot of experience and had been in a lot of places where I ended up going later in my career. He and I were tennis buddies so we had these ferociously competitive matches and he and I got to be good friends. He was really supportive of me when I had this possibility of moving to Dakar though he really didn't want me to leave. We sat down actually in Dakar and he said, "Look, I would never hold anybody back professionally. If you think this is the right thing to do, I will support you," so I always appreciated that.

Q: How did they describe the job that you would be going into?

LUCKE: We were based in the River Basin Development Office, part of USAID/Dakar. The boss was Vito. He wanted me to come in and take over a job in charge of the Gambia River Basin Development project. This was opposed to Senegal River Basin portfolio than Manantali Resettlement was part of. It was the same office but a different orientation but my Gambia basin project was the only one not part of the Senegal Basin projects, called OMVS in French.

Q: As I understand, there are specialties in USAID that officers tend to stay in, be it education or let's say rural development or economic development or so on. Were you already thinking of specializing in a particular area?

LUCKE: I came into USAID with a certain specialization, the equivalent of what the State Department would call a cone. In the State Department you would have economic, consular, political, management or whatever. In USAID our specializations included programs, controller, economist, project development, general development, health officer and so forth. I was a Project Development Officer--in other words, people who basically design and evaluate projects and a whole lot of other tasks as well, "miscellaneous other duties" as it is called. That is what I did in Mali, for example, helping design the Manantali Resettlement project. In Dakar I became a Project Officer, in other words, charged with managing a specific project. It was a little bit of a deviation from my normal specialization track, but that is perfectly normal and I wanted the additional and different professional experience.

1982: Second Assignment: Dakar, Senegal

Q: OK, now when did you arrive in Senegal?

LUCKE: I arrived I think it was May or June of 1982.

Q: And of course your wife accompanied you?

LUCKE: Yes, but that is also a story. She and our daughter--soon to be daughters, plural--were there with me in Dakar but my getting to Senegal was a story with a different twist. When I transferred to Dakar, I had just purchased a Peugeot that I wanted to keep but there were no reliable all-weather roads to drive from Bamako to Dakar. So I embarked on the great adventure of putting my car on a flatbed railroad car and I sat in my car all the way to Tambacounda in the Senegal where the paved road to Dakar started. I was surrounded with some of my belongings, an ice chest and a whole lot of water, because it was really hot and you never knew what was really going to happen. You could be pushed off to a side rail and sit there for a while. But I was young and adventurous and wanted to do it--and keep my car. So, I went over by myself in my car on the train and my wife and child flew from Bamako to Dakar a little bit later and we met in Dakar.

Q: Were you given any warning from anyone that, "Well, you know you will be traveling through an area that is kind of disputed." Did you have any concerns about security?

LUCKE: Well the normal concerns. There were no ethnic tensions at all at that time and I still don't think there are any in that part of Mali and eastern Senegal--mostly Bambara, Fulani and Malinke and they got along fine. I had heard of other adventurous souls doing the car-on-the-train thing before, so it wasn't unheard of. I figured it would work out all right ultimately, and it did. The problem was I didn't have the proper paperwork to cross the border which was a mistake the office had made in Bamako but I was ultimately able to finagle my way across. Otherwise I would have been unhooked from the train and God knows what would have happened. Thankfully, all worked out fine and I ended up getting all the way to Tambacounda in eastern Senegal. There my car was unloaded from the train and drove the rest of the way to Dakar.

Q: Does the topography and geography change as you move from lower Mali into Senegal?

LUCKE: It changes a bit. Around Bamako there is sparse vegetation but there is vegetation with a lot of baobab trees scattered around. Also red laterite dirt roads. The further west you get it becomes more desert-like with less vegetation, at least the parts where the track passed through. By the time you get into Senegal it starts to get a little more vegetation the further west you get. You can tell however you're not in North Carolina or Tennessee--it's sparser than that.

Q: You didn't have any major concerns about large carnivores or things like that?

LUCKE: No, I don't think there are any large carnivores left in West Africa. There are warthogs in places though. I had my shotgun under the seat anyway.

Q: OK, So it was uneventful other than the border kerfuffle. You get there and rejoin your family. What was the AID mission like at that time?

LUCKE: Well, coincidentally, I was just back there less than a year ago, where the new USAID/ Dakar mission is located in the new Embassy. So, it was completely different than when I first arrived in 1982. We were downtown in a very urban area. That was back when Dakar was a city of about 700-800 thousand people. Now it is more like 2 million. So, it was much more manageable back then in terms of transportation and urban issues. I had by then gone back and forth from Mali to Dakar by plane enough times on TDYs that I knew what the place looked like and knew my way around a bit. I had even gone for softball tournaments with my wife and my friends. So, in a lot of ways coming to Dakar was like going home or at least to my second most familiar place in all of West Africa. I really loved it. I felt immediately at home and comfortable. I liked all my colleagues, and my boss was pretty supportive. It was really a very positive situation. Also we were starting a new project and that was exciting. I had never managed a program like that before. So, it was all professionally challenging and a physically nice place to live--we used to joke that it was USAID's version of Paris. We had a house that overlooked the

ocean and the beaches were ten minutes away. It was nice and close to paradise compared to Bamako. Everything is relative.

Q: At the time you arrived in 1982 did the USAID mission in Dakar also have some regional responsibilities?

LUCKE: Yes. My office was regional in that we covered the OMVS - Senegal River Basin Organization and OMVG Gambia River Basin Organization projects covering about six countries in West Africa. My project covered eastern Senegal or "Senegal Orientale" as they say in French, The Gambia and northern Guinea called the Fouta Jallon.

Q: Before we get into your actual activity, could you explain the differences between Senegal and Gambia?

LUCKE: The colonial language in Gambia is English as opposed to the colonial language being French in Senegal. That was number one. Number two, Gambia is a riverine country. Like you see a little ribbon on each side of the Gambia river. The other thing that always struck me was the different spellings of the same family names in both countries. The family name Diallo in Senegal was spelled Jallow in English speaking Gambia. Really not much difference between the two countries except for a distinct colonial past.

Q: In terms of the ethnic backgrounds and so forth, it was similar even though there was a border.

LUCKE: Yes, similar. I think the Wolof was still the predominant language in both countries and the predominant ethnic group even though there were Fulani and Malinke, especially as you got down into southern Senegal--Casamance--and down into Guinea.

Q: And Senegal was essentially Muslim?

LUCKE: I would guess about 90% Muslim and maybe 10 % Christian. The Serere ethnic group in Senegal was more Catholic. The first President of Senegal, Leopold Senghor, was Catholic and married to a French woman. Senghor was a remarkable guy and a member of the Academie Francaise. He was also the first African leader to leave office after an election on his own free will. While others--like Mugabe or Idi Amin--would do anything to hang on to power, Senghor left office when his term was up. I always admired that. That was one little detail that made Senegal special in my eyes.

Q: All right, so let's take a look at the actual job that you had. What were the basic mission goals for you when you arrived?

University of Michigan work on Gambia River Basin Development

LUCKE: Well, we were beginning of a new project so we had to hire support staff, direct newly arrived contractors from the University of Michigan's Environmental Research Lab, order project vehicles and so forth. We were forced to procure American vehicles which were terrible at the time and soon we had a stable of Chevy Blazers instead of the Land Cruisers we really wanted, but we ordered a lot of special equipment like heavy duty shock absorbers that would keep them going in the bush as best we could. This was back in the era when American cars were not reliable especially under the conditions of Africa. It was always a challenge.

The OMVG (Gambia Valley Development Project -- French initials) project was to carry out feasibility studies--aquatic, environmental, economic, agricultural and so on, plus aerial photography of the entire region. This was similar to what had already been done for the Senegal River basin previously and we were maybe a couple of years behind them. The point was to study the possible impact of building two dams on the Gambia River--an impoundment dam downriver and a salt-intrusion dam nearer the mouth of the river. There was to be a huge agricultural and rural development scheme to increase production and incomes so we needed to study the potential impact of the dams in advance. So, basically we were getting the whole effort started. We brought in aircraft from the U.S. in order to do aerial photography which made us pray for sunny weather so they could fly and save money.

The Michigan team actually brought a project ship across the Atlantic from Lake Michigan all the way to the Gambia River. The ship served as the team's scientific center and laboratory. All of this was pretty unique for USAID. Everyone else had project vehicles but we had a project ship! The team of scientists and researchers from the University of Michigan were great people and enthusiastic about their work. It was great having these guys and ladies. They were all based in Banjul, the Gambian capital. It was very exciting getting all of that started with a thousand moving parts. The OMVG headquarters was in Dakar and they provided the project support as well. We soon opened a small hub office down in Labe in Guinea as well. There were a lot of moving parts but it was whole lot of fun professionally and personally to deal with all that.

Q: The length of time for the project was roughly how long?

LUCKE: I believe it was about four or five years.

Q: In the normal course of events would you be expected to see it through all the way?

LUCKE: Not necessarily. We would normally be expected to complete two full tours of two years each but there was some flexibility based on a number of factors. However I fully expected to finish two complete tours. We were very different than the State Department on that score as they tended to do one tour only and then depart.

Q: What was the cost or the rough the budget?

LUCKE: Oh I don't recall exactly but probably in the neighborhood of 20 million dollars.

Q: That would be both the equipment, the personnel and additional funds for unforeseen and so on.

LUCKE: That was the entire budget of the project, but you never quite knew for sure how much of that money you were going to get based on yearly appropriations and allocations that was a yearly HQ as well as field based undertaking. We ultimately received what we needed to complete the project on time and did not have to request any additional funding.

Q: In term of program management you had US citizen contractors, some from Michigan and other places. You had also USAID direct hire personnel whom you were also managing?

LUCKE: No, I was the only direct hire USAID person involved in this project. My boss was a USAID guy, but I was the one who had the direct responsibility. I had one American USPSC (U.S. citizen Personal Services Contractor) who worked for me as my deputy. The Michigan contractors were by far the largest group and we spent much of our attention on this group and on their progress.

Q: And obviously FSNs.

LUCKE: We had a couple of invaluable ones.

Q: Did you hire the FSNs or were they already part of the mission?

LUCKE: It was the latter as I recall.

Q: Nevertheless their expertise could be applied to this brand-new project.

LUCKE: Yes, we actually had a number of pretty impressive Senegalese contractors who ended up being hired by the University of Michigan team as opposed to being hired by the USAID. They were very important to the project.

Q: How was the University of Michigan selected?

LUCKE: They were selected through a process of open competition as required by our procurement regulations. So, the University of Michigan and especially their Great Lakes Lab bid on the project and the proposal was evaluated and selected as the main implementer. There was definitely competition and we had a big book of regulations governing that process. It was sometimes a long and arduous process but we had to do it and do it correctly.

Balancing Environmental Impact With Development Objectives

Q: All right, so let's go ahead and follow you into this project. How did it develop?

LUCKE: It developed in a way we didn't foresee. Once we got into the real nitty gritty of having our research teams go the length and breadth of the river basin, carry out the ecological and aquatic studies and all the other environmentally related data and then pull it together for the conclusions and the final reports, it became clear to us that there were potentially some quite negative impacts on the environment and ecology if the two dams were built according to the original plan. The original plan was that with the impoundment and anti-salt intrusion dams constructed, we could assure a more or less constant and level supply of water that could be used for irrigated agriculture year round. Our job in this preliminary stage, as I said before, was to determine the impacts of these works on the ecosphere, environment and so on if and when these dams were built.

To make a long story short, it became clear that there would be considerable environmental damage and other negative impacts on aquatic breeding grounds, mangroves, current agricultural production and livelihoods if the dams were built. That was not what the OMVG authorities wanted to hear, but nonetheless the original scheme would have destroyed the existing agricultural system among other things. So, we all went through this total adjustment from a "Let's get this done so we can get the dams built so we can implement the greater project" to more or less "This is the last thing we want to be associated with because it could cause more damage than do good."

Q: Even the dam that would prevent the water from becoming brackish, it was better to leave the water brackish because of basically the ecosystem that lives in that kind of water?

LUCKE: Yes,, the natural ecosystem stemming from the normal ebb and flow and changing salinity of the water from rainy season to dry season and so forth was basically a good thing and supported a fairly positive ecological balance.

Q: Interesting. So how long does it take you to come to the conclusion?

LUCKE: The field work, data gathering, analysis and write up plus the aerial photography took pretty close to three years.

Q: OK, so it takes you from about '82 to about '85?

LUCKE: That's right.

Q: In the meantime, while this was going on, did you have other responsibilities as well?

LUCKE: No, that was it. This was a big project with a lot of moving parts and I was the only direct-hire American managing it. I had a lot on my hands and a lot of responsibility.

Q: So as this is going on, you are also staying in touch with Senegalese government counterparts. How did they react?

LUCKE: Well, it was also Gambian and Guinean counterparts within the OMVG organization itself, which as I said was based in Dakar. OMVG was led by a Gambian official who was not exactly thrilled by our conclusions to say the least. His Senegalese deputy was considerably more understanding and more philosophical about the study conclusions and really respected the science that had gone into the conclusions. He was however between a rock and a hard place as his Gambia boss wanted to move full speed ahead no matter what. .

Q: Did it create any significant bilateral issues for the USAID mission with any of the countries?

LUCKE: No, not really. I don't know of any negative thing except the negative reaction of the OMVG head. Nothing I am aware of affected political ties with any of the Member States. One of OMVG's employees was the son of the then President of the Gambia and he was fully versed on the report's conclusion and supportive. We had good relations with almost everyone.

Q: Now what about AID Washington. As this is going on, the picture is becoming clearer and clearer that this isn't a project that can go forward. What is AID Washington saying to you?

LUCKE: To the extent we talked to them, I think they were thankful for honest and well justified conclusions. The financing for the original dam and agricultural scheme was never intended to come from USAID anyway though I am sure we would have some role to play. The bulk of the dam construction financing would more likely come from the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries like Kuwait or Saudi Arabia. They were involved with OMVS financing and the plan was that they would have a role with OMVG as well. As far as USAID went, our OMVG work was still small potatoes compared to what was going on in the Senegal River basin. They were ahead of us timing wise and trying to get a billion-dollar program started. We were looked at, at least in the beginning, as the poor little sister. Then the OMVS failed to get their own financing for a variety of other reasons including some similar issues as with OMVG and lots of worries about where the rest of the money was going to come from. Again, the financing was never intended to come from the U.S. Essentially in both river basins, USAID was doing the preliminary legwork and then we were going to help to broker the investment funds from other sources. The big Gulf donors ended up changing their policies away from doing the large scale agricultural development based on dams, even though the dams were in fact built on the Senegal River and actually resulted in some pretty positive things. So, we went from sort of being the poor sister to being the one where many were pointing to and saying what a good job we had done by honestly projecting the real impacts on the Gambia Basin and the potential damage that had been avoided. It was not the result they had expected but I think the conclusions ultimately made us look good.

Q: Great. You start with the notion that you are going to be doing this big development project. You conduct due diligence and you find out, well you can't do it after all, it

wasn't a disappointment. In general people were pleased that their environment didn't suffer.

LUCKE: We just made the right recommendations; they were accepted and we avoided taking part in what could have been something like an environmental disaster.

Q: During your management of the program were there significant obstacles you had to overcome.

LUCKE: Yes, every day. So, I spent a lot of time on the road and a lot of time going down to Banjul and to Guinea, both Conakry and Labe. There were significant communication and coordination issues with OMVG headquarters and a thousand issues to deal with every month. It was what comes with doing the job. It was challenging but as I said before it was a lot of fun managing this program. This was of course back in the pre-email days and it was essentially impossible for us to be micromanaged from Washington even if they had been so inclined. When I thought about it, I figured I had one of the best jobs in the Foreign Service or even the USG.

Q: And just in terms of managing your team, everybody got along even though there were cultural differences, language differences and so on?

LUCKE: The only problem we had were personnel ones with a couple American PSCs working at OMVG but that was really no big issue either. I recall nothing that we couldn't handle at our level and without it going up the chain of command. In fact, most of the experience was very positive.

Q: During the development of the project obviously, you create networks with a whole variety of people who become involved in one way or another. Were those networks valuable to you or in the end was it really more of a small group of people and it didn't expand much further?

LUCKE: I don't really know how to answer that except that we had a network. It wasn't a giant network, but it wasn't a small one either. We covered three countries. So, you know you basically did what you needed to do. We, as USAID, were very supportive of the University of Michigan people and they in turn were very appreciative of our support. Everyone was treated as colleagues and equals. There was none of this attitude we sometimes saw like "He's just a contractor". That would drive me crazy. As far as I was concerned, we were all out at the end of the road together and we needed to work together, be collegial and supportive. Their success was our success and vice versa.

Q: The other aspect of networks that I was trying to flesh out a bit was even though the project didn't go forward, were the contacts you make there and the contacts your team made amongst themselves, were they valuable for people who came after. In other words, you had a rolodex of cooperating partners in order to carry this out. Were you able to sort of turn over those contacts to a successor and continue the value from them.

LUCKE: No, because by the time I departed Dakar, it was clear there was not to be a huge, successor billion-dollar irrigation program in the future and therefore there was no need for a U.S. Direct Hire replacement. If I recall correctly my PSC (Personal Services Contractor) deputy just took over for me. This was more or less the middle of 1985 it was time for me to move on. The thing that it had done for me professionally was it gave me credibility that I was a good professional. I could manage people and programs that were complex and had many moving parts. It got me promoted and all that. So, it was good for me career wise.

Q: What about work life balance? How did your family adapt to life in Dakar?

LUCKE: We lived as I said in a nice little villa that overlooked the ocean. By the time we had our second daughter, my wife was working for the Mission, part time if not full time, as a management officer doing similar duties as she had done in Mali. We had a great group of friends, and we played softball and wind surfed and there was a club nearby with wonderful restaurants and great beaches. We had a great time.

Q: OK, that pretty much wraps up Senegal unless there are any other things that you learned there that you would like to pass on as lessons learned.

LUCKE: Well, as Mick Jagger so eloquently said, you can't always get what you want, but you get what you need. It was a great revelation at the time to see something end up right even though it doesn't end up the way you thought it was going to end up. To me, it reconfirmed that I was a capable person. I was competent. I could manage. I got along well with people. I worked well with everybody and from a professional point of view, it was kind of reconfirming.

Q: By now you have worked about now five years in West Africa. What are you thinking about for a follow-on assignment at this point?

1986: Preparations for Third Posting and Arrival in San Jose, Costa Rica

LUCKE: It was almost seven years I think. Anyway, so I happened to be back in Washington and was walking the halls of the State Department and ran into a colleague from the Latin America Bureau and she said, "Well what are you up to now?" I said, "Really, I have another year to go in Dakar even though we have pretty much reached the culmination of the program." She said, "We actually need somebody like you to go to Costa Rica. We have an unexpected vacancy. We have a project development slot. It is the number two guy in the office. It is a very dynamic program. It has got a lot of money." And then she added, "Why don't you consider that?" I replied "Well I don't speak Spanish." She said, "We can take care of that. You can go to FSI." So, one thing led to another and I ended up getting assigned to Costa Rica of all places, which is the last thing in the world I thought was going to happen. But we ended up moving back to Virginia and I took Spanish at the FSI. I had never gone to FSI before but I had such a good foundation in French, I got a 3-3 in nine weeks.

Q: Wow, that is great.

LUCKE: I got my 3-3 in nine weeks and once again, when I got there, it proved to me that I really couldn't speak Spanish even though I thought I did. But I learned. Anyway so we arrived.

Q: Let me ask you one question about the education in Spanish you got there. Was it the typical diplomatic education where they instruct you in how to read newspapers and how to talk to diplomats and government officials or did they actually try to give you a more development oriented vocabulary?

LUCKE: No, it was definitely not the latter. It was this is your past tense and you learn your verbs and whatever. And practice--it was pretty basic stuff. It wasn't the greatest. My teachers were from Peru and Argentina. The Spanish they speak in Costa Rica was really strange. They would "tu" the President you and "vosotros" the dog. It wasn't too similar to the FSI Spanish I thought I had learned. A friend later told me the language in Costa Rica was a vestige of Costa Rica's isolation during the colonial era. I learned as we went, my proficiency improved little by little, but I missed the easy fluency of French.

Q: Great. So you pick up your Spanish and when do you arrive in Costa Rica?

LUCKE: It must have been in the early part of 1986.

Q: Just as a side bar, I arrived in Costa Rica for one of my first tours not very long after you in September of '86. At that time, obviously, I was at the embassy and USAID was in a separate building.

LUCKE: Right. We were actually together to start with downtown in the Embassy. But then we built the new Embassy and the new USAID building separately in the Rohrmoser part of San Jose.

Q: OK, so actually when you first arrive you are in the old downtown embassy building.

LUCKE: Yes, and we were there for more than a year.

Q: Because the subsequent USAID building was quite large and quite nice.

LUCKE: Yep, we built it using Costa Rica-owned local currency generated by our Balance of Payments program. No dollars went into that at all.

Economic Reform, Diversification, and Private Sector-led Growth

Q: What is your portfolio of projects in Costa Rica?

LUCKE: I went back to being a project development officer. Basically, we were designing new programs, taking on implementation of some ongoing programs and doing

what needed to be done. Also, I was in charge of what we called our local currency program, balance of payments support program. The balance of payment program was cash to help Costa Ricans through a tough period economically where they really didn't have sufficient funds to keep themselves at equilibrium with the IMF or the World Bank with their debt. We would provide a number of dollars, hard currency in exchange for a number of needed and necessary policy reforms--fiscal and monetary policy stuff. It was exciting to see a country make the decisions for reform that they clearly needed to do and have the leadership to actually undertake them. The reforms are changes that Costa Rican leaders wanted to do anyway but for political reasons were difficult but necessary. We more or less told them that in the case of political blowback, it was OK to blame us if that would help. But they did the right thing and were really good leaders on the economic reform front. It worked the way it was supposed to: the host country led the reform and we were there to assist. It worked and the Costa Ricans get most of the credit. Many Costa Ricans to this day are grateful for our assistance and to their own leadership who made it happen. It's one of the truly untold stories of a very successful USAID program in the world.

Q: Yeah, interesting because typically when you are looking at results of USAID you are looking at objects like schools, clinics, or water projects, but in this case the goals and results were less visible.

LUCKE: Well, I disagree with your premise to a certain extent. We were always about trying to carry out projects or programs in the context of an overall strategy and plan coordinated with USAID/Washington and of course the State Department and Ambassador. In Africa if we were doing let's say sustainable agricultural development, ag price reform or the like, there was always an underlying strategy and purpose behind what we did. Especially in Costa Rica, what we did was assist a number of programs aimed at reforming the economy and making it more sustainable. A reorientation towards exports and attracting foreign investment was part of it. This amounted to a basic transformation of a protectionist, statist economy to an export based and more open economy. It became a great success---Costa Rica began exporting beef, cut flowers and tropical plants and so forth and began attracting investment starting with textiles, the tourism sector including eco-tourism and then electronics and IT. We were right in the middle of that including supporting the successful export and investment promotion agency there called CINDE which was a private agency and not part of the government. We were right in the middle of that economic reorientation of the economy, started, as I said, by the Costa Ricans themselves.

Q: And this job that you took on relied more now on what you had learned at Thunderbird.

LUCKE: I guess so. I mean it was all different types of programs but all "economic development" writ large. One of the neat things was how the balance of payments assistance, worked--and it could have been say $60 million or $80 million a year and that is not chickenfeed. We said OK, in exchange for this policy reform and hard currency, you need to generate an equivalent amount of local currency. While that money belongs

to you, the Costa Rican government, we are going to program that money with you for other activities that provide further developmental impact for the benefit of Costa Rica. We would pay our local staff with that money and we ended up being able to build the new USAID building also. The new USAID building ultimately belonged however to Costa Rica. We also set up a number of trust funds to endow a number of local institutions such as an agricultural school, a business school and others using the local currency. After a while we ceased requiring these local currency generations but we made good use of it while it lasted.

Q: To stay at this strategic level for a moment, did the context of Costa Rican President Oscar Arias's peace negotiations to end the Nicaraguan civil war have any effect on what you were doing?

LUCKE: Well, yes and no. I think you came after we had Ambassador Tambs. Ambassador Tambs was replaced by…

Q: Ultimately by Deane Hinton.

LUCKE: Right, Deane Hinton who was my boss too. There were parts of our program that dealt with the humanitarian side of that particular conflict. I personally didn't have anything to do with that but it was going on all around us. I think it would be honest to say that part of the justification of our funding levels at USAID was not only the economic reform rationale but also to support Costa Rica's stability in the face of Contra-Sandinista conflict next door. I knew what was going on nearby and we worried about it and everyone was a bit on edge because of it. There was a lot swirling around but we in USAID were less affected by it than I am sure were other parts of the Embassy..

Q: Right. Now roughly how large was the USAID mission when you arrived?

LUCKE: Let's see, I would say American direct hires probably about 25, maybe less, and the USAID portfolio around, I would say, $100 million to $120 million a year to maybe as much as $200 million a year towards the end.

Q: OK, and this was where you gave your exclusive attention. There were no other programs that you were involved in.

LUCKE: Yes, local currency management, economic policy reform negotiation. Managing the local currency was a big deal and a challenge.. Also, designing other projects.. For example, we ended up having a lot of input into a project to protect the environment by fortifying, solidifying the national parks system, a series of programs that protected those rain forests, natural forests and buffer zones around the parks. That was a great contribution and again, led by Costa Ricans.. We also designed a northern road project near Nicaragua that had to be very careful on potential environmental impacts.

Q: Now as you are getting involved with this and working, to what extent were you physically present at the Costa Rican ministries and agencies, or were you working from the USAID building?

LUCKE: I was with the Costa Ricans all the time. I spent a lot of time at the Central Bank and dealt with the President of the Central Bank. I also dealt with the Vice President of the country on economic reform negotiations. He was a great guy, Jorge Manuel Dengo was his name. He just recently passed away. We dealt with Don Oscar and his successor President Calderon. I also got to know the Minister of Agriculture, Jose Maria Figueres, who was the son of a famous ex-President and would himself become President after our departure.

Q: Don Oscar's successor was Solis or Calderon? .

LUCKE: Calderon. Solis came later. Anyway we dealt with all of those and many more. Probably my closest counterpart was a woman, Rebecca Greenspan. After I left had she became second vice president of the country. In fact, I dealt with this whole generation of Costa Ricans who became top leaders of Costa Rica a decade or two later.

Q: Would you say the interaction with them helped educate them in how to run a more open economy.

LUCKE: I don't know about that. I mean these were smart people and they were well educated. We are talking about people who probably went to good schools possibly in the States or elsewhere. I mean they knew what to do. They were just in a system that had not really caught up with the economic thinking of the time in terms of openness, being export oriented, removing tariffs and that kind of thing, so they knew what they needed to do, they just needed a little impetus to do it. That's where the balance of payments program came in. We had a great relationship with them. Again, it was another one of those untold stories where we helped them with the financing and with "policy dialogue" as we called it but they were the ones making change and reform happen. It was a happy confluence of having a good level of financing, support from many corners of Washington and capable and reform-minded Costa Rican counterparts. That was a winning combination and certainly not the way it always worked.

Q: At the time, the Reagan administration's disagreements with regards to Oscar Arias' activities in peacemaking, that did not begin to interfere in any way with the USAID programming.

LUCKE: Not at all. In fact, what we got with the Reagan years was actually a good thing, as far as I am concerned, as there was an orientation towards private sector development which was much needed. We were no longer just working with governments. We were working with business associations, agricultural cooperatives, and we were working with exporters. So much of our activities and responsibilities had to do with the private sector. That was either something that wasn't possible to do in West Africa or wasn't appropriate given our strategies. But as far as I was concerned, the Reagan years were excellent

because we could work with a fuller gamut of economic development initiatives that were based on the ability of the private sector to create jobs and economic opportunity. So, I loved it.

Q: Did your work have regional aspects as well?

LUCKE: Well we didn't have much to do with other USAID missions in other parts of Central America but we did receive some occasional assistance from USAID's regional office in Guatemala. However, many of the programs we were implementing in Costa Rica were being developed as well in countries like El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and so forth. Examples were the early administration of justice programs, and that really got started in Costa Rica and began to be replicated in all throughout Latin America. Also, investment promotion and export promotion activities were going on in other countries supported by USAID. All those priorities and others were going on all over Latin America.

Q: It sounds like the relationships and the network that you built while you were down there were all pretty positive. Were there any downsides or negatives as you were working out the programs?

LUCKE: It wasn't really a negative, but we did have challenges. One was the ownership of the local currency and that was a big issue for a while. We knew that since the money had not been appropriated by Congress, it couldn't be ours. At a certain point, the local currency funds totaled over a billion dollars in colones so you had this ironic situation where neither the Costa Ricans nor the Americans wanted ownership of the money. At first they were shocked to learn that it belonged to them even though we mutually programmed and agreed to the use of the funds. So, they had to deal with that issue. Eventually the Costa Rican lawyers came up with a solution that satisfied themselves and us and so that issue went away fortunately. We had a really good relationship with those guys--they worked out these issues while at the same time preserving the ability to program additional financing for the good of Costa Rica.

Q: Now and then either USAID or other U.S. government agencies periodically have people present in the local ministries to advise ministers or to advise the bureaucracy. Was that part of what you were doing as well?

LUCKE: The Mission did have a couple of qualified advisors stashed around, but to my knowledge we didn't have anybody embedded in the government. We had the normal project contractors and NGOs that we supported doing various supportive duties for projects. One of our US friends was working within CINDE and was an important factor in CINDE developing into a premier investment promotion agency but he would tell you again, that most of that credit goes to the smart and capable Costa Rican experts who CINDE hired. CINDE became in essence the flagship investment promotion agency in all of Latin America and that was replicated in El Salvador and some other countries as well. CINDE's role in attracting foreign investment into Costa Rica was a clear success and

another thing of which we were really proud. It's also probably one of USAID's most successful programs that you will never hear about.

Q: USAID Washington was I imagine quite happy because it sounds like basically everything went well with the relations with the local government and the completion of the projects.

Success and Sustainability of Projects in Costa Rica

LUCKE: Well, the proof is in the pudding. I left Costa Rica in mid-1990, and a couple of years after that we closed the Mission for good. We declared victory and went home. USAID's Missions and economic assistance are not supposed to be permanent fixtures. Ideally you work yourself out of a job and that's exactly what happened. I went back to Costa Rica several years back and I was struck by how many Costa Ricans remember what USAID--working with Costa Ricans of course--was able to accomplish. I guess that the bottom line is that it was really pretty transformational. I have had two or three other instances in my career of similar transformational accomplishments that you aim for but don't always achieve. Costa Rica was the first one.

Q: Yeah, I have to agree with you. I mean I spent two years there in the political section in the embassy and I had a similar experience. Costa Rican government officials were very cooperative, intelligent, and approachable. They were ready to listen to good ideas. Ways of improving and being more efficient. It was sort of a model country for USAID.

LUCKE: Yes, I think results clearly demonstrate that.

Q: Were there any major obstacles that you encountered that you did have to overcome in the course of this stuff?

LUCKE: You can tell I am basically an optimist because I remember the positive stuff and don't really remember very clearly any of the real negative things. However, development is not like pounding nails. It can be and often is far more complicated than that.

Q: No, of course.

LUCKE: We had a thousand constant challenges in Costa Rica but we could see and feel the progress and it was always fun to go to work. We worked hard and long hours and could get a bit physically beat down. We lost out a lot in terms of family time and recreational time and all that. It is such a wonderful country to be outdoors and take advantages of the rain forests, beaches, national parks and so forth so the work kept us from taking full advantage but we did the best we could. I love going back to Costa Rica as there is so much to see and do. We were there almost five years.

Q: Was your wife working during that time?

LUCKE: Yes, she worked for the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, which was a regional organization based in Costa Rica. So, she worked there and then eventually got a job with USAID working in our Private Sector Office managing several projects. She was perfectly qualified and her Spanish was good and probably better than mine. At the time, I was not so high up in the USAID management food chain that we had to worry about the dreaded "conflict of interest". She was happy and our third and last child--a son-- was actually born in San Jose. So, we had our own little Tico.

Q: There had been some kind of scandal as I recall with USAID in that period but did it affect you?

LUCKE: What kind of scandal?

Q: If I recall right there had been some issue about the USAID director and the accounting for some funds.

LUCKE: Oh yes. At the time was had the "Inspector General from hell" who went after our Director and more particularly our Comptroller for some alleged sins which were completely trumped up. It was ridiculous and a case of authority gone berserk. These guys to the best of my knowledge had done absolutely nothing wrong. It destroyed the career of our Controller and negatively impacted our Mission Director at the time. I think the Director's alleged sin was accepting a silver plate worth about $200 from one of the associations we supported that he didn't adequately declare. That Director soon departed after that--it was time for him to leave anyway-- and was replaced by another one who eventually became my friend and mentor. Having that IG matter hanging over our heads was a waste of time and energy based on a bunch of baloney and half-truths. That was the Inspector General we had back then. The Controller ended up going to court to clear his name and was eventually exonerated many months later but it cost him dearly career wise and financially.

Q: Were there any final lessons learned from this particular experience that you either brought with you or you feel that you want to share for those who might be walking into similar economic reform issues.

LUCKE: There are lessons learned, I guess. It was, in some ways, ideal to deal with the specific reform needs of a place like Costa Rica which was reasonably well developed with well-educated counterparts who were willing and capably led to enable them make the hard decisions and make the right reforms for the country. You realize they knew what they ought to do in terms of reform but they need some help and support in carrying it out. We, as USAID, were able to walk and talk softly and keep the checkbook handy.

Q: Yeah and just to reinforce what you are saying I had a second tour in Costa Rica from 2009 to 2012 and I can tell you that the difference in development in only 20 years was gigantic.

LUCKE: You can hardly drive around San Jose these days because of the traffic, so development may have a downside, but most people are living better and signs of prosperity are all around. The old quaint Costa Rica is still there too, you just have to drive a bit further off the main roads to find it.

Q: Absolutely no question. It really raised living standards for everyone.

LUCKE: It really was a great success, and again, thanks mostly to the Costa Ricans.

1990: Conclusion of Costa Rica; Foreshortened Tour in Tunisia Due to Gulf War I

Q: All right, so now as you are approaching the end of this tour what is on your mind for where you are going to go next?

LUCKE: Well, I got a call from one of my colleagues who was the Mission Director in Tunisia, and he said, "What are you doing?" And here I am finishing up five years in Costa Rica and I had started looking for something to come next. It turns out the Mission Director in Tunisia needed a deputy, the title being "Assistant Director". He knew I spoke French and it seemed to me to be a logical progression of a higher ranked position in a country I already somewhat knew. I had served in Costa Rica previously as Acting Deputy Director this would be my first official job as part of "Mission management" so I spoke with my wife and we agreed to take the position in Tunisia." So, by mid-1990 we were off to Tunis.

Q: And no Arabic training.

LUCKE: I had some Arabic training in graduate school.

Q: Right.

LUCKE: All of the people I would deal with in Tunisia spoke excellent French. The Arabic spoken in Tunisia is very difficult to understand even for Arabic speakers from elsewhere so French was fine.

Q: Now a general question. At this point you have managed quite a few projects and developed quite a few programs. Were you developing in any conscious way a management style?

LUCKE: Yes, probably. I never really thought of it that way, but it was very much a collegial approach, be cordial, listen to people, work well in teams, treat employees with positive feedback. I was convinced, and I still think, I was a good manager. I liked what I was doing and had a pretty high confidence based on the successes we achieved. The feedback I got from my various peers and bosses made me feel like my reputation was positive. I like to think I got things done, focused on the bottom line, was goal oriented and got it done.

Q: OK, did you have to resolve problems between staff, and if so how did you do it?

LUCKE: I don't remember too many of those kinds of staff problems and I really didn't have many problems with anybody. There were a couple of times I felt certain people weren't pulling their weight in terms of how hard everybody else was working but nothing other than that.

Q: I ask because you know you have now been managing for quite a while and sometimes there are turf battles or somebody resents somebody else because they are getting a certain aspect of the project that they wanted. That kind of thing.

LUCKE: I don't remember anything like that. We were too busy to snipe at each other. We were all busy and engaged. There was a constant flow of challenges and issues to deal with and we were just too busy to spend time on the petty things. We did a lot of laughing. People for the most part had great senses of humor and my colleagues were mostly a real blessing.

Q: That is wonderful, all right, great. So, between Costa Rica and Tunisia did you go back to Washington at all?

LUCKE: No, straight to Tunisia. It was like a week after Saddam had invaded Kuwait. We arrived in the midst of a crazy anti American demonstration. Welcome to Tunis. My wife told me, "This isn't what you told me it was going to be like." I had visited Tunisia while in school in France and it had been pretty great.. And now we arrive in the middle of an anti-American demonstration. We also had no place to live so they put us in a hotel--three little kids including a one year old and the family dog. It was not well managed.

Q: Oh my, that is quite an arrival.

LUCKE: Yep, Saddam Hussein always was one of my main career influencers.

Q: I guess we will see that a bit later in subsequent assignments. But you are not the only one for which that is true.

LUCKE: Absolutely. The first time I got sworn in as a Mission Director in the State Department, instead of being like most people who thank their mommy, daddy and their fifth-grade teacher, I thanked Saddam Hussein.

Q: [Laughter] But eventually the protests wear down. As far as I recall there wasn't a lot of damage done to American property or the embassy in Tunisia.

LUCKE: No, not at the time. That came later.

Q: So eventually first you are in a hotel but eventually you move into your permanent quarters.

LUCKE: It took about 3 ½ months.

Q: Really?

LUCKE: Yeah, it was miserable. My wife was ready to divorce USAID and probably shoot me. It was just ridiculous. It worked out eventually--we got settled just in time for us to be evacuated, so the whole situation wasn't ideal. The job however was fine. It was challenging and I liked the things we were working on, but politically it was a bad period of time to be there.

Q: So you get to the mission and as the deputy director or the assistant how did the mission director describe your duties.

LUCKE : I was the number two in the Mission and a large portion of the portfolio was under my supervision, including the project officers and people who were designing projects. Basically, everybody reported to me except the Legal Officer, the Controller and that kind of position.. We also had a Regional Housing Office that was with us. That part of our situation was fine and we really didn't have any problem with it.

Q: Your housing was not part of the embassy's housing pool.

LUCKE: No, we were separate at that time.

Q: How large was the mission when you arrived?

LUCKE: It was smaller than my other ones. Maybe 12 direct hires. We had some really superb FSNs who had been around forever and really knew everything.

Q: How long did you end up staying in Tunis.

LUCKE: Six months.

Q: Just six months?

LUCKE: Thanks to my buddy, Saddam.

Q: I see. Anything that you would like to share that had any value for you with your subsequent career or anything else.

LUCKE: No, I mean it all worked out for me career-wise a lot better than I ever imagined after the evacuation. I don't know if you remember the famous James Baker news conference after meeting with Iraqi foreign minister Tariq Aziz. This was, we all thought, the last chance for a peaceful resolution to the Kuwait mess. James Baker comes out after the meeting to meet with press. Oh, and almost every American in the whole Mission was in my den watching the TV because I had the only satellite dish. Baker said "We have been talking for four hours….unfortunately……" When we heard "unfortunately"

everybody gasped in unison because we knew what was coming. Everyone filed out of our house, went home and started packing a suitcase. We were gone two days later never to return.

Q: Tariq Aziz.

LUCKE: Tariq Aziz, that is right, the Iraqi Christian. So, I guess the lesson is just realize that this is an unpredictable profession you are in and stuff happens and sometimes things are completely beyond your control. You just have to be flexible and flow with what happens. Take care of your family; take care of your kids and make sure your folks are protected. Understand security. Don't sweat the small stuff. I, myself, personally felt some kind of guilt or something over the fact that we left Tunisian unfinished and that I must have done something wrong because we got evacuated. It took me five or six years to realize that it wasn't my fault. I did get to close the circle back in Tunisia some years later as a Presidential election monitor that was a perfect ending, but that is another story.

Q: When you evacuated and the Americans left, what happens to the FSN's?

LUCKE: Well, they stay behind. The idea was they were going to continue to work and we would have maybe one or two essential persons without kids who stay behind and keep the lights on. The original idea was to see what happens with the conflict and maybe we would come back. It became clear soon enough that none of us in the Mission were going to go back and in fact, we closed the Mission again, not like Costa Rica where we had succeeded, but because the Tunisians were giving verbal and other kinds of support to Saddam. So, we as a government said to heck with that; we won't support such a government, so we closed it down. Robert Pelletreau was the ambassador, good guy, capable and my tennis partner. He was dealing with President Ali and we just watched the political situation deteriorate. It became clearer and clearer that our time there was going to be limited. We especially worried about possible attacks against our kids' school or the school bus they rode on. We had two little girls in elementary school. So, we all left and we all were on the same flight out to Paris. We flew into Raleigh-Durham for some reason. My family went home to Texas and I went to DC. We were separated for the next six months.

1991: Evacuation from Tunisia: Work on Emerging Democracies in Eastern Europe

Q*: So now you are on separate maintenance in Washington. What happens there?*

LUCKE: Well, I found a little apartment in Georgetown and volunteered for every TDY I could. I worked on the Europe bureau to start off with and was able to witness some of the liberation from communism first in Prague and later in Budapest. I was part of the delegation that negotiated the first Balance of Payments support programs with the government of Czechoslovakia and then Hungary. Shirley Temple Black was the Ambassador in Czechoslovakia. So, it was really fascinating; I loved it, and it was good being there. I turned forty in Budapest on that trip. Then I went to Peru, Bolivia, Argentina and Uruguay for the Latin America Bureau. I went all over. I must have racked

up a quarter million frequent flyer miles. Back in Washington, I did an assessment of the Europe program that I was asked to do by the Assistant Administrator. I was very honest and critical about things that needed improvement--- I laid it all out in black and white. A couple of the bosses were not pleased and for a while I was not very popular. But then a significant Congressman got a hold of the report on the Hill and loved it. They called it the "Lucke Report" and all of a sudden I was getting all kinds of kudos for it. The AA who was ready to have me drawn and quartered a week before then offered me the first Mission Director position in Bulgaria.

Q: OK, wait a minute. You did this report. Now at the time, this is the early 90's when USAID was starting up programs in the former Soviet Union and the former East Bloc.

LUCKE: That's right, yes.

Q: And a whole variety of programs, not just balance of payments. Which ones in your opinion were going well in general and which ones weren't going so well in general?

LUCKE: You know, really, I don't remember much as I was in that Bureau for such a short period. There were, I recall, some interesting and successful "Enterprise Funds" in several of the countries.

Q: Oh I see.

LUCKE: The Enterprise programs were funds that were invested to start new businesses or expand existing ones, the idea being to spur the economy, create employment and so on. I recall that several of these worked as intended and were successful. My job in the report was to evaluate the entire Europe operation that had been underway for a just a couple of years then and make a number of specific recommendations. They ended up liking it on the Hill and therefore they ended up liking it in USAID as well.

Q: So it turns out that the result of this report was more career enhancing than might be expected?

LUCKE: Yes, certainly more than I thought. I mean internally you do an assignment like this and you're trying to be honest and insightful and certainly not trying to please everybody. I was trying to do my job and an absolutely honest assessment based on a whole lot of research and input from colleagues who were actually serving there and backstopping the programs from Washington. I never thought that my efforts would either hurt or help me career-wise. I had no expectation. My whole point was to do a thorough and professional job.

Q: As a result of Congress getting hold of the report, were changes made in the way USAID conducted any of the activities you reviewed?

LUCKE: Yes, a number of changes and adjustments were made. Once I turned down the offer of being the first Mission Director in Bulgaria--there was no international school at

the time in Bulgaria--I returned to the Latin America bureau where I had been working before we went to Tunisia and got evacuated. I was sort of in demand and was soon pointed to Bolivia to rejoin my previous boss from Costa Rica. I'll never forget my Texas wife's pithy comment when I told her we had been assigned to Bulgaria. She asked "What do they speak in Bulgaria?" I said, "They speak Bulgarian." She said, "Well, I am not learning blanking Bulgarian." Actually, the real problem was that there was no schooling and we had little kids. So we went on from there.

Q: So USAID management took seriously the work that you did and there were some positive developments in how these new programs were rolled out and managed?

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LUCKE: I think it was more a question of how the programs were managed, whatever that means. Yes, they had to take the report seriously. You are a former FSO yourself. When Congress becomes aware and interested in something you certainly by definition have to take that seriously. The Congressmen, specifically David Obey (D- Wisconsin; considerable service on and periodic chairmanship of House Ways and Means Committee) was a very influential guy. He was head of the Sub-committee that dealt most directly with USAID programs worldwide, so USAID absolutely took his interest seriously.

Q: OK, so now where does this put you in terms of your next assignment. What kind of churn is going on that eventually puts you in the direction you are going next?

LUCKE: Well, my recollection was there was some interesting competition for my services which made me think that I must be doing something right in my career because everybody wanted me. The Latin American & Caribbean Bureau which was one of the premier bureaus in USAID and where I had come from previously when I had been in Costa Rica, wanted me back. Since I turned down Bulgaria, I really was sort of a free agent. First I went to work for the project development part of the Latin America Bureau in the State Department building in Washington. I saw this as an interim placing as I was eager to get back overseas to a Mission. No offense to anybody but I just didn't like headquarters work nearly as much as I liked serving in the field. That's when I volunteered for every overseas TDY assignment I could possibly do. The task in Bolivia was to take part in what they called a "Mission Management Assessment" which was a nice way of saying that the Mission was having internal problems that needed to be identified and fixed. That turned out to have major implications for my future. But for the time being, I was traveling non-stop and my family was still home in Texas.

Q: And again this separation was due to the fact of the evacuation from Tunisia. OK, but at some point they are going to want to put you in a permanent mission assignment.

LUCKE: That was coming up. What happened was my last boss in Costa Rica, who was by now a friend and I guess I would say if I ever had a mentor in the Foreign Service, it was this guy. In any event, Carl was in touch with me. He had actually been in Washington when the Gulf War started and we watched the opening salvos together from a bar in Georgetown. I had just left Tunisia. He had sort of an off the record conversation

with me and said, "Look I don't know what is going to happen but my next assignment is to be Mission Director in Bolivia. I would sure like to figure out a way to get you there too in a responsible position." So, that's what happened. After doing about six months or seven months of the Europe and Latin America work out of Washington, it was time to get the family back together and get an overseas assignment. So I took the head Project Development position in Bolivia with the understanding that I may be able to eventually move up to Deputy Director once the current Deputy's assignment was up and he departed. That is in fact what happened. So we went to Bolivia--what a place. It was a very different country and place than I had ever been, but I liked it. But then again, I even liked Iraq once I arrived there, so maybe I have a screw loose. But Bolivia was a huge and diverse country with the Andes, jungle and everything in between.

1992: Fifth Assignment: Bolivia and Efforts to Diversify Crops Away from Coca

Q: Now what year did you arrive in Bolivia?

LUCKE: 1992.

Q: This was right at the time of the change in administration.

LUCKE: Yes. That is when I guess Clinton came in. So I was there from 1992 through mid-1996-- five years.

Q: Wow that is certainly a long enough time to understand the country and its needs.

LUCKE: Right, I went as planned or hoped from being Project Development Officer to being Deputy Mission Director. Then my boss Carl was reassigned as Director in El Salvador so I was elevated to Mission Director. I was Mission Director for the last year and a half of my stay in Bolivia.

Q: OK, so what are the types of programs that you oversaw?

LUCKE: I was involved in all of them somewhat in my PDO position--including our ESF/Balance of Payments program again, like Costa Rica, local currency, some on PL-480. The duties of course changed when I became Deputy and then Director. The Deputy position involves a lot of internal supervision like a DCM in State and the Mission Director job was very wide ranging and both challenging and fun. The Director had to assure good coordination with the Embassy and the Ambassador. It was important to make the Ambassador into a supporter and an ally. We were doing a lot of anti-drug things and therefore there was a lot of both scrutiny and pressure. We, in USAID, were an important part of the Embassy team and I always remembered I worked for the Ambassador at the end of the day.

Q: All right, then can you talk about any of the specific programs that in a way looking back on them that were particularly successful or perhaps particularly unsuccessful and why you think it occurred that way.

LUCKE: Sure, well a couple of things occurred to me immediately. One was we were very much involved in what we called administration of justice--basically helping the legal system and the court system work better. This was a problem in most of Latin America and it certainly was in Bolivia. A lot of the lessons we had learned because we were so involved in this sector in Costa Rica we were able to apply a lot of that experience to Bolivia. We were doing similar justice programs throughout. A second one was what we called "alternative development"; basically trying to help farmers in the coca growing areas develop legal crops to replace coca. Many people would not believe tropical fruit could compete with coca, but in fact, those making money from coca or cocaine were much further up the production chain than the simple campesinos. So, we were working on research, applied research and being able to provide alternative crops for the farmers mostly in the Chapare which is the coca growing zone south of Cochabamba in the Amazon basin. Crops like hearts of palm, star fruit, passion fruit, mangoes, black pepper, bananas and so forth could be grown and marketed successfully in Santa Cruz or even as far away as Argentina. There was a network of rivers in that part of Bolivia that ultimately flowed into the Amazon. It is truly an incredible part of the world. So a good number of the farmers were actually making good money and they were very happy to not be on the wrong end of the law. Other parts of the Embassy, like DEA, were working on the interdiction side, but USAID was involved in "alternative development" and its moving parts like rural roads, financing, cooperatives and so forth. It was pretty successful.

Q: And there were enough farm to market roads and so on to be able to get their crop.

LUCKE: Yes, we helped improve a lot of those roads and built some of them. In fact, we were ahead of the DEA in terms of taking down narco planes because we built "bus stops" out of concrete on some of the rural roads that were sometimes used as landing strips for the narco planes.

Q: Interesting.

LUCKE: We would put our concrete bus stops on the straight portions of the roads and planes would land and have their wings knocked off. They quit trying that after a while. We had a running joke with some of the DEA guys after our "bus stop" successes, you know "USAID 3, DEA 0". We were involved in a lot of different kinds of programs and it was a creative time. We had clear channels of communication and pretty good cooperation from the government which was absolutely essential. You don't have that now in Bolivia and the current President--who was a coca union leader in my time there--threw USAID and DEA out of Bolivia some years back..

Q: Had any thought been given to way back when you have been working with this to the lithium reserves in Bolivia and sort of switching to trying to mine or use the lithium as lithium batteries become more valuable.

LUCKE: I had no involvement in that at all and no knowledge of it. Another aspect of our work at the time was a balance of payments programs, economic policy reform just like I had been in Costa Rica and later in Jordan. We hold out the prospect of balance of payments assistance to help the government pay off its external debt to the IMF and the World Bank. An equivalent in local currency was made available and those funds were programmed for additional development activities. We would also pay the government for the eradication of coca which was controversial as that really didn't act as a permanent incentive to get out of the coca growing business. So I was involved in all that.

Q: Just go back one second to the administration of justice improvements. In terms of measuring the success of those programs, did the local population understand that things were getting better with the justice system. Was there any way to measure improved confidence in the local population.

LUCKE: Good question. We had our own internal monitoring and evaluation systems and we always had benchmarks that were established and measured. So we had, let's call it, an internal system to be able to evaluate the results of these programs, and I think those were generally positive. Even in a place like Bolivia, a little progress in a sector, say justice, that was in such dire need of improvement, to put it diplomatically, was helpful. Whether the local population was aware or not, the people we dealt with in government and the private sector were aware of it. Whether the general population was, probably not at all. But you know the government probably didn't touch the lives of the majority of Bolivians who were very poor anyway. So as Forrest Gump would say, "that's all I have to say about that."

Q: How about the sustainability of the projects you completed? Obviously there were positive outcomes while you were there. Were they sustainable to the best of your knowledge over time?

LUCKE: Well, they were sustainable while I was there. I don't know over time what really happened. The test probably really is the institutional changes, cultural changes and the training of key individuals and the many lawyers, judges and court administrators and so forth we trained. We would even donate large number of legal books in Spanish to a lot to universities and law schools all over the country. The situation now, I am just not informed but I am hoping that much has been sustainable. But you know anybody who works in development and hangs on for decades, you are, by definition, an optimist. So I saw a lot of positive changes while I was there.

Q: As you moved up, what kind of issues internal to the mission did you have to deal with to maintain efficiency and morale.

LUCKE: There were always internal issues to deal with within the Mission. We moved to a new building. We hired more staff; we continued our programs; we developed new programs--all challenges but part of the deal. We had real good relations with the government at the time. The president was elected about mid my tour there, President Goni Sanchez de Lozada had actually been raised in the States. Goni and his brother

Tony spoke Spanish with an American accent which always used to crack me up. They were easy to work with and their people were good too. It was a friendly and productive relationship for the most part. I mean you always have issues in difficult times. We were physically separated from the Embassy but spent a lot of time there in meetings and coordinating. I think there was a bit of inevitable resentment by the State folks vis a vis USAID. We had so many external activities and spent money--we had a checkbook they didn't have so maybe there was some resentment there. This was before State more or less assumed control of USAID's budget which happened in about 2005-2006 I think. . But we were always very aware that we were one team and had to work together. Everything we did was communicated to the Ambassador and DCM. Neither were shrinking violets but I liked them both and I recall several instances when USAID stepped to the plate with resources, people and creativity to help solve some important Embassy issues. It was very important for me to show that USAID could work cooperatively with the rest of the Embassy and succeed together. By the time I left, I know Ambassador Kamman was very satisfied with USAID. We supported each other and it worked out well for the Embassy's effectiveness as a whole.

Q: That , of course, makes perfect sense. Two different agencies, two different budgets. Now five years later, have you begun thinking about where next you might want to go? Were you thinking of staying in Latin America or were you also considering another part of the world?

LUCKE: No, it was really the latter. My Spanish was never as good as my French but it had improved a lot in Bolivia. I had like a 3+ in Spanish and it was fine. But I had a 4 in French, had attended a French university and that facility had always been an advantage for me. But I wanted to go to the region where my interest in an international career started--the Middle East. I was in touch with the Assistant Administrator for the Asia/Near East Bureau and I knew that there would soon be a Mission Director position opening in Jordan at the time I was scheduled to depart Bolivia. I was in the Senior Foreign Service by this time and ready to be a Mission Director on my own. I really had my sights set on Jordan because it was a key US ally, had King Hussein as ruler, was next to Jerusalem where I had been as a kid. Jordan seemed to be an absolute perfect place for me to go and I had my heart set on it.

Q: When you say it was suggested to you, this is coming now from Washington.

LUCKE: Yes, I knew the head of the Asia/Near East Bureau and he and a senior USAID committee ultimately would make the decision on the Jordan Mission Director position.

Q: And in terms of timing we are now talking about 1997?

LUCKE: No, that would be mid-1996 when I left Bolivia and transferred to Jordan.

Q: Just one more thing before you leave Bolivia. How did your family do there? Were they generally happy with the education, etc.

LUCKE: One of the attractions of going to Bolivia is that they had an American school. So all three of my kids were in school. My oldest daughter got through the eighth or ninth grade there. My middle daughter was three years behind, and my son was in pre-kindergarten, I guess. They liked it and were quite happy in school. My wife worked for the Mission on an export/investment promotion project and she loved it. Bolivia was her favorite post because she loved her job so much. She did extremely well and proved to be an excellent manager and highly competent professional. She was much loved by her colleagues. Her Spanish was very functional as well. She was hired before I became Director so there was none of the "dreaded conflict of interest" stuff. We worked that out legally so she would report to somebody completely different and not me. I also was happy because I had a real live band, called "Sopa de Pato" with mostly USAID people and a couple of locals. We played blues, jazz and rock & roll and had a ton of fun playing around La Paz and even Santa Cruz. One of my favorite stories was being recognized by a taxi driver and it wasn't as USAID Director but rather as the sax player for Sopa de Pato. So it was almost an ideal situation in terms of family. My wife had wonderful counterparts and they loved her. I mean she was very people oriented. She spoke Spanish, understood how it all worked, did a great job, and had great relations with the contractor that we had who was running the projects. So, I mean for her, it was an ideal situation.

Q: OK, so now you are talking with the family about moving to the Middle East. How does that go over?

LUCKE: Well, they had been to Tunisia before under less than ideal conditions so I had to do a bit of a marketing job. I assured my wife and daughters that Jordan was pretty moderate and not at all like some of the more repressive Middle East places. I tried to convey that the region as a whole was not this dark and bloody place where terrible things happened daily. I would say "Look, I have been there. It is not like you are going to Saudi Arabia, you don't have to veil yourself or wear a niqab" or whatever it is. My wife was unconvinced, but the second we arrived, the entire family thought Amman and Jordan were great. The people were hospitable and it was and is a pretty great place. It all worked out fine.

Q: OK, so when you arrived in Jordan what were the expectations for the mission's goals because you are going there now as mission director.

1996: Sixth Assignment: Jordan -- Ramping Up from $7 million to $400 million

LUCKE: I had been so completely absorbed with my job in Bolivia that I had not really done a whole lot of research as to what the program was about. I remember getting sworn into the job and my boss saying the new Mission Director is assuming a program of I think he said, $7 million a year. I was saying to myself, "What? That is ridiculous, we had $80 million in Bolivia". Seven million, what is wrong with this picture?

So I went to Jordan with the sudden realization that the program had very little money but I figured I would get there and check it all out. The Ambassador in Jordan and I were pretty close from the start--we were both Tar Heels and shared a lot of the same interests.

One day we put our heads together and said, gee, what is wrong with this picture? We have this key country in a volatile region and it is our closest ally in the Middle East except for Israel, and we are not supporting them economically, if barely at all. Jordan had bread riots in 1995, the year before I arrived. The government had tried to increase the price of bread and it set off riots. Jordan had also signed a peace treaty with Israel in '94 and had not exactly seen a "peace dividend", as we used to call it.

Wes and I knew this was not right and not sustainable. Jordan needed us to step up. So, what were are we going to do about this? The long story short, first we basically developed a strategy to brief key people on the Hill about what was happening so they could make their own decisions about how to better assist Jordan in its efforts to increase internal stability and help economic growth. Second, there had to be, in essence, a "peace dividend" for having signed the peace treaty with Israel in 1994. Three, we, the US, had a longstanding commitment to Jordan economically, militarily and otherwise since the 1950's when a very young King Hussein developed an understanding with Eisenhower administration. In essence, the deal was "Help keep us safe and we will be your friend and ally". That was in essence an obligation that we needed to never forget, then or now.

The key people from Congress visited Jordan--Democrats and Republicans-- and received some very convincing briefings from key Jordanian officials. The King was on board as was my counterpart, the Minister of International Cooperation. That Minister was competent, impressive, educated in the States and, significantly, even of a Palestinian background. She was a good example of the good quality of Jordanian officials I dealt with on a day to day basis. They all spoke English and it didn't take me long to realize that my Arabic was never going to be used professionally. Maybe to ask directions or buy fruit in the market but not at work. I was never going to be capable of carrying on a conversation about economics in Arabic.

Anyway, long story short is our seven million dollar program I had inherited a year before became $150 million the next year and grew substantially every year after that. The point of course was what we and the Jordanians did with the money. We worked in three key areas--water, family planning/health and economic opportunity. To sum it up, there were too many people for the resources available, Jordan was the second water-poorest country in the world, and there were not enough jobs. Our entire program was focused on these key sectors. We got to work and produced more than a few impressive results with the full cooperation of the Jordanians. Soon, it was clearly considered by USAID in Washington to be one of the best programs anywhere in the world.

Q: Let's continue with the description of how you went from a budget of $7 million to $300-$400 million.

LUCKE: Basically we kept doing what we were doing in the three key sectors but made them a mile deep. The "Economic Opportunity" part covered everything from microfinance, to WTO accession, to support for business associations, to IT development, free zones, stock market improvement, privatization and much more. The water sector was one of the most critical sectors in Jordan. If you don't have any water; you don't

have a country. We were involved in every aspect of water infrastructure, conveyance, wastewater treatment, sewage treatment, water treatment, you name it. We completely re-did the Amman water distribution system to reduce water losses and increase coverage. We literally were investing nearly $200 million a year in the water sector alone. I became close with one particular Water Ministry official who was #2 in the Ministry when I was Director and is Minister today. I saw him actually last year in Amman and we talked about it. He said if not for the work that we did--and the fact that Jordan is piping water from an underground aquifer in the south called Disi to Amman--he said Jordan would have exploded, particularly with all of the refugees now in Jordan from Iraq and Syria. The third sector was family planning and health--a sector where USAID has long been working. Jordan's birth rate is very high and we helped Jordanians provide quality services. They took the ball and ran with it and were doing a good job. So those were the things we did. I refused try to work in more sectors--the needs were so great in the three we were addressing that I felt we would lessen our impact by trying to do more. A mile deep not a mile wide. Everybody bought into that, though I imagine the staff got tired of hearing me say it.

Q: Looking back to the extent that you know, were all of these sustainable, particularly the water projects given the changing climate and so on?

LUCKE: Yes, the water infrastructure work was important but repairs, extensions and so on would make it sustainable. These thing like conveyance systems and wastewater treatment have to be maintained. We were very involved with helping the Jordanians do all of these things. They are still doing the water programs today but at a lesser clip than when we were doing them. They had such a dire need, and we had not been involved to the extent that was needed because previously we simply didn't have the money. When we increased the size of the program, there were any number of water priorities to go after. Jordan has been able to maintain its water sector programs and expand them not just with USAID assistance but with the assistance of a lot of other donors, the World Bank, the GCC, the Germans and so forth. But one thing we refused to do was to help Jordan with the Disi pipeline which is located near Wadi Rum where "Lawrence of Arabia" was filmed. Disi is an aquifer of fossilized water that can provide Amman water for perhaps 50 years. We, the U.S., refused to have anything to do with that because of the environmental concerns. But because we were providing assistance in other parts of the water sector, they were able to get funding for Disi from other sources. The current minister, Hazim el-Naser is technically astute and a key member of the Cabinet and a crucial actor in keeping Jordan stable because if you do have water and manage it effectively, you do in fact have the chance to have a real country. King Abdullah specifically asked him to come back into the Cabinet after being abroad for some years.

Q: Right. In the buildup as you were essentially doubling the size of the mission, were there lessons in management that would be useful for others in a similar situation?

LUCKE: We way more than doubled it. We went from $7 million to $400 million so do the math. However, we had 11 USDHs and 40 FSNs at $7 million and 11 USDHs and 40 FSNs at $400 million. One lesson as a good manager is that if you treat people well, give

them real responsibility and give them the credit for doing well, you attract really good people. Jordan was an easy place to recruit people because we had an American school, it was stable, the work was important and the Mission had a good reputation. I had two great and supportive Ambassadors, one of whom was Bill Burns, later Deputy Secretary. That was great. The lessons was to lead by example, treat people with respect and if they are real professionals, it they react professionally. There is no reason to micromanage. Just let them do their jobs and give them positive feedback. If they prove they can't do it, then that is a different story. My Program Officer ended up being a five time Mission Director and an Ambassador. An absolute saint. Maybe three or four of my American staff became Mission Directors. My first Private Sector Officer however took the cake--he became Acting Administrator for the first year of the Obama Administration. I was lucky enough to have some really excellent people. My wife could not work for the Mission--the dreaded "conflict of interest"-- but was hired by a foundation that was run by King Hussein's sister, Princess Basma. So soon, she was happy and making herself essential as she had done in Costa Rica and Bolivia. Anyway, the last thing to say is that the local Jordanian FSN staff was another absolutely key element in our success. They were always supportive and I hope they felt as much support back from me.

A Model for Other USAID Missions in the Region

Q: Given all the incredible things that were going on in that relatively short period of time while you were Mission Director, did other regional missions visit to see what you were doing? It sounds like you were a bit of a model in the region.

LUCKE: Yes, that actually did happen to a certain extent. The new Mission Director for West Bank/Gaza based in Tel Aviv came over and sat down with me for a couple of weeks. He said "People in Washington recommended that I come over and see what you are doing and how you were doing it." He was a first time Mission Director. I think the Director from Lebanon also came over and we ended up together later in Iraq. I even had visits from Egypt, the Director in Egypt. As an aside, I kept getting offered the Mission Director job in Egypt, which at the time was USAID's largest program in the world. I kept turning it down and never wanted it. I said I am not going to go there because the Egyptians know they are going to get this large amount of money because of the Camp David Accords, so the Director would have absolutely no leverage with the government in terms of implementing needed reforms. I was perfectly happy to stay in Jordan where we had this perfect confluence of support from Washington, meaning Congress, State and USAID/Washington. Two, we had money. As we say in Texas, money doesn't talk, it screams. Three, we had really qualified Jordanian counterparts who were not only willing to just go along with us but actually lead. It wasn't just the U.S. doing this, it was the Jordanians doing it with the U.S. helping. So those three things are just the perfect confluence of positive characteristics that you strive for and if you have them, you can do great things..

Q: And sometimes in these countries where development begins and there are some rapid improvements, did you end up having some communities in Jordan that were jealous of others because some of them seemed to be getting more of the benefits of the aid?

LUCKE: No, not really. There were like three towns in Jordan that were difficult places to work: Ma'an, Zarqa and Tafilah. The difficult communities meaning more radicalized than others. Zarqa is where Al Zarqawi came from, the bad guy in Iraq. They tended to be fundamentalist, anti-American rabble rousers, but it didn't have much of anything to do with us really. One had to be careful if you went to these places. We did carry out microfinance programs in all these communities because they were part of Jordan. We benefitted a lot of people through microfinance. Whether they knew it came from the U.S. or not, I don't know. I know of no resentment based on assistance anyway.

Q: You mentioned that some of the people benefitted without knowing that it might have been due to the U.S. mission. Was that a problem for USAID in Jordan? In other words if locals knew that it was the U.S. directing the project, was there hostility?

LUCKE: We didn't think like that. We mostly wanted Jordanians to realize that a lot of assistance was coming from the US. Many of the movers and shakers in the private sector knew what we were doing in Jordan because they were involved with us in making programs work. We were happy to put the clasped hands symbol on our work--in fact it was required. Our counterparts in the government knew exactly what we were doing and embraced it. No one ever told us to go away and take our money with us. Many Jordanians knew what was going on and they knew where this assistance was coming from. They were very grateful for the most part. There were a few nut jobs who were Saddam lovers, for example, but we were mostly able to avoid these types. We particularly had excellent cooperation and partnerships with key members of the private sector because we were key in advancing and working with private sector associations. We helped them understand how to lobby for economic reform, and promote pro-private sector issues like export oriented job creation and more. Those relationships USAID still has to this day. In fact one of our closest private sector collaborators became the Jordanian Ambassador to the U.S. These were good and hard-working people who cared about Jordan and saw what we were doing was well intentioned and well designed and they wanted to be part of it. To this day, they will tell you they think the world of USAID because they saw us at our best. Not to sound naïve or whatever but it was an almost uniquely positive situation where the need was there, the money was there, the cooperation was there, the leadership was there on all sides. It worked. It was all I imagined my job to be or could be if the circumstances were the best. That is why the whole Jordan experience was so special to me..

Difficulties in Balancing Family Needs and Needs of the Service

Q: After four years in Jordan, you're approaching the end of your tour, what are you thinking career-wise. Sometimes people at this point in their career think they might want to take a year off and complete a master's degree or public administration degree or some other detail assignment.

LUCKE: Oh, I wanted to stay for another two years which would make six years total. The reason was I was in the perfect situation from every point of view. Washington

thought I was doing a good job. The Jordanians liked me and our program. My staff was happy. It was just ideal. So I want to stay but unfortunately I had two problems. One, the normal track is you will stay and work two tours but I really wanted to stay longer for another personal reason as well. My second daughter—who spoke Arabic by this time--was going into her junior year in high school and if I stayed two years she could graduate in Amman with her friends. My oldest daughter had graduated from high school in Jordan my last year there. So we tried to make it work. My boss in DC was supportive--a good man. These were the Clinton years. The problem was the head of the USAID personnel office was a bit of a tyrant. So I go in and see her and say I would really like to stay another two years. She said, "Sure. You are doing a great job and you are one of our most respected and senior Mission Directors in the world. So yes, we will do that." So I had at least a verbal agreement. Then I talked to her later about it when it was time to get it made official and she said denied the previous conversation and commitment ever happened. "You can't do that. We need you in India." I refused. I absolutely did not want to go to India. I wanted to stay exactly where I was. Anyway, so long story short, they got me a one year extension. I therefore would have been able to get my daughter going into her senior year of high school. You just don't pull a kid out as a senior in high school. That is just unfair. You don't do that. So my wife and I had this very serious conversation. She said, "I am not divorcing you; I am divorcing USAID." After all you have done, this is what they are going to do to you?" So we were in sort of a crisis point. But I said, "OK, you are going to go. I had been approached by the same guy I worked for in Bolivia who was now the head of the Latin American Bureau in Washington. He said, "Look, we are desperate to get someone to be Director in Haiti." I didn't want to do this at all but it was nice to be asked. Yes, I speak French and had been to Haiti before. There was however no way the family would go to Haiti. My wife had had a bad experience while working there in 1987 during election violence and the US school had a mediocre reputation. No way on that front. We were despondent as a family because clearly we were going to be broken up. My family went home to Texas, and I went to Haiti.

Q: I see.

LUCKE: So that is what happened to us.

Q: You did get your extra year in Jordan.

LUCKE: I was offered but I turned it down. I wasn't going to stay there and have my daughter leave going into her senior year. I thought it was better to go home. What happened is that the family, minus me, returned to the States. They came home to Austin, Texas, and our daughter and son were admitted to a private school, a really excellent school. My daughter was able to do her junior and senior year in Austin with an absolute quality education and was able to attend an excellent university with no problem at all. So for the family it worked out great. For me I was pretty miserable much of the time because I was in Haiti by myself.

Q: Yes, and you were mission director there. What year did you arrive?

2000 Sixth Assignment: Unaccompanied to Haiti

LUCKE: 2000.

Q: Now, in Haiti, we seem to pour a lot of money and attention into it every time a natural disaster strikes. So an earthquake will destroy a modest housing project. A hurricane will blow out even modest eco-tourism development or modest infrastructure projects. When you arrived there in 2000, what were your goals?

LUCKE: Let me go back to your last paragraph here. Most of Haiti's problems are not externally caused. I mean yes there was a terrible quake in 2010 and they have hurricanes frequently. As a matter of fact, I was down in Haiti this last month working on hurricane recovery and I am going back later in the year to do more. I mean yes, there are lots of exogenous things that happen in Haiti, but most of Haiti's problems are internally caused by weak and corrupt governments, weak institutions, poor governance, often poor leadership, and other factors related to poor agricultural practices, deforestation and so forth. Haiti was once the richest island in the world. Now it is one of the poorest. Some of my Haitian friends would say we were not colonized long enough, meaning that most institutions in Haiti are so weak. It is not that the people are in any way inferior or have less ability, but they suffer from weak institutions, and one can add corruption and, too often, a legacy of violence.

Despite it all, Haiti is still a beautiful place and most foreigners either love it or hate it. I fell in love with the place, I have to admit, "malgre tout" as they would say in French. So here I am as Director again with a decent budget, maybe $60 million a year. There was no Ambassador, just a DCM/Charge so as the next highest officer in the Embassy, I began to serve fairly regularly as Charge. The USAID program was not supposed to work directly with the government since the disposal of Aristide, so we worked mainly with NGOs and contractors. I liked being Charge and got to meet with President Préval who would later be President again during and after the 2010 earthquake. We did a lot of humanitarian stuff. We worked on hurricane recovery, we worked on watersheds, we did reforestation, provided a lot of food aid, supported family planning and HIV/AIDS work. We worked with several excellent Haitian doctors on HIV programs and the well-known Paul Farmer.

I traveled extensively in Haiti and just kind of just threw myself into it. I was not happy being separated from my family. That was a first. The irony of being Mission Director in Haiti was that I went from being the fair haired child/favored son on the Hill as the Director in Jordan, and to being more like the devil incarnate as Director in Haiti. These were the days of Jesse Helms and his activist staff. Not to speak ill of the departed, but Jesse Helms as Chairman of Foreign Relations had never had a passport in his life and worse he was from my original home state. His staff would beat me up on my regular trips to Washington but at least I could slip home to Austin after Washington and see the family. Helm's people hated Haiti and hated USAID. They wanted all of us to go away and just disappear.

Senator Jesse Helms and His Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy

Q: Well let's go back to Jesse Helms for a minute. As time goes by his name is forgotten and his role in foreign affairs kind of dims. Do you know why he so often went after the State Department and USAID?

LUCKE: He was ignorant. He did not understand the role of economic development or economic assistance as a tool of foreign policy. In fact I don't know if he would recognize foreign policy if it hit him in the face. He was just surrounded by a bunch of very conservative assistants and staffers. I can say that as a conservative myself, but I was not that kind of conservative. Helm's staff was the problem. I doubt whether he could have even found Haiti on the map. In my view and that of many conservatives I think, foreign assistance is a key tool of US foreign policy and one that is a lot more peaceful and pleasant than conflict. Many normal Republicans, in my view, seemed to understand this at least as well as most Democrats. In my humble view too, USAID prospered more and was better managed under Republican administrations. I have heard some of my Democrat friends say the same thing. So, in my view Helms was just a disaster and he should be forgotten. I mean I remember watching his television editorials as a kid--- he was a broadcaster on a station in Raleigh, North Carolina. I remember as a kid being repulsed by this guy. He was a segregationist too, at least back then. And suddenly this guy becomes a US Senator and head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Go figure.

Q: OK, I was curious because obviously being a Foreign Service Officer working at the same time, the State Department had similar problems. It never seemed to get better and I never quite understood what the animus was in Jesse Helms that drove him against diplomats and development officers. Perhaps you have a better understanding coming from North Carolina, the state he represented.

LUCKE: He wanted to abolish USAID and merge it into the State Department which I always failed to understand. It was like the UN. The UN may waste a lot of money--and it does--but if you abolish the UN on Tuesday, you have to reinvent it on Wednesday because much of what they do cannot be done by other institutions. Same with USAID. Whether you are led by conservatives or liberals, the work that USAID does is in the foreign policy interest of the United States. It has got to be done. It is not going to go away. If it is not USAID, it is going to be the USAID people in this part of the State Department. As far as I was concerned, it would be very hard to merge those two cultures into something that is going to function better than the current partly separate structures we have now.

Q: Yeah, and I can tell you that public diplomacy got no better for being integrated.

LUCKE: Absolutely. Look at USIS. I mean the example of USIS is very telling.

Q: No it didn't get any better and one of the principal reasons and I don't mean to digress too far here, but one of the principal reasons it didn't get any better was you could not get an undersecretary to stay more than 18 months. And without someone at the helm of a major aspect of U.S. foreign policy, people below get lost. You know they are not sure what the priorities are.

LUCKE: You are right. As far as USAID is concerned our hero at the time was Clinton's USAID Administrator, Brian Atwood. Brian was a man of intelligence and integrity and he fought to keep USAID as an independent agency and he was ultimately successful. Helms took his revenge on him. I admired him because he sacrificed himself for the good of the agency. Brian was nominated to be Ambassador to Brazil and he would have made a wonderful Ambassador but Helms nixed it. He never even got a hearing.

Q: That was one of the other aspects of Helms' approach: he would block appointments that would otherwise be perfectly normal and perfectly appropriate. He would even hold up their promotions or their receipt of merit pay. It went down to that level.

Differences in Foreign Policy Management between Republicans and Democrats

LUCKE: It was his staff doing that. That is a pity but just one other very quick remark because you mentioned you felt that in general USAID was better managed under the Republicans than under Democrats. I have to agree, because what I found is Republicans tend to have a set of priorities and stick to them. Whereas, Democrats had a set of priorities and then another set, and then another set. And let everybody with any little idea in on policy making.

Q: You are right.

LUCKE: I want to tell you a quick story to illustrate that. When I was in Bolivia, it was the end of Bush 41 and the beginning of Clinton. They suddenly decided that all of the programs we were doing in terms of private sector growth and development were all bad because working with the evil private sector was not their priority. They wanted to have more of a poorest of the poor focus. We had a very successful private sector development programs that created thousands of jobs, you know, export oriented industries, investment promotion, microfinance, banking reform and so forth. We were good at it and we had competent people working with us. So the Clinton people come in. The word came down from on high that we were not supposed to do private sector development anymore, and here we are with all this vibrant success going on in Bolivia.

So USAID missions all around the hemisphere were terminating all of these successful programs and starting new ones with the newly announced focus. I told my staff we were not doing that. We changed the label instead. Instead of calling it "private sector development", we renamed it "economic opportunity". A year later when the political masters in Washington figured out what we were doing, they had decided that job creation in the private sector was a really good thing. It was what we needed and if by changing the name to sound politically correct, then we would do it and keep

implementing our programs as originally planned. We also didn't have to go through the trauma of dropping programs, redesigning new ones and going through a long and arduous procurement process. We just changed the name and soon they were happy and we were happy.

Q: Very clever. Someone else in your position might have panicked and started closing down projects.

LUCKE: They did. All over the hemisphere. I said we are not doing this.

Q: Yeah, and it even came down to non-USAID people like me. I was in public affairs but I needed to be able to go out and talk about every single tiny program that was sent to us from who knows where in Foggy Bottom -- from clean cook stoves to hand washing and on and on. Really, when everything is a priority nothing is a priority.

LUCKE: I know.

Q: Back to you. You are in Haiti and you are trying to make a go of these programs in a difficult political culture. I think many people coming after you are going to be in countries similar to Haiti. Maybe not in the Western hemisphere but in other places where there are similar problems of poor governance. Are there lessons learned you can share?

LUCKE: As I said, except for when I was Chargé, we avoided the GOH and instead worked with NGOs, contractors and grantees. I am glad I got to know the President, René Préval, because we ended up working together after the earthquake and knowing him helped. We weren't allowed to work with the government then as that was a policy decision. We didn't officially consider them a legitimate government due to the Aristide ouster. So we while we had a bit of a confrontational stance with the government, when we did communicate, it was pretty cordial. I sort of liked President Préval personally. I wasn't in Haiti for much more than a year. The reason was because of my family situation. One kid was in college but the other two were at crucial ages when I needed to be around. One was just getting out of high school and the other was just going into middle school. I got married because I like my wife and I didn't want to be separated from her or our kids all of the time. I knew when I made this decision that separation was not going to be a long term affair. I liked my job, loved Haiti and my staff, but I wasn't willing to endure the family separation.

Departure from USAID and Return to Work on Iraq Reconstruction

Q: All right,. How do you get out? How does it happen that you move on to the next location?

LUCKE: I quit.

Q: Did they let you do that?

LUCKE: Yes, it was pretty simple, I quit. I left the Foreign Service. I said good-bye and got a job with an Arlington-based economic development contractor who let me work at home in Austin. I would spent three weeks a month working in Texas or traveling to monitor projects---mainly Jamaica and Uganda---and then a week a month in the home office. I went back to USAID because of 9/11 and the subsequent build up for the Iraq intervention.

The fundamental reason I went back was I felt like so many other people after 9/11; I wanted to do what I could to help the country respond to this incredible tragedy. I had been a senior manager with USAID in the Middle East. I had studied Arabic including two years with a tutor in Jordan. I had a solid reputation as a good manager because of the successful and well regarded USAID program in Jordan. We had demonstrable results in the three areas of water, economic opportunity and family planning/ health. So I started getting some calls from senior people at USAID asking me if I would be interested in coming back. The looming question was what was really going to happen in Iraq. What would USAID's role in Iraq be if the conflict happened? There clearly would be a robust reconstruction and possibly economic development program of some considerable size. USAID was looking to me to lead that effort in the field. At the same time, our people were starting to conceive the content of such a program and thinking how to put it in place, how it would be procured and then implemented. I think we weren't really sure how USAID was going to be part of the overall effort which ended up being, of course, led by DOD. We can get to that, but the organization that was put together was ultimately called ORHA--the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance and USAID was to play an important part in ORHA.

2002: Planning for Iraq Reconstruction: Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA)

Q: Where was USAID thinking of sending you?

LUCKE: It was looking like I would be the lead for USAID's Iraq program in the field—in Iraq. I met with the Administrator, Andrew Natsios, about it and I was set, as far as the Agency was concerned, but my position within ORHA had to be approved by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. They tell me I was not the original choice as "Reconstruction Coordinator" but I was the one who was approved by him for the position. So, I was sworn in once again as a FSO and rejoined USAID. The only difference was that according to the rules, I was no longer able to be promoted--I was already a FE-MC so that was no big deal--and perhaps a few other things I forget. This was later to come into more focus when I was nominated as Ambassador but as far as the work and responsibilities went, it was like I had never left.

Q: OK, and as these early talks are going on, what were they foreseeing would be the key areas that you would need to work on?

LUCKE: Yes, our thinking was evolving on that and was led by a couple of key people in USAID/Washington. We knew we were playing catch-up from the start—this was to be a huge effort that had to be put together very quickly, projects conceived, competed, procured, funded, staff hired and so on. I remember hearing that the US had years to plan the occupation of Germany and Japan after WWII and here we were trying to put this Iraq program together in just a few months. Some things were obvious from the start though--we knew we would have to have a program to repair essential infrastructure because, as we suspected and it turned out to be true, the real damage to Iraq's infrastructure was a result of the utter neglect from the regime and not from damage from the conflict. In fact, there was really very little damage from the conflict that we were required to repair. So, we had a reconstruction program aimed at power, water, wastewater, port repair, communications and the like. The telecommunication sector was the only one really taken out during the fighting. We also planned projects for local governance, education, health, economic governance (which had many moving parts) and so on. We planned to grant funds to international organizations like WHO, WFP and others when it made sense to do so. The education program, for example, had to replace the Saddam era textbooks and we had to repair schools prior to the start of the school year. The demands of the power sector were the most serious as the system was so fragile and had been kept running with duck tape and bailing wire for years. It was a testament to the clever nature of Iraqi engineers that it had been kept running at all for so long. We even took part in the initiative to replace all the former Iraqi currency with new bills. It was a huge program—in fact the largest US financed reconstruction program since the Marshall Plan. But the bulk of the money was for infrastructure repair that was contracted with Bechtel—a billion dollars for the first contract and a subsequent second contract for another billion.

Q: OK, so at what point were you actually expected to be on the ground?

LUCKE: We didn't know how long that was going to take. At the early pre-war days at USAID headquarters in the Ronald Reagan Building, there were a lot of meetings to conceive and plan programs, to develop terms of reference and develop what ultimately turned into contracts and grants---awards that would be made to various companies and other implementers. It was a huge task to start to get ready. We did not know the timing of the conflict of course or even if there would be a conflict. We were brought into the overall mix of overall preparations being led by DOD. This was when ORHA, the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, was formed. The new head of ORHA and my soon to be boss was retired Lt. General Jay Garner. So, all this was happening. I ultimately became one of three deputies to General Jay Garner, the so-called "Deputy for Reconstruction" There were two other Deputies, one for Humanitarian Assistance and another for Governance. The Humanitarian Deputy was Ambassador George Ward and third one came out of the Pentagon who didn't last long and whose name I don't recall. I actually deployed to the field—to Kuwait—in early November 2002. I was met at the airport by two US Army colonels who told me "You are the first civilian to arrive in theatre." I guess I was the first. Garner and the rest of ORHA came to Kuwait in January of 2003.

Q: Let me just interrupt one second here before you go on. ORHA as an organization, was your understanding that it was created expressly for the reconstruction effort in Iraq, or was it understood that it would remain as an organization for other purposes as it grew and developed lessons learned.

LUCKE: No, it was solely for purposes of establishing a civilian presence in post-conflict Iraq to take care of immediate reconstruction, humanitarian and governance needs.

Q: OK, and as you were developing the plans in USAID, I imagine you included or in some way worked with the Pentagon in developing these plans because they were the ones on the ground who had the knowledge of at least the territory and the facts of what you might be facing.

LUCKE: Yes, we were forced to pull together this huge program very quickly and without the benefit of the preparation time that had been put into place for post-WWII Japan or Germany. We had a few months to prepare, not years. We, in USAID, had to hire new staff off the streets and via a staffing contractor because the normal USAID personnel system was completely incapable of responding to our immediate needs. The bureaucracy was ill equipped to help us.

A lot of that coordination took place at the Deputies level that I of course was not part of. We spoke often with our State Department colleagues and increasingly more and more with DOD We, in USAID, certainly did not have complete visibility as to all the planning and decision making going on around us. The main decision maker was the Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. I know that Administrator Natsios was in a lot of the high level meetings. USAID was a player in the process, of course, but we were frankly, a pretty small voice compared to DOD and State. I was told I was the eighth choice as "Reconstruction Coordinator" but have no idea if that was true or not. All the others who came before me apparently either didn't have the experience or somehow they weren't managers of large programs, I don't know. They were also not from USAID. I think I was the first one put forward from USAID. I was probably chosen because I had the prior management experience with USAID in the Middle East and was politically correct as well. For better or worse, I was named to that position.

2002: Arrival in Kuwait to Prepare for Entry into Iraq

Q: Returning to the chronology, you arrive in theater in Kuwait in November of 2002 and the basic officers of ORHA are on the ground with you?

LUCKE: Not at all. They were not there at all. I was there totally by myself. I needed to first figure out some basic things like where we would be working and who did the coordinating. I was talking to representatives from the various United Nations agencies who were there or were arriving there in Kuwait. Sometime during that period, I was recalled to Washington to work with ORHA and we were actually looking for offices in the Pentagon. It was a -- well, a complete, you know, the colorful military term that starts with the word "cluster. I mean they never found us offices and it was completely

pandemonium, which surprised me. I thought, gee, the Pentagon would have its act together by now. But it didn't. We had to move a lot of bodies and that meant personnel actions and other bureaucratic challenges and so forth. On the bright side, I was getting to know General Jay Garner, who headed up ORHA, and we sort of clicked from the start. He was a great man and he and I became friendly. He understood my frustration. I mean we just couldn't wait around and not do anything back in Washington. I really felt we needed to get going in the field as well. As for Washington planning, that was coming together pretty well. A USAID officer named Ross Wherry was really one of the main guys who was conceiving and writing some of the initial programs and was doing a really fabulous job which he put together with a lot of help. Two other key people in this preparation, who later became my deputies, were Earl Gast and Chris Milligan. So, with their excellent foundational work, I got the blessing of General Garner to go back to the field. I was there in Kuwait when the first elements of ORHA arrived. I sat there on the tarmac and watched the plane come in and met General Garner. At first, our challenges were interminable; we worked from dawn to midnight with meetings every day to try to get organized.

Q: And all this organizational aspect is going on in Kuwait for the moment.

LUCKE: Yes, there were a number of activities and training things (and what they called RAC drills) with military terminology I had never before heard. (RAC, or Risk Assessment Code drills are part of the military's tactical planning review for conflict zones. There are five levels of risk:1 Critical, 2 Serious, 3 Moderate, 4 Minor, 5 Negligible. For the manual that provides a more complete description of this criteria click here on RAC Manual). We talked with various experts on Iraq and the Middle East and all that stuff. So there was a lot of that going on in Washington as well, but it continued once I hit Kuwait and Iraq.

Q: OK. Now the two deputies that you mentioned, Earl Gast and Chris Mulligan, were they out in the field with you at this point or were they still back in Washington?

LUCKE: Chris came first and Earl came a little bit later. Earl ended up being an Assistant Administrator in a very senior position. A great guy and friend to this day. We ended up dividing up the work and we played it by ear as they say because it had never been done before and we were dealing with different agencies, different nationalities. You know the Brits were there and the Australians and the Japanese and so forth, all trying to pull it all together.

Q: Let's continue with the first steps and the kinds of assets you are going to need initially.

LUCKE: Well, a lot of that planning was going on in Washington and Ross was one of the really essential people there. He really made the decision, for example, to order our armored vehicles. Our vehicles were armored unlike the vehicles that ORHA procured. This armor ended up saving lives ultimately. Although we were part of ORHA, we were also a separate unit as well in some ways.

Q: This is an interesting issue because of course, after the famous landing of President Bush on the USS Abraham Lincoln under the banner "Mission Accomplished," as U.S. forces had to deal with increasing insurgencies and IEDs in unarmored troop vehicles.

LUCKE: Right. The military had their own issues and they had their own vehicles and are not to be confused with the civilian stuff. But you are right-- the military somehow arrived with Humvees that were not fully armored. Soldiers put armor on their own vehicles, which is crazy. God knows how many good people we lost because of inadequate armor plating of the Humvees. By the same token, I think we ended up losing a lot of those thin skinned vehicles because there was nothing to protect them at all. And once when we first arrived, jumping ahead, once we first got into Baghdad, everything was really pretty quiet. There had been the shock among the population as to what had just happened. People were very much lying low. So there was not much violence. Of course that changed, particularly after Bremer came in and abolished the army and stirred up the hornet's nest.

Q: Right. American military units have a long history of improvisation to improve equipment. I remember learning that during WWII, some tank units had to commandeer ploughs to jerry-rig to the front of the vehicle to cut through hedgerows. Here in Iraq, soldiers are improvising again with cast-off metal plating in what you might call "after-market" upgrades.

LUCKE: Well, it is like the military guys say "The battle plan lasts only until the first bullet is fired." So I mean, you make do with what you have and then you adjust accordingly. I guess that is certainly true with the situation with which we were all presented.

2003: Arrival in Baghdad with ORHA

Q: OK, sorry I didn't mean to steal the story. So when do you arrive in Baghdad?

LUCKE: Well, we spent six months in Kuwait. I mean, I spent six months in Kuwait. I arrived back in Kuwait in January and we ultimately went to Baghdad in stages beginning April 23, 2003. I arrived in Baghdad on April 23rd. By that time, the month of fighting was largely over, and it was declared permissive enough for civilians to come in, or ORHA to come in, and start to do our work. So our team started arriving on April 23 of 2003. Chris Milligan and I were together along with Ambassador Ward. We went in together, landing in the ruined Baghdad airport via a Oklahoma National Guard C-130. We made our way into what was Saddam's Palace, in the soon to be famous Green Zone. We were the very first civilian wave to arrive in Baghdad. I guess Jay Garner was there at the time. We had nothing. We arrived into an empty palace, with no lights, no running water, no place to eat or to sleep or wash or anything. Just completely nothing.

Little by little your drinking water is delivered and you get mattresses delivered. We had MREs delivered... that kind of thing. So it was very rudimentary. Digging away dirt and

dust and mud in the palace. To use the word "palace" was really pushing it. There was a mosaic of Saddam on the wall which we covered up quickly. There was a mad dash for a day or two for people in ORHA to claim office space and sleeping space. So that is what we did. We kind of marked our spot with those little yellow post it notes saying this is a USAID office. This is whatever office. The military was there as well as we, so it was another one of those "cluster you- know- what's". Every day it got a little bit better and we got a little more equipment, to the point that ever so slowly we became more and more able to work.

But it took a while. We had very poor communications. We had no way to really talk to each other. Then we got a few satellite phones that you could only use when you were outside. You could never receive calls unless you predetermined the time to be outside to receive one. So that is all we did for outside calls. I quickly predetermined a way for Chris and me to divide the time with the sat phone. Cell phones came later. After several weeks, I guess, I went back to Kuwait where the bulk of our people were so that they could maintain connectivity to Washington and key field assets and continue to develop the program plans. I continued to commute between Baghdad and Kuwait as we began moving waves of people to Baghdad as we started to have connectivity, electricity and all of that stuff, generators and whatnot. It was a long process. It was not the most orderly thing you have ever seen, but we got it done.

Q: So when you say you got it done, what you mean here is that eventually you had a headquarters that was capable of communicating with your field crews or contractors to begin the work of renovation or rebuilding the basic infrastructure that you had identified.

LUCKE: Right, yeah. We started to mobilize these guys little by little as well. During the days in Washington, our first infrastructure repair had been awarded to Bechtel. It was a billion dollar contract which at that time was the largest contract ever done in the history of USAID. So the Bechtel people were starting to arrive and we scrambled just to find enough floor space for rudimentary sleeping accommodations. Our offices were originally in the Palace and then the Convention Center. Eventually, the Bechtel people brought in trailers for offices and billets and the military brought in trailers and some of the senior people were assigned a trailer. I remember sharing a trailer in the early days that was placed right outside of the palace. So I was there with many of my other staff who were in Baghdad by that time, living off of MREs and slogging our way ahead.

By about mid-May we started hearing rumors that Jay was going to be replaced by this guy named Jerry Bremer. For about a week both Bremer and Jay Garner were in the palace together, each with his own entourage. It was really strange. Eventually Jay left. I regretted it not only because of personal reasons, but because Jay's view was "This is not our country, we need to do our job as quickly as possible and then leave." I totally agreed.

Transition from ORHA to Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) under Ambassador Bremer

For our part, we knew if we were going to do any kind of meaningful development or infrastructure repair work, we were going to be here for a while. But in terms of seeing Iraq turned back over to Iraqis as quickly as possible, that was something that Jay and I both thought was absolutely essential. We certainly didn't need to have the presence of a long term occupation force. I did not think that was appropriate at all. But with Bremer's arrival a different approach was taking shape.

For better or worse, Bremer came in and took over and his team began to flow in. A lot of this staffing plan was not visible to us. It was all happening back in the Pentagon. People were being identified and then plugged into various positions. Small numbers became larger and larger numbers of staffers, and a bureaucracy for a huge operation was established with offices, not just in Baghdad, but in Basra, Hillah, and Erbil, up in Kurdistan.

Q: Is this a good moment to describe the arrival of allies and their coordination with you?

LUCKE: Yeah, I mean, we were a bigger presence than the other donors and development teams, so, not to sound arrogant, but it was probably more important that they coordinated with us than we coordinated with them, but we did. We had to coordinate with everybody. So we coordinated first with the British and certainly all of the international community reps. The UN was particularly important in terms of, for example, the World Food Program, WHO, UNHCR and UNDP and all of those organizations that could meet immediate health, housing, and food needs. We met with just about everybody who had a growing presence there: the Australians, the Spanish, Japanese, particularly the British. We needed to do this. We needed to show that this wasn't just an American show; it was an international operation. We were part of it. We were a big part of it, but we came to respect and appreciate that all the many different players were contributing.

Importance of Bechtel and Iraqi Subcontractors in Reconstruction

Q: All right. So Bechtel arrived. It is beginning to scope out what it is going to need to do. How do things proceed from there?

LUCKE: Bechtel was always the biggest weapon in our arsenal because of the job they were hired to do, the number of people they had, the amount of money in the contract and so forth. One of the first priorities we agreed was to fix the schools so that the kids could go back to school when the school year started, whenever that was, August or September. Here it was May. Repairing schools was not the kind of thing that Bechtel normally did; rather building plants, refineries and that kind of stuff. But the Bechtel people were great, they were flexible while following the terms of their contract. They hired people and Iraqi subcontractors to rebuild schools. They did exactly what they said they were going to do when they were hired. We really wanted and needed them to hire as many Iraqis as possible Hire as many Iraqi subcontractors as they could and put people back to work. Get them employed in the economy. Give these Iraqi contractors the kinds of contracts

they probably never would have had under Saddam and do the work. They were capable people, were clever and worked hard.

My admiration for Iraqis basically as a society is pretty high because they worked hard and did their own work--they didn't bring in legions of workers from South Asia like some countries in the region. They had somehow kept the power plants running and sometimes I think they often did it with bailing wire and duct tape. Most often they did a really good job. Anyway we got the schools fixed. They were just in terrible shape and in some cases, had been where weapons were stored and God knows what else was in there. A good number of these were fixed under Bechtel's leadership and a lot of Iraqi sub-contractors got it done.

Restoring Electricity

The next thing we focused on was the power sector. This was a long and complicated story, so to make it brief and short, Saddam had basically appropriated or stolen power from the regions like from the north where the Kurds were, and from the south, where the Shi'a were. For example, he stole electricity from the heavily Shi'a area in Basra -- that area generated a lot of that power for Baghdad. So, that was not sustainable because the regions needed power as well. That, in addition to the fact that the power grid itself was so fragile -- it was held together with duct tape and chewing gum -- was the challenge. The number of outages multiplied. One outage would lead to another, and then you would find that part of the reason was that the equipment of one substation constructed by one European country was not compatible with another substation constructed by a different country. Spare parts were hard to find. Things literally took a year to repair. The oil- powered Dora plant that provided a lot of electricity for Baghdad was very problematic. So everybody was looking at that. It wasn't just Bechtel, we had lots of folks including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers looking at Dora to get the power up and running. And then other parts of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) by this time were trying to get the oil production up, not only to power the electricity grid, but to sell for foreign exchange to apply toward other domestic needs. There were a thousand things going on at once.

But Bechtel was doing the job. Good people. From my point of view they were really heroic. I can't count how many times I saw them in their protective gear getting into those thin shelled vehicles and going outside the wire, outside the Green Zone, to work on projects.

One problem was that with as many NGOs as we had working with us, we rarely saw the press cover their successes. For example, Iraqi municipal governance councils did get underway and had credibility on the community level. They helped in terms of identifying needs and assisting in community development programs including micro finance programs. This underlines an important point I should mention. With all this activity, there might have been thousands of small successes in our reconstruction work, but none of these successes, or at least very few, appeared in the press. You heard the bad news but you never heard the good news. And most of the credit has to go to all those

people working on the ground, the American contractors, the other donor personnel, and especially the Iraqis who worked outside the protective barriers, sometimes while bullets were flying. We became more and more reliant on the Iraqis to provide the workers and skills, especially when the army was abolished and the resistance escalated. In my view, they did a heck of a job.

Q: Was most of the power generation oil-driven, or could you begin to get non-oil based electricity, to take some of the burden off the oil sector.

LUCKE: Yeah, it was mostly fossil fuels including heavy fuel oil from the oil fields. There was some hydro up in Kurdistan and near Mosul, but it was a small percentage, I think.

Q: And did you see competition among the constituent ethnic groups of Iraq competing for who would get the oil and for what purposes?

LUCKE: No, none of that was going on to my knowledge. We were all completely focused on trying to get power up and running in Baghdad because that is where the need was the greatest. That is where the instability was the greatest. There were a lot of other units-- smaller plants in the periphery of the country and others that were actually working. They weren't damaged by attacks. They just needed to be repaired and maintained, not rebuilt from scratch.

Q: And were most of the Iraqis that you hired as civilian engineers knowledgeable about how the power sector worked, or did you have to rely on Iraqi military people?

LUCKE: I am not aware of any military, or ex-military, folks we hired. There were a number of engineers we worked with who had been, or were, employees of the Ministry of Electricity. They were government employees. They were a pretty dedicated, hardworking group, to my mind. The ones I came into contact with the most were the ones working at Dora power plant where much of the generation equipment was not working at all. The equipment was originally built by Siemens back in like the 60's or 70's. We finally did get a third generation plant up and running at Dora but it took a while to achieve.

Q: OK, So looking back, how long did it take you to achieve the goal that you had for the power sector.

LUCKE: Part of the answer is it got a little better every week. There would be a major failure and it would look terrible, like you had accomplished nothing, and had to start all over again. But I would say, a rough estimate after three months, it was better than it had been, and probably after six months, it was more or less functional. Eventually something like a national grid was re-established even though there were still weaknesses in it. I am telling you, that was not a sign of anybody's incompetence--it was a sign of just how broken and poorly maintained the system was and how long it takes to fix something like that. Just as importantly, it also signaled that in the future, Iraq was going to require many

new state-of-the-art generation facilities and this required time, planning, technology and financing. You don't just turn on a power plant like that. It takes a long time--years, if you have the money. I reiterate, the reconstruction task was not for the most part to repair war damage---telecommunications being the main exception--the infrastructure had degraded due to the utter neglect by the former Saddam regime and lack of maintenance.

Water, Electricity, Currency, Education, and more -- Everything at Once

Q: What was the next major issue?

LUCKE: Well, there was water conveyance, wastewater treatment and sewage treatment. There was no sewage treatment in Baghdad when we got there. Absolutely none. It went straight into the river. So we were working on rehabilitating all of these plants, or most of them anyway. But remember, these major infrastructure activities were not going on one at a time. Everything was happening simultaneously. We were doing the education stuff with curriculum and text book development as well as repairing the Finance Ministry so that we could physically replace all of the currency, and all that was going while we worked on the water issues. The currency replacement was one of the amazing accomplishments that you neither read nor heard about. With everybody working together -- USAID, Treasury, DOD, and the military on the ground -- we were able to replace every dinar in the system. The new money went out, the old money was removed, and all of it accounted for. And, most importantly, no one was killed or injured in the process. That was an impressive accomplishment but you will never hear a word about it.

Q: With new currency did that mean that there was enough of a financial infrastructure that people could actually go to almost a neighborhood bank and exchange old dinars for new?

LUCKE: I think so. I don't know exactly how that worked but basically there was a system in place to exchange the money from the banks themselves with a new supply. People could turn in their money to the banks and exchange for the new notes. There was a system and it worked.

Q: As all of this is happening how are you managing the ramp-up in U.S. personnel?
LUCKE: As I said, we were bringing people in waves into Baghdad. The immediate problem was to find places to work and sleep. I must have moved quarters five or six times in the first few months and, by way of saying that, if you don't have that stability of basic living and work quarters, you really can't get much done. We started off having just a few offices for our entire operation in the palace, but that was clearly going to be insufficient for our entire operation. Our contractors really were on their own in terms of their own quarters. This was part of their contracts, and they had their own people working to figure that out. Bechtel was just right down the road from us anyway, so they were taking care of their own personnel. As I said, it got a little better every day, or at least every week anyway.

We -- the USAID mission --we were the first ones to hire Iraqi FSNs to help with our operations. We had actually moved into the Convention Center, which is right across the street from the Al Rasheed Hotel. It is separate from the Palace but, of course, still in the Green Zone. It is probably about a five or ten minute drive between the Convention Center and the Palace, so I spent a lot of time going back and forth. We would have early morning staff meetings, and I mean early. Our first meeting with Bremer would start off at six in the morning, which was later moved back to seven. Most of us were housed at the hotel right across the street from the Convention Center which was very convenient for us--- until it was rocketed one morning. Then that all changed. Eventually we built our own residences nearer the Palace. Office wise, USAID shared space in the Convention Center with the Army Corps of Engineers, who were our supervisory engineers for the Bechtel contract. So that co-location worked for all of us.

Q: Did you solve the problem of being able to communicate in real time with all of the people in the field. The Bechtel people, the military, local employees, and so on?

LUCKE: That was a huge issue. Without good communications, we were unable to function. Little by little, we went from having a few sat phones to having a cellphone tower and to being able to communicate with everyone in the Green Zone. We had cell phone first for key personnel and then for everybody Eventually, we even got email up and running and that marked the moment we were pretty able to function like a regular office. On my cell phone, I could call internationally Some, but not all my colleagues were hooked up so you could call the States---our area code was actually a suburban New York area code. But even with this much connectivity, we didn't always know everything that was going on, especially in the area of security. For example, when we learned that some of military or police action was going on, and we couldn't get enough information where we were, I would pull out cellphone, call my wife in Texas, and say, "Turn on the television and tell me what's going on." As she watched and reported, I was able to pass the information to the security people on the ground in my area. After a while we got better. We had our own security system set up so that we were much better advised and things were really working a whole lot better. It was a rough slog to get there but we got there.

Q: Now as this is all going on, did the inter-agency groups that needed to speak to each other in Washington knit together and take action based on the needs you gave them?

Disputes Over Where and How Much Money to Spend

LUCKE: I didn't have perfect visibility on that because of being in the field. My deputy, Earl Gast, was basically in charge of all of the administrative stuff, sort of like the classic DCM would be in an embassy. Chris was my guy who handled the CPA liaison and that was like a full time job because Chris had some 50 people with whom to interact. He was superman to be able to do that. We spent a lot of time on the care and feeding of Ambassador Bremer and his staff. It was a continual challenge because a lot of people did not know anything at all about USAID and some who did didn't seem to care much for us. A lot of them did not seem to know the overall interlocking 3-Ds: Diplomacy,

Development and Defense -- the three legged stool that all the mission elements took as the foundation of our activities. At times, these internal challenges reminded me of the old Pogo cartoon, "We have met the enemy and he is us."

Q: Right.

LUCKE: There were times when we were at each other's throats, spending too much time arguing over money, arguing over allocation of where money would go. A continual problem was Ambassador Bremer saying things like, "I have a letter from the President saying I can do, basically approve, whatever I want to approve." We explained that we were all subject to federal procurement regulations and we were not going to break the law, by the way. We had contracts in place and grants in place and huge mechanisms. We had been working on this for eight or nine months so, it is like the fact that you just can't stop a super tanker on a dime and turn it around. We had a lot of those challenges. Also there was this committee on programming local currency for local municipal projects. When you are dealing with cash, USAID has accounting requirements, etc., but other agencies just wanted to get the money to projects or individuals as quickly as possible. It was a huge morass of competing interests on this committee, and some of the members either did not know anything about USAID, what we did or how we worked, or in the case of some key officials, some place early in their careers they had some kind of negative experience with AID and they just didn't like us very much. Chris handled this committee, but I also spent a lot of time and I probably shouldn't mention names so I won't, but I spent a lot of time basically trying to convince people that we were all on the same side and we're here to make things better. We are not here to complicate things. We can be the best tool you have ever seen in your tool box. Just let us do our job.

Q: Without naming names, what would be the kind of problems that you would run into with other agencies?

LUCKE: It was really the leadership, not other agencies.

Q: Oh I see.

LUCKE: And people in those agencies didn't really understand the way procurement worked. You just kind of had to understand how to plan a project, how you make a contract, with competing bids, etc. You awarded it. You mobilize and you don't just, on a whim, stop that kind of action and momentum, change your mind and do whatever you want. We had to follow rules. If you ask the Iraq IG, Stuart Bowen, if you ask him about accountability with spent monies, it is clear that USAID was one of the stellar agencies in that regard. We had our system in place and we did this stuff all over the world, albeit we never did it to the extent that we had to do it in Iraq.

But there were disagreements. for example, about Bechtel being accused by leadership of some alleged failing so we would bring the COP to meetings with CPA leadership to explain in detail what was really going on and how on most occasions and instances, they were really doing a heck of a job. There was a disagreement about one of our programs, I

don't recall the exact issue, but one person in the CPA leadership said "I am going to take all of that project money away from you right now and we are going to distribute it in the streets of Hillah." And this would amount to screaming fits from that source and therefore, it felt pretty ugly. I had this large group of about ten or so former USAID Mission Directors who worked in various places in the CPA. Some worked directly for the CPA, but most of them were working on USAID contracts as senior people. We almost had a mass resignation one day because they were all tired of getting screamed at and being threatened with the reallocation of all their project funds. I had to go into guidance counselor or spiritual healer/psychiatrist mode to get people to calm down. Chris Milligan spent a lot of time doing this as well and, as I always told him "God will reward you…" Chris had the patience and creative perseverance that surpassed my own. He saved us every day and I will always be grateful.

Q: From the USAID point of view, I can totally understand the fear that contracting officers have if they see money intended for a particular contract suddenly moved to do something else. A contracting officer could go to jail for that.

LUCKE: That is what we kept saying. We said, "Look, for God's sakes, you have got to understand we are all bound by the law. The rules we follow are also part of the law. I told these people in question that I am not going to go to jail for this and I am not going to let any of my people go to jail for this. You have to do the right thing. So we had a lot of conflicts on that and it was not agreeable and not fun. That is why I ultimately decided not to write a book about this. I had written a book about one of my other countries but I decided not to write a book about the Iraq experience because I simply did not want to relive this kind of conflict again. Repeat the Pogo quote: "I have seen the enemy and he are us."

Q: Not to dwell too long on this issue, but as you know, there were some allegations of mishandling of money, of funds disappearing without proper accounting. Did that affect AID?

Now, in the reviews, at points there were allegations of lack of control over spending or use of cash. This was funding that went through other sources, not AID, because we had our auditors with us and certainly our contract experts with us. So to the extent that these allegations were made, I think that had more to do with the fact that the CPA and DOD did not have their auditors with them or their contracting officers or procurement people in the field, as we did. They had to rely on people back in the Pentagon. We had offices not just in Baghdad, but in Basra too. So that served us well. Just as an interesting footnote, the head of our office in Basra would eventually become the director of USAID/Baghdad several years later. He was actually raised in Basra as a child of Christian missionaries. He spoke the local dialect and everything. We also had an office in Kurdistan as well. So we were far flung with reps all over the country.

Q: The other aspect of reconstruction is, as you begin working more and more with Iraqis, were they giving you recommendations that were helpful for you, that weren't just self-serving?

LUCKE: Yes, the whole point and to underline it was that everything should be turned over to the Iraqis as quickly as possible. It would make it a more sustainable program if they would lead and more importantly if they would finance it with their own resources. So I think we were able to do that. We saw both men and women who were empowered in the municipal councils do amazing work and that gave us the confidence to delegate much decision making to them. They weren't used to having the authority to do it. But once unshackled, we saw what incredible potential these people had. It was the same at the university. They were taking the lead in reopening the universities. Certainly, we had helped with equipment and curriculum reform and computers and whatever books they needed, but these guys were taking the ball and running with it because they could. There are plenty of stories that I am just not aware of because I ended up leaving in the middle of a lot of changes and progress. How people were trained to do power maintenance and repair and so forth. So, yes, there were a thousand stories about sustainability and passing responsibility back to the Iraqis where it belonged. I think it is a story of which we can be rightfully pretty proud.

Public Affairs and VIP Visitors

Q: Given the number of small but important good news stories, was the public affairs arm of the State Department helpful in getting that out, or did USAID have its own strategic communications effort?

LUCKE: The first thing to realize is that there was no Embassy then. We were CPA, the Coalition Provisional Authority after General Garner left and Ambassador Bremer arrived. So, we had no typical State Department functions that might come from an embassy. But basically, yes. The CPA had a public diplomacy part, and we at USAID also had public diplomacy people. We had a large, robust staff whose job it was to get the stories out. We had daily reports and weekly reports and all kinds of reports. We did our best to get everything out. If I had a reliable internet connection, I would have sent the reports to my network of friends, family, and colleagues as well. A lot of my family, in particular, would write to me that they didn't hear any of this stuff in the media. All the positive stories of achievements and progress were not getting out. I gave interviews all the time. I gave interviews in French, Spanish and English and I was asked to do this media affair put on by the White House, called "Ask the White House". It all went on line... so we did that. All of our staff were constantly being interviewed. We did what we could do. We put it out there, but whether any regular person walking down the street in Des Moines knew about what we were actually accomplishing, I would say probably not. I mean, almost surely not. I don't know who the brains of the overall public diplomacy operation was, but we were putting out stories full blast, and not to convince anyone, but just to say what we were doing -- which, in and of itself, was positive. I can't really account for how well it got out, but I suspect I know the answer.

Q: On a similar point, selling the successes, did you start getting congressional or staff delegations that wanted to see the ground truth of the operations.

LUCKE: I guess several months after our arrival in Baghdad, we started getting CODELS and STAFFDELS and delegations from other countries who we had to brief. Sometimes we had to pull the country clearances because of security concerns on the ground. I did not endear myself to my Washington boss by pulling her country clearance because of a CPA decision that for a time there were no more country clearances due to security concerns. For example, the road between the Green Zone and the airport was becoming more and more problematic This kind of clearance denial created problems for us back in Washington, but those problems are nothing in comparison to what might happen if someone got injured or killed. So even though we erred on the side of caution, there were still numerous visits. A lot of them wanted to see what we were doing; some wanted to see what the military was doing, or other parts of CPA, so we didn't give them the full run through like we did in other places where I've served. One way to make up for this was our use of videoconferencing with lots of people back in Washington who included senators, House members, and their staffs. Given the time difference, we spent a lot of late nights giving stories and situational reports to these VIPs. It was all part of the job.

Q: Do you think that the visits or teleconferences gave you any additional capital or credibility with congress? Or did you even need it?

LUCKE: It certainly didn't hurt. I think at the end of the day we were all smart enough to know that it is better for Congress to understand and approve of what you are doing than the contrary. So we had a couple of visitors who just didn't seem all that interested, but they were offset with others who were very clued in. The main person I spoke with several times was on the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee that handled USAID matters, Jim Kolbe (R-Arizona). He was one representative we always tried to be sure received all the information he needed.

Q: Looking back on the development of the specific programs, what lessons can you draw for ramping up development programs from zero and doing several programs in parallel.

LUCKE: Once again "proper planning prevents poor performance". If we had not done the quality planning on contracts that allowed these things to be competed and awarded we would not have had a chance at successful implementation. That is number one. Number two would be to get yourself a smart, caring, hardworking, competent staff. Three, understand this is not about us, it is about Iraq and therefore the essential role of participation and leadership by Iraqis was absolutely essential. Four, you have to sometimes get confronted with impossible bureaucratic challenges like those CPA presented to us. You have got to just do the best you can and have designated people like my designated American hero Chris Milligan to take care of some of the uglier aspects of our dealings with CPA. Keep communications with Washington flowing so they have a chance to support you back there. To the extent you possibly can, convince your colleagues outside of USAID, like DOD -- both uniform and civilian -- as well as the thousand other players we had there, to say that USAID people could be trusted, knew what we were doing and were able to get results of which we could all be proud.

Q: OK, sure I definitely get it. And you did not see any sort of negative change in congressional support and so on during the time you were there?

LUCKE: No not really. Again I did not have visibility on the whole picture . What was going on in Washington was mainly handled by our people in Washington. What we had to deal with was coming out the other end in Iraq. Managing our funds, budgets and personnel while being able to keep our projects going and trying to figure out what needed to be done and how things should sometimes be adjusted, was the challenge. For example, our $1.0 billion infrastructure project with Bechtel was re-competed after a year or so and it ended up with Bechtel awarded the new project with another billion added to the contract. So a new contract was put into place. That's all I have to say about that.

Q: So competition among the ethnic groups for more or better or different kinds of development wasn't a particular problem at the time you were there.

LUCKE: You know, we did hear some griping for example when we visited Kurdistan with my boss Andrew Natsios on a couple of occasions. The Kurds initially complained that they were getting the short end of the deal as far as development financing went. They told us that their Peshmerga troops had been engaged in the conflict against Saddam and they weren't seeing much of a return on their investment. We explained that funds are not unlimited and we had to focus first on putting out the fires where the fires were. For the most part, that was not Kurdistan. We assured them of that and while we understood the Kurds had problems, the problems in Kurdistan were not as severe as those in other parts of the country. After a while, they grudgingly accepted that fact, especially after they got their own oil production underway and began exporting it.

Q: So the subsequent difficulties that arose among the different communities was not immediately evident when you were there at the beginning.

LUCKE: Much less than you might think. I can't tell you how many times the Iraqis on our staff said we don't care about that Sunni vs Shi'a stuff. You guys make too much of that. We are just Iraqis, okay. That was true for at least our employees, and it is probably true as well for the educated parts of the country and less true in the regions and so forth. I think today it is probably more, but people understand the problems in Iraq are more of a tribal and clan issue than an ethnic or religious feud.

Q: Were there particular programs that you either abandoned or changed dramatically once you were on the ground?

LUCKE: We certainly adjusted some of our priorities in terms of repairs in infrastructure. For example, we thought there would be far more needs for repair of the port infrastructure at Umm Qasr because it was one of the areas first invaded during military operations. Instead, we learned that the Saddam regime's own mismanagement had allowed the port to become silted up to the point where it couldn't receive larger cargo vessels -- a potential disaster if we had to get lots of grain or other basic supplies in quickly in case of a humanitarian crisis--which did not happen. So we immediately turned

to Bechtel and they brought up a dredger from Dubai in order to remove silt from the inner port and docking areas. We did plenty of things like that on the fly, again because we had our procurement and accounting people with us to get the contracts in order quickly. I guess the story isn't so much abandoning projects that didn't work, but adjusting to the needs we didn't expect. That happened a lot.

Security of Personnel

A big problem in doing this was the security aspect. Any time we identified a new project that needed doing immediately, we had to budget for the security aspects of the project. Once the insurgency started, we were forced to spend a quarter of our budget on security and that had not been budgeted to that extent at the start. After the abolition of the army, security became a real issue and a costly one. Security concerns kept us increasingly limited as to where we could travel and work so we turned increasingly to our Iraqi staff and Iraqi contractors with our NGOs and grantees. You had to be very careful. USAID didn't have a dedicated guard force until three months into this thing. We ended up spending a heck of a lot of money on a security guard contract with an American company, Kroll, which provided us mostly British ex-SAS guys. We had to do it. That was the major adjustment I certainly recall.

Q: Did this expense have to come out of your budget because it was your personnel, or was there ever the possibility that the U.S. military would simply sort of adopt you as yet another piece of what it needed to do in terms of security there?

LUCKE: No, that is not the way it really worked. The military was there guarding the Green Zone and access to the Green Zone and all of that, and they certainly had a huge presence across the board. But their job was not providing the usual security for us as FSOs. You really had to take care of that outside the US military per se. Part of it had to do with I think different pots of money. Our money was appropriated for USAID. We were able to properly and correctly change terms of contracts to reflect security costs. We had to hire other security firms for that. There were various security outfits all throughout the Green Zone to provide security for the different contractors or different agencies. We had Kroll and other agencies used other companies like Triple Canopy, Blackwater and the like.

Q: At the time you were there, had the PRTs, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams, begun to fan out ,or was that really subsequent to your time?

LUCKE: For the most part it was subsequent. I did see the beginning of the structure for these regional development groups in the activities of our regional offices in Erbil, Hillah and Basra. But the actual PRTs came a little bit later after I left in February of 2004.

Q: I understand. moving ahead, did you know how long you would be there, how long your management tenure would be, and at what point did you begin thinking about turning it over to a successor?

Reflections on the Initial Reconstruction Stage

LUCKE: This was the largest economic development program or reconstruction program since the Marshall Plan so it was literally a huge deal that we were able to turn it into a relatively well-oiled machine, at least compared to what it looked like at the beginning. We were getting things done that were pretty impactful thanks to our Iraqi staff, number one, our hardworking contractors, number two and all the other actors we had in the mix. We were making progress in all of our sectors. And I could see that from where we started in Baghdad in April 2003 to the time I handed it over to my successor in February of 2004, that we had made significant progress---infrastructure, municipal and economic governance, education, health and so on. When I departed Baghdad, I had been in theatre for 16 months which was a record at the time. I admit I was exhausted but ultimately I came to be really satisfied with what we accomplished in a relatively short time in education, health, certainly the infrastructure repair, microfinance, and local economic governance---the firm KPMG was our contractor on the latter.. Microfinance sometimes gets lost in the midst of so much else going on, but we loaned out some $300 million in small loans, mostly to women entrepreneurs, and the repayment rate was about 99%. The staff that made that a success, by the way, were our Iraqi staff working for several key US NGOs. I suppose it was pretty amazing all that was accomplished. The evaluations bore this out.

For a successor, I would say that the ship had been launched and now you just need take the helm. So if you are doing it right, you don't start a series of one year projects and then start all over again. Our projects were multi-year, even up to five years if the need and the money was still there. There were continual challenges and issues that would come up requiring important decisions but my successor was going to be in a pretty good position about not having to re-launch much of anything. There were plenty of the normal issues: trying to deal with CPA; how to deal with local currency; and being agile enough to address the thousand things you face that are unexpected. But the program, at least for the successor, was launched. The successor probably had to be in the business of thinking about what came next, if anything. Iraq, because of its resources, well, we were confident that we could begin to pass much of the responsibilities back to Iraq and they would increasingly take the lead. That was really the goal we had all along.

I would also note that everyone had to work very hard. My team was always fighting mental and physical exhaustion. Also, you have to keep the security of your people in the forefront. The security issues for USAID personnel was handled by my deputy, Earl Gast, and he did a great job. We were relieved and proud that, despite the difficult security situation, we did not have anyone on our direct or extended staff injured or killed on our watch. This included FSNs and contractors.

Certainly from a management point of view, it was the largest challenge I had in my career. Unfortunately, the task was made much more difficult because of the infighting within CPA, but we got through it. I think I mentioned that I would have written a book about the Iraq experience as I did about my first post, Mali. I was perfectly capable of doing so but I decided I did not want to go through and relive some of the negative

things, even though there was plenty of positive that happened too. So, I will just leave it there.

Q: Speaking of books, are there any in particular that you would recommend for people who want to understand the Iraqi reconstruction efforts from a development point of view?

LUCKE: You know, I have to tell you I did read a couple of them but not all. There was one particularly ironic book written by a certain CPA leader that that listed CPAs accomplishments during his tenure in Iraq. Until I threw it down in disgust for good, I noted that many of the accomplishments cited in the book, as in the accomplishments this person was most proud of, were accomplishments achieved by USAID. The irony was of course that these accomplishments didn't seem to be considered worthy of much of anything by leadership while they were happening. Mostly from CPA we encountered something more like resistance and certainly not support. But when it came time for that person to write his book, many if not most of the cited accomplishments were those of USAID. Go figure.

Q: Are there any other parting thoughts that you have about it for those in similar situations of conflict to post-conflict development?

LUCKE: I think USAID did learn lessons from the Iraq experience in terms of interacting with the military that could be applied anywhere. The same would be true for the military. For example, in the emergency relief for Haiti right after the earthquake in 2010 those of us with significant experience in civilian-military collaboration in complex situations like Iraq, understood the important respective roles of civilian and DOD actors and that these were both interdependent and complementary. The military can do some things in development, but they are not as good as we. We certainly can't do what the military does or go where the military goes, no way, of course. After Iraq, policies changed, training on civ/mil roles was carried out and there was subsequently a much better understanding of how to respond to complex emergencies like Iraq and how to translate this into action on the ground. We learned the hard way in Iraq. It became easier in subsequent whole-of-government situations.

Q: From here you move on to become U.S. Ambassador to Swaziland. How did that happen?

Becoming a Nominee for Ambassador

At that time, it was normal practice in the Foreign Service that one USAID senior officer would be nominated for an Ambassadorship. It just so happened that there were no USAID officers serving as Ambassador as I finished my assignment in Iraq in 2004. The personnel office gears were grinding and my name was eventually put into the mix. I wasn't the only USAID person being considered but I was happy about the possibility and was enthusiastic about the country in question.

To take a step back, the actual process started while I was on R&R from Iraq. My wife joined me and we went to Abu Dhabi en route to where we were ultimately going on a short vacation. It was great to get out of Baghdad. We stopped briefly in Abu Dhabi and stayed with my friend who was the U.S. Ambassador to the UAE at the time. She was the first Arab-American woman to become a U.S. Ambassador, and we were all proud of her and liked her husband as well. So, my wife and I were staying at her residence. The Ambassador asked me, "Well what are you going to do next?" I said I had no idea and that I was really just trying to just concentrate on my current job. She said, "Well why don't you try to become an Ambassador." I thought about it and my wife said, "Why not?"

It so happened that the Administrator of USAID called me my first week back in Baghdad and he told me that coincidentally it was time for us to give State a nomination for a USAID person to be Ambassador. The position they were looking at was in Swaziland. He asked if I was interested and I replied positively. That got the ball rolling. Once I gave Andrew the green light, it went from there. I turned in a ton of paperwork and submitted a huge binder of documents--it must have been six inches thick--and got interviewed by telephone by the White House and followed the normal process from there. That is how it took place.

Q: Then of course you go on to confirmation in the Senate. That went smoothly?

LUCKE: Yes, absolutely. I left Baghdad in February of 2004. I had been there for most of the first quarter of 2004. I went back to USAID with the title of Deputy Assistant Administrator for Iraq, like a Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) in State. But that was really a temporary title because I was soon caught up in the process of preparing for the Hill hearings, meeting various people around town in DC, studying and so forth in connection with the nomination. The whole process went pretty much according to plan. You hear horror stories about nominations getting delayed and delayed and all that. When I had my hearing on the Hill I had the great honor of having both senators from Texas, Senators Cornyn and Hutchison come and they introduced me. I knew them somewhat anyway which was very helpful but it was very nice and generous of them.

I had my hearing with two other Ambassadors-Designate. One went to Gambia and one went to Cameroon. It went very well with Senators Feingold and others asking me questions. I was in fact enthusiastic about going to Swaziland. People would say "Why would you want to go there?" The reason was the challenges there as you know there were certain diplomatic things we had to deal with but of list of challenges, they were principally developmental rather than diplomatic. I was the kind of the perfect guy for that so I thought it was a great fit. I loved almost every minute of it. It was a great honor and a great job. As they say, it is a good gig if you can get it. I got through smoothly up on the Hill with some good questions on HIV/AIDS from Senator Feingold from Wisconsin.

It was ironic that at the same time I was completing my process for Ambassador, my sister-in-law was also completing hers for the post as Ambassador to Switzerland. So

there were two people from the same family, at least by marriage, going to two very different countries whose names differ by only a few letters. And we were both political appointees. As I told you earlier, I had previously resigned from the Foreign Service, so this appointment for me was actually by definition classified as a political appointee.

Q: Oh interesting. I didn't remember that. Now were you also allowed to choose your DCM or how did that work?

LUCKE: No, I was not. I was more or less told that this is who I was getting and that was that. I imagine that if I had dug a little deeper I might have tried to get my own person. But I felt like, ultimately, it was good to have somebody who was a State insider. She had done that before in another African country so she knew all the inner workings. I thought that was probably a real good thing. It worked out fine.

Q: OK, So, you and your wife are going, did any of the rest of your family accompany?

LUCKE: Yes, our 15 year old son actually went as well. He had finished 9th grade and was going into 10th grade. We decided to give it a try because there was an international school there… where Nelson Mandela's children had attended. We all preferred that to a South African boarding school. So, we showed up and we went to work, and my son went to school. The school turned out to be pretty much a disaster, and my son did not last very long; we had to send him back home. We just couldn't make the international IB program mesh with our own US bound college curriculum. And he was eager to return to his old school.

Q: Did he go back to a public school in Texas or did you send him to a private school or how did that work.

LUCKE: We sent him back to his private Episcopal school in Texas where we knew the principal and some of the teachers so it was a great fit. Our son lived with his grandparents, my wife's parents in Austin, when he got back, so it worked out well.

Arrival in Swaziland: Goals and Resources

Q: All right, you get to Swaziland and what are your basic instructions. What were the goals you had to accomplish?

LUCKE: Primarily, I was very interested in evaluating how the HIV/AIDS programs were being presented and the whole conceptual basis of these programs, so as to ensure that what we were doing was coherent, made sense, and to see what could be improved. When financing appears for a priority like HIV/AIDS, there is a tendency for a proliferation of small activities in areas of urgent need. So, getting a grasp on that was my first priority. We were in the process of hiring a US HIV/AIDS expert and fortunately we ended up getting a very highly skilled HIV/AIDS person who became a very key advisor to the head of the Swazi AIDS' office staff. So, that was the main priority.

Also, as I was leaving Washington for post, the Assistant Secretary for Africa whispered in my ear, "We didn't want to telegraph this to our previous State ambassador, but you understand these things better. We have an old, terminated USAID project whose funds were still unspent. If you can come up with a good plan for these funds then you can use them." I thought that was wonderful. Ten million dollars out of nowhere in a place like Swaziland is a big deal. So, we started working on this program that ended up turning it into a lot more than ten million dollars. That was a great program. I had a whole range of responsibilities trying to figure out what we had to work with, what was the potential for doing additional valuable stuff, what were the contracts we had in place, and how we could do better with what we had. It was a lot of fun professionally doing that. We had more resources at the end than I ever thought possible

Q: It's interesting that some countries that receive development assistance from the U.S. get it in earmarked or specially designed funds to address a particular issue. Besides the ten million did you have other designated sources of funds?

LUCKE: Yes. Very early on, I started compiling an exact list of all of these little pots of money and exactly where this money was coming from and its purpose. I had a one-page piece of paper with all of that information that I continually updated and carried around. We had money certainly we had significant money from State and that was increased over time. We had PEPFAR money as well as USAID regional program funds for trade/investment that were supported out of either Pretoria or our regional office in Botswana. We ended up using a lot of the Botswana-based USAID support for investment promotion work, an investment road map and so forth that I could tell you about. We even had money from the International Labor Organization. So it was a whole array of USG and other sources but the total amount was well in excess of any other donor to Swaziland.

By the end of my tenure in Swaziland, we had gone from $20 million to almost $100 million which, in a small country like Swaziland, was huge.. Part of that mainly had to do with increases in PEPFAR funding and the fact that we used the inherited $10 million through an authority called the DCA, Development Credit Authority, whereby we actually leveraged that $10 million into a sum exceeding far in excess of the $10 million. The project had to do with agricultural and small enterprise development in Swaziland through an outfit called TechnoServe and it was a success. It was exciting watching the program become larger and more coherent because we ended up consolidating the smaller AIDS projects into more coherent and sustainable larger programs. Fortunately, I had two really excellent expatriate staff people who handled most of that.

Q: I do want to get into the programs and everything, but before that, I wanted to check on a fact. As I understand it, earlier, within the last 20 years, USAID had closed its mission and continued any projects via Southern Africa regional offices?

LUCKE: Yes, the USAID bilateral mission had closed in Swaziland. The old Mission building was in sight from my office window. It would guess it closed five or six years before I got there and all of the programs that remained were, as I say, handled out of the

two major offices in the region--Pretoria and Gaborone-- or actually handled out of USAID/Washington. We had funds and technical support coming in from several sources. We also received $6 million from USAID for malaria prevention. There was another program on international justice and several others.

Q: And did Swaziland still have Peace Corps?

LUCKE: Yes, we had a very robust Peace Corps. Led by a woman who was originally from South Africa. She was great. She ended up getting replaced by someone else who was far less effective, but we had about as many as 90 volunteers, so that was a plus. I loved the Peace Corps and spent all my extra time, when I had any, on visiting volunteers in the field. They were excellent people and we had a few "super volunteers" as they say. I knew these young people would be internationally and Africa-minded for life. That's why I loved the Peace Corps.

HIV/AIDS: Prevention and Treatment

Q: So we have set the scene of your assets, what you had to work with. Let's go ahead and look into the projects and programs that you oversaw.

LUCKE: The HIV/AIDS prevention program was focused on ending/preventing mother to child transmission, HIV awareness, procurement of contraceptive, testing and eventually, on male circumcision. We also supported an HIV/AIDS clinic that was funded by Bristol Myers Squibb. I think by the time I left they had ten American physicians there. It started out small, a clinic built while I was there. We dealt a lot with the corporate officers of Bristol Myers Squibb, including the local representative. They were very impressive. The local Swazi HIV agency was led by a capable white Swazi, for whatever that is worth. He was really professional and effective. The whole HIV/AIDS epidemic was tremendously important to us and we all spent a lot of time on it. After all, Swaziland had the highest HIV/AIDS rate in the world. We received great support from our local US PEPFAR rep and close liaison and assistance from the regional office in Jo'burg. And from Washington as well. That was our top priority.

For the trade-related matters, we used the Regional Trade Hub based in Botswana. They provided quality technical assistance to the Swazi export promotion agency, something I knew a lot about from my past tours in Latin America, in Bolivia and Costa Rica. We brought in some of the same world class experts we had used in those countries to help them reform and improve the function there. We also brought in experts to help the Swazis develop an "investment road map" which was basically a guide for foreign investors to be able to identify opportunities for investment and overcome some of the legal and organizational impediments. We were very happy how that came out.

Agriculture and Rural Development

For the rural areas, it wasn't really rural development, it was more small enterprise starts. We used the $10 million to create a Swaziland Enterprise and Economic program called

SWEEP. Then there were the other smaller programs as well. As I said before, for a country without a bilateral USAID mission, we had a lot of substantial development activities going on.

Q: For the agricultural development aspects what were you looking to do? Was it alternative crops or was it more farm to market development?

LUCKE: No, we really didn't do that directly per se. The agriculture part was indirect through the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act. (See url: https://agoa.info/about-agoa.html for a short history of the AGOA.) That was basically to identify products, mostly textiles, but also there was an agricultural component for products that could be exported to the U.S. We calculated we helped create some 30,000 jobs just in the textile industry alone through the AGOA. Actually, after I departed Swaziland, the country was declared ineligible for that AGOA program for various reasons I will not comment on. But it was going on full force while I was there and we took full advantage of it in trying to promote economic growth and employment generation.

Q: How would you rate the involvement of the FSNs in your programs?

LUCKE: We hired a Foreign Service Officer spouse originally from the Ivory Coast to administer the Ambassador's Self-Help Fund. But in general we had good Swazi FSNs who were always a source of knowledge and good advice. We had a great Swazi economist for example. I had a junior FSO who was a combination political/economic and consular officer and she did a great job. She would take my USAID prose about meetings and events and somehow translate it into acceptable State Department language in our reporting cables. God bless her.

I had great access to the King and accumulated a lot of stories about my interactions with him. Actually, he and I got along very fine based on what happened in my credential ceremony with him. We had a really great working relationship based on a number of approaches--logic, humor, Biblical allegories, Texas humor, Southern humor and a lot of serious intent especially when it came to talking about HIV/AIDS and Swaziland's response to it.

Using Humor Effectively: The Ambassador's Credentialing Ceremony

Q: Oh wait a minute. So what happened at your credentialing ceremony? We can't leave a story like that behind.

LUCKE: Well, before I went there, I went to FSI and said, "Look I have never been to Swaziland where I don't speak the language (SiSwati is part of the Nguni group of Bantu languages). In Swaziland, the business language is English but the spoken language is SiSwati. I asked FSI, "Do you have anybody who can teach SiSwati?" So, God bless FSI, they dug up a SiSwati teacher and I took lessons for a month.

So now we're at the outdoor part of my credential ceremony--they had a band that played the Star Spangled Banner and then I inspected the troops with the King. The King was nice and we went in and I presented my credentials, made my speech and all that. Then we proceeded to a room next door and it started very awkwardly with all of the Swazis sitting near the king on one side of the room and the Americans sitting along the other wall facing the Swazis. I sat down in the indicated chair beside the King. I had already made my formal remarks in the other room previously so now our two groups were lined up on chairs on each wall basically staring at each other. The Swazis were dressed in their traditional costumes. It was the classic kind of thing that could have been tense and awkward.

Anyway, I decided to tell the King that I had studied SiSwati prior to arriving and I could do all of the clicks in the SiSwati language. So he said, "Let me hear." So I went through the clicks and there are like four different varieties of clicks. He and the rest of Swazis almost fell off their chairs laughing. So the event went from being really up tight to roaring laughter on all sides. Maybe this wasn't normal diplomacy practice but I always found humor to be a great tool to use professionally and in life. We were all laughing and turned it from stiffness to an unexpected hilarious moment that resulted in a nice kind of bonding experience. Some of the things the King did and wouldn't do over the time were disappointing to me and not always what I hoped. My tenure there was a little exasperating on some issues, but we always got along well because of that first experience. I always had access to him, thankfully. He was really nice to my wife and my son. It was a nice experience that broke the ice. I never had a problem with access to the King.

Q: That is a really charming story. If you can use humor to defuse a very formal, tense situation, it definitely puts you in good stead with your counterparts.

LUCKE: It was nice to get off to a positive start and establish warm relations with the Royals in the palace. I had dealt with a very different set of Royals in Jordan, of course. At the end of the day, I loved the work and wanted to be effective in my job. That experience wasn't just to be jovial or a nice guy. I wanted to have access too, so it worked out great.

More on HIV/AIDS Programs

Q: Now with the AIDS program, was part of the education program to eliminate the stigma? Did it work?

LUCKE: Before you get to stigma, the main thing is for people to know they their status. We needed them to not be stigmatized or be afraid of knowing their status, especially when Swaziland had the highest HIV prevalence rate in the world. So the first thing we had to overcome was for people to agree to get tested and know their status. Once you knew your status and what caused it and then to understand that there were treatment options available. This is the time when antiretrovirals were becoming increasingly available and distributed, so we had this additional support option. (For a brief

description of anti-retrovirals and how they work go to this hyperlink NRTIs). HIV finally was not a death sentence anymore. You could be treated and lead a relatively normal life. The other thing we tried to emphasize was the importance of faithfulness to one's partner because, unfortunately, there was a long tradition in Swaziland of anything but being faithful to one's partner. Too many people had multiple partners all over the place and that was the reason the prevalence rate was so high. The other thing we started to push at the time was the importance of male circumcision in reducing HIV transmission. We had a great deal of assistance in this effort from Dr. Daniel Halperin, a professor at the public health school at the University of North Carolina--Chapel Hill. He was in the forefront of campaigns to promote an understanding that male circumcision was an effective way of lessening transmission. We worked both of those things together with the adequate provision and procurement of condoms distribution and the male circumcision literature. All of that was going on.

Q: Did you feel that by the time you were done that you had made inroads?

LUCKE: Yes, absolutely. Within six months we were already more effective. We were definitely making progress damping down mother-child transmission and with the greater awareness of the importance of knowing one's status. Knowledge of the value and use of antiretrovirals spread, therefore more people applied for their use. We felt like it was a huge challenge, no doubt. I mean the highest rate in the world -- more than Botswana and more than South Africa. More than Zimbabwe. We were definitely going in the right direction. It is a terrible thing to say, but when you are at bottom, there is nowhere to go but up. You don't die of HIV/AIDS but rather because of a compromised immune system, so you die of typhoid or some other maladie because your immune system can't fight it off. Almost a whole generation of people died and what replaced them were fewer in numbers. That led to the prevalence rate decreasing slowly.

The other thing we concentrated on, from a managerial point of view, more than anything was the HIV/AIDS orphans issue. This was around 2005-2006. We kept saying that by the year 2010, one eighth of the population of Swaziland would be HIV/AIDS orphans. They would be a generation of kids who would be raised by their grandmothers or other children. That was a huge problem and it was just heartbreaking to see. At the time, my wife was working for the World Food Program. She would go out in the field and see the orphans and tell me stories. I got to know some of the WFP top dogs from Rome who came down to Swaziland and so I accompanied them as Ambassador on some of their field trips. I really became more knowledgeable of the impact of AIDS on real people especially kids. They needed to be fed. They needed to be schooled. They needed to be acknowledged. This was a tremendous issue in the country.

Q: And in doing all of this, you mentioned that you were able to leverage funds in certain programs. Was this an area in which you were able to do that, or do you recall other sectors where you could share experience on how to grow your budget.

LUCKE: We mentioned that one of the lessons is to be aware of all of the instruments and tools that are at your disposal. That was one of the things that I, as a USAID guy,

knew better than the classic Ambassador from State. I talked to my predecessor. He said, "I wish I knew what you did because you know where all the buttons are to push to get USAID to provide all this money."

He said, "I don't know that. They don't teach us that. I didn't have a clue." So he was right. The thing about turning the $10 million into a lot more was a mechanism we used in USAID called Development Credit Authority (DCA) . I asked USAID/Washington to send one of their top people out who had been in my staff in Baghdad to help design this thing. It took several months but it was a great example of using a tool that a lot of people were not even aware of, let alone understand how it worked. We went through the private banking sector to leverage additional funds for this very laudable act to do more economic development in Swaziland.

The other part of the answer would be to coordinate with other donors to make sure you get more bang for your buck. We coordinated very closely with all of the agencies that were working on HIV/AIDS along with us. Just how far since you ask, it was the World Health Organization, the Swazi government through all of their HIV/AIDS agency that I referred to before. We dealt very well with the other embassies there, the British, Taiwan and particularly the Dutch. We had a really nice ambassador's group. We got together at least every month and talked about things of mutual interest and it was a great opportunity for us to coordinate programs and make sure we were all on the same page. I used that, I think, very effectively. It has to do with donor coordination, therefore increasing the bang for the buck. That makes it possible to follow similar approaches and policies. We also worked with UNDP, WFP and all the UN agencies. We also got some assistance through USAID's Title II Food for Peace which went through the World Food Program. The director of WFP in Swaziland was probably my closest international colleague and friend there. He was also my next-door neighbor; we did a lot of work with the WFP. You work with the organizations that are present in the country and are doing things similar to yours. Interestingly, Swaziland was one of the few nations left that still recognized the Republic of China and not the PRC. The ROC ambassador was also helpful in the textile industry which we were also supporting through the AGOA.

Role of South Africa

Q: Were there logistical or other kinds of infrastructural challenges you had to get over? I mean it is a developing country after all.

LUCKE: You know like you say in Spanish, "Tan lejos de Dios, tan cerca de los Estados Unidos" --so far from God, so close to the US. In this case the United States would be South Africa and Swaziland would be Mexico. You have the challenges of dealing with the issues of a very large neighbor. But the situation also comes with advantages which include the road system, the provision of power and water to a certain extent. All of that infrastructure spilled over from South Africa greatly to the benefit of Swaziland. Some of the banks were South African. The telephone networks, the cell phone networks, were extensions of South Africa. That really helped us in terms of the infrastructure. I got out a lot to visit Peace Corps volunteers which makes me realize that when you are off the

beaten path in Swaziland, you are in a very poor and underdeveloped place. You would be rich if your family was earning $100 a month on just farming or whatever--it was very rudimentary. There was a lot of just basic subsistence economic activity going on, but it really didn't look at first glance like the bottom of the economic pyramid. Looks were deceiving in Swaziland--it looked pretty good on the surface and not so much like a developing country until you got off the beaten path. Then you realized how the rural population lived and how it was an undeveloped country, to say the least.

Q: Yeah and of course it is small so naturally neighbors that are larger and more populous are going to have an important role in every aspect of its development. Were remittances still an important aspect?

LUCKE: Sure. There were a lot of Swazis working in South Africa and the money they sent home was important. It was like in Haiti when you have a number of families with a cousin in the U.S. sending money home. But there were Swazis in South Africa and they were sending home the remittances. One of them, who seemed to be an economic force, became my friend. He was a white Swazi named Natie Kirsh and he was one of the wealthiest men in Africa. Natie had lots and lots of activities going on in Swaziland and elsewhere . He lived mostly in South Africa and London but he was from Swaziland and had many interests there. He called me one day and asked if I could come and meet him down in Ezulwini down the hill from Mbabane the capital. So I met with Natie, the South African Ambassador and a few more diplomats and private sector leaders. It turned out that F. W. de Klerk, ex- President of South Africa, was there as well. He was the last apartheid leader but he was also, like Mandela, a hero who led the way to majority rule. He paved the way for Mandela to get out of prison, run for president, and then facilitated a peaceful transition of power. The key people in the diplomatic corps, plus de Klerk, got together to try to persuade the King on a couple of matters we thought the King was missing out on.

It was a great honor to meet de Klerk although I would have been just as happy to meet Mandela, whom I never did, unfortunately. My predecessor did. It was a very interesting cast of characters at the meeting. The South African Ambassador was a former ANC guerilla fighter and it was touching to see these guys meet. De Klerk hugged him saying, "My fellow South African." The South African Ambassador was saying if you hadn't done what you had done in 1992--releasing Mandela from prison--I would have been in the bush fighting against you. It was a moving thing to witness.

Q: This is a little off the subject but obviously among the South African countries all of them are managing reasonably one way or another with the exception of Zimbabwe. Did any of the Zimbabwe problems end up washing out into Swaziland or did any of that have an effect on Swaziland?

LUCKE: You know clearly the HIV/AIDS issue was something that other places in southern Africa all had in common. The importance of proper economic management, which they absolutely did not have in Zimbabwe, also concerned Swaziland, but that issue in Swaziland was not as much an emergency in Swaziland as it was in Zimbabwe.

Q: So while you were there, there weren't any other regional issues of note to mention.

LUCKE: Not really. Some of the rules on the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) were being changed that ended up negatively affecting Swaziland but that is about all I recall. And of course HIV was a huge regional problem.

Q: Now in the long service of some of the FSN's did any of them end up emigrating to the United States?

LUCKE: Certainly some did in every other country I worked, but I don't recall anybody getting an SIV (immigrant visa) in Swaziland. I don't think so. Not that I recall.

Q: That is fine. We are always interested especially if they are long time serving FSNs because they are a sense of institutional memory and also a memory of how things changed in the country that they were serving in over time and sort of a bit of a reflection of how USAID and later the other assistance programs, the longer-term effects and how things played out.

LUCKE: They were great in that regard and could give chapter and verse on things that had gone on before, what other Ambassadors had done, the proper channels to approach the Royals in the palace and who were the right advisors. They were very helpful always.

Q: So as you are looking at moving towards the end of your tour was there talk about another ambassadorship or another high-level appointment in USAID Washington?

LUCKE: There could have been, but my wife could only stay with me a year. She had to go back because our son was living with her parents and that was not sustainable in the long term. Frankly after two years, I said I think my obligation to the administration is really up. I basically wanted to reunite with my family--that was my motivation. Nevertheless, I still wanted to do something international. I wanted to do something that was a culmination of my international experience. As a result of my work and contacts, I was approached by the World Food Program. They started to talk to me about being an official with the WFP in Rome. So that is what I decided to pursue next. I just wasn't interested in working in Washington and moving there. Every time previously, when it seemed to be time to be assigned to Washington, my buddy Saddam Hussein would do something stupid and I would end up staying in the region. I never had to serve in Washington except for the first six months when I entered the Foreign Service and then, when I was doing my preparation for my Ambassadorial hearing. Other than that, I did not serve in Washington and I did not want to. I was totally a field guy and just found the eternal Washington turf fights to be very tiring. That was not what I joined the Foreign Service to do. I didn't want to go back to Washington because that would not have solved my family separation issue.

The plan was for my wife, who was already working for the World Food Program in Swaziland, to work for the World Food Program in Rome.

Q: OK, so then what does happen. You complete the ambassadorship in…?

2006: Retirement and the World Food Program

LUCKE: It was 2006. Mid-year 2006. Then I retired.

Q: Did the World Food Program offer pan out?

LUCKE: Yes, they offered me a high level job on the Executive Secretariat. I was like the third or fourth ranked American in the whole organization. The Bush Administration (43rd President) had nominated senior Americans to run the World Food Program. The head guy, the Executive Director, at that time was Jim Morris from Indiana. His Chief of Staff had come down from Rome to Swaziland and we started talking about what I was going to do next. They offered me a senior position on the WFP staff and so I moved to Rome.

Q: What were your responsibilities at WFP?

LUCKE: First of all, I should say it didn't work out the way I had it planned. My wife could not join me in Rome because her father, who was a physician in Austin, was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. So all of a sudden, here I am going to Rome, by myself, without a wife because she had to stay home and take care of her dad. Her mom was aging as well. I wasn't exactly sure how long of a proposition it was ultimately going to be. What they asked me to do was very similar to what USAID had asked me to do when I was evacuated due to the Gulf War between from Tunisia and my tour in Bolivia -- to do a management analysis of how well they were running their programs and make recommendations on how they could save money, be more efficient, consolidate services, all that kind of thing, which I think I was pretty well positioned to do. I had a lot of experience in terms of management and organizational coherence and how to make an organization more efficient.

Q: But all this time you are thinking about how you can get back home because it didn't work out exactly as you had planned in terms of a tandem assignment.

LUCKE: Yes, that is right. Also, I ended up having a health issue. Here's what happened. I would spend like two or three days a month in at headquarters. The rest of the time I was running around the world interviewing staff and organizing my report. I carried around a heavy brief case that I would hang around my shoulder. I ended up aggravating an old bicycle injury that I had in Costa Rica years before. It was actually diagnosed by the WFP doctors as a disabling injury.

Q: Wow.

LUCKE: I was disabled. I was in constant terrible pain. I was physically unable to carry on. I ended up resigning from WFP for two reasons. One was separation from family.

That was not going to be sustainable because it had not worked out the way that I wanted it to. The second thing was my injury. It was a great position, Rome was wonderful and I had great colleagues and all, but it wasn't sustainable..

Q: Sure. I mean in any other circumstances it would have been a great job.

LUCKE: It was a great job but I was in a whole lot of constant pain and the doctors in Rome told me I needed a major operation. They declared me physically unable to work. After I left and went back to Texas, I went to see a well-known chiropractor who worked on the UT football players and had a great reputation. He took one look at my X-rays and grabbed me by the neck and it all went snap, crackle, pop and I was 95% cured.

Q: Incredible.

LUCKE: It was incredible. It just saved my life as I couldn't live this way any longer as I was more or less incapacitated by pain. So, I went on and started a new life. Since then, there have only been small recurrences of that problem, but it allowed me to go on and start a new career.

Q: Let's continue with those post-USAID careers since a number of them have you returning on short tours with AID.

LUCKE: Yes, I am glad you asked that. I really loved what I did in terms of the economic development work. It is what I wanted to do "when I grew up" and I was able to do it and be successful at it. I had a good deal of satisfaction from the things we were able to accomplish in Costa Rica and Jordan, for example, the latter going from a tiny program to a hugely diversified portfolio worth over $400 million with major impact--it was very satisfying. We had great impact in Iraq as well, not that you would ever hear about it. So I really had a great career.

Other Development Work after USAID

I actually started my private sector work in the area of affordable housing working with a US company that made aluminum forms into which concrete was poured making housing that is cost effective, energy efficient, affordable and attractive. I started working with these guys and given my background in Iraq, I ended up helping them get a project in Iraq to build schools. I went back to Iraq for a number of months, living in Kurdistan, in Erbil, while we put together project and worked on getting additional projects for the company. That went on for about two years.

Q: Was this work actually contracted by USAID?

LUCKE: No, this had nothing to do with USAID at all. This was completely private sector. The company was based outside Kansas City and I still occasionally do work for them, particularly in French-speaking Africa.

Q: So was the Iraqi government paying for the school project?

LUCKE: It was the Kurdistan government. The semi-autonomous, the KRG The Kurdistan Regional Government. We approached their Minister of Education to build the schools. Long story short, there was rampant corruption in Kurdistan and we decided to finish the school project and move on. I have done work for this company in the DRC, Senegal and a few other countries, mostly French speaking.

But anyway, I remained in touch with USAID and therefore in 2008 went to Brazil to be the acting USAID Mission Director for three months. Then in 2009, I guess it was, I was asked by USAID to lead a joint State Department/USAID team to do an economic governance study in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This was something that came out of a trip to the DRC by Mrs. Clinton where she promised President Kabila that we would provide a team of experts to do an analysis of Congo's impediments to economic growth, looking at the climate for investment, mineral exports and much more. I was the team leader for the economic governance team. I had some good folks working with me as well. After our field work in the DRC, we came back and finished up the report that ended up being very well received. That was 2009.

2010: Haiti Earthquake Relief: Once Again, Everything at Once

In January 2010, the Haiti earthquake happened. I looked at the devastation on TV in horror --this place I knew so well--wondering what I could do to help. The former head of my USAID private sector office in Jordan through a series of crazy events had become the Acting Administrator of USAID. So, my friend, Alonzo, knew me and knew of my background in Haiti, that I spoke French and so forth. He called and asked me to come to Washington to discuss the earthquake response. Long story short I ended up going to Washington and met the new Administrator of USAID who had been named three days before the earthquake. Next thing I knew, I was flying into Port au Prince as the head of the USAID's --actually the USG's-- overall response to the earthquake. That all happened pretty quickly. My first assignment was to be at the airport and meet Secretary of State Clinton upon her arrival. I flew in eventually--after an unplanned stop in the Turks and Caicos--and met the Secretary, the US military head who was already there plus the Haitian President and Prime Minister. I knew already knew President Préval because he had been President during my tenure as Mission Director in 2000-2001. Obama had named USAID as the lead USG agency for the so-called "whole of government" response to the earthquake so there was a lot of pressure on the Agency to perform.

The stopover in the Turks and Caicos was because our plane wasn't cleared to land in Port au Prince when we first flew in. So we flew on to Turks and Caicos and found that the crew had timed out and could not turn around and fly back to Haiti. I called a friend of mine in the White House--one of the few holdovers from the Bush Administration--and explained the problem. This guy was amazing. He said, I will figure it out and get back to you back. So, he calls me back about five minutes later and says, "Walk out on the tarmac and look to your left." I did. He said, "You see that building down there. That

is a Coast Guard station. I have them lined up to fly you in by helicopter right now." So I go down there, get on the helicopter and landed at the Port-au-Prince airport amid this incredible hum of activity. It was just two days after the earthquake and the military and civilian aircraft were landing constantly with equipment and supplies being delivered. It would have been utter chaos except for the fact that the U.S. Air Force was controlling the airport and the arrivals. So I meet Mrs. Clinton and proceed on to meet with the Haitian President and Prime Minister. I also met my U.S. military counterpart who was the deputy commander of SOUTHCOM, General Ken Keen, a three-star.

As an aside, I succeeded in making Mrs. Clinton angry at me. President Préval recognized me from before and he spoke to me in French and I answered him in French. Anyway, apparently Mrs. Clinton did not appreciate the fact that I was speaking French and apparently she wasn't understanding it. If looks could kill, I would truly be history.

Anyway, I rolled up my sleeves and went to work. The next thing I remember, it was three months later. It was amazing to be part of it and I have to give all the credit to our wonderful folks in uniform. Although I had some top USAID people and a great OFDA team, General Keen, my counterpart, had maybe 30 full colonels plus 21,000 troops on land or at sea. I told General Keen that it was a little strange that the USAID guy was supposedly in charge of such an operation when it was DOD with all the assets, but we just accepted it and worked together to get the job done. That is the way it worked.

Q: Now based on your experience and background, what were the first things you decided to do?

LUCKE: This is what we called the "hair on fire" days. It was absolute chaos and pandemonium. We had to figure out who we had to work with. We also had to deal with the fact that everyone was very much impacted by the earthquake. Many of the top people in the UN in Haiti were killed. The US military had to fill in a lot of gaps but at the same time we had to operate as part of an international operation and give respect and deference to the Haitian. We had a large and robust DART team--Disaster Assistance Response Team--led by Tim Callaghan. We took stock of the experts we had, experts in logistics, health, shelter, water/sanitation and so forth trying to cover the landscape of needs. We had realized that we had to work with a Haitian government that was not particularly well functioning even in the best of times but that had lost key people in the earthquake. We had to deal with a UN organization that had also been decimated by the earthquake and it was the UN that was supposed to be the lead organization when a disaster of this nature happens. They are the ones supposed to be the lead organizers but they had lost people and couldn't therefore fully play that role at the beginning. So we had to be sensitive to all the damaged and injured partners and try to fill in the gaps where we could with our experts, either military or civilian. It was complete and utter chaos to start with but every day it got a little bit better. We were flooded with a zillion requests every day---send a helicopter to this orphanage, take water to this place; something terrible has happened here, get security for another place and so forth. A thousand things were going on simultaneously. We were also flooded with thousands of volunteers wanting to help.

Q: Right.

LUCKE: We had so many folks arrive who were ill prepared--no cell phone, no place to stay, no real place to work, but they were there. I think hundreds were sleeping on the Embassy lawn at the start. God bless them, you can't blame people like that but it was really hard to deal with them. Nevertheless, we succeeded in getting many of them employed with NGOs or other groups. We had no cell phone coverage at the start but all that got fixed fairly quickly. Literally, there were bodies in the street and mountains of rubble to deal with. The Montana Hotel was the center of a lot of activity with rescue groups from many countries trying to pull survivors out of the rubble. It was pandemonium, hair-on-fire to start, but every day it got a little bit better. Our best asset, of course, was the US military with all their equipment, helicopters and various skill sets. I was quickly becoming a big fan of helicopters and did a lot of country-wide coverage thanks to them and General Keen. I was incredibly grateful every day for the military and their amazing capabilities..

Q: Given the destruction of ground modes of transportations I imagine that a lot of things had to be done by helicopter.

LUCKE: Absolutely, roads were clogged with debris and then with traffic so it was hard and time consuming to rely on vehicles. If I could go by helicopter, I would. General Keen always had a helicopter at his disposal, so we did a lot of joint trips.

Q: I imagine clearing debris, dealing with dead bodies and providing urgent food and water assistance would be the most urgent things.

LUCKE: Remember we were working only on the emergency response and not reconstruction. That came later. After dealing with the bodies, we had to assess the water, food and medical situation and that was the task of the DART for us. It became clear that there wasn't much of a water or food shortage but rather a distribution issue. We had to deal with port problems and basically brought in an artificial port in the form of a large barge from a U.S. company. That helped the delivery of food, medical assistance and water in the early days. And then we had to manage distribution, deal with logistical logjams and solve a thousand problems happening all around. It took a while to free up logjams at the port and the warehouses as supplies were coming in. We had a lot of our people working to unclog all of this.

We were very concerned with the Montana Hotel where a lot of foreigners had been staying, including some US college students, diplomats and so forth. We knew this was going to be a tragedy. We had two US rescue teams on contract with OFDA, one of them from Arlington, Virginia and one from Los Angeles. There were teams from the US, Chile, France and even Iceland working at the Montana site. We tried to help coordinate all of that. Our DART did a good job, doing what they do best, a lot of it having to do with assessments to identify problems and issues and then coordinate with a thousand actors to get it solved. .

We worked through what the UN calls, and what we all called, the cluster system, which meant groups to assess and address areas such as housing, water, health, sanitation, etc. The UN slowly replaced their missing personnel who had been killed and the cluster system got on its feet. I knew some of the UN people--two of the top UN reps had been colleagues of mine in WFP in Rome. The head of the WFP operation came from the Rome headquarters and he was very effective. The lead UN guy was an American named Tony Danbury who I had also known in Rome. Anyway, Tony was key in getting the UN back up and operating and helping to solve a zillion problems. We worked together very well. The other thing that was just really propitious was that General Keen had gone to staff college with the head of the UN military team called MINUSTAH (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti - French initials). He was a Brazilian general. The fact that General Keen and the Brazilian general already knew each other well was another stroke of luck and made interaction easier.

Difficulties with Micromanagement from Washington

Actually, part of the challenge had nothing to do with us or Haiti, but rather dealing with Washington. This was early in the Obama Administration and their tendency was to try to over manage or micromanage everything from Washington, which is impossible to do anyway and made our lives more complicated. At one point, it seemed that my bosses in Washington felt my main job was to prepare powerpoint presentations so they could show them to Obama. I told them if that was what they thought was my job, that I would quit right now and be gone. For God's sake, we were still pulling bodies out of buildings and saving lives. Please let us do our job. It was another one of those Pogo cartoon moments... where we have met the enemy and he is us. The military called it "the two thousand mile long screwdriver".

But the USAID group got a few more qualified people over time, but the pace was killing us: I had people literally dropping from exhaustion and it happened frequently. People were working 20 hours a day and under great pressure. After a while, you just fall apart. I would tell folks that this is a marathon, not a sprint, and to take care of yourself. You are not going to be effective if you don't get a little bit of rest. I found that I was not particularly good at taking my own advice and I came close to falling apart physically myself. I literally had key staff passing out from exhaustion on the floor, including some doctors. Working in those conditions was very hard but people were very dedicated to the task at hand and the work got done. Again, I was grateful for such a dedicated group of people who could accomplish so much under difficult circumstances.

Housing Relief Workers and Homeless Haitians

Q: Just a technical question, I imagine part of the job of the military was simply constructing temporary shelters for all the volunteers.

LUCKE: No, not really. Not to my knowledge.

Q: That is interesting. How were they all housed given so much had been destroyed.

LUCKE: The short answer is they weren't. You had to see what the U.S. Embassy lawn looked like. People were sleeping on the grass at the Embassy. We had a large number of tents that we put up at the rear of the Embassy to house our emergency response teams. They brought in their own supplies, like tents and so forth. Organizations were camped at the airport or on vacant lots where they could find them. A lot of it was just catch as catch can. That is what I meant by utter chaos. My USAID group was housed--nine of us--in a three bedroom apartment across the street from the Embassy.

So many NGOs or individuals arrived in confusion, oftentimes very ill-prepared. But like us, it got a little bit better organized each day. Some of the NGOs were even based in the Dominican Republic. The UN was better equipped than most of them. They had headquarters and places to stay and were able to build out from there. Trailers were brought in to house the World Food Program and other agencies. They used whatever was at hand: trailers, containers, tents, anything. That is what they would eventually transform into something like offices. It was just pretty much chaos to start with.

Let me say that shelter became one of the premier issues for relief, after you take care of the food water, and medicine portion. We knew that we had a huge problem in terms of shelter. So many Haitians suffered from inadequate housing in the best of times but it became a severe issue after the earthquake. Tent cities sprang all over the earthquake zone as so many homes were either destroyed or damaged to the point where people were afraid to live in them. People were staying in open spaces all through Port au Prince. The Presidential palace was a beautiful building but most of it was now collapsed and had to be bulldozed away as rubble. People were all around the center of town trying to make do, living as best they could in makeshift tents. It became clear that we had to begin the shelter issue. This was an international effort, not just USAID of course, so the international effort began to focus on shelter via the provision and distribution of thousands of tarps, as opposed to tents. Tarps are a lot better than tents because tents tear, fly away and eventually, rot. In the context of Haiti, a temporary shelter with a tarp could eventually, more or less, be transformed into a more stable and more permanent shelter than a tent. We used to give the "think outside the tent" speech in favor of tarps vs. tents a lot. There was a lot of pressure to get the tarps procured and delivered because the rainy season was on the horizon.

I had a conversation with President Clinton about this at the airport. He told me he could bring in thousands of tents from Bangladesh, I think it was. I gave him the "tarp vs tent" speech and politely told him to please NOT bring us any more tents.

Q: One of the interesting things that comes out and this particular story is how valuable the connections and networks you made throughout your USAID career in urgent situations like this.

LUCKE: Yes, it was both within USAID and outside. Two of my closet UN collaborators were people I had known when I was at WFP in Rome. I also brought in some of the US

staff I had worked with in Iraq because I knew how capable they were. Many of our support staff in Washington, had known me from earlier points in my career, particularly the Acting Administrator whose idea it was to get me to Haiti in the first place. They knew me, and they knew my track record, as a Mission Director and as someone who had an important central position in Iraq and they knew what we were able to do there. My deputy in Haiti was Chris Milligan, who had been my deputy as well in Iraq. USAID is not that large of an agency anyway so we end up working with some of the same people again. But I was pretty well known, I guess, as a successful and senior Mission Director so there was a lot of trust in me. I didn't know the new Obama people-- that was a new group to me. I bet I had worked previously with about half of the senior US staff who came into Haiti to work on the earthquake relief effort.

Q: So how long did you spend in the end in Haiti on this job?

LUCKE: Three months. I arrived right after the quake which was January 12, 2010 and departed in April.

Q: By the time you left what was the situation then?

LUCKE: Much better. The military had started to draw down its deployment and the hospital ship, the USS Hope, had left the area. The military assets were fewer in number because they were not as needed. Distribution points for food were well established and did not have to be guarded to the extent that they had been before. Everything was sort of falling into place for a more controllable relief situation. There was never really a problem about the availability of food. It was a question of distribution of food, because there was plenty of food available locally.

One of the cardinal rules of development is "do no harm", so we didn't want to keep food or water distribution at the expense of the private sector markets. Agriculture in Haiti had been very negatively affected by US policies under the Clinton Administration so we didn't want to make it any worse. We did what we needed to do to assure food, water and medicine right after the earthquake but there was no need to do it forever or even past the immediate emergency phase.

But things were getting a bit back to normal in terms of imports and exports functioning. Some of the local economy was coming back to life but so many people were living in temporary shelters and there was a huge task ahead of starting to clear away some of the rubble--a process that would take a few years. Rubble was slowly being moved to a landfill outside Port Au Prince. Another priority for us after getting the tarps distributed was to unclog all of the canals in Port au Prince that had been filled with rubble and garbage. That was an urgent undertaking because once rainy season started, there would have been floods which would have been another disaster. So, we got that done. Anyway, we had the priority of the day or the priority of the week or the priority of the month. We identified them and tried to get them done as quickly as we could. One of the great things about using the OFDA, the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, was that the grant process was truncated and could quickly be carried out. Grants could be awarded in a few

minutes because they had the special authority to do that. We could move the money quickly.

Q: Wow, remarkable. When you depart how does the effort change or are you simply replaced with somebody who might be staying a bit longer term?

LUCKE: Yes, this is one of the real ironies. I really tried to surround myself with people who I knew could do the job, and I knew a lot of these people from Iraq. As I said, the guy that ended up replacing me as U.S. Response Coordinator was Chris Milligan, who had been one of my two deputies in Iraq. He came in and became the response coordinator after I departed. Things were getting more back to normal by that time anyway There certainly was not an emergency operation any more. It turned more into stabilization. The Embassy was getting back to normal and we slowly drew down our numbers. The emergency response and rescue teams closed shop, packed up and went home. They had done an amazing job. Things were returning to, I certainly wouldn't say, to normal. In fact, I was back there just a few weeks ago working on hurricane relief and there were still a few people living in tents outside town ,but not many, thankfully. The rubble has mostly been removed as well.

Q: So it was never thought that reconstruction would be part of your mandate.

LUCKE: No. Reconstruction was a long-term deal. I really made it clear that I could not get involved in that.

Q: This episode is 2010. Did you have others then even after that?

LUCKE: Yes, oh yes. I took a break after 2010. I came home and started my own consulting firm. I had some international clients. In fact, I had to drop some of what was I doing with them when I went back to USAID for the Haiti earthquake duty. The consulting was basically helping U.S. companies expand their work with new clients and new markets overseas. I always wanted to be my own boss and I was still working with my housing guys, doing that in places all over Africa, the Middle East and so forth. I spent a lot of time back in Jordan and back in Iraq.

2014: Creating a USAID Rapid Reaction Force: Deployment to Jordan for Syrian Refugees Impact in Jordan

But what happened was in, I guess it was, 2013. There was a call that went out from USAID to put together a sort of rapid response group, most of whom were ex-USAID employees, who could respond to shortages overseas or to other situations that needed to be addressed and could not be addressed instantly by the personnel system. It was a pretty smart move as they really needed to have that capacity. OFDA always had rapid disaster response people but the regular USAID had not, to my knowledge. I got myself interviewed and requalified, got my diplomatic passport back, along with my security and medical clearances. In 2014 they asked me to go to Jordan to work on the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on Jordan.

Q: Right.

LUCKE: I do that for three months and was back in my milieu. I knew a lot of the people in Jordan. A lot of the people in the government were still there or had come back to the government. All that work of building good relations I could use effectively to help the Mission address the problem of having, still again, another refugee influx of 1.3 million Syrians on the border. Jordan itself only had 6.4 million people. So with all the Iraqis, the Palestinian arrivals, plus Jordanians, plus the Iraqi refugees, plus the Syrian refugees, you have a population of 10 million with which to deal. It was a terrible challenge for Jordan to accommodate those people. The Jordanians were doing the best they could and USAID put major resources into the program in order to help them..

Q: Moving to your next short tour in Jordan in the three months you were there with the gigantic job of dealing with literally millions of refugees, mostly Syrian but also some others, what were the key tasks the key goals that you wanted to accomplish while you were there?

LUCKE: Well, as I think I mentioned, the Mission had increased in terms of size, budget, and scope of the work by a tremendous amount. When I started in Jordan as Mission Director in 1996, we had a paltry budget compared to what came later. When I left in 2000, we were up to close to $400 million a year. When I went back to Jordan as the Acting Deputy Director the budget had become almost a billion dollars a year, which was second only to Afghanistan in the world. When I was Director, we kept it focused on three things, economic opportunity, family planning/health, and the water sector. By this time, they were doing all of that plus education, democracy and governance, education and more. They had a robust continuation of private sector development/economic opportunity programs. They were not quite as robust as I would have wanted in terms of the water sector but they were also doing a number of things having to do with improved governance. Some of it was focused on assistance to municipalities that were affected by the influx of Syrian refugees. So it was all of that, literally a mile wide and a mile deep as opposed to when I was running the show in the late 90's to 2000 where we were a mile deep and not very wide. We were more focused then but the needs of 2014-2015 were different..

Q: You know what the refugees need, what was the view from the Jordanians, what were their concerns?

LUCKE: The Jordanians were appropriately worried and concerned about their ability to take care of all of the refugee needs without impacting the Jordanian populace too negatively. We wanted to help the Jordanians mitigate the negative effects of the influx of still another surge of refugees, this time from Syria, after previous surges of refugees from Iraq and Palestine. Jordan's stability in the region was of course a key priority for the US. It was important for any number of reasons. The Jordanians were working with a number of other actors as well as us, of course. The UN High Commission for Refugees was another very important organization on the refugee scene in Jordan, particularly in

the north, where they ran two large refugee camps. They were in charge of getting refugees registered and then processed, which was a long term process. We were helping the Jordanians as well in the education sector to accommodate, not only Syrian refugees, but clearly, Jordanians as well. We were building schools right and left, developing curriculum, etc. The schools were actually doing a shift of Jordanian students followed by a shift of Syrian students with Syrian teachers and, I think, following their own curriculum.

Providing Water

They were particularly concerned with water. We were financing programs to pump and convey clean water to these northern communities, building cisterns, building storage facilities or water projects for schools as well as municipalities so it was really all sizes and all over the map with water. We were trying to do some of the things that the Romans had been good at 2000 years ago like capturing rainwater runoff into cisterns. We were trying to reapply some of the lessons of the past to make sure communities could cope with the demand.

I knew the Water Minister who had been a friend and colleague before. He was the Minister in 2014 so we got together again and went back and compared notes. He spoke of the use of an aquifer of fossilized water called the Disi aquifer that was discovered during my stay there in the late 90's. That was in the Wadi Rum area of southern Jordan. It was really a huge amount of water, probably enough to supply Amman's drinking needs for 50 years. But once it was gone, it was gone and there had been a wringing of hands by people in Washington about various environmental issues. We were basically told to leave Disi alone. So the government of Jordan got loans from somewhere, it could have been the World Bank. The Minister said to me, "If we had not done the Disi pipeline this city would have exploded when the Syrians came in." So, still in Amman as it was before, you turn the tap on and you get water maybe two or three times a week. Using the Disi aquifer made a bad water situation a bit more tolerable, but water remains a major issue for Jordan.

We worked with municipalities in the north and I made a couple of trips there to work directly with mayors and other municipal officials on projects that were being well implemented by a competent contractor. We talked to lots and lots of local officials about their needs; we were helping them, even garbage pickup and disposal, in addition to water.

We also had small, but effective, programs run by NDI, the National Democratic Institute, as well as IRI, the International Republican Institute, which were tremendous little programs, particularly regarding the participation of women in local government.

Q: Was there a sense that the majority of refugees had arrived or that you would literally have to continue planning for the potential of more?

LUCKE: When I was there in late 2014, there were still plenty of refugees coming over the border. They had to be taken care of. Now, later in early 2016, ISIS did a terrorist attack that killed seven or eight Jordanian soldiers at the border. As far as I am aware, they basically have closed the border and they work with the UN to supply water, food, shelter to some of the refugees. On the other side of the border, I don't know if that has changed now or not. The Jordanians really tightened up on the flow of refugees because, as the King would say, Jordan was being overwhelmed.

Refugees in Jordan

Q: The locations for settlement, were they principally at the edges of cities or were there huge tent communities?

LUCKE: Actually neither. The communities where they were in tents were in the two or three camps located in the north, so not too far from the Syrian border. One was Azraq, a little town that was accommodating 20-25,000 refugees, but had a potential of accommodating many more. The other camp, the larger one, was a place called Zaatari. Zaatari was near the border further west than Azraq with over 100,000 refugees there. But of the estimated 1.3 million Syrian refugees in Jordan at the time, most live in cities and not the camps, Only 600,000 of those were actually registered with UNHCR. It was similar to the situation with the Iraqi refugees. Some of them had money, but most did not A lot of the Syrian refugees quickly burned through their savings and were at the mercy of the World Food Program and UNHCR. I went to visit the Azraq camp. I think most of the tents had been replaced or are being replaced by more permanent kinds of metal shelters. I sat down with several Syrian families in Azraq, drank tea, and asked them about their lives, what they were doing before, how long they expected to stay, and other issues. But the other thing to say about the Syrian refugees is that most of them are not segregated in camps. Most of them went to Amman or other cities. They are moving in a kind of shadow economy, trying to work but not being allowed to work legally in Jordan, though that has changed somewhat now. Up until last year, they weren't given work permits. So they are the guys in the kitchen in the restaurant or in the backroom of the sewing store or barber shop or something like that, trying to work and trying to earn a little money for their families. The situation was really pretty dire for most of these folks. And they weren't just in Amman either. They were scattered pretty well all throughout Jordan. Places like Aqaba, Ma'an or Tafilah had significant numbers of Syrian refugees. It was only about 20% of the entire refugee population actually living in camps. The rest of them were living in Jordanian cities.

Maintaining Stability in Jordan under the Stress of Millions of Refugees

Q: You have started by saying you have some four million refugees in Jordan with a Jordanian population of six million. I mean it is hard to even imagine that two thirds of the population in addition are in dire need.

LUCKE: Yes, and they came in waves. There was the Palestinian wave that came into the east bank of Jordan after '48, '56 and '67. The Jordanians stayed out of the '73 Yom

Kippur War. But in all of these conflicts, there had been waves of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees into Jordan where they were not exactly welcomed but they had really no choice. The Jordanians, the "East Bank Jordanians," had to try to accommodate them. When I was there from '96 to 2000, which was a preview of Iraq and pre Syria, some 65% of the population of Jordan, which is to say 65% of about 6.4 million official Jordanian citizens, were of Palestinian origin. The East Bank Jordanians, as someone used to say, are the "real Jordanians", but they are a minority in their own country. Then again, in 2003, because of Gulf War II, there was this influx of maybe a million Iraqis, many of whom have gone back, but a lot of them had stayed. The Iraqis tended to have a little more economic means. So they came to Jordan with a little more money than the Syrians who were even more desperate. So, yes, when you take 6.4 million, plus a very large birth rate, plus an influx of over a million Iraqi refugees, and then 1.3 or more Syrian refugees, you have a pretty disturbing brew of potential instability in a poorer country with very limited resources and situated in a very tough neighborhood.
Q: Based on what you know and what you have seen to date, how does Jordan manage to keep a lid on things? In other words how does it maintain stability with all of this?

LUCKE: I think it starts with the King. He has become, particularly after the Jordanian pilot was burned alive, a rallying point for the people. The King has been a strong leader, widely admired, and that has been a great element of stability in Jordan. The second thing: Jordan worked with the US and the international community and carried out some significant economic reform that permitted them to create jobs in new sectors like high-tech and more export-oriented industries. There was some hope on the economic front that they were actually creating jobs--not as many as they need mind you-- but that helped out on the stability front. There are any number of factors like that but I think the international community, led by the UN, particularly the UNHCR, World Food Program, that understand how important it is to assist the Jordanians deal with the refugee problem.

Q: Did we do a great deal of training for the Jordanians? Education exchanges and so on?

LUCKE: We used to. We don't really do much of that anymore. There are a few organizations that are sort of directly or indirectly funded by the U.S. government. The Fulbright program, the AMIDEAST program and others that identify Jordanians to go to school in the US. But it is not like before when USAID had a robust and well-funded education program. We would identify all of these promising young students, scholars and send them to places in the U.S. We created this cadre of well-trained, useful and pro-American people who would return to their countries. There is really much less of that now than there used to be, which in my opinion is too bad.

Q: Were there well obviously the FSNs or the LESs in your mission must have been of great help. Is there a particular aspect of the work they have done that you would like to highlight.

LUCKE: Oh yes, they were key. I think I said when I was going over the part when I was Director in Jordan, that we started out with 11 Americans and approximately 40

Jordanian FSNs and we kept that number stable and consistent even when we went up from $7 million to $350-400 million a year. We just had to manage smarter and limit the number of management units. The Jordanian staff, for the most part, was pretty darn good. We relied on them for everything. Two top people in the Program Office with institutional memory were Jordanians--Mohamed Yassein and Kenana Amin. We had key FSNs in our economic growth/ economic opportunity section, as well. We counted on these guys and they came through. I was really surprised when I got there to find out we had a high percentage of Jordanian Christians working for us. We looked for opportunities to hire extremely well qualified Muslims as well as Christians, so it worked out fine.

Q: Would there be today any particular one FSN that you might recommend that we interview who has had a long history with the mission and might be able to talk about sort of the longer the horizon of how these things have worked out and so on.

LUCKE: Yes, I can think of at least two who are still there. A number of them have gone on and have been replaced by people who I don't know at all or who I just met when I was back there in 2014. I can provide the names and emails.

Q: Any FSNs who have actually used their opportunity to emigrate to the United States?

LUCKE: Oh yes. A good number of those who have put in 15 or 20 years have applied for the Special Immigrant Visa. I have written a number of recommendation letters for them and a good number have been accepted and have emigrated to the U.S. My former driver moved to Chicago. A couple of other Jordanian friends went on to become American citizens. One worked for the World Bank and is now in the private sector. That happens a lot. Many who have 20 years of service will continue to apply for the SIV, I am sure.

Q: The ones we would most like to talk to would be the ones who were assistant program managers or project developers or you know, worked with local government on the execution of programs and so on.

LUCKE: Yes, I can introduce you to one of those people absolutely. He was a banker we hired in '96 or '97, I think. He worked for around 15 or 20 years and is now working for one of the for-profit consulting firms, sometimes referred to as Beltway Bandits, in Amman. He could tell you chapter and verse everything we have done in terms of private sector development. He would be a fascinating guy for you or others to speak with. His name is Jamal Al-Jabiri. Pronounced "Jabri". I can send you his email address.

Q: That would be great. If you want we'll go ahead. Send me his Email. I will talk with Carol Peasley because she is also sort of working on developing the FSN contacts. So let me talk to her. Sometimes it is also just nice if we do decide to call him if you would just drop him a very short E Mail

LUCKE: That is what I was planning to do. And give Carol my best by the way. She was responsible for my assignment to Costa Rica in 1985, long ago.

Q: I will. She was delighted to see that you were on the list and that even in Austin we could get your recollections so this is fantastic. That is great and I will follow up on this. That takes you to 2014 but there still is a little bit of time since 2014. Were there more connections or activity with USAID?

2015: A Short Deployment to Mauritania

LUCKE: Yes, two more actually. So that was 2010. In 2014, it was Jordan. In 2015, I am balancing all of my private sector duties and trying to arrange things so I can deploy again for USAID. But at the end of the day, I am more or less my own boss. I was at this point in 2015, through the CS-3 people in USAID, starting to get a number of offers. They asked me to go to Angola, to Mozambique-- they asked me to go to all over the place because I am one of the more senior people and I speak French. I am pretty appropriate for Africa. They asked me to go, of all places, Mauritania. I had never been to Mauritania. I had stopped over there once on a flight to Paris and lived all around it when we lived four years in Mali and almost four years in Senegal. But I never worked in Mauritania. It turns out that I knew the Ambassador. He had been DCM in Tanzania when I had been on a business trip there. He and USAID asked me to come do this deployment. So I was a USAID mission of one--a one person shop that was supported out of the regional office in Dakar.

I went to Nouakchott and I arrived on July 4, so July, August, September of 2015 I was working in Nouakchott. I spent a lot of time on a variety of cat and dog programs, a lot of humanitarian programs that were small, but important, and run by OFDA. There was a Food for Peace program and a World Food Program that covered many of the basic food needs directly. We spent a lot of time trying to get the attention of people in the regional office who were consumed with larger and really more important regional programs, but it was my job to sort of scream and holler and try to get some attention for Mauritania. The needs there were really pretty great. It is one of these countries where USAID used to have a large mission but had closed it down with only a few residual and new activities. As I say, these were run out of the regional office in Dakar.

Q: Let me just ask you, was the closure in Mauritania due to security concerns? I can't imagine they sunsetted it because of the advancement of the local economy.

LUCKE: It had to do with politics. There were a couple of coups in the past that affected the thinking re a USAID Mission. That was when we were insisting on working with countries that shared our policy concerns on promoting democracy and so on--properly so. But in terms of the military and security side, they loved us. The Mauritanians absolutely loved USAID and they would see my business card and would say, "Oh my God, USAID is coming back". I said, I don't think so, at least not on the scale as before, but we never really completely went away. We dealt with a number of humanitarian and economic issues. As a result of a locust outbreak a few years before, there had been a

huge stockpile of pesticides left behind and we helped the government deal with cleaning that up. To not address that issue could have very negative consequences on people and on the environment. There was a lot that kept me busy. I worked with two extremely good State FSNs who were world class. I liked the Ambassador and the DCM and we got along very well and did some great stuff together. I think they appreciated having a really senior guy like me to come to a place like Mauritania. I spoke French and knew the region. It was a really positive experience, much to my surprise. I mean, I did not know exactly what to expect but I ended up really liking it.

Q: In three months how much can you accomplish?

LUCKE: Well, you keep lights on and keep the motor running. You get the word out to people in the regional mission in Dakar of what was happening, our needs, our issues and provide the on-site management and oversight of our ongoing activities. You do whatever needs to be done. One thing I did was to help the Ambassador recruit a longer term replacement for me.

Q: Aha, an opening.

LUCKE: There was not going to be just the interim two or three months that I provided. . Somebody was going to be there long term, preferably two years, at least. And that was accomplished.

Q: So USAID policy slowly began to move toward at least having one resident individual there.

LUCKE: Yes, I think she was a PSC, a contractor. She wasn't a direct hire. That really didn't matter. There was a presence and it was going to be a long-term presence. She and I did not overlap but I left lots of notes and the two FSNs knew perfectly well and the issues. I also left my recommendations on what to do and how to do it and who to deal with on various programs and issues. I trust it went well. Mauritania is one of those places where you can see that with just a little bit of money and a little bit of care and a cooperative government, a lot can be accomplished. My lesson for what was the most and best of all of my posts, in terms of the work challenges and accomplishments, was Jordan. As I said, we had the perfect combination of willing and able local counterparts in the government and private sector; we had the attention and support from Washington, and we had good abilities within our Mission staff. With that combination, you can do magical things. That's what we had in Jordan. That is why I truly recommend that you talk to Jamal because he can give you that chapter and verse from the point of view of a Jordanian.

Q: OK. In terms of Mauritania was the idea that you would go in temporarily because AID was thinking it was going to go back?

LUCKE: No, not really, not in terms of a Mission, no. There was no consideration of reestablishing a larger Mission again. Ideally, that would have been nice, but really, such

funding wasn't available. We were in a situation where, for better or worse, the squeaky wheel gets the grease. The money was, in large part, going to crisis countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Jordan and other places like that. Smaller countries, particularly in Africa, kind of get the leftovers. That is maybe too bad, but that is the way it was.

Q: This was also the moment when we were addressing Ebola in sort of the edge of West Africa.

LUCKE: Yes, and, as well, Iraq was starting to go down the tubes again. That program, that was largely being closed down in Iraq, was opened up again with an enhanced budget. So yes, Ebola was happening around that time and received a tremendous amount of attention from USAID and from the international community. I think the overall response was considered a success.

2016: Remote Management: The Case of Yemen

Q: Now Nouakchott and one more assignment beyond that?

LUCKE: Yes, one more, and this was a bit of an odd one but I did that this year, 2016. From the first of March into June of 2016, I was actually assigned to the U.S. Consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia as part of the so-called Yemen Affairs Unit. I have never legally been into Saudi Arabia, though I am pretty sure I crossed the border several times when I was in the desert in Jordan, but I never legally or officially had been there.

The YAU was the U.S. Embassy/Sana'a, Yemen, "in exile" with us living and working mainly out of the Consulate in Jeddah. We were trying to act as the U.S. Embassy in Yemen but located in Saudi Arabia. Our FSNs were still in Sana'a and we talked to them every week if we could--at least Washington did. I tried to be on the weekly call when I could. It logistically was far from ideal--the YAU was in Jeddah but the Government of Yemen in exile was working out of Riyadh, the capital. So we were always on planes between the two cities, always moving around. The point of this was to try to support peace talks between the legitimate ROYG and the Houthis who were running part of the country and the capital Sana'a. The talks began in April in Kuwait. The Emir of Kuwait had offered to host the talks and there was a UN emissary for the talks who was actually Mauritanian. He was running the show and was a capable guy as near as I could tell. I had never been in a situation where we were so physically separated from the folks with whom we needed to work, i.e., our direct counterparts.

We did the best we could but it was far from ideal. Matters were made worse by idiotic decisions by State's Bureau for Management which provided the YAU with practically no benefits at all. With the lack of benefits--people had to share quarters, could not bring in a vehicle and so forth, no one in their right mind would ever bid on long term jobs. Therefore, they had to fill in with a series of short-termers, WAE guys and so forth. So we were just schlepping along. I would sort of shuttle back and forth between Riyadh, Kuwait, and Jeddah. The peace talks unfortunately fell apart as the Houthis were unwilling to make any concessions and the ROYG was pretty inflexible as well.

Q: But with the peace talks going on what was your role?

LUCKE: My role morphed a couple of times. Before the peace talks started I was working with the Minister of Cooperation, my counterpart. I was acting as USAID for the Yemen Affairs Unit so I dealt with everything that needed to be done in terms of USAID activities. One of the humanitarian aspects was the provision and delivery of food assistance. We still had NGO's, American NGO's, working in Yemen in spite the danger. There were a hundred things to keep us busy--coordination with Yemen's partners in the UN such as WFP, UNDP and UNHCR for example, as well as Yemen's more active bilateral donors like the Germans and especially the British. We worked closely with the Brits and saw most issues exactly the same. I also worked with the Yemeni cabinet members in Riyadh on a number of economic and humanitarian issues. Some of the economic issues had to do with oil and gas production and with electricity. We also worked, in the absence of anybody else doing it, on an international donor coordination mechanism that I spent a lot of time on. In that regard I worked closely with the UN, the World Bank and the Germans and the Brits. The British Ambassador was an impressive and positive presence. I have never been in a situation where the Americans and British saw the world in such a similar fashion and came up with similar approaches and solutions. So it was a very positive experience working with our British colleagues and that is something I won't soon forget.

We worked very hard in the YAU. We worked very long hours, six days a week and sometimes seven days a week. As I said, there were not a lot of incentives to work there, just our sense of professionalism. As I stated previously, there were practically no employee benefits and we worked at keeping a positive attitude. Living in KSA was not a walk in the park either, though that was not the worst of our problems at all. I stayed in Kuwait for the talks for a couple of weeks but I didn't feel fully effective there so I went back to Riyadh for the most part and continued to work with the Cabinet and economic advisors, particularly with an impressive young man who was the number two person in the Ministry of Finance. After three months, I was ready to depart. I think that, of my three deployments for CS3/USAID, the KSA deployment was the least successful, though we did the best we could under the circumstances.

Q: What did people believe was going to happen at that time when you were there because in the Western press there was never a sign there was going to be peace even approaching an agreement.

LUCKE: Right, that turned out to be true. There were positive expectations but, after seeing the opening positions of the two sides and the fact that hostilities never ceased, it soon became clear that this wasn't going to work. Both sides dug in their heels. There was inadequate monitoring of the so-called cessation of hostilities, so that was a real point of instability. And there was a lack of real progress. The UN envoy from Mauritania and his deputy tried the best they could with different approaches but with little success. There was a break in the talks over Ramadan and then the idea was to get back to work afterwards, but it didn't work.

I think the population of Yemen is something like 28 million people and perhaps 80% of them now need some kind of humanitarian assistance. The place is in dire straits. Not that you would ever hear about any of that in the press. Syria and Iraq and Libya would get the attention, certainly not Yemen, but it was evolving into a dire situation. Back in the US, I try to keep up with Yemen as I still care about it, but I see little in terms of real progress. You hear the Envoy is still working and making the rounds in Aden and Riyadh and Kuwait, all the while trying to see if they can revive the cessation in hostilities that can lead to peace talks. But it has not happened yet, which is discouraging. The currency has been devalued, the infrastructure for ports and more has been damaged. It is a pretty dire situation. There have been bombings from the allies that have tragically killed civilians. If you think Iraq or Syria are complicated, have a look at Yemen. Yemen really takes the cake.

Q: In terms of managing from afar, are there any other insights because this is probably the only time in your career when you have been managing projects or FSNs when you could not be physically present in the country.

LUCKE: We, especially our Washington office, kept up constant communications with the FSNs in Yemen. They would have a weekly call that I would try to join. It was not ideal. The humanitarian assistance part of the job kept me busy, and it was more, in terms of coordination and communication, making sure the right people knew what was going on. I dealt directly with a number of Ministers in Riyadh, met with the Prime Minister and President, and had a diverse set of activities and objectives.

Q: This takes you to the end of activities with USAID in 2016. Did you mention that you would be taking on one more in 2017?

LUCKE: We shall see. I celebrated my return to the United States after Saudi Arabia by tearing my quadricep tendon in my knee so I was out for three months then in rehab. Since then however, I have been to Haiti twice working on hurricane recovery and hope to keep doing that. Other than coordinating with USAID on that, I have been working with faith-based NGOs rather than USAID directly.

Changes Needed for Improved Efficiency at USAID

USAID as an organization, in my opinion, has miles to go to get itself reformed. I see it as far too centrally controlled and micromanaged by headquarters. It takes 2 ½ years to get an activity approved which is nuts. What used to be the big advantage USAID missions had was that we had empowered Missions overseas with delegated authority and none of that exists any more. And they wrap themselves up into rules and regulations that are more than the normal ball and chain of congressional requirements that we have to deal with. I love the agency but not as it is right now.

I hope the Trump administration will undertake a number of reforms. There are a number of former senior managers of my generation who still care about the Agency and are familiar with the issues. Many of us have strong opinions about how it has gone wrong

and where it has gone wrong. Not that there aren't good, smart and capable people-- there certainly are. It is just that management and processes need to be improved. They must be less bureaucratic, less centrally controlled. More authority needs to be redelegated to the field and more efficient and logical activity approvals and procurement need to be undertaken. I am hoping that now that we have had this election, some reform minded people will come in. I still care about the Agency and want it to work. I want it to be effective as a foreign policy tool and for the benefit of the U.S. and our host countries. I have seen the magic happen in Jordan, Costa Rica, Iraq and elsewhere.

I want to see this continue and get better because I think much of USAID fell off the rails during the Obama Administration. The Obama Administration's first AID Administrator in my view was a disaster, Anyway, all by way of saying, hope springs eternal and maybe the new administration will deal with it more effectively. I talked to people on the Trump transition team and I do not think more consolidation with State is on the cards. We'll see, but I am hoping for better management, effective reforms and the maintenance of a sufficient foreign assistance budget.

Q: What do you think originally caused the bureaucratic ossification or the excess of caution in all of the different processes?

LUCKE: What I think caused it was excessive caution based on a lack of experience, poor management and weak leadership. During my tenure in Haiti after the earthquake of 2010, I saw the new group of USAID leadership as insecure and tending to micromanage and manage poorly from Washington. They tried to compensate for lack of confidence and experience by micromanaging. The military called it the "2000-mile-long screwdriver" USAID's leadership under Obama created a number of so called "initiatives" that were mostly sizzle and no steak. All these grandiose ideas that sounded wonderful but ultimately, there was no money to do much of anything. Hundreds of well-meaning people were running around chasing their tails to little effect.

Q: Was the advent of the QDDR and perhaps more oversight by State part of the problem?

LUCKE: I can't really say as I wasn't around when that was going on. It didn't really affect me but the people who were my friends and colleagues were working on it; They were completely and utterly absorbed by it. I mean, it was kind of like a tar baby, it sucked them all in and they couldn't get free. I doubt it was worth the effort.

Q: It appears that you are finding that USAID's effectiveness in the field is being reduced because of the reduction in the relative freedom that missions had to be able to switch or remake programs when conditions on the ground required. What do you think accounts for that?
LUCKE: You know, they changed the approval process and made it much more centralized and complicated. As a Mission Director, you always had to coordinate with the Ambassador and with your backstop and Bureaus in Washington but much of the former authorities of Mission Directors have been assumed by Washington. So I think

that is a short answer. Also, I was really struck when I got back to Jordan and started talking this new generation of USAID employees, mainly in their late 20's or early 30's. Very smart; very nice but spending an inordinate amount of time on processes and what I call "worshipping at the holy altar of indicators".

Of course we need to measure success but you can't sit around and talk about the perfect indicator all day long and think that you have done any development because you haven't. Economic development is what comes out the other end and how you affect people's lives through projects and activities on the ground. I think paying these people all of this money to be possessed with process and indicators is just wrongheaded and inefficient.

Q: It sounds like the organization had become very afraid of being asked to prove how it was using money to best advantage or, where the bottom line was. So, it became obsessed with proving whatever it was doing was in some way measurable to whoever was looking at the measurements.

LUCKE: Yes, I think there was an obsession about that from top to bottom. If that is a reality at the top, it is going to be that way at the bottom because it all trickles down. I am not saying that not a lot of wonderful things were accomplished. They were, for example, in Jordan. But another way of saying it is that working for USAID these days is not nearly as much fun as it used to be.

Q: Was there anything in particular about how they measure the outcomes that seemed misguided to you?

LUCKE: Not so much misguided but too much emphasis. Too many people hired to do that. Not only directly involved with the USAID staff but the staff of all of the contractors, all the grantees and all of that. Enough already. I mean we have to look out for the money and we have to be responsible with other people's tax dollars. That has always been a priority. But you can't sit in an office all day and worry about indicators and think you have done anything important or substantive economic development.

Other Reminiscences of USAID Tours

Q: OK, were there any other anecdotes from some of your posts that were unusual or illustrative of AID life or what it is like to see a program through. Did you want to share any of those?

LUCKE: Sure I can do a little bit. As I told you, I wrote a book about Mali. I want to write at least one more book so I think I am going to write a book that basically goes through all my countries with an essence on economic development challenges in each of them with a number of my true "war stories" thrown in that will make it interesting.

A friend of mine just wrote a great book that has motivated me as well. He is a former U.S. Ambassador and five time USAID Director like me. His book is entitled "The Dust

of Kandahar" about his service in Afghanistan. It has kind of inspired me to go back and write another book.

Q: OK, we certainly are always interested in the lessons learned. So where are you thinking of starting?

LUCKE: I am going to start at the beginning. I am going to start in Mali and tell different stories, a bit differently than I told in my first book. In Senegal, which was the river basin development story, I ended up going places where Americans just didn't go. I had several really good close encounters with President Bush 41 throughout my career and I will tell some of these, particularly about King Hussein's funeral in 1999.

In Senegal, Vice President Bush came through on his way to attend the funeral of Sékou Touré in Guinea. He stayed right next door to me at the Ambassador's residence. I had my three-year-old daughter on my shoulders waving an American flag when he drives by in his motorcade. He stops and rolls down the window and my daughter is waving the flag and opens his window and asks how I am doing. I had met him earlier that day at the Embassy and I told him that my wife was Dr. George Willeford's daughter. My father-in-law had helped Bush get started in Texas Republican politics years before when he was Texas Republican Party Chairman so I told him that the little girl waving the flag was George Willeford's granddaughter. He was delightful. As a junior officer, I got a lot of cred with my colleagues after that happened. The junior USAID guy knew the Vice President.

Then he came to Costa Rica for a celebration of "100 Years of Democracy" held in an elaborate downtown national theater. Daniel Ortega from Nicaragua was there looking like a Boy Scout in his Sandinista uniform. The Sandinista's looked pretty surly, I thought. Oscar Arias was the President at the time. Arias, at one point, led President Bush out into the crowd outside and the Secret Service went a little nuts, understandably. Arias said "Come on out, the people want to see you." Arias leads President Bush out into the crowd and he ends up hugging a sweet Costa Rican lady who was in his path. It was very touching.

As the event was ending, Bush was approached by President Menem of Argentina and President Borja of Ecuador challenging Bush and Baker to tennis doubles the next morning. President Bush says "I don't have a racket and I don't have tennis clothes, and neither does the Secretary". I was standing right there and rightly, or wrongly, offered to lend them anything they needed. I had plenty of rackets and tennis clothes galore so they sent a car to my house to pick up everything. So long story short, they played the next morning. I have a great picture of James Baker and President Bush dressed in my clothes with my rackets and beating the heck out of the Presidents of Ecuador and Argentina. Bush-Baker were good athletes and good tennis players. They used to win the senior doubles titles in Houston so I pretty much knew who was going to win. It was all in good fun and the losers were great sports. Anyway, that was another good story for me. Then when King Hussein dies in 1999, I volunteered myself to be Control Officer for Bush 41,

by now ex-President Bush. Clinton was President in 1999. I have such great stories from that too.

So those “war stories” will be part of the book along with the essence--economic developmental challenges and USAID’s responses as well as a few “lessons learned” I’ve picked up over the years. Tentative title is “Foreign Service Passages: Stories of an Improbable Career” but that will likely change. Look for it on Amazon someday..

End of interview