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

AMBASSADOR RONALD E. NEUMANN

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INTERVIEW

Q: This is a Foreign Affairs Oral History program interview with Ron Neumann. Today is the 30th of May, 2010 and we're here in the Washington DC area. This interview is being conducted under the auspices of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I'm David Reuther. Ron, you have a very interesting personal background and I must say at this point that both your mother and your father have already interviewed for this program. So you can correct the record now (laughs), but let's talk about some of your background. Where were you born?

NEUMANN: I was actually born in Washington, DC while my father was in World War II.

Q: What, Army?

NEUMANN: In the Army, yes. When the war came along he couldn't volunteer because he wasn't a citizen, so he had to volunteer for the draft. He could be drafted as a alien resident, a green card holder. But he couldn't volunteer for the army directly because he wasn't a citizen.

Q: Hm.

NEUMANN: So he volunteered for the draft and got drafted and for a while he was a interpreter in a prisoner of war camp in a prison in Colorado. In fact, he told me once he was sent there because they were going to have German prisoners and he was an

Austrian, native of Austria. And the day before they got the prisoners they were told they were getting Italians instead of Germans and --

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: -- and he had a little Italian. So he became the sole interpreter in the camp. But he eventually went overseas, went to England, switched to OSS (Office of Strategic Services), and went into Europe.

Q: And actually he had been a college instructor in Wisconsin prior to the war.

NEUMANN: He had been a professor in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Let's see. Had he gone to Oshkosh before the war started, that is, before the US entered the war? I don't really remember. If you checked -- because I know he went to Oshkosh after the war because we left there when I was three. I know he got his got his master's and his PhD both from the University of Minnesota, I think. Although I really don't remember for sure now. I'd have to look it up.

Q: You were born in September 1944.

NEUMANN: Right. At Walter Reed.

Q: Walter Reed, all right.

NEUMANN: History turns around because my son was born when I was in Vietnam. Although not in Walter Reed.

Q: The war ends shortly thereafter and your father then goes back to Wisconsin.

NEUMANN: Yeah. You're right, he was teaching. Because I remember my mother finished out teaching his classes when he went into the Army.

Q: Oh, for Pete's sakes. So what was growing up in Wisconsin like?

NEUMANN: I have no idea. I left when I was three-years-old. The only thing I know about Wisconsin is I've still got two of my father's pipes that were made in Oshkosh so that I know that as of this date I'm smoking a pipe that's got to be a minimum of 62-years-old.

Q: So where mainly did you grow up?

NEUMANN: California. We went to California when I was three.

Q: What part of California?

NEUMANN: Los Angeles to -- my father taught at the University of California, Los Angeles, UCLA. And he was there for quite a few years.

Q: Well, so you were a surfing dude when you grew up?

NEUMANN: Not really. I was kind of a nerd is I think more the case, although I liked hiking. I was a boy scout and all those things. We also spent some time abroad. Wet traveled in the summers and then twice when I was growing up we lived abroad for a year when my father was teaching. So when I was five going on six we lived in Paris. And when I was nine and 10, which I have more memory of, we –had a split year, the first half in Bordeaux, the second half in Strasbourg. And because we were going to be split, he was teaching one semester in each place, my mother decided she would teach me. So that year I was home schooled with the Calvert system. I remember that they sent us a box that included not only the instruction manual in the books, but the paper and the pencils and the erasers and everything you needed. You were totally self-contained with that box. And it told the teacher what to do. It was actually probably the best year I had in grammar school

In Bordeaux we lived on a house that was right on the street. This was in 1954. France was still very much recovering from World War II. I remember one of the oddities was we actually had an icebox. Not a figure of speech, but a refrigerator where the iceman came every few days with a big block of ice and a pair of tongs and stuck it in the top of the icebox. And the house was also heated with the stove that was in the kitchen and that heated the radiators. Then I think one of the neatest memories of that time -- I guess I was probably nine-years-old -- was that the house was right on the street. Literally you opened the window and you could touch a passerby on the sidewalk. And in those days in France a guy would come down the street with a pushcart selling fresh bread. And so class always had a recess in midmorning when the bread seller came by and we would buy a warm baguette and devour it.

Then the second semester we went to Strasbourg and there housing was very short because a lot of the war damage hadn't been repaired. And that worked out pretty well because we ended up renting the ground floor of a chateau outside of town. The owners lived in the upstairs and we had the ground floor. And this was a 17th century chateau. It was originally a fort, but it was built on low ground, which was a bad idea, so it was taken and burned several times in various wars. And in the French Revolution they took the towers off. But it still had about a half a moat and 10 acres of fields. It was a wonderful place for a kid growing up. But it was also a real throwback to living in a different, older time because there was no central heating. Rooms were heated with beautiful porcelain stoves in the corner of each room and the stoves had a little door that you could put the coal in and another door down below to take the ash out. And then they had a door out in the hallway. When the chateau was built people had lots of servants so they would come along in the hallway and put coal in from there and you didn't have to be bothered in the room. The trouble was that we had no servants except a maid. I used to go down to the coal cellar, literally, and get coal and bring it up. And one of the results of heating that way was that we only heated the rooms we were in. So we never used the

dining room except for a party because it was too much trouble to heat the dining room just for a meal.

I remember also in that house there was no refrigerator, but there was a cold room. It was an interior room and it had chicken wire around big broad shelves so you could keep all your fruits and vegetables and things like that there, and they stayed pretty cool. And the chicken wire would keep rats or mice from getting into them. And we did have a maid, Claude or Claudette. My mother probably has that in her notes. But it was a wonderful life for a 10-year-old. You could go running all around the hills and there were some old fortifications of the Maginot Line collapsing into the forest. And you could find a bunker or two to prowl in. Great stuff as a kid.

Q: Now, did you have siblings?

NEUMANN: I had one brother. He's seven years younger.

Q: So you'd done all this exploring by yourself.

NEUMANN: Yeah, most of it. Once I had a friend that I'd made in a summer trip in Austria who came and visited me. We've lost touch since. Because my father was often teaching in the summer or lecturing there were a number of summers, I don't even remember how many, abroad. And so usually we'd go and he would do his thing. And either we would take off with my mother or we would all get together at the end. And so there were several -- not ever year, but there were several summers in Switzerland. I remember at one point we went to Brittany and took a bicycle trip. And my mother had our limited baggage on the back of her bike and I had my brother on the back of mine. He must have been about seven.

Q: (laughs) You actually started off with quite a bit of international experience.

NEUMANN: Yes. And then my father was instrumental in starting the first diplomat in residence program at UCLA. And he started an international affairs teaching center or something. I'm giving it the wrong name. But the result was we always had foreigners and academics and Foreign Service officers wandering through the house.

Q: Did you do your high school primarily back in the States?

NEUMANN: Except for those two years of primary education, all my education was in the states. I went to Venice High School in L.A. and then I went to Riverside (UCR) for university. By that time I had met Elaine, who's still my wife. And I wanted to go away from home, but I didn't want to go so far away that I couldn't get home for some weekends. I also wanted not to be at UCLA because I knew too any of the professors there who'd known me since I was a small child. You know, when you're 18 you like this idea of being on your own. So I went off to Riverside, which was a good school. It was then fairly new as a general campus with excellent teachers, professors. But I wanted to be away. And that only worked to a certain extent because the first year I was there they

got a new vice chancellor and he came from the Political Science Department of UCLA where my father had been teaching. And the next year we got a new chancellor and he came from the Political Science Department at UCLA. And I remember that I thought I should go call on him because he was somebody who'd been a particular friend of my parents. And so I went to see the secretary. This was in my sophomore year. I was really getting into this, you know, Mr. Neumann adult in college business. And I went to see the secretary and told her I'd like to pay a courtesy call on the chancellor, but it didn't really matter when, any time he had time. And she said, "Well, let me check with him."

And so she disappears into his office and I'm standing there enjoying being Mr. Neumann and I hear this booming voice come out of the other room, "Come in, Ronnie," *(laughs).* And I knew right then my theory wasn't working.

Q: (laughs) Now, you started in 1962?

NEUMANN: University? Yes.

Q: And so you were a freshman -- well, you would have at that time there was the change from the 1950s to the 1960s all wrapped up in the presidential election and Kennedy coming on board. And you would have felt that sort of stuff. But you're a freshman then and Kennedy gets assassinated.

NEUMANN: Yeah, I was driving into a gas station right below the university to have my '56 Chevy looked at for some reason. And I remember that's where I was when I heard the news that he'd been killed. I suppose everybody in my generation can tell you where they were when they heard that news.

Q: Did that engender any particular thoughts as to what you wanted to do with yourself?

NEUMANN: I had actually already made up my mind to join the Foreign Service. I made that decision in the 10th grade. I was clearly outwardly directed, you know, not going around searching for my life's purpose. I made up my mind early and stuck to it. It just took a long time to get there. And so it was not part of a career decision – related to Kennedy's death. But the formative influence on my time, obviously, was the Vietnam War, which was progressively roiling campuses in the middle '60s. And I was a supporter of the intervention. I don't know if I feel that strongly about it now, but I was then. And that was pretty much of a minority viewpoint on any campus of a University of California. Riverside was not nearly as vocal as UCLA or Berkley. We weren't having riots and mobs. But supporting the war was pretty much a minority viewpoint. And so when the war enlarged with President Johnson's decision to add more troops I decided to put my money where my mouth was. So I ended up volunteering. Actually I tried to enlist in the Marines and they wouldn't take me as an officer because my eyes were bad. So then I went down and volunteered for the Army. And they also told me my eyes were bad, but I guess they needed people more because they gave me an almost automatic waiver. Any of them would have taken me as a soldier, but I wanted to be an officer. So they gave me an automatic waiver, but the waiver was only for non-combat arms and I

was signed up for the Transportation Corps. But that wasn't really what I wanted. I wrote a long letter to the Surgeon General's Office; I don't know how long it was, but it seemed long at the time, and I explained that I hiked and I was a rock climber and I fenced and Teddy Roosevelt took seven pairs of spare glasses to Cuba and since I could do all this would they please give me a second waiver so I could go fight. And eventually they did, although it didn't happen until I was in Afghanistan. So eventually I got what I wanted and told them to tear up the transportation enlistment and enlist me for the infantry, which eventually they did.

Q: Well, let's back up a little bit.

NEUMANN: Let's back up a little bit.

Q: You decided by the 10th grade that you wanted to be in the Foreign Service. Does this affect things that you're starting to read or pay attention to?

NEUMANN: I don't know how much it did. I mean I always had an interest in the world. I still went ahead as a history major, rather than political science. I argued at the time that history was as good or better a preparation for the Foreign Service as political science. At the time it was essentially a sophistry because I wanted to study history. But over the years I've actually decided that I was accidentally correct and that I think history is a better background for the diplomatic profession than political science.

Q: Were you interested in any particular countries' history or history of a time?

NEUMANN: For my BA in history the main focus was divided between 17th century Europe and the Western expansion. And in Riverside if you wanted to graduate with honors in the History Department you had to do a thesis for your BA. I actually did mine on how violent the cowboys really were. That was a lot of fun. I went off to Topeka where they had the Kansas State Historical Society and read all the surviving newspaper runs from the boomtowns. I read all the memoirs that cowboys wrote in the '20s and '30s when all of a sudden being a cowboy suddenly would pay money if you wrote a memoir. Some of them were real whoppers, but some of them were pretty accurate. I produced my honor's thesis, which I eventually tried to turn into a book, but couldn't find any publishers. That was some years later and it seemed it wasn't academic enough to be a scholarly publication and it wasn't quite popular enough for the popular press, so it never saw the light of day.

Q: Well, what was your conclusion?

NEUMANN: My conclusion was that the cowboys were a great deal less violent than movies depict. But part of that I think was that because there was no law, because people were more respectful of each other in general because there was no external or legal restraint. But when things broke out then of course there was fighting. On the other hand, there are a number of ideas that have come down that are pure myths. I mean one is the idea of the fair fight. There was a code of a fair fight, but it meant that if somebody had

said he was trying to kill another person the other person was entitled to shoot on sight. And that didn't really matter whether it was back or front. So this idea of the fast draw on the street was a very rare occurrence. It did happen. I read about one -- I forget which one of the Kansas cattle towns it was -- maybe Newton--where there were two folks shooting at each other in a room full of smoke and dodging around a potbellied stove as they tried to get shots at each other and finally crawling around the floor to see legs because the room was full of powder smoke. But the popular picture of a gunfight in the movies is wacky, first of all because nowadays in movies they always use smokeless powder. But in point of fact, you know, up through the 1880s most people were still shooting black powder and it had a lot of smoke. And secondly, very few people died on the scene of a gunfight. Most of them died of infection later because when you got shot you not only had a big ball, but you had several layers of dirty clothes carried into the wound as well. And medicine was pretty primitive. So there was violence, but not nearly with the kind of brutality of the movies where I think in many cases they've really converted urban gang warfare backwards into Western legend.

Q: There were some rangers. Wasn't the movie "Shane" dealing with some range wars --

NEUMANN: Oh, there were some big range wars --

Q: -- in the 1880s?

NEUMANN: There are some big ones. In the Lincoln County War, which involved Billy the Kid, 30 or 40 people got killed in. There was one in Arizona called the Pleasant Valley War, which wiped out the better part of two families. There was one in Colorado where a group of big ranchers thought that small owners that they called nesters were taking too much of their land. And they actually hired a whole lot of gunmen and a special train and brought the gunmen in by train and this invading army proceeded to get stuck on their first battle where they eventually killed a couple of people but one fellow held them off all day from his house. Eventually troops were called in and surrounded these guys, and they eventually surrendered about the time the army was going to roll a wagonload of dynamite down on the house they were in. But in the end, their political ties were so good that none of them were ever convicted.

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: And it was -- it was quite a story.

Q: So you graduated in '66 now.

NEUMANN: Yeah, back to contemporary. I graduated in '66. I had taken the Foreign Service exam and I had not passed it the first time. I was going tot have to take it again. And of course his was a great shock to my ego. I decided since I was going to have another year I was going to stay in school. So I got my master's in '67. They didn't have a thesis for the master's, so I was able to romp through that in a year. I also got married in '66 before I graduated.

Q: So you would have had to taken the written exam?

NEUMANN: So I had to take the written exam a second time.

Q: And --

NEUMANN: To my irritation.

Q: Practice makes perfect.

NEUMANN: Practice makes perfect. I eventually got in. And I've been telling people many years now, don't get discouraged if you don't pass the first time.

Q: Now, the second part of the Foreign Service entrance procedure though is the oral interview.

NEUMANN: Mm-hmm.

Q; Did you do that out there in California too?

NEUMANN: I did that in California. Of course it was very different then from what it is now. It was much looser. It wasn't as structured as it is now. Because I remember there was some question they asked me and it was something where I happened – I don't remember what the question was, but it was something where I happened to know quite a bit of, something I'd studied in college. I deliberately gave them an answer that sounded a little bit wild because I was trying to draw them into asking me a follow-up so I could wow them with my knowledge. But the ploy failed because they just moved on to the next question. But I guess I had a certain maneuvering streak in me, even at that age.

Q: Now, this is three guys at a table --

NEUMANN: Yeah.

Q: -- and you're sitting in front.

NEUMANN: Yeah.

Q: That sort of --

NEUMANN: All I remember about the exam is one episode where they gave me some scenario that was, you know, some excruciating situation and then they say, "What do you do?"

And I remember my first answer was, "I think I'll take two aspirin," *(laughs).*

Q: And when did you pass?

NEUMANN: Let's see. We used to take the exam in the winter. So it must have been some time in '67 that I actually passed the exam.

Q: And they didn't offer you a job right away or --

NEUMANN: Or they were ter --

Q: -- you were already committed to the Army or --

NEUMANN: Both. I was already committed to the Army, but also things were terribly slow in that period. Under President Johnson they really held down entry. There was even a year or two where we had no Foreign Service classes coming in. And in fact when I went into the Army I fully expected that I would have to extend my enlistment by at least another six months to keep a paycheck until there was a Foreign Service class. So it was very slow. But they also had a procedure where if you went into the Army they would put you on a sort of frozen list so that you didn't have to retake the exam. Your eligibility period did not expire and then you would come off that list when you were out of the Army, or out of the Service.

Q: And that was the rule at the time --

NEUMANN: Yeah.

Q: -- that properly passing the exam meant you were eligible for a year if they didn't pick you up in that year.

NEUMANN: I don't remember what --

Q: Then you had to go start over.

NEUMANN: Yeah. It might have been longer than a year because classes were coming so infrequently. I have a vague memory that it might have been two or three years you were eligible. But I may be wrong in that.

Q: So let's get this in train here. Graduating with a master's, '67, you've passed the Foreign Service exam, enlisted in the Army --

NEUMANN: Well, actually --

Q: But you take some time off --

NEUMANN: Actually I went to Afghanistan *(laughs).* Well, I had a three and a half month delay on my enlistment. And my father had become ambassador to Afghanistan in 1967. He was a political appointee, a Republican who had supported Johnson against

Goldwater. And so he was a Republican who was suggested to Johnson by former Republican senator from California, Kuchel, and then nominated by Johnson. Of course subsequently he went on to stay in Afghanistan under Nixon and go to Morocco as ambassador under Ford. He was out during Carter years. Then he went to Saudi Arabia under Reagan. And so he was a political appointee who spent nine years as ambassador in three posts under four presidents of two parties. But of course that was all in the future. In 1967 he had just gone off to Afghanistan. We had three and a half months to spare before I had to report to duty. So we went out to visit my parents.

Q: Now, is this paid for by the Foreign Service?

NEUMANN: Oh no, no --

Q: Children --

NEUMANN: No. We were too old for that. I was 21 then.

Q: OK.

NEUMANN: So no, my parents paid. I certainly didn't because I had no money
Q: OK. You went to Afghanistan, stayed with your folks in the summer of '77.

NEUMANN: Yeah, with my wife.

Q: What was Afghanistan like in those days?

NEUMANN: Primitive. It was just beginning development and general joke was on the order that this was a country moving rapidly from the 13th to the 15th century. But it was also a friendly place. Occasionally you'd have problems. There were some areas where people were cautioned not to go to because of banditry. But Elaine and I traveled all over that country, sometimes with my parents, sometimes not. For instance, we were down in Kandahar at one point, where all the violence is now, and we found that the flight back had been canceled and there was some reason, a party or something, we wanted to be back in Kabul for the next day. Somebody had a car that they needed to get back to Kabul and I just borrowed the car and drove it back to Kabul with my wife. Nobody thought anything of that. We went with an engineer, an AID (Agency for International Development) engineer and an Afghan engineer and we drove all the way across the center of Afghanistan from Heart to Kabul. And we stayed at the hot springs at Obie where the mineral water came out of a hole in the side of the rock and you pulled a rag out of the hole to let the water out. And you put the rag in as a the stopper at the bottom of the tub, and that was great until the water got up to the top of the tub and you realized if you pulled the stopper out of the bottom it was all going to empty, and if you didn't it was going to overflow. About that time you noticed that there was a drain channel that ran along the side by these -- I don't know what they were, marble tubs, and that was the way it was supposed to be. And so we went on. It was -- at least as I remember it now -- it was 36 passes and seven river fords, a five-day trips through the center of Afghanistan,

all dirt roads. We camped at the lakes of Band-e Amir that are beautiful and we stayed in Bamiyan where the Buddhists were. And so we really saw a lot of Afghanistan.

I went with a hunting party up into the northeast, into what's called the Wakhan corridor, that's the little panhandle of Afghanistan carved out by British and Russian diplomacy in the 19th century. I went with a group that was going to go hunting Marco Polo sheep. That's a mountain sheep with horns that do a full curl and a half. I guess being the ambassador's son helped because I got invited to go. I just went with a camera, but it was a long trip because we went first by road up through Faizabad and out to the end of the road at a place called Qala Panja. Anyway, there was a strange little wood house built in this barren countryside that had been shipped up there for the king. That was the end of the road. Then we got horses -- actually, first, sometime in midmorning we got donkeys. And they said, "Put all your baggage on the donkeys and the horses will be along later," so we did. And I watched with some consternation as all my goods went off on these donkeys. And it was some hours before horses showed up. But in fact they did and we moved along so smartly that we passed the donkeys and got well up some valley. And then when night came the donkeys were well behind us and it got cold quickly in the mountains so we were all wrapped up in sweaty horse blankets until the donkeys showed up with our coats and sleeping bags. We went on the next day by horse over a 13,000-foot pass.

The cavalcade got very large because in Afghanistan when you rent the horse the man who owns it goes along too. So you double the number of people for the riding amounts and then you add horses for the baggage. By the time you've got your horses and all the people that go with it with them you're at, you know, 30 odd for a group that started off at five or something. We went over one pass and it was a 13-hour day in the saddle. But you had to finish because most of the horse owners don't have any kind of sleeping bags. And at that altitude you have to get down into the valley to the stone huts of the shepherd's camp where the sheep spend the summer. We did that and we traded the horses the next day for yaks and then we rode yaks up into the hunting area. We based camped at around 13, 14,000 feet and hunted up to about 15 or so. So I saw quite a piece of the country. But we were also at more normal places, Mazār-i-Sharīf and Herat briefly and driving down to Jalalabad. But Elaine drove through the Khyber Pass while I was off hunting. We saw quite a bit of the country in our three and a half months.

Q: Who was this hunting group? Just some embassy people?

NEUMANN: No, it was a couple of wealthy Americans. There was a pretty stiff price for the hunting permit for these sheep. A license to shoot one included the whole expedition, which was run by the government that controlled the thing. And it was -- my memory is $5,000 per sheep. But that was 1967 so $5,000 was a lot more money then.

Q: Must have been beautiful terrain and clear nights.

NEUMANN: Oh, it was fantastic. The mountains go up to 22,000 feet. I remember one point we were riding across a slope where we were maybe halfway up a slope that was three or 4,000 feet long. You just felt like ants moving on the face of the earth.

Q: Now you came back from that and picked up your army enlistment.

NEUMANN: Actually, while I was in Afghanistan I got the news that my second waiver had been approved. I think it had nothing to do with the letter I wrote and everything to do with the fact that they were losing second lieutenants faster than they were getting them. But in any event, I wrote back and asked that my transportation enlistment be torn up and that I be reenlisted for the infantry. And that was followed by very long silence. Of course in those days we didn't have email and cell phones and these things. Eventually, I got the word. Well, it turned out later my father had wired back to his desk officer to see if he could find out what was happening. Unknown to me, the Defense Attaché had also sent back the Pentagon and this all became clearer after I was back when I dropped in to see the friendly recruiting sergeant. After all, who wouldn't be friendly to some idiot who wants to enlist in the Infantry? And, and they said to me when I walked back in, "Who do you know?"

And I said, "What do you mean, who do I know?" Well, it turned out on one in the same date *the* State Department, probably some junior desk officer, had called up to inquire about my enlistment. And at the same time their colonel at the main station in Los Angeles had gotten a call from *the* Pentagon wanting to know about this fellow's enlistment. And so they were quite stunned that *the* State Department and *the* Pentagon were all wanting to know why I could not get enlisted in the Infantry.

Q: So you did your basic at Fort Dix.

NEUMANN: I did basic and AIT (Advanced Infantry Training) at Fort Dix. I had no earthly idea why except that it was the policy. All OCS candidates, Officer Candidate School, went to Fort Dix, although I enlisted in California. I remember I went down to the recruiting station at 7:00 a.m. as required, having had very little sleep, and I sat all day. About noon everybody else that was getting inducted that day was put on a bus and they went to Fort Ord in California. But I sat there until 5:00 p.m. because OCS candidates go to Fort Dix. At 5:00 p.m. they took me out to the airport, but that was because they were closing the office, not because the plane was going. The plane actually left about 10:00 p.m. that night and it was a Delta flight that made at least two stops. So every time I started to get to sleep it would be landing and you had to raise your seat, put your tray table up. And then when it got to Newark, Newark was fogged in so that the plane was diverted to Baltimore. In Baltimore they put us on a train, which was fine. But when we got off the train at Newark we were just on our own. I had no idea how to get to Fort Dix. So I was walking around with my little bag and somebody told me well, you go down this street two or three blocks and there's a bus stop and that bus gets you to Newark Airport and at Newark Airport you can get another bus to Fort Dix, which I eventually did. And by that time it was 5:00 on the second day since this process had started and they gave me a little bitty slip of paper with barracks number and a hat that

wanted to fall down over my eyes, except for my glasses keeping it up, and a coat that was too long in back, and a roll of bedding under one arm and said, “It’s too late to do the rest of in processing tonight. Find the barracks that we’ve written on this little slip of paper and we’ll see you in the morning.”

So by this time it was about 7:00 at night. It was starting to rain. I was trying to keep this little piece of paper dry, grope in the dark for this barracks, it’s November, cold, with this hat falling over my eyes and the coat trailing behind me, thinking to myself, “Welcome to the U.S. Army.”

Q: (laughs) Valley Forge. How long was the training in Fort Dix then?

NEUMANN: I guess it was four months. Two months of basic training, two months of advanced infantry training, AIT. Then I went to Fort Benning, Georgia for Officer Candidate School. I think that was March of ’68.

Q: And now Fort Benning wasn’t that Green Beret and all that sort of --

NEUMANN: Benning was home of the airborne. In fact, the airborne trainees used to really frustrate people in our OCS company because we had some that were already airborne, paratroopers that had decided to become officers. But at OCS you weren’t allowed to wear any insignia except the little OCS brass. And so we’d be running or hiking out to a range and a truckload of guys for the airborne training would come by shouting insults. The derogatory term the airborne had for non-airborne is “leg,” like straight leg. And so they’d shout, “Leg,” and it would just really frost the airborne guys in the OCS class. But they weren’t allowed to say anything.

Q: Now, while you were in training Ted Offensive itself breaks out in Vietnam. Was there much awareness of that?

NEUMANN: Yeah, we were an Infantry OCS class, we’re all going to Vietnam. We’re all going to fight. They didn’t want anybody going anyplace else.

Q: So when Ted blows up I mean it made it all that much more serious.

NEUMANN: No kidding, it’s war. But I mean that’s what we enlisted for. We were all serious. I mean it has some impact. For instance, we had a peer rating as well as all the other ratings and all the pressures they put you through, because OCS was a pretty high-pressure thing. Lots of it was kind of chicken stuff, harassment to see if you could take the pressure. But some of it was real effective too. Field training was very good. But one of the things we had in addition to all the rating they did was a peer rating that we had two or three times, where each person rated everybody else in the student platoon on a whole variety of things. But really we rated each other on one issue only. If I’m in trouble in combat do I want to depend on this man to come save me. And if your answer was no you just gave him a zero for everything, comportment, manners, intelligence. It didn’t matter. You wanted him out of the program. So it was pretty savage, but it was honest.

Q: And when did you actually arrive in Vietnam? What was your unit?

NEUMANN: May 1970. After Fort Benning everybody got some time in the real Army, more or less, before going from training to Vietnam. I went to Fort Bragg, North Caroline for six months and actually was in a psychological operations unit. In many ways it was a very nice posting and Elaine got to join me. We were doing the precursor of area studies at that time, so I got to go to Washington two or three times to talk to people in the State Department and other places, which was all fun. I don't think the work amounted to much quality, but it was fun. But I decided it was not what I wanted to do in Vietnam. In fact, I thought psychological operations in those days was pretty useless. There was a general, I think his name was Flannigan, who had said somewhat derogatory terms about the psychological leaflet bales that used to be dropped out of planes in those days said that if you leave the wire on the leaflet bales you'd kill more VC (Viet Cong). Anyway, yeah, I was sort of that view of psychological operations.

I went to jungle training for two weeks. They sent us down to Panama in the Canal Zone. It was very good country to be training in, but it was not a very good training course because they'd only changed the course just before we got there from being a course for a fairly junior enlisted personnel to being a course for officers. They really hadn't adjusted their training program yet. Their classes were geared to people who'd had a lot less training than we had received so we could probably have gotten more out of the course. But it had its amusing moments, like the course on artillery adjustment by sound, because in the jungle you can't see where the rounds are landing. And the instructor obviously hadn't changed his notes and so he started off by saying, "Now, you may not think this is important, but some day the platoon leader may be dead and the forward observer may be wounded and so you may have to do this." And he's standing here in front of a class that is entirely composed of infantry and artillery second lieutenants, except for five senior NCOs (non-commissioned officer). The rest of the entire student class was officers.

And so I turned to the fellow next to me and said, "Oh, I guess we don't have to worry. I'm dead and you're wounded."

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: But it was good, you know, we got a first look at the jungle, we got to get soaked for a week in the monsoon. We learned to sleep in a hammock, which was very nice but totally useless because in actual combat conditions sleeping at the bursting height of a mortar is really a bad idea. So I never slept in a hammock in Vietnam. But if you're ever camping on a sleep slope it's nice to be able to deploy a hammock if you have one. It was a strange course in other ways too because the NCOs, who ran most of the training were all outranked by everybody in our company. The instructors were all Puerto Ricans who had moved to Panama because it was close to Puerto Rico and they liked the environment. Good NCOs, they just happened to all be Puerto Ricans so there were a lot of Spanish accents. And the colonel in charge of the program was a very strange fellow from New York who used to walk around with a pressure gauge and check

the tire pressure on vehicles. We all thought he was a little strange. The reason I tell you this is because after three days leave we were the on a plane to Vietnam. Two thirds of the plane probably was people who'd been in this jungle-training course in Panama. And somehow one of the people from our class who had a knack for impersonating accents got on the plane's PA (public address) system. And all of a sudden this voice is coming across on the PA system, first with a very Hispanic accent talking about the proper grip of the machete, and then with this New York accent talking about tire pressure. It was just an absolute stitch. To the two thirds of the plane who had come out of this course all understood what this skit was about. We were breaking up in hysterical laughter. The other third had no idea on earth what was going on and were looking completely puzzled. And every time we would begin to stop laughing we'd look at one of these other passengers who was completely blank, and that would set us off again in hysterics. That was the only good moment that I remember on a flight that I think was 19 hours from San Francisco to Tan Son Nhut outside of Saigon.

Anyway, when I got there, as I said earlier, I knew I really didn't want to go to a psychological operations outfit and so I kept waiting for somebody that I could talk to about what I really wanted to do, which was go to the infantry. And for two days we had almost no human contact. Corporals and privates came in with papers and collected the papers and took them away. At the end of two days everybody got their assignments, and all the other people in the group who'd come out of psychological operations were assigned to psychological operations units and I was assigned to an infantry brigade. I'd never had any human interaction, but somehow I got what I wanted. So I went up to the northern end of the country, the first Corp or I-Corp we'd call it, and joined the Fifth Infantry Division. There was a brigade of the fifth infantry up there. The rest of the area was under the control of the Marines. We were the only Army brigade in the area and were attached to the Marines until they began their pullout and we began to take over their positions in 1970.

Q: Was that army to start that process or ---

NEUMANN: No.

Q: -- were they up there to --

NEUMANN: We'd been up there -- we were part of the force up there consisting of one mechanized infantry battalion, one armored battalion, our very, very straight infantry battalion that I was in, the First battalion of the 11th infantry. Of course that designation is a regiment; 11th infantry. In fact, we didn't have regiments anymore. We just had battalions that used to belong to regiments. So every unit in the U.S. Army has a regimental designation, but we haven't had regiments for a long time so the battalions could be anywhere. And we had a cavalry troop as well, the recon outfit, as I recollect. We were posted right up along the DMZ (demilitarized zone). That was our area. As the Marines left we began to take over Marine positions that were right on the DMZ, firebases like Chon Tien and a place where we had some artillery called Charlie Two. Kason had been evacuated. Nobody was out that far, but we had a place up on Dong Ha

Mountain. It was called landing zone or LZ Fuller and it overlooked the road to Kason. That was the furthest west position that we had U.S. troops in that part of Vietnam.

Q: What was the basic nature of your unit's assignment.

NEUMANN: Patrol, stay around, look for the enemy. We ran a lot of sweeps and things like that, most of which I think were not terribly useful. The second company commander though that we got really was a master. Stanley Blunt, and never was a man more aptly named. But he was a great soldier. I think he'd been with the 173rd airborne as a lieutenant until he was wounded, and then he'd come back after he recovered and spent a year with the ARVN, the Army of the Republican of Vietnam, as a battalion advisor. Then he had extended his tour in Vietnam by six months in order to get a U.S. Infantry Company. When I left he had extended for another six months in order to keep the company for three months. He never asked anybody to do anything he wouldn't do himself. He was a fine soldier. He didn't take risks unnecessarily. I remember when he joined the company he said he was going to teach us to do ambushes and hide. And I, in my arrogant wisdom of three months in the field, thought, "This is pretty silly, you know, how ya going to hide 120 heavy footed infantrymen?" And he taught us he could do it. We would go into an area and we would break down into platoons, unless we were right up on the DMZ. And we would find trails. We would dig several different night defense positions on low ground in bushes, rather than high ground. Then we would build automatically detonated mines out of claymore mines that we linked together with blasting cord and trip wires. To this day I'm probably the only ambassador that could build you what we now call and IED with three claymores wired together. We would put those on some trail and then we would slide into our night position just before dark. We'd carry five days of food. We wouldn't take any helicopter resupplies for five days, and when we took a helicopter resupply we took it first thing in the morning so that we could move out and be someplace else by night. In fact, when we got the helicopter resupply we didn't take the standard marmite cans that the hot food came in. Our food came out packed in these big metal tubes that artillery shells come in that had been washed out. They put our food into these artillery tube shells. Then when we were done with breakfast we'd fire a clip into the shells, put a lot of holes in them so no one else could use them and we would move out for the morning. The technique worked. I mean we had more successful ambushes than any other company. By that time I was coming out of the field, going into the rear as company executive officer. But we had, North Vietnamese soldiers walk into our ambushes with their rifles slung on their shoulder with no idea there was anybody out there. We killed quite a few of the enemy.

Q: It's an interesting illustration of training and mentoring, which is valuable for any kind of --

NEUMANN: There's more than the school solution. To make this make a little more sense, the demilitarized zone was basically depopulated. The villages had either been bombed or they were in free fire zones so people had evacuated. It was an area where we wanted to keep supplies, and troops from moving down from North Vietnam into the South. It wasn't an area of population protection or intermingled villages. In fact, the Viet

Cong in our area were completely destroyed by the time I was up there. They were a tiny remnant of malaria-ridden folk. And they were really no threat to anybody. Our threat was regular North Vietnamese Army Forces. This was not a guerilla war or an insurgency where I was. This was a regular war being fought with irregular tactics. Elsewhere I'm sure it was an insurgency but the enemy I fought were not to be confused with a popular movement. These were people in nice, clean khaki uniforms and little pith helmets that came across from the north. We weren't allowed to shoot across the demilitarized line as a result of an arrangement that had been made sometime earlier. And so when we sat up at Con Tien we could watch the truck lights from the North Vietnamese Army delivering supplies down on the other side of the demilitarized zone. And in fact, there was one fight that my company got in, although I missed it because I was in the hospital probably with malaria, and they were reinforcing right across the DMZ.

Q: And how long was your enlistment?

NEUMANN: My enlistment was for two years of active service after commissioning. You enlisted first and then when were commissioned after about ten months, we were released from service -- whatever the proper word for that is -- discharged, and then immediately reenlisted. Of course they kept us all in the mess hall so we couldn't hide, but we were immediately reenlisted for two years. However, when I was ending my tour in Vietnam I got a letter from the Foreign Service saying there was class starting and could I make this class. That was unusual because they hadn't been recruiting too many classes. I hunted around in the regulations and I found a provision for an early release for national service or something like that, that I thought could make work. I thought, "Well, I've done what I came to do." So I put in my paperwork and I learned my first great bureaucratic lesson of the U.S. Government: *keep a copy* because they lost the paperwork. So I made it all out again. About that time I finished my tour in Vietnam and came home and halfway into my 30-day leave I got a telegram that said my release had been approved. A couple weeks later I was in Washington with the Foreign Service.

Q: Now, at the time you were in Vietnam, your father came out.

NEUMANN: That is correct. This was an odd adventure, and probably the greatest experience of culture shock I've ever had. My father routed himself from some visit in the States back to Kabul via Saigon. A fact I hadn't remembered until I was going through some letters last night to refresh my memory for this tape, but at one point apparently I wasn't sure I could actually go meet him because the first sergeant was going to be on leave. But in the end I got leave. It was kind of funny because I had been up on top of Dong Ha Mountain with the company and the North Vietnamese were trying to hit us with mortars. They were hitting on each side of the mountain but they couldn't quite figure out how to hit the top. So when I got down off the mountain the first sergeant told me that there was a major who was the control officer in Saigon and I needed to call him and tell him when I was arriving. The first sergeant had obviously been having a great deal of fun with this poor major, telling him that I was on a mountain and they didn't know if I would get off and we were under fire. It was all most amusing. And then he told me I had to call Saigon and I looked at one of these crank phones like you see in

old war movies where you crank the handle and then you talk to the battalion switch. We were way up at the other end of the country from Saigon and I wondered how in the world you could use this crank phone to make a call to Saigon. It was usually trouble to get through to brigade. But the first sergeant was obviously having fun. He said, “Sit down, sir.” He started cranking that phone and screaming about priority call for Saigon. And before you knew it he had this call patched through I don’t know how many switchboards. So I left for Saigon.

One day I’m up on a mountain getting shot at and the next I’m sitting on the patio of Ellsworth Bunker’s ambassadorial residence where the great man is sitting in his bathrobe with his bare legs sticking out having his breakfast melon. It all seemed very civilized except for the claymore mines that were in the rose bed. My father showed up later that day and we had a wonderful two days. They gave us a little VIP (very important person) toured down to the delta where we met John Paul Vann, a name to reckon with in Vietnam. He was still arguing at this point in 1969 that the Tet Offensive of the year before had been a failure for the Vietnamese. It was not the victory it was made out to be in the US press. Politically they had surfaced their network and lost most of it. They’d alienated Vietnamese. He believed that this was a huge strategic opportunity. Of course, by that point nobody in the United States wanted to hear about that.

I reread a number of my letters thinking that maybe it would be better if I actually had facts for this interview. There are some interesting comparisons with Afghanistan where nobody’s moving without big force protection units and things. In 1969 or early in 1970 in the northern part, we had some big battles. But I drove in a Jeep from Quảng Tri down to Hue with just a driver when I had to pick up a prisoner. We had barbeques on the beach at Qua Viet. We had patrols inland. We had, you know, we had security out when we did that. But you had a lot of movement going on without any particular extra security other than the weapons we were carrying ourselves. And -- having now gone through Algeria and Iraq and Afghanistan, it was interesting to me to see how much, at least in our part of Vietnam, we had enough control that we weren’t doing armored convoy movements.

Q: Whereas in these latter days one was.

NEUMANN: Yes.

Q: Now, in --

NEUMANN: Of course I was a higher profile target in the latter days.

Q: The trip that you took with the father down to the delta, you were -- you said on a previous occasion that it -- what was interesting about it was you had to be fastened into --

NEUMANN: Oh, the helicopter ride was very bizarre to me. We didn’t have very many helicopters up where we were operating. But when we did they were very stripped down.

You sat on the floor, there were no doors, and as soon as they touched down you got out of it as quickly as possible because you might get shot at and you're vulnerable in the landing zone. So we got in this VIP helicopter to go down to the delta and it had seats and it had seatbelts and then they insisted on closing the doors and they wouldn't take off until we fastened the seatbelts. I thought this was all very odd and very discomforting.

Q: What did your father think of this trip?

NEUMANN: He enjoyed it. Beyond that, I don't know that I remember more at this point. I mean we talked a lot about the war. Obviously he had both political concerns and his son was there. But he was also a supporter. So we were seeing things the same way. I mean it was odd for him, I think, because I know he had served in two small revolutions in Austria and he had been in a concentration camp and he'd gone to war himself. Yet all of that seemed far more natural than having his son go off to a war. He always had to deal with balancing pride and worry. Now that I'm a father, although my son fortunately is not going to go off to war, I think I have a better understanding of this.

Q: Now, you've found the paperwork loophole to transfer immediately forthwith to the Foreign Service rather than --

NEUMANN: By the way, I found that last night.

Q: Ah, photograph, helmet, M-16, backpack, glasses. Holding the helmet up, I can tell. Awesome. One would think it'd be fairly contemporary, because the terrain in this photograph looks sandy, deserty --

NEUMANN: Yeah.

Q: Not jungly at all.

NEUMANN: Yeah.

Q: Interesting. Any final thoughts on something you learned in Vietnam that stuck with you in later service..

NEUMANN: One thing I learned there and which was useful later on as I've been at various danger posts, is that when you're living with danger you do a kind of a special adjustment psychologically. Initially, when you've never had bullets around you or rockets or things like that, anything seems dangerous. But when you've lived with it somehow -- and it's a very subtle process, you don't realize you go through it -- you tighten the circle that you regard as being dangerous to you. You tighten it geographically, spatially. Things outside that circle you don't see as dangerous anymore. I learned this in Vietnam. I remember learning it consciously. We'd come back from an operation. We were in a place called LZ (landing zone) Nancy and the men were all off to clubs or something in the middle of the day. And the platoon sergeants and the platoon leaders were sitting around in one barracks, we called them, hooches. A big rocket came

in and landed probably a quarter of a mile away at the end of the perimeter. There were just five, six of us platoon sergeants, platoon officers in there. I remember one of the platoon sergeants got up, walked down to the end of the barracks, looked out the door at a big plume of smoke, said, "It's incoming." came back, sat down in his chair, went back to his letter. I went back to reading my book. Nobody else moved.

I was thinking about this and I realized, "We're not being weird. It's a quarter of a mile away. It can't hit us. There's no salvo, there's no more rockets coming behind it. We have all mentally defined that as not dangerous, therefore irrelevant to what we're doing." I realized this later in posts like Algiers and Afghanistan and Kabul. People who have not lived with much danger find it much more horrifying when something happens, some distance away. It causes a certain amount of fright or even panic sometimes. But over time as people live with danger of them make this adjustment. So a lot of what you see in people that may be mistaken for courage is in fact just having made this adjustment to what they regard as dangerous and what they don't. I've seen this, you know, repeatedly. I remember we had a car bomb that blew up a convoy outside the embassy in Afghanistan. And I was talking to my defense attaché who had run out to help afterwards, but he was just chortling about how he was down in the dining facility having coffee and this went off, and people were getting under tables. And he knew from the sound it was a bomb and not a rocket, and therefore not a danger to him. So he was finishing his coffee and chuckling about all these people diving under tables. Same phenomena. End of the insert.

Q: Well, just to finish it off, I did Tiananmen Square and when it was all over and the pressure was off it was interesting to me that a couple of the junior officers quit the Foreign Service because they felt they couldn't take these kinds of experiences. Whereas I'd been through it already 10 years earlier, and found it interesting.

But you, you do the paperwork --

NEUMANN: Get out.

Q: You get in the Foreign --

NEUMANN: Get in the Foreign Service.

Q: The Foreign Service. And that is June, 1970.

NEUMANN: Right.

Q: Now, Foreign Service, like the Military, has basic training. The Foreign Service calls it --

NEUMANN: A100.

Q: A100.

NEUMANN: Yeah. Named for room in a building where the first class met.

Q: Is that what it's for?

NEUMANN: Yeah.

Q: I never understood that.

NEUMANN: –Yes, that was the room designation of the first basic class.

Q: Who was in your class, do you recall?

NEUMANN: Oh, Lord. John Wolf was. He became an ambassador. Harry Geisel, who's now the acting Inspector General of the Foreign Service. Alan Roy, who is deceased. Those are the only names I really remember. Oh yeah, Andrew Winter was. Pete Chavez was too and he also became an ambassador. And Larry Farrar, yes. Don Hester. .

Q: Now, let's see, by 1970 you're 28-years-old? 27, 28, you've had a military enlistment. How did you see the other people in your class? Some of them must have been just right out of school.

NEUMANN: Well, some were. But our class was a class that swept up a lot of people that for one reason or another had had time after their exam before they came in. Rusty Hughes (Morris Hughes), who later became an ambassador, was in my class. He had just come out of being a marine second lieutenant platoon leader. A number of people had worked. It wasn't all a college grad course. There were some of those, but a lot of the people had been teachers or one thing or another. Mid-20s to upper-20s, somewhere around there, was pretty much the standard age in the class.

Q: So people had a little seasoning.

NEUMANN: Yes. In fact, it was a very independent minded class. Our class went to one of the very early off-sight training courses, I think it was at Front Royal. That was one of the very early experiments in doing some of this off-sight teaching. It wasn't very good the first day. But they kept saying, "If you don't want to be here, you don't have to be here."

That night I was talking to a friend of mine. He said, "Are you getting much out of this class?"

I said, "No."

He said he wasn't either and so we decided we'd go hiking the next morning. We just took off and went hiking. We came back about noon and went into lunch. In great alarm one of the instructors asked us where we'd been. We told him we'd been picking

blueberries. It turned out that about half or more of our class had all absented themselves. The interesting thing about the nature of this class was that there was no rebellion. It was not a group decision. It was just that half of our class had, in twos and threes, decided they weren't getting anything out of this and they told us we didn't need to be there so the hell with them. That's why I think that said a lot about the independent mindedness of our class.

Q: But also the kinds of subjects that they're covering in the A100 sounded like they didn't keep you riveted.

NEUMANN: Well, this off-sight piece was kind of a one off thing. It wasn't exemplary training, I think. It was all about team building and I don't remember what else. Much of the A100 course is how do you exist in the Foreign Service, how do you figure out paperwork. I don't have a lot of memory beyond that. In a sense, I was beyond the course because having gone to Afghanistan when I'd already passed the Foreign Service exam, I had spent a lot of time and attention looking at the embassy and seeing it through the ambassador, my father's, eyes. And so this was a huge advantage, not just in A100, but when I went to my first post because I understood what an ambassador was looking for and what a DCM (deputy chief of mission) wanted, and how an embassy hung together, and what all these pieces were. The one disadvantage I discovered over the years was that I never had quite the period of confusion that most junior officers have when they stumble around in their first embassy. As supervising more junior officers has become part of life later, I had to get that feeling intellectually by talking to people, because I hadn't experienced it.

Q: And at that time would there be separate instructions on consular issues and --

NEUMANN: Oh, there was a consular course. It was absolutely deadly in those days. It's now much improved. But when I had it, the consular course was all book learning. There was no role-playing. The instructors probably could have died without falling over *(laughs).* It was just the most atrocious rote learning instruction of memorizing pages of FAM (Foreign Affairs Manual) and regurgitating them. I guess it worked, because I later disputed with a department about a naturalization case based on the training. I don't think I won, but anyway I felt very opinionated, so they must have taught me something.

Q: This group of more mature independently minded people must have found that part of the course a little --

NEUMANN: Yes, but, that's 40 years ago and I don't really remember how we reacted to it. I think it was just one of those things you had to get through so you went and studied and got it done.

Q: How did the assignment process come up?

NEUMANN: To the extent I remember, I guess we knew something about where we might go. But the assignment process was so different in those days. There was no bid

list. I remember that when I was going from my first tour in Senegal to my second, that I asked to go to either Persian or Arabic training and to go to a small post. I had no idea what posts were out available, and then the department disposed of us. But there was no bid list business. In those days it was fairly standard to send you to some place you had not experienced for a first tour. If you had any background at all they would probably send you someplace else. The theory, which I think was reasonably valid, was that before people locked themselves into one region they wanted to make sure that they had had a little broadening experience.

Q: Anyway, you're done with the fabulous A100. Your post has been selected for you.

NEUMANN: Yes.

Q: You're going off to Dakar in Senegal.

NEUMANN: That's right.

Q: But before you get there they're going to give you some language training?

NEUMANN: Yes. I got a French refresher. French had always been a bit of a trial for me. My parents were fluent French speakers and of course German was my father's maiden language. When I was about 10, maybe earlier, they tried to get me to learn at home, suggested we have one day a week that we would speak at least one of the two languages, and I would have nothing to do with that as a child. I rejected this utterly. The result was a great deal more pain later in learning French. Finally, my parents sent me off to live with a French family in Grasse close to the Riviera for a summer when I was in college. That got me over the hump of being afraid to speak. So by the time I joined the Foreign Service I had much more colloquial French but not good grammar. The Foreign Service sent me to a number of months, of language training and then Senegal was a Francophone African country where one worked in French every day. The Foreign Service training was good and the system worked well.

Q: What were your duties?

NEUMANN: I went in first as a consular officer. Senegal, Dakar had two junior officers in those days. It had a rotation system, although it was before they began actual rotation posts, as we have them now. But the way it worked when I was there was that when you got there you were the consular officer. When the other junior officer left you became the economic commercial officer. Depending on when you came in, you either got six months of consular work and a year and a half of economic-commercial, or the other way around. I was lucky, from my point of view. I had six months of consular work and we did everything, we had immigrant visas, we had several death cases. I signed a crew on an off a drilling ship because of our completely antiquated regulations about ship crews. These regulations were designed in the 19th century to protect seamen's paychecks and they're now essentially irrelevant because their paychecks are covered under their union contracts and are deposited directly into their bank accounts. So they can hardly be left

ashore with no money. But you still have a consular requirement to witness if they sign people off that they are properly paid. So I did a bit of all that. Then I became the economic commercial officer.

However, in the meantime, for three months I became chargé in our embassy in The Gambia. That was an odd first tour experience, to be in charge of am embassy. But it was an embassy of one officer. The embassy in The Gambia (in those days the capital was Bathurst. It's now become Banjul) came under Dakar because the ambassador in Dakar was also accredited to The Gambia. We had one permanent office as charge plus a small Peace Corps contingent. The one person died and it was all very confused. The DCM flew down with a small charter plane to brng the body back because there were no proper coffins or undertakers in The Gambia. Unfortunately, the fellow that died had not lived very much in the States. His wife was not in good shape at that point. She was having trouble deciding whether to bury him there or bring him back. The idea had been that we were just going to put his body on the plane, fly it back to Dakar, and get a proper undertaker there. She couldn't make up her mind. So in the middle of the day I got a Dodge panel truck and we took all the seats out in back and loaded a coffin in and put the undertaker in the one other seat and I drove that down to Bathurst, about a four hour drive I think. I remember a lot of problems because we had to take a ferry across the Gambian River in the rain and the tires were wet and skidding on the wood going up the ferry. We arrived sometime in the evening, and I helped the undertaker lay out the deceased. Then I became chargé in the Gambia. The DCM flew back after a day or so and I was in charge for the next three months. So six months into the Foreign Service I have a one-person embassy.

It was particularly interesting because it was a separate embassy. The ambassador was dual accredited. But it was not a constituent post of Dakar. Therefore, the one person did everything. I was the class B cashier, I cashed checks in my cash box and had to account for them, and had to send the accounting off to Paris. I loaded sealed pouches and did pouch inventories and met planes. I also lobbied the President of The Gambia for his vote on who should represent China at the United Nations. I wrote the cable and then I had to cipher the cable. Then I had to send the cable out through the telegraph system, the PTT (postal telegraph and telephone), because we had no communications system at Bathurst.

We had a radio that I could talk to Dakar on and then we had another radio at the house where I was supposed to be able to talk to Dakar except the radio at the house never worked. Generally, when I got a classified message I would radio Dakar if they were also an addressee, and ask them if this was something urgent?" If they said no then I would just wait until the weekly classified pouch came down on the plane and they'd send me the classified cable which I'd read and tear up the sheets that I didn't need from the cipher machine.

At one point I remember going upriver to look at some Peace Corps projects and I used a line that I'm sure has not been used in the last several decades and probably will not be again in the American Foreign Service. I gave the key to the outer office to our local

African clerk and I said, “Mr. Fall, if anyone comes tell them the chargé has gone up river. I’ll be back on Wednesday.”

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: In retrospect it seems like a line out of “The African Queen,” or something. But it was great fun. I did everything and I learned a lot about administration since I didn’t know any of that stuff, and not having had any expectation of doing it I had to get out the FAM, the famous Foreign Affairs Manual. I had to read it all the time and find out how to do things. It was actually pretty good intensive training when you got to reconcile your cash box and find out what expenses are legal and how to code them and do all sorts of other things.

Q: Now, going back to Dakar, what does the embassy look like? How big is it? Who’s the ambassador?

NEUMANN: The Ambassador was Ed Clark, G. Edward Clark I think it was. John Loughran who was a great Africanist was the DCM. His wife was Kathy. I think they have both passed away. Lou Kahn was the political officer. It was a small embassy. Dakar was not in the middle of everything. Dane Smith was my predecessor. He also became an ambassador. When I left Sean Donnelly took my place. He also has subsequently become an ambassador, so it must have been a good post.

Q: What would -- you’re the junior officer -- your first set of duties are consular. How does the embassy look to you? What’s its priorities?

NEUMANN: To the extent that I even remember nowadays, we were dealing with a number of economic issues. It was the beginning of the Sahel, the great West African drought. We were looking at some of those issues. It was a big peanut exporter. It was not a country that had terribly close relations with the United States. It was historically a Francophone country. France was the big player there. We must have had some important bilateral issues, but I don’t really remember what they were. It was a lot of keeping relations going. There were a number of regional issues that kept the ambassador and DCM busy, but didn’t really affect me. But you know, it was a decent pace of life and it was a good place to learn a lot of duties, but I don’t remember that we had any particular crises of foreign relations. I remember I once wrote something on aflatoxins, which the Commerce Department published. I couldn’t tell you a thing today about aflatoxins in the peanut crop, but I was quite an expert at the time.

Q: Well, then that was a fairly short tour. You arrived in January and that tour was over then by January ’73.

NEUMANN: We thought we were going to be there a few more months, but we suddenly got orders to go back to the States to begin Persian language training to go to Iran.

Q: How was that organized? Were you angling for language training?

NEUMANN: I had asked for either Persian or Arabic training and assignment to a small post. My experience in Afghanistan had really turned me on to the Muslim world. And it was that trip to Afghanistan where I decided that that was where I wanted to specialize. I therefore made the request that I did. But in those days we didn't have a bid list. So it was not a question of choosing which post I really wanted or which language because I didn't know what I could get. So I got six months of Farsi training and went off as the vice consul in Tabriz. One maybe amusing bureaucratic incident approaching the State Department has not really changed in all these years. When I came back from Africa we had some additional storage authorized, about 3,000 pounds. We had a small collection of stuff and I just left it in the apartment thinking I'd just drive down, put it n the warehouse when I left. When I got ready to ship out I called up the State Department. They said, "Oh no, that storage company is no longer on the approved storage company list. You can maintain a shipment, but you can't add to it."

And I said, "Well, what do I do?"

And they said, "You could have a new storage account, but you must have 200 pounds."

I said, "What if I've only got about 75 pounds?"

"Oh well," they said, "in that case you'd have to pay for it yourself."

I thought about this. And I thought, "Wait a minute. I'm authorized 3,000 pounds of additional storage. But if I have 75 I have to pay for it myself." So I asked them to give me a new storage account and assured them I would have 200 pounds. My wife and I drove down Wilson Boulevard where they were building the Metro in those days. I stopped the car and got out and asked the foreman if I could take a few pieces of asphalt they were digging up from the street. He thought that was just fine. So I loaded up some asphalt, took it home, filled up two trunks with my new vintage Wilson Boulevard asphalt collection to be preserved for posterity, locked it up, and sent it off to storage where it added sufficient wait to be authorized. The U.S. Government stored my asphalt collection for three years until I came back from Iran. That was a victory over the bureaucracy that I still find satisfying today.

Q: (laughs) Wonderful. Wonderful. Who else was in language training with you?

NEUMANN: Mm. Lordy. Who was in language training with me? Oh, John Ratigan was in language training.

Q: Fairly big class?

NEUMANN: No, it was a small class.

Q: Just a couple guys.

NEUMANN: My wife was also in language training. That was a bad idea. I mean, you should never let a couple be in language training together. One person said to me, "In language training, by the end you hate everybody. You hate those that are slower than you because they're holding you back, and you hate those that are faster because they make you look stupid." We didn't hate each other and we're still married but I think it's actually a good idea when husband and wife are in different language sections.

Q: What was Tabriz like then as an assignment?

NEUMANN: It was a fantastic assignment. Tabriz is a major city of Iran up in the northwest. At the time I was there we had a consulate because it was a political reporting post. This is very rare nowadays where consulates remain essentially only where we have consular interests. But Tabriz had always been a contentious area. There'd been missionaries up there. The first American killed was in the 1909 rebellion. He's buried in the cemetery across from the consulate. We'd established a consulate there first because of missionary activity, then there was fighting there during World War I. During the joint American-Russian occupation of Iran in World War II Tabriz had been in the Russian zone through which lend-lease supplies were sent and we wanted to know what was going on. After the war there were various crises; an independence movement, Soviet occupation, and so on. The area was more Turkish than Iranians so there were always interesting political developments. The result was that we had maintained the post. There were only two of us there. We did consular work there but there was very little consular work in point of fact. We had about 20%of Iran in our consular area. I was a political officer. Chuck Mast was the consul when I first went to Tabriz. He was an economic officer. So I did consular and administrative work, but I also did political reporting. Then the second year when Chuck left I became principal officer and a new vice consul came in behind me. That was the period of the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq in 1974 and then the collapse of the Kurdish rebellion in '75. All of the Kurdish areas of the Iran/Iraq frontier were in our consular district. I spent about a week out of every month traveling in the consular district and doing political reporting.

After the Kurdish rebellion began I realized that whatever I was going to lose for bad Persian was going to be more than made up for by what officials would tell me if I didn't have an interpreter with me because the Iranians are rightfully suspicious of whom the interpreter might also report to. So I cut the umbilical cord, left my interpreter and after that I did all my traveling on my own. My Persian in those days was a whole lot better than it ever became since.

It was an interesting period because at first I was not aware of the clandestine US support of the Iraqi Kurds. But I learned an awful lot. I misattributed it in the end to Iranians sending U.S. equipment into Iraq in violation of the FMS agreements, the Foreign Military Sales agreements. I had picked up on my own that there were American weapons going in to Iraq, particularly because some of them were recoilless rifles that had a very distinctive shape and could only be U.S. I had picked up that the Iranians were firing artillery from the Iranian side of the border in support of the Kurds. There was one governor who used to tell me when I dropped it on him what *our guns* were doing. In

fact, they blew up one of the guns because they didn't clean the barrel: the carbon built up until it got smaller than the round they were trying to shoot out of it. There was a U.S. Army team that I discovered had come down to repair the weapon and assess the damage. I had discovered that there were foreigners going into Iraq, quite possibly Americans. So I actually picked up quite a bit on my own. But I did not in my naive younger days understand that this was actually a clandestine operation in support of the Kurds. However, I was tracking the battle progress and did a lot of reporting, some of which can still be found in the famous volumes titled Nest of Spies, because a lot of my reporting was still in Tehran where the embassy was taking seven years later and the shredded pieces having been put back together can be read in the volume the Iranians published.

Q: Now actually, weren't the Iraqis also trying to recruit Kurds in Iran to harass the Iranians?

NEUMANN: There was a very small vestigial Kurdish independence movement, which occasionally threw a bomb. But it was very small. And I don't remember any particular Iraqi footprint. There may have been, but I don't remember being aware of it.

Q: So primarily in this case, Iran with U.S. support were using the Kurds to fight Iraq.

NEUMANN: Yes. The Kurds were fighting for their independence. It was interesting because coming into the winter of 1974, the Kurds were being forced back against the Iranian border. And people kept saying, "Wait til the winter." But they didn't do well in the winter. What had happened in previous wars was that in the winter the Iraqi troops would pull back out of the higher Kurdish mountains and the Kurdish would get back for free whatever positions they had lost and then they could start fighting again in a essentially defensive war in the spring. In the winter of '74-'75 the Iraqis didn't pull back. They entrenched on all their forward positions, put up barbed wire, and determined to stay. The Kurdish military performance that winter was actually quite disappointing. We had expected from the way that they were talking that they would get some of this ground back when the Iraqis couldn't use their air because of bad weather. They didn't. What I realized later was that the Kurds were great defensive fighters, they were courageous. But these guys were not the Viet Cong. They were not going to do mass attacks through the barbed wire into machine gun fire to overrun a position. That just wasn't the nature of the tribal warfare that they had practiced. Since mass attacks into machine gun fire was the only way they were going to take back those positions, they didn't take them back. The result was that the spring of '75 opened with the Kurds already having lost a lot of ground and being steadily shoved back toward the Iranian border. I've often thought that this has not been adequately taken into account when people have condemned both the United States and the Shah of Iran or the Shah's subsequent betrayal of the Kurds -- and it was a betrayal; he promised to support them -- but I don't know what was in the Shah's mind. I doubt that the Shah had ever expected to get into a situation with the high risk of all out war with Iraq when he signed up to back the Kurds. In fact, that was what was beginning to happen in 1975. The Iranian artillery was firing regularly to protect the insurgency. There were two areas. One was the Ruwandiz Gorge in Iraq. The only thing that was keeping the Iraqi Army from coming all

the way through the Ruwandiz Gorge sand shoving the Kurds across the border was Iranian artillery fire. One of the things I figured out was that the Iranians had to have people in the fight because you don't shoot artillery without someone calling the rounds, calling it where it lands and adjusting fire, and usually you don't let other folk do that for you. I'd also worked out that the Iranians were intervening in the war. The other place they were shooting was into the Kalidasa basin. There's a range of hills and there's a basin, and there's another range of hills right back –into the Iranian-Iraqi border. It was the Iranian artillery fire, they once had five artillery pieces firing out of a place north of Sanandaj, that was keeping the Iraqis out of this area. That was what was protecting the Kurds on their last line of hills.

But this was getting a lot closer to being all out war between Iranians and Iraqis than just covert support for the Kurds. Yet frankly, if the Iranians didn't keep up the artillery fire the Kurds were going to lose. But if they didn't stop intervening there was a real risk of an outbreak of war with the Iraqis. I think this was far more direct risk than the Shah had ever planned on, although that's entirely surmise on my part. What I do know is that everybody that I talked to in those days expected the war to be much more a model of the previous Kurdish rebellion where the Kurds were able to take back positions in the winter, where the war went on year by year in kind of a stalemate, and where it would take a much larger Iraqi operation than they were likely to be able to mount to really bring it to a close. That simply was not what happened. The Kurds were steadily losing the war from late '74 right into when the Algiers Agreement was signed that cut off Iranian support and led to their collapse. After that there was a massive migration of Kurds into Iran and that's when I got to know a lot of the Kurdish leaders that I was later to work with in Iraq.

Q: Young Barzani.

NEUMANN: Well, yes. Massoud Barzani was fairly young. I knew his father, Mullah Mustafa, in the camps. I knew his older brother, Idriss, who has since passed away from natural causes. I knew Talabani somewhat.

Q: And now you're saying the Kurds at the end of this moved into Iran. Was it one of these refugee camp things or?

NEUMANN: Initially there were refugee camps along the Iranian border. I remember particularly that near Piranshahr there was a big one. Later the Shah decided that it was too sensitive to have the Kurd camp so close to the border where they could make trouble. He pushed them to move to camps he established deeper into Iran where they would be further away from the border, particularly for the leadership. And he got them where he could control them a lot better, but that was after my departure.

Q: So they're basically in resettlement camps but there were already Kurds in Iran.

NEUMANN: Yeah.

NEUMANN: There were Iranian Kurds, that is Kurds who were native to Iran, but these were Iraqi Kurds. And of course Iraqi Kurds could communicate in Kurdish with the Iranian Kurds, but the Iraqi Kurds mostly speak Arabic as a second language while Iranian Kurds also have Farsi. And there were some Kurds who spoke different dialects but they could all talk to each other easily enough.

Q: So in fact --

NEUMANN: There are various differences. There are tribal differences and other things. In fact, the Kurds are a very divided people in tribal terms. I did a study once when I was in Tabriz of Kurdish rebellions in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey during the early part of the 20th century. And one of the distinguishing features was that they could never manage to get a rebellion going on two sides of the same border at the same time so that they were never able to have any kind of secure base area or a situation where the Kurds on one side of the border would be helping the other side. In fact, one of the distinguishing features of the '74 rebellion was that it did bring together groups that have fought against each other. Talabani's PUK, Popular Union of Kurdistan, is much more of an intellectual, somewhat left-leaning urban intelligencia. Barzani's KDP (Kurdistan DemocraticParty) was much more of a tribal group based around the Barzani tribe. And in fact, some of the Kurds that fought for Saddam and against the rebellion were tribal enemies of the Barzani tribe. There were a lot of tribal issues that moved into politics. It wasn't all about nationalism, by any means.

Q: Now, Tabriz is one of a number of consulates and you have the main embassy. What were the other consulates?

NEUMANN: Originally there was one in Isfahan or Shiraz. I can't remember. Because they made a change while I was there. There was one consulate which I think in those days was in Shiraz, and they split the people, and they reopened in Khorramshahr and Isfahan, if I remember rightly. I may be off in that memory. Anyway, Mike Hornblow I remember was the consul in Khorramshahr. And Ryan Crocker was on his first tour as a vice consul in there, Khorramshahr, and I was on my second tour in Tabriz. And Crocker and I have known each other ever since.

Q: And followed each other into Iraq.

NEUMANN: Followed each other into various places. He has the distinction of I think of having had not only more embassies but more bad embassies -- he's been blown up in his (Beirut), which at least I haven't. I've just been attacked by mobs in mine but they didn't storm my house as happened to him in Damascus.

Q: Who's running -- who's the ambassador and who's running the embassy?

NEUMANN: The ambassador was Dick Helms, Richard Helms the former Head of the CIA. And of course, it was a peculiar assignment because with the CIA involvement in

the coup against Mossadegh it wasn't a great idea to send a former CIA director out. That wasn't Helm's fault. I found him to be an excellent ambassador. He was very retentive. He was politically astute, as you would expect from somebody from the CIA. He never bottled up reporting. The embassy would sometimes ask that I report certain things by letter to the desk rather than by telegram. That was particularly when, unbeknownst to me, I was getting into clandestine areas. But they never asked me not to send a report, nor did they ever censor any of my reporting, some of which was quite critical of the Iranian Government on policy grounds. The DCM early on, Jack Nicholas, when he was chargé, would sometimes push back against some critical reporting. But when Helms was there, never. And Helms really pushed the consulates for political reporting on Iran. It was an early formative experience for me on how much political reporting you can get out of posts if the ambassador wants it and insists that people do it. And actually, I think we had a lot of reporting on Iran in my period.

The thing we didn't understand was how the Shah would later collapse, mentally. How he would vacillate. It was not that we didn't know that there were a lot of problems in Iran. I was documenting riots in Tabriz University and various things. But there was a pattern in the past, ever since the Iranian rebellion in, I think 1963, that when resistance would break out the Shah would reach out and squash it. That happened every few years. I think all of us, without really examining the proposition, believed that if there were another large-scale outbreak of anti-regime violence the Shah would again reach out and squash it with force, as he had before. And what happened, of course, in 1979, '80 was he didn't. He vacillated. He would send out the troops, people would get killed. He would pull back troops. There was, in my recollection although I wasn't in Iran at that point, a kind of ebbing and flowing of the early demonstrations where people were quite unsure how far this was going to be able to go. But as the Shah vacillated in his response the demonstrations also gained force. And I would suspect that that memory is very much in the minds of Iran's current leaders in their very harsh reactions and suppression of the Green Movement in Iran. They are probably not going to show the same vacillation that led to demonstrations increasing in severity in a kind of rolling wave. So I think that what we got wrong in our reporting, in a sense since we didn't actually discuss it, was a supposition that the past would be replicated in the future. That's a problem for experts and expertise. Expertise is essentially a very well informed projection in a linear fashion of the past. What expertise doesn't give you is any analytical basis to see discontinuous change when the line suddenly bounces. Two things that were not known, nor predicted, was that the Shah would have this breakdown and vacillate in his policies. The other was not understanding that the clergy would enter government. And that was a prediction, which, to my knowledge, all of the academic experts got wrong. All of those who've written so vociferously about the incapacities of Foreign Service reporting were themselves completely wrong about the clergy's domination of government. That was because it was a complete change from the pattern and the philosophy of the Iranian clergy in all previous revolutionary movements. Expertise, knowledge of the past that is, led one to say they would not enter the government. Except that Khomeini had a different idea.

Q: Now were you there when the Shah had that big celebration?

NEUMANN: Yeah, big Persepolis celebration.

Q: Yes.

NEUMANN: That was -- I think that was shortly before I got there.

Q: OK. While executing your duties at Tabriz you did quite a bit of traveling then.

NEUMANN: I traveled about one week out of every month. The consular district was large. It changed a little over my tenure but in the end it ran from Rasht on the Caspian Sea down to Lorestan and Ilam provinces. So I had about 20% of Iran in my consular district.

Q: What kind of vehicle did you have?

NEUMANN: I think I had a Chevy Carryall.

Q: Hm, OK.

NEUMANN: I'd take off with my driver. Sometimes we'd have made phone contact and I'd have an appointment or two with a governor. We had U.S. Army training teams in Khorramshahr and Rezayeh. I became friendly with them I stayed with them and I'd also hear about their training with the Iranian Army and what was going wrong. Iranians were already practicing their delaying retreat in the face of the Iraqi invasion. This was the 1970s so the fear of Iraq was well established. Sometimes there were funny stories, one day I remember one of the military advisors came back, he was really frustrated. They'd been having an exercise. And the Iranians had all their tanks deployed on the forward slope of a very bare hill where they would be easy targets to the hypothetical Iraqi forces down below. And when the American remonstrated with his Iranian colleague the Iranian, never short on wit, pointed to one scraggly bush down the hill and he said, "You see that bush?"

And the American said, "Yes."

He said, "We're simulating the forest," *(laughs).* Iranians were never short on wit.

So anyway, I got insight from the Americans. There were a small number of American citizens in the area who I got to know, especially American wives married to Iranians who'd studied in the States. I developed quite a network of Iranian friends at that time. There were very few foreigners in that area. There were lots of foreigners in Isfahan and Shiraz. But very few foreigners in my part of the country, so it was in that sense a more authentic foreign experience. There was only one other consulate in Tabriz, the Turkish Consulate. The British and French had cultural offices. So we were a very small diplomatic core. We also covered west to north up to the border with Russia. There was a group of Russians building, or rebuilding the railway connection up to the Russian

border. Since the interpreter with the crew told me that at a previous tour he had been an interpreter for a Russian SAM (Surface to Air Missile) missile battery in Egypt I figured that maybe he wasn't entirely a railroad type. There was certainly some KGB there. But there were genuine railroad people. They were building the track. I remember we had a highly liquid celebration at the Russian camp for Victory in Europe Day. I think by 1972 or whatever this was, maybe '73 the Russians were probably the only ones who were still really celebrating Victory in Europe Day. But they did. They had this party and they had the whole diplomatic core such as it was and the Director of the Iranian Railway. It was linguistic confusion because a lot of them spoke nothing but Russian. But my vice consul, Bob Campbell, did speak Russian. So we were translating back and forth between English, Russian, Persian, and French. The Director of the Iranian Railways who spoke perfectly good English got up to give his toast and asked me to translate from Farsi to English. God knows why he didn't just give it in English, because his English was good. But he wanted to speak in Farsi and he wanted me to translate. And if I hadn't had a lot of shots of vodka it probably would have been very hard. But as it was, he got up and not only did he speak, but he spoke for 15 minutes because it turned out that he had been an engineer on trains running military supplies from the Persian Gulf to Russia during the war. So he had a lot of reminiscences to get through. Somehow I managed to translate them all.

Q: In this traveling to and collecting information you would have called on the various governors?

NEUMANN: I called on all the governors and many other officials. There was wide variation. Some would tell me a lot, some would tell me very little. I remember the district governor in Piranshahr would tell me nothing. And the district guy out in Sardasht would tell me all kinds of things. So the only reason I would travel up to Piranshahr, which was a whole day's trip out and back, would be to make it a little fuzzy that one guy was talking to me more fully than another. But I got to know quite a few of those guys, yes. Hamedan city was in our area as well as Rasht where the Russians had a consulate. I remember having cold whiskey at 10:00 in the morning calling on the Russian consul in Rasht. And then having a really, really bad drive over bad roads, which was particularly hard on the stomach after having done Georgian wine and Russian whiskey and God knows what, before lunch. Diplomat life was definitely better in those day although there was a terrorist threat in Iran. However, Tehran was worse. There was one successful assassination of American officials in Tehran every one of the three years that I was in Iran. One was two Air Force guys. One was a defense attaché. I think the third was couple of contractors, all of them guilty of the first sin of counter security, not varying their routes and times. But a year or two before I got to Tabriz my predecessor had had a bomb thrown up the balcony of the room he was staying in in Mahabad. We hadn't had any immediate threat for some time, although there was periodic information that there would be threats in our area. I used to travel with a pistol in my briefcase. In fact, I remember once I was coming back from a trip and I was dozing in the front seat of the Carryall, which was my normal way of traveling, and I suddenly felt the vehicle slowing. I sort of groggily woke up and I looked up and there was a herd of sheep going across the road. There was a car parked on the side of this very narrow dyked up road that you

couldn't drive off of easily. And the car was stopped with the driver standing outside the car for no apparent reason on the roadside of the car, smoking a cigarette. It just looked like a classic ambush. That herd of sheep was going to bring us to a halt exactly next to this stopped car with the guy smoking a cigarette right next to my window. And you know, having come out of Vietnam not too long before, I looked at this setup and boy, did I come awake in a hurry. And I had that briefcase open and I had my hand on the pistol and the sheep passed, and the fellow smoked his cigarette. Thank goodness he didn't ask me for a light or I'd have probably blown him away. I kept swiveling my head to look for people coming up from behind the dyke behind us. Absolutely nothing happened. The herd of sheep passed, the man finished his cigarette, and we drove on. But I didn't sleep for a while.

Q: What was the source of the assassination?

NEUMANN: There were two different Mujahideen movements; Mujahideen-i-Khalk and Mujahideen-i-Faydaeen were the names, I think although I'm no longer positive without checking. I think the latter were the ones who were really taking after Americans.

Q: Did you get an opportunity to come down to the embassy from time to time?

NEUMANN: I would come down to the embassy usually about once a quarter. Generally what I tried to do when I was traveling was to time my trip so that I would get back to Tabriz about two days before we would get our weekly pouch so that I could feverishly write up whatever I wanted to send out as telegrams. We didn't have any separate telegram facilities in Tabriz. So I would then send my telegrams or air grams down to Tehran in the pouch and they'd go from there. But about once a quarter I would either drive down or take the train and have some consultations in Tehran.

Q: Who did you mostly work with down there, the political section?

NEUMANN: Mostly the political section. Stan Escudero, who later became an ambassador in Tajikistan. Arch Bolster was there as the supervisory officer for the consulates. Hawthorne "Hawk" Mills, was political counselor.

Q: Hm, because Henry Precht was there.

NEUMANN: Yeah. Henry was there part of the time.

Q: And the date is the date he arrived at post.

NEUMANN: He was -- he was a political counselor. Stan Escudero was there. George Cave was the deputy Station Chief. George Ellsworth was down in the commercial section with his horse saddle. And I remember Ellsworth had a card he could occasionally give out to somebody. The cards sat on his desk in a little holder and they looked like calling cards. But when he gave you one it said on it, "Yours is truly the saddest story I've ever heard," *(laughs).* One got the feeling that he might not always be

sympathetic. Bill Lehfeldt was the economic counselor. Walt Lundy was there under him too. And Clyde Taylor also was there in the economic section. Clyde later got an embassy and is now a colleague. He runs the Una Chapman Cox Foundation that shares the suite with us at the American Academy.

Q: Oh!

NEUMANN: So quite a few folk. Probably more that I've come up with, Dan Gamber who was in the admin section, and he and his wife Nancy were friends of ours. And the Ratigans who had been in Farsi training with us, John and Barbara, remain friends to this day.

Q: It's interesting how people go through these similar experiences and they hold together and those experiences may inform the rest of their career. I mean you talk about how many people in your A100 became ambassadors. This -- these are -- the names that come out of Iran at this time are quite lights in the NEA (Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs) Bureau for the next couple of decades. I mean anybody would recog -- so it was a pretty heady time.

NEUMANN: Yeah, good group. Ambassador Helms came up and traveled for three days with me. I remember at one point he was complaining about some staff problem and saying that Americans took more stroking than any other people to keep American officers happy. And I thought, "What a grumpy old man." And I remember a few years later I came home at a time when I was DCM in Yemen and I was telling my wife about something and I said, "You know, Helms was right. They take more stroking."

And she said, "You're a grumpy old man."

Q: (laughs) That's an interesting point. Did you get many visitors? CODELs (congressional delegation)?

NEUMANN: No, we got very, very few visitors. It was such a tiny community up there. In fact, my predecessor's wife had started a kindergarten and we needed a kindergarten for our son. The only way to keep the kindergarten going was that my wife bought her out and ran the kindergarten when my predecessor's wife left. The consulate was 50% larger than we needed. It had been designed when the post was larger and we had an AID mission in Tabriz. And although it was clear that that was going to be phased out it didn't change the architectural plans any. So we had one entire wing of the consulate, which we had no need of. That was where we had an elementary school and a kindergarten. And in those days you didn't have all the security stuff. So we had a multinational elementary school running in the consulate in one wing and my office in the other. There was a guard at the gate but he knew all these people, and they just drove in, dropped off their kids, picked them up, whatever. It was certainly a different time.

Q: You're saying there was quite a missionary community.

NEUMANN: It was not huge, but it had been there for many years. In fact, there was a missionary-run nurse's training school right next to our compound. There were two or three -- maybe there were more American nurses there. We socialized a lot with them because there were very few Americans in town so we all knew each other. There was one funny incident. We had an enormous number of big black crows in the consulate in Tabriz. We had a big piece of ground in the consulate. We had a small almond grove that was just lovely. We also had a deserted AID compound next to us that we still owed that was vacant. Anyway, we had all these crows, and they were a nuisance. So I took the riot shotgun that had been sent up to Tabriz. And I would occasionally go out and shoot crows with the riot shotgun. Actually, because it had such a short range I usually had to ambush them by hiding under a tree. It didn't make much difference to the crow population, I think. But anyway, apparently one of the Iranian nursing students asked one of the American nursing instructors asked what this occasional gunfire was in the compound. And with an absolutely straight face this nice nursing missionary lady told her, "Oh, once a week they take the bad Americans out and shoot them," *(laughs).*

Q: (laughs) Well, it --

NEUMANN: It was a politically interesting time. We had all kinds of minorities in our consular district. We had Azeri Turks, Kurds, we had both Shia and Sunni Kurds, Lurs that are almost Kurds, Rashtis, the people who live up in Rasht. So we had a potpourri of languages in the area. I just stuck with Farsi because it was the lingua franca for everybody.

Q: Now, you were up there when the Algiers Agreement was finalized and the, this covert war --

NEUMANN: War ended and all the Kurds came into Iran, yes.

Q: How did the local Iranian administrators see that? I mean the governor would have --

NEUMANN: You know, nobody -- no Iranian ministry or even a private was going to question a decision of the Shah. It was just the way it was. And frankly, wasn't as much to talk to them about then. The war was over. I would call on the Kurds in the camps. It took me a while to figure out why they kept insisting that this was our fault. They were referring to the secret assurances that Kissinger had given that we had given a sort of second party guarantee of the Shah's assurances. I don't think Kissinger actually betrayed the Kurds. I think we simply had absolutely no ability whatsoever to do anything about the Shah's breaking his agreement with the Kurds.

Q: That tour ends, you're now a second tour officer in 1976. How do you get your next job?

NEUMANN: I get a telegram telling me what it is.

Q: (laughs) And you decoded it.

NEUMANN: No it was unclassified. I was assigned to the Southern European Office of EUR (Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs). I don't remember that I asked for anything in particular. If I did I can't remember now. I came back and it was interesting in some ways. This was 1976, two years after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. Southern European affairs handled Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus. In fact we came back from Iran with stops in Cyprus and in Greece for consultations. I had visited Turkey somewhat earlier on a vacation from Iran. It was still a very intense tense period in the Aegean. Interesting, coming back I remember, because we were on official consultations we could drive across the green line in Cyprus. But Famagusta at that time was an empty city. We could drive down to the barricades at the entrance to the city and look down this street of apartment buildings that were all empty with curtains blowing out the windows. So I came back. But I didn't particularly like the job I had. I had a very interesting office and Nelson Ledsky was the office director, a real expert on Southern European affairs. I was a kind of a non-desk officer. I had all the issues that slopped across communities and countries. I did a GNC (guidance, navigation, and control) issues, which was tense at that point between the different governments. I was the Armenian non-desk officer dealing with Armenian issues. They were interesting issues. But after a year I decided that I really wanted a desk of my own. One of the interesting projects, before I forget, was that Ledsky had me write a classified history of the events leading up to the Turkish invasion and our diplomacy right after it. The reason for that was that the official account of the historian from the State Department was done without any access to NODIS (Not for Distribution, a restricted distribution category of telegrams). Since Kissinger hardly ever worked in anything less than a NODIS telegram effectively the historian's official account of that period was highly deficient and lacking a lot of detail. And in those days, having been the crisis office for the war, EUR/SCA had a couple of drawers full of NODIS cables in our barlock. These were going to have to be retired and Ledsky put me to work writing a summary history of the crisis, strictly from the NODIS cables. It wasn't to be a general history beyond the NODIS. I don't know whatever happened to that, but I did produce it. I think a copy is in a group of papers I once sent off to be declassified and never heard from again. It was an interesting experience. But anyway, after a year in that office I really wanted my own desk where I would be responsible for a country. And I didn't get the Cyprus desk job when the officer left, quite possibly because it was easier to recruit for that job than for mine -- I don't think it was personal about me -- but it really irritated me when I didn't get the job. I wanted to know how to get out of this office. I was able to go after the job of NEA staff assistant because for that job the assistant secretary who was then Roy Atherton would then call up the assistant secretary in EUR and that's what got me busted out of my EUR/SCA after only one year on the European desk. It's an interesting commentary I think for people who get too wound up about what their assignment's going to be. It was being an NEA staff aide that led to my being Jordan desk officer later, which was a primo job in NEA that I would not have gotten had I not gotten well known as the staff aide. And being the Jordan desk officer was where I got to know David Zweifel who went off to Yemen as ambassador and took me as his DCM. And being DCM there led me to other good jobs. I might have had just as good a career had I gotten the job that I thought I really wanted. But I would have had a completely different one. That doesn't prove that everything will always work out for

the best. I'm not being Pollyannaish about it. It's simply a commentary that I've never forgotten on how little we understand about what the future holds. So you work for the job you want, but when you don't get it you have no idea, you know, where these branching roads lead to. And certainly the branch for me of Jordan to DCM to deputy office director to a second DCM job would not have been there in anything like that same way had I gone where I thought I wanted to go.

Q: One of the interesting things about the Office of Southern European Affairs, Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, is wasn't it originally part of NEA?

NEUMANN: Yeah.

Q: And not Europe?

NEUMANN: It was given to EUR as part of a shift of the geographic orientation, I believe in 1974, if memory serves me correctly. The Middle East Bureau NEA received the North African posts from the African Bureau on the basis that they were members of the Arab League and that far more of the politics of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya were involved with Arab matters than were involved in African matters. They were shifted to the Middle East Bureau and Greece, Turkey and Cyprus were shifted from the Middle East Bureau to EUR about two weeks before the crisis broke out and the Turks invaded. In fact, I heard a story once from the late Arnie Raphel, that there were EUR desk officers chasing file cabinets on dollies down the hall *(laughs)* trying to find records. I don't know whether that's true or not. Arnie used to claim he had to send NEA people to EUR to teach them how to manage a crisis. NEA has so many, we had more practice. But the result is that the office did move. Of course that was part of the long term contraction of the Middle East Bureau, which at one point included the Balkans, Austro-Hungary, as well as all of the Middle East, and even Russia.

Q: Hm.

NEUMANN: There used to be a little piece of paper hanging on the wall going into the NEA conference room that had the area of responsibility of the Near East Asia -- South Asia Bureau in something like 1909. In the '70s we also had India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal --

Q: Sri Lanka, Bhutan.

NEUMANN: Sri Lanka, Bhutan, all of that was NEA. They used to say the bureau went from Marrakesh to Bangladesh but at one time we also had a piece of Central Europe, the Balkans and Turkey, southern Europe in the Middle Eastern Bureau. And that was at a period where you could take a photograph of the entire staff of the State Department in one place on the steps of what's now the Old Executive Office Building.

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: So we had more ground, but fewer problems.

Q: Now the assignment you had in Southern European Affairs, you ended up basically being the regional affairs officer.

NEUMANN: Yeah.

Q: How big an office was it? Eagleton was the director, Ledsky was a deputy. How many other --

NEUMANN: Ledsky was director. By the time I got there.

Q: OK.

NEUMANN: I think it was seven or eight, something like that.

Q: there would have been the Turkey desk officer, the Greek desk officer, the Cyprus officer, and then --

NEUMANN: Yeah, there were at least two Turkish desk officers, and there may have been two Greek desk officers. I'm not sure of that myself. That's five director -- deputy directors, and Cyprus desk officer -- six. So we would have been seven or eight.

Q: And with that kind of responsibility would you have been interacting with the front office on a fairly regular basis?

NEUMANN: I don't remember a lot of interaction with the EUR front office. A lot of interaction with Ledsky. EUR was a much more hierarchical bureau than NEA. I don't remember being particularly resentful of that. I just don't remember having much contact with the front office.

Q: You were saying you got into NEA through your association with Atherton?

NEUMANN: Well, I applied for the NEA staff job and getting it was on the basis of Atherton's choice. The assistant secretary wants a staff aide so if he decides this is the guy he wants -- or gal -- he's then going to have to pick up the phone if they're not immediately available and get them made available, which is what he did. I think I was helped by two things. One was my reporting from Tabriz, so I was well and favorably known in my bureau. And in the mysterious ways of the day it probably didn't hurt that my father was well and favorably known to the bureau.

Q: (laughs) Oops.

NEUMANN: Now, I don't think that would have gotten me the job if they thought I wasn't the right person. It got me in the door to interview for the job, even though I wasn't up for a transfer. So I think it's kind of a commentary. You can use this old boy

network, if you want to call it that, to get you heard. It doesn't necessarily get you a job. NEA staff aids have over the years been a pretty select group. I hope they still are. There used to be an old piece of yellow legal pad paper in the safe with the names of previous NEA staff aides and an awful lot of them went on to become ambassadors. In my time the outgoing staff aide whose place I took was Ed Abington who became consul general in Jerusalem and later a sort of representative of the Palestinians after retirement. I took his place. I worked for several months with Jim Collins who later became ambassador to Moscow. When Jim left his place was taken by April Glaspie, who of course became ambassador to Baghdad and who I think has been most unfairly criticized for the episodes leading up to the invasion of Kuwait.

Q: When you came in to the NEA front office at that time it was a very August collection of people.

NEUMANN: Yeah. Sid Sober was the PDAS (principal deputy assistant secretary). Spike Dubbs, who was later assassinated in Kabul, was the deputy for South Asia. Mike Sterner and Nick Veliotes divided up the rest of the region. Of course Nick went on to be ambassador in Jordan where I was his desk officer later on and then ambassador to Egypt and assistant secretary. These were heavy hitters. I think there was a lesson there in a sense, which is not that younger officers can't be just as bright and maybe in some cases known as much, but when you had people with this kind of seniority they could carry the bureau's weight in interagency discussions and in seventh floor discussions in a way that becomes much harder in my experience when you start pushing DAS (deputy assistant secretary) jobs down to people who have not been ambassadors or who have not been DCMs in senior posts and have not had years of experience in the service. And again, it's not a function of what they know but of the sort of gravitas, the weight they bring within the bureaucracy. I've known a very few less senior officers, FS1 or new senior officers who can be seen to represent the bureau in seventh floor discussions with equal weight, but not many.

Q: That's a good exposure because the NEA people, I mean, you know, they get to have a war every five, seven years.

NEUMANN: Years ago when my father was lecturing he told me that when he had to give a title long in advance he would choose Crisis in the Middle East because he was sure when he came to speak there would be one.

Q: (laughs)

Q: We were talking about being a staff aid in NEA. Let's see, you get there in 1977.

NEUMANN: Yes. Not a good time, although it was to get worse later because by '79 you had the hostage crisis. But we had various wars and things. It was very interesting in a number of ways. NEA staff aides, at least in those days, were a good deal more like what are now special assistants in a lot of other bureaus. NEA didn't have a special assistant position the staff aides had to be both substantive and procedural, and that was one of the

reasons that so many of them I think were picked for a lot of substantive knowledge of the area and went on to strong careers. I remember Hal Saunders once said that the difference between an NEA staff aide and a staff aide in any other bureau was the difference between an airline pilot and a bus driver, that a lot of the time each one of them was sitting there in front of a control stick, but occasionally one had to know a whole lot more. We really were responsible for keeping an eye on what was going on across the bureau. One in a sense trivial thing, but also important was what to call to the attention of the assistant secretary. In those days everything came in paper cables. There was no electronic filing. I would say that we would get in a day a stack of unclassified cables that would be easily four inches high. Out of that stack we might give 1% to the assistant secretary. We would give him probably somewhere between, I don't know, 20, 40% maybe of the EXDIS (a restricted category less restricted than NODIS) cables and all of the NODIS cables. With all that sorting he was so crazily busy that he would be unlikely to get through all of those cables in one day. He really depended on us to make sure that he was aware of any burning issue, not just a crisis issue, but something that was important enough he needed to know about it. Like any staff aides we were taken up with process and procedure and moving paper, but a major piece of our job was to really be aware of what was going on across the bureau and to make sure that the assistant secretary and the deputies knew whatever they needed to know about developments fast enough to be able to act, or at least to be ahead of other people in the bureaucracy and acting on them. It was a major part of what we were responsible for. One of us would work late and the other one would come in early in the morning. And then, I don't know, we'd switch after a couple of weeks or something like that. But the one who left at night always left a memo for the one coming in in the morning of anything important that had gone on, what you'd done with something, what you'd done with paper. The last thing we'd do at 10 or 11:00 at night was type up whatever notes were needed so the person coming in at 7:00 in the morning, or 6:30, could land running.

Q: And there were two staff aides?

NEUMANN: There were two staff aides. We also, as we said earlier, had a very senior experienced group of deputies. We learned an awful lot from these people. Sometimes consciously, but a lot just watching how they worked because, you know, we were right there with them all the time. NEA is not a hierarchical -- or wasn't anyway -- a very hierarchical bureau, I think that was simply because it had too many crisis and too few people to have a lot of space for being formalistic about who talked to who. It was always a lot more of a rolled up sleeves place with desk officers interacting with DAS's

Q: I think you and April were on at the same time as staff assistants.

NEUMANN: We were indeed.

Q: She's one of my heroes.

NEUMANN: Yes. April's one of my heroes. I think she's been very unfairly maligned. One of the other jobs we had was that we were the official repository for the entire record

of Middle East peacekeeping, from the Kilometer 101 talks forward. NEA held all the documents, all the historical record. And every time there was a trip then, particularly when Kissinger was secretary he wanted the assistant secretary from NEA with him even if his trip had nothing to do with the Middle East and was going off to Moscow or something. We had to pack up a set of square briefcases, which contained all the negotiation and discussion records from all previous Middle East negotiations, index, the last two month's significant cables, maps and I forget what all else. By the time I left it was running to six or seven briefcases of documents, which had to be packed and indexed the night before the trip. And one of the more amusing aspects of what was otherwise a pretty dreary job of making copies and punching holes and writing indexes at midnight was that nobody except the assistant secretary understood how to use this system so that the line officers who went with the secretary found to their great frustration that every time the secretary wanted some document on the Middle East, they had to go get the assistant secretary for NEA to find the document for them in this collection of briefcases.

Q: Now, one of the things that might have informed the atmospheric around your assignment is there's a new administration has come in. The Carter Administration comes in January. So Kissinger's gone, Cy Vance comes in. Do you feel any of that atmospherics?

NEUMANN: Oh yes. In several ways. But particularly as the Iranian Revolution gets going in '78 you had the absolute incoherence of the Carter Administration and its inability to permanently sort out any of the bureaucratic turf wars. That isn't unique by any means, but the Vance/Brzezinski pulling and tugging over different approaches to Iran complicated by Pat Derian's human rights approach made decision making just an agonizing process. I remember that at one point there was a memo about whether or not to supply tear gas to the Shah's forces. One side argued (an argument I supported -- although my support was irrelevant) was that it made more sense to give them tear gas than to have them use the bullets they already had and kill people, which they were certainly going to do and were doing. But the Human Rights Bureau felt that it was simply immoral to give them tear gas for crowd suppression, and therefore this had to be a no. You know, the fact that they were going to kill people instead was deemed irrelevant to the moral purity of the argument over tear gas.

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: Maybe tear gas was considered chemical warfare. I don't remember. Anyway, this memo took weeks to get upstairs, pulling and tugging between the bureaus. Finally, I guess it was Vance who made the decision, we sent tear gas out. And then, I don't know, a month or two months or three months later came another request for tear gas, and we went through the same process all over again as though no decision on the issue had ever been made. That was a mini-example of what I saw repeatedly between Vance and Brzezinski when memos, issues went to the president. Although I've lost focus on what the specifics were now. But it showed Carter's inability to have a single strategic vision. Every issue that I saw that went to him was decided as a discreet issue, which meant that whatever came next, it didn't follow in a sense in a sequence. It wasn't

if you decided in one direction one time you were going to decide it in the same direction for next time. No, it gets looked at all over again. That caused a vacillation in our policy. Brzezinski wanted to back the Iranian generals and the Shah in a very harsh response to the growing rebellion. And Vance didn't. And there's an intellectual argument to be made for each side of that. But the fact was –that President Carter was unable or unwilling to come down on one side or the other decisively so that our decisions constantly lurched back and forth between these two contending poles in the administration. I was not a player in those things, but as a staff aide I was moving all the paper and watching these various decisions. I was not incredibly impressed by the beginning of the Carter Administration.

Q: In addition to Iranian issues that were bubbling up, the Carter Administration involved itself in Middle East peace.

NEUMANN: They became much more impressive there. The period that I was staff aide was the year that we were trying to restart the Geneva negotiations. That was basically a failure, but it wasn't intellectually badly done. It was just that the process of trying to go back to Geneva was essentially a process of trying to get people to show up. And to show up they had to have an agreed agenda. But since everything on the agenda –right down to the way you phrased things, had an influence on the substance of a problem, it meant that people didn't agree easily on an agenda. I remember the agenda kept getting shorter and shorter. I don't remember how long it was when it started, but I remember by the time the process collapsed we'd gotten down to about half a page of the most generic bullet points because we couldn't get agreement on the underlying substance. By the time the historic Camp David Accords negotiations took place I was out of a staff aide job, so I was not directly involved in those. I made one trip with some documents to Camp David during the negotiations, but otherwise was pretty much a bystander.

Q: So you're in the staff assistant job for one year?

NEUMANN: For one year and then I became Jordan desk officer.

Q: And while staff aid did you have an opportunity to travel with the assistant secretary in some of these Middle East things?

NEUMANN: No. I don't remember him ever taking a staff aid with him. That's funny because that's so standard now. I think we traveled maybe a little less. He traveled a lot, but there was so much direct involvement with Kissinger in negotiations that the assistant secretary was often traveling as an aide to the secretary. Atherton and Saunders were the two assistant secretaries I worked for. Both were brilliant and both were pretty low maintenance as bosses. They were real examples of how you could be a tremendous leader and intellectual and still be decent people, decent to their subordinates. They certainly stand in contradistinction to some later loud mouths. Not so much in the NEA job. But you know, there's no reason to be a bully to be an effective diplomat. Especially not to your own people. But I don't remember ever traveling with them. It may be that we did and I've forgotten, but I have no memory that we ever made a trip.

Q: The Camp David Acc -- OK, by the time of the Camp David Accords then you had moved on to the Jordanian desk. How is the desk organized? That's NEA/ARN.

NEUMANN: In those days Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq were all in ARN. Mary Ann Casey was the Iraq desk officer. I remember she was going to bid and I was going to bid and we had a lunch to sort out which one of us would bid on which jobs so we wouldn't fight with each other and it would maximize the chances of getting the jobs we wanted. So bureaucracy was already becoming a skill.

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: Walt Cluverius was the first country director and then he was followed by Nat Howell. Jim Collins at one point was the deputy director. I think Nat was the deputy before.

Q: Yeah.

NEUMANN: And who else was in that office?

Q: Larry Pope?

NEUMANN: Oh yeah, Larry Pope was in there at the same time.

Q: Now ARN can be a busy place because in '78 you had Israel moving into Lebanon.

NEUMANN: Oh yes.

Q: Again. And by '79 -- '78 things are starting to get bad on the other end with Iran. So what is ARN watching (laughs)?

NEUMANN: Might have watched the world go to hell.

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: I remember staffing at least two task forces for various Israeli incursions into Lebanon, although I've pretty much forgotten the details of the politics. I was aware of things going around me, but I wasn't responsible for them, which is probably one reason other than age that I don't really remember. With Jordan, we were focused on issues of stability, of our bilateral relations, of trying to get the Jordanians to come in the peace process after Camp David, of what was then clandestine work for them to prepare for possible instability in Saudi Arabia, and of course on our economic and AID assistance relations. So there was a big enough portfolio to keep me occupied.

Q: Who was the deputy assistant secretary that covered ARN?

NEUMANN: It was initially Nick Veliotes and then he went off to become ambassador. And I don't remember who took his place in that job when he became ambassador.

Q: Was it Draper?

NEUMANN: Oh yeah, it was Morris "Maury" Draper.

Q: How was Nat Howell to work with? He was --

NEUMANN: Oh, he was great fun. Of course we were both pipe smokers and in those days we could smoke our pipes in the office, so that helped too. Nat had a great cynical sense of humor. He'd been at this for years. I remember at one point we had a somewhat bumptious young associate professor who was assigned to our office for a week. It was some kind of an exchange program we had in those days. And he came bustling in late one evening and dashed into Nat Howell's office and said, "Dr. Howell, Dr. Howell, how will we know when Lebanon is on the way to a solution?"

And Nat, who'd been working on this problem for years late every night, really tired at this point, looked up at him out of red-rimmed eyes and said in a flat tone of voice, "When the death rate exceeds the birth rate," *(laughs).*

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: You couldn't not like working for someone like that. But we were all intensely busy and as long as you had good people that made for a good atmosphere. We also had the periodic joint military commission meetings with the Jordanians where I went along as the state representative with our military when we went out for those. Intellectually, one of the issues we had was trying to get Arabs in general and Jordanians, in my case in particular, to sign on to the peace deal made between Begin and Sadat at Camp David. It was an interesting intellectual problem. What we were peddling essentially was an argument about process, that the process would create changes on the ground, that changes on the ground would change facts, and that would allow a different kind of peace settlement, from what was possible at the time, and therefore, they should come into this process. The Arabs all rejected that argument. They wanted to see the final shape of a peace treaty. They wanted to negotiate about a peace treaty, not negotiate about a process. And they didn't buy the argument that what we called a dynamic process, words that frankly do not translate into Arabic, would evolve into a peace settlement that would be acceptable. I think the only people in the Middle East who really bought the argument of dynamic process were the Israelis and the Likud Party that voted against the Camp David in the Knesset. They did believe that it could bring the kind of changes we were talking about, and that was one reason they opposed it. But the Arab Government and peoples by and large simply didn't buy this idea that dynamic process could give you a different set of facts. In private they were happy to talk about negotiating peace, but if they were going to buy a carpet they wanted to know which carpet they were going to buy. They didn't want to go to the bazaar and say let's see if what we can buy something. It was a different way of thinking. And I don't think we

really understood it terribly well. The peace deal at Camp David was an historic achievement. And of course the second thing that gave us terrible trouble with the Arabs was that President Carter I think legitimately believed he had a set of commitments from the Israelis about settlements and then the statements of Begin within I forget how long, but shortly after Camp David that changed the understanding or clarified it. But in any event, the difference between what the Israelis then said publicly and what we had been telling Arabs was also a major blow to our credibility. Obviously that is a very truncated, dimly remembered vignette of the peace negotiations after Camp David. But I do remember the psychological difference of trying to convince people about the whole idea that process can lead to a change in facts. That was a very American notion. It was completely unacceptable and incomprehensible to most of the Arab world.

Q: As a desk officer then you had an opportunity to travel out to your area?

NEUMANN: Yes, I did. Several times. Which was good fun.

Q: Did you just hit Jordan or all the ARN posts?

NEUMANN: I was in Jordan and Israel and the West Bank.

Q: Hm.

NEUMANN: Because that was where Jordan was directly focused. Jordan didn't really get involved in say, Lebanese issues. They weren't involved in Iraqi issues except to worry about the Iraqis attacking again because the Iraqis had sponsored the Palestinians in the fighting in Black September, in September 1970. When I was desk officer the Jordanians still kept most of their tanks up on the Iraqi border dug in facing the Iraqis. It wasn't the Israelis they were worried about in a war at that point.

Q: Part of a desk officer's job is support of the embassy, certainly on the policy side if not admin issues. Was there anything that particularly arose at that time for you in taking care of the embassy or following up on ambassadorial issues?

NEUMANN: It was a major part of my job. Of course one did it differently because we didn't have a very good classified phone system. We did have it, but it was horrible. I mean it was like Donald Duck talking under water. The phone sat on a great big safe in the NEA back office. One had to change the combination of the codes to the phone every week. And it was hard to use because the ambassador at post had to go to a separate room to use his secure phone. It was very hard to use. We did have something called the official informal telegram in those days, which has now fallen out of use, but which was not supposed to be circulated although I don't think it was impervious to front office attention. But it generally was not circulated. And that was our main method of transmitting informal views back and forth in the pre-email days when you had things that were more sensitive than you wanted to put on the telephone. So I remember doing a fair number of those. I have a feeling I may have done a weekly official-informal message , but I'm not positive about that. That was where I would convey background to

the ambassador, political wheelings and dealings within the bureaucracy and things that he needed to know to be able to play in the policy game in Washington. That is a tremendously important function of the department, to keep the ambassador informed politically of his rear. And it's one aspect that I find only a few desk officers really understand, partly because we don't train people to do it. It's something you either learn on the job or you don't learn. In many cases what you find is the function becomes subsumed by the country director or the deputy director for the office, or it isn't done. Or the ambassador interacts with the front office, which means that the desk officer falls even further down the power chain. But it really is something that the desk officer can do a great deal to prevent. Now, in a one-country directorate where you've got half a dozen or a dozen desk officers and one country directorate it's going to be different. But where you have essentially one or two desk officers per country and several countries in the directorate, the desk officer by making him or herself attuned to what's going on in Washington, to what the policy focus is, to thinking not about what they need to do to get some damn paper upstairs, but what the ambassador needs to know or how policy can be shaped can do a lot to keep an ambassador informed. And the more the desk officer does that and does it well, the more the ambassador will look to the desk offer to do it for them in the future. An active desk officer who's not just pedaling gossip but looking at this from a point of view of policy, can build his or her influence, both with the ambassador and in the policy process. One who sits around waiting to be told what to do or asked to report on something will usually find themselves sucking air.

Q: One of the roles that the desk officer plays is the interagency contact, both for the department and the embassy, working for commerce or AID. I suppose those sorts of --

Q: Jordan had a huge number of interagency issues, some of them contentious. I confess that I developed a certain liking for this sort of thing. I think Veliotes when he was a deputy once referred to me as having bureaucratic blood lust *(laughs),* which I thought was a little extreme. But I do remember him muttering as I walked out of some meeting on some issue, when I'd explained some bureaucratic strategy we were using, "I'm glad he's on our side." You have to tackle the bureaucracy both as a foreign culture and as a sport. And if you don't treat it as a culture, which like any foreign culture abroad needs to be learned and understood in order to operate effectively then you will be a failure in Washington. If you expect that somehow Washington is going to run in some pure fashion that observes the wiring diagrams on agency relationships or how business will be done, then you have no business being involved in foreign affairs because the bureaucracy of Washington is every bit as much a culture to its own as any foreign country you deal with. You need to look at it as sort of a sport where you can score points by winning. And that doesn't mean you have to be a backstabber and sneaky. In fact, I found over the years that you can have most of your disputes upfront. You don't have to yell at people. And you can be very professional in how you dispute with them. Now, I wouldn't say that I've never done anything a little sneaky, but by in large I've kept most of my disagreements with people polite, professional, and upfront so that people don't feel betrayed. They need to know that if you say you're going to do something you'll do it. If you say you're opposed then that's serious because you're going to be able to mount some kind of a defense. There were a number such issues with commercial issues and

economic ones. I'd forgotten a lot of those. The biggest interagency issues were particularly with defense. We have a very close relationship with Jordan. And particularly because in those days -- this was, remember, right after the attempt to take over the shrines in Mecca in '79 -- there was a lot of worry about Saudi instability. In those days we were worried about Saudi Government being unstable, about threats from the right. Now we worry about threats from the left. But those days it was the right wing that we were worried about. And one of the questions was what happens if there's suddenly a revolt in Saudi Arabia against the regime and this imperils the regime and imperils oil. Of course we didn't have nearly as much global mobility in the late '70s as we do now. One of the things we came up with was a discussion, highly secret in those days but I'm pretty sure it's leaked since so I don't think I'm giving away anything, with the Jordanians, that if asked or even conceivably if not asked, you could have Jordanian units move in to Saudi Arabia. Of course, the Jordanians loved the idea since they'd been kicked out of Hejaz at the beginning of the Al Saud period. And we liked it because the Jordanians had by far the best-trained units, they were on the scene, they could get there when nobody else could. There were all kinds of clandestine planning about how many brigades we would move and how we'd get them to key places in Saudi Arabia and what could be air dropped and what could be road marched and how they closed with each other. All this obviously required a lot of consultation between State and Defense. In other words nobody was off on their own.

Q: Were there other major issues with AID or --

NEUMANN: A major issue with AID involved water in the Jordan River and a major dam project that was to share water with Isreael. The idea had been around a long time with various studies. We tried to move ahead on it and to be the go between with Israel and Jordan. It never came about. There were a lot of different and very complicated problems but one I remember was that between the early discussions, I think in the late 60's, and when I was working on the problem the Israeli water needs had shifted from agricultural demands to a big need for water for urban areas. That changed the whole basis for discussion and we were never able to resolve the issues between the two sides.

Another issue I remember was simply keeping the budget alive. I don't remember big fights between the embassy and AID. There may have been some that I've forgotten about in the intervening time, but I don't remember any. I remember we had to do so-called "zero based budgeting" for our AID and Defense programs. I remember that the exercise was very tedious. The only thing I really remember was that at one point I put on the back of my ZBB (zero based budgeting) submission that I sent up to the front office a cartoon taken out of I think The Atlantic. And the cartoon -- it was typical Atlantic cartoon with a long caption -- showed a bunch of apes standing around and the caption said, "This meeting has been called to discussion the Division of the Meat. It having been pointed out that there is no meat, we will fight about the bones." I thought this was particularly appropriate to our arguments about the budget, so I appended that to my official submission, but somebody lacking a sense of humor took it off before it went upstairs.

Q: (laughs) One of the things that's -- that NEA desk officers are aware of is public interest in the United States on major issues. Did you have an opportunity to do some public speaking or?

NEUMANN: I don't remember how much, but I certainly did some public speaking. There was also an interesting thing that the American Jewish community was always sending groups to Washington. There was a rotating requirement for desk officers to go to the NSC when one of these groups would come through and talk about our area, general relations, etc. Jordan was often involved with Israel and in those days there was also a view that Jordan should be given over to the Palestinians and that should become the solution to the Arab-Israeli issue. The Jordanians of course didn't think a whole lot of this. And frankly, the Palestinians didn't either because they are as attached to their view of Palestine as the Israelis are to their view of Israel and that Palestinian view, whatever else it might be, does not view Palestine as Jordan. You could make an historical argument that they were once a part of the same thing and therefore the Palestinians ought to view Jordan as Palestine, but they don't. And the Israelis didn't think much of the argument. In any event, it was a live issue at the time and one which we often had to address. So I would periodically have to go over and be one of the briefing officers for these groups of American Jewish politically interested citizens. What struck me about them was that they were not terribly well informed. They were very committed to Israel obviously. But I was very surprised to find that issues that were being freely discussed in the Israeli press that I would have thought were matters of more general knowledge because the Israeli press were different positions on issues were very often unknown to the rank and file of the American Jewish community. I didn't understand it, but I just found it surprising. I expected them to be committed, but I expected them to be better informed.

Q: Another group that would have been interested that might have come to your attention is the Congress, of course is always interested in foreign policy.

NEUMANN: One really can't ignore them. Desk officers were not doing testimony, so I don't recollect that I ever did testimony. But I certainly worked with congressional staff members. And NEA in my experience has always been forward leaning in terms of working with the Congress, taking the initiative to work with people. Periodically, the department pulls back and wants congressional relations confined to a few people, especially charged with that responsibility. The result is always almost bad because the people charged with the responsibility don't actually know squat about the issues and therefore can't be appropriately proactive with the Congress, telling them what they need to know so we build understanding and avoid trouble. I think the view that I've seen come back over and over again in different NEA administrations is one of get people up, work with the Congress, find out what their issues are, try and tell them why we agree or disagree with things. Actually why we disagree may be the most important because if you agree it's usually not a problem. The Jordan desk was where I began to learn that. I don't remember how much was doing it myself, how much was going with other more senior officials. But I certainly came out of that job with a lot more feeling for how much one needs to work with the Congress and with the congressional staff, how important staff is,

because it's the staff that follows issues fulltime. A congressman might be very interested in the Middle East, but he's still got all kinds of other issues coming at him, either from a national basis or from his constituents. But it's his personal or committee staff that followed the issue fulltime, and they're the ones that have the first real crack at influencing congressional opinion. It's really important to spend a lot of time working with congressional staff. And you know, I've had people that I started knowing then that I worked with periodically over years. We didn't always agree, but if you have a good reputation with them, meaning that they believe you're honest; they believe that you might not tell them everything, but what you tell them is true -- then your personal credibility can remain high and your relations good, even if you're in dispute over a particular issue.

Q: The Congress. I guess -- oh, I was thinking, you know, you went from Tabriz, which is the far end of the world, to staff assistant, which is the inter-sanctum, now down to desk. It's an interesting transition as you pick up more information and more understanding as to how --

NEUMANN: Mm-hmm.

Q: -- the system works. I think that progression is worthwhile.

NEUMANN: Well, you know, it's like any other business. Or the Army. You know, in the Army they used to tell you, you don't have to be able to do any particular job that your men do better than they do it, but you have to know enough about it to know what they're supposed to be doing. As you learn, move up in the profession and want to supervise, it is great help in supervision if you actually know what the hell you're doing, to put it bluntly.

Q: The other thing I wanted to ask is this is the Carter Administration coming in. We do have Pat Derian trying to nail down the human rights policy. So we're now writing human rights reports. Is that the desk job? Did you get involved in that?

NEUMANN: I certainly have later. I don't really remember. I remember the disdain with which most Foreign Service officers approached the issue of making human rights an essential pillar of our human policy, and I would say that we were probably wrong and that it was a good thing. But it was certainly jolting. It did open up a kind of discussion which I think had never been very focused in American foreign policy and still isn't, although it's not just about human rights. It's the disjuncture between people who think that foreign policy has to have priorities, meaning one thing comes before a second in all things, and the reality that a great nation has multiple interests. And a great deal of real foreign policy is how you manage and balance among interests, not absolute prioritization. That issue circles back constantly in human rights, how far do you go toward human rights as a priority issues, versus relations with states, stability, Middle East peace, avoiding wars, advancing your commercial interests. They're all legitimate interests of the state. Often your problem is not one of absolute ranking, but of how you try to shuffle several of them forward without them getting into conflict with each other.

Q: I had an earlier discussion with people in NEA who were very concerned about the way that the human rights thing came, because they really didn't want to discuss in that kind of detail Israeli policies.

NEUMANN: Yeah, well we fixed that by not doing it.

Q: (laughs) That that was one of the major -- the bureau pushed back on the human rights things, because --

NEUMANN: May well have been true, but it wasn't the piece of the issue that I was particularly involved in, or at least I don't remember it at this point.

Q: You start in '78, but '79 really hits the bureau. You've got the Shah -- Iran continues to unravel. In fact, in February of '79 the Shah leaves. And then you have the seizure of the embassy in '79. How is -- how does -- does that affect ARN?

NEUMANN: It didn't affect ARN particularly, except with a general fear of Iranian radicalism that was prevalent across the Arab world. It affected me in three respects. First of all, a number of people I knew became hostages. Mike Metrinko, who's still a friend today, had taken my place in Tabriz. Bruce Laingen who'd been one of my father's DCMs in Kabul was head of the Tehran Embassy and I knew him. The Swiss, who were the protecting power, were taking papers to him where he was hostage in the Foreign Ministry and they took him the Foreign Service promotion list the year I got promoted. I remember thinking, here's this man who's a hostage with no idea what's going to happen with his life, and he finds time to write me a congratulatory note on my promotion. That always stuck in my mind. I remember, it was a very nice note talking about the clarity of the light in Iran which has a very attractive, particular quality, and he was reflecting on that in the letter. It was a very upbeat letter. So that was one thing. Then initially after the hostages were taken we were occasionally able to talk to those in the Foreign Ministry by telephone. It was thought that having Farsi speaking officers on the working group would help get communications through. I think that was an error. Later we figured out if the Iranians wanted us to talk to them we would get the call through. And if they didn't want us to talk to them having Farsi speaking operator interacting with the Iranian telephone operator in Tehran or the Foreign Ministry operator wasn't going to make a whole lot of difference. Eventually after one of our officers got incensed and got in a real shouting match with a telephone operator in the Foreign Ministry it was decided that maybe this really wasn't the best idea in the world. But anyway, initially the thinking was we needed Farsi speaking officers on the crisis working group. For the first month or something of the hostage period I was doing regular shifts on the working group. Then the third place that it involved me was in the preparation of a dissent memo where several people who had served in Iran thought that we ought to be taking more forceful action. Was that the right course? Who knows. I know John Limbert thinks we'd have got them all killed if we'd gotten our way. And maybe we would have, because part of the thrust of the memo was that while we ought to get the people out and keep them safe that is not the only American interest, that there is our position in the world and that if we bow too much

we're going to suffer other consequences for having shown ourselves as weak. Of course, that fear was in a sense washed away by Reagan's defeat of Carter. Had the Carter Administration remained a second term in office, I think, we would have seen a lot more thrusts against the administration. But that's unknowable. Anyway, the result was three others and I, four of us, wrote a memo to dissent with the policy and saying that we ought to take military action. I remember Escudero was one, and I've forgotten who the other two were at this point. Then late in the day we decided collectively that the memo ought to be signed only by those who had served in Iran since the beginning of the revolution. We thought that would be more effective than having signatories who had served in Iran, but not in the period of the revolution and therefore couldn't claim to understand it or didn't seem to necessarily understand it as much. So I dropped off of the signature line, although my name was still there as one who subscribed to the views. And I actually had written a piece of the memo, although not the majority of it. As a result of not being one of the three signatories I was not one of the three who were called in and lectured loudly for having voiced dissent. So I felt left out. But so that was the other place where the --

Q: Now, is this the proper dissent channel message or --

NEUMANN: No, dissent channel didn't exist in those days. It was a memo from obstreperous officers to the secretary of state. I think.

Q: Now --

NEUMANN: It was pre-dissent channel. We just decided to dissent.

Q: NEA we've always said is good at crises. Tehran comes up. There's a task force set up.

NEUMANN: Yeah, don't forget, we also had South Asia problems; we had Spike Dobbs assassinated in Kabul that year and the embassy in Islamabad overrun and people killed. It was a bad year.

Q: That's right.

NEUMANN: That was all in the bureau.

Q: Well, that's why that bureau's officers are so sophisticated. The -- the task force, just as a bureaucratic mechanism, how did they sat that up and run it?

NEUMANN: I think NEA really understood task forces. Once upon a time there was a tape I've seen that the late Arnie Raphel made about working in Washington where he actually voiced his principles for running a task force, which I think NEA by and large followed intuitively. But he voiced them explicitly. And they were interesting because the first thing he said was you become the secretary of the group, you get hold of the pen, you chair the group. And then, you make sure you have the lead responsibility for drafting. After you've controlled all the form you can go on and worry about substance.

But it is not entirely a humorous point because it's how you dominate policy. And the other point was to always overstaff. Throw as many people as you might conceivably need on a working group at the beginning. Actually, this is something that I've seen State officers are actually rather poor at understanding-- probably because we get used to working with too little and think pain is virtue. I've seen State officers chronically, instinctively without thinking about it decide what's the minimum you need to do something and what's the minimum staff. Then when that staff isn't adequate they go through terrible pain because it often is very hard to get more people. At the beginning of a crisis you can get more people, maybe not many as many as you want, but you can get more. And one of the things NEA understood was that you just rip people out of desk jobs and other things and you put them on shifts and everybody works extra hours. But you put enough people on a crisis to manage the issue; whatever you have to mange, the sit reps, the reports upstairs, the reports to the assistant secretary. Then if later on you find you don't need as many people you can let them go back to their regular work. It's far easier to overstaff a crisis group at the beginning and let them go later than to find you're understaffed and then try to get people.

Q: And NEA was staffing this through its own --

NEUMANN: NEA staffed most of their crisis groups through its own resources. If something went on long enough or if it involved American citizens then you'd get some people from consular. It depended what the issue was. I remember we did the crisis group for the Achille Lauro hijacking. I don't know what I was doing by then but I remember being on the crisis group for that by which point Veliotes was ambassador in Egypt. I remember at one point -- I don't know whether it was April Glaspie or whether it was Beth Jones,. I'm not sure. I think it was April. Anyway, she was on the phone to Nick. And we knew that the Egyptians listened to the telephone call. She was speaking very slowly, almost like special English and saying very slowly, "Nick, you have," -- I don't know how you're going to transcribe this, but maybe just space the words out, "You. Have to. Understand. How. Angry. Everyone. Is. Here." And she was speaking, in effect, for the Egyptian wire tappers. And I remember that this working group was composed of people from NEA and from the European Bureau. And all the NEA people went on working as though this bizarre manner of speaking was the most normal thing in the world and all the EUR people had stopped working and were staring at whoever was making the telephone call. And it was a small indication of the cultural differences of the bureaus.

Q: One of the things that came up while you were on the Jordanian desk was Desert 1, the attempt at rescue.

NEUMANN: I landed in Jordan with military delegation on a military flight for one of our joint U.S.-Jordanian Military meetings the day the failure of Desert 1 was announced. We all felt terrible and sort of humiliated, as well as being sorry for the people killed. I remember that the overwhelming reaction across the Jordanian Military that we dealt with, from General Ben Shaker the commander on down, was first of all polite, and second of all it was "too bad but now you should pick yourselves up, dust yourself off, go

back and do it again. Do it and get it right." There was no condemnation of having tried a military rescue. They were unhappy it hadn't worked and they thought the thing we needed to do was to go back and do it better.

Q: And that was a reaction from a high-level official.

NEUMANN: That was a reaction from every Jordanian Military officer we spoke to. It was from generals to lieutenant colonels, and majors.

Q: Very professional reaction.

NEUMANN: Well, they were also terrified of the Iranians. The Iranians were seen as fermenting rebellion all over the region. And the Joranians were fine with limited military action.

Q: Now the way the decision worked out, Secretary Vance wasn't very happy. He had been out of town or something like that. So he resigned.

NEUMANN: I had nothing to do with his decision. I didn't know anything about the raid until it failed. My understanding is that Vance actually made the decision to resign over the issue before the raid took place, but that he agreed to hold the decision so it wouldn't jeopardize the raid. But that's all, you know, reading and hearsay. None of that should be taken as a fact from me.

Q: One of the unintended consequences of the seizure of the embassy, Desert 1 is later that year Iraq invades Iran.

NEUMANN: Yeah. That involved us a bit more. Jordan again was peripheral, but ARN -
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Q: Also covered --

NEUMANN: Also covered Iraq. And at that time there was no question from policy point of view about backing Iraq. People have seen this later as how could you do this. Well, you know, it was simple. Iran was the strategic threat. The thought that Iran might manage to break through Iraqi defenses and menace the Arabian peninsula and oil was a direct threat in everybody's view in the bureau. This was a major strategic threat.Iran had taken Americans hostage, was fomenting rebellion around the region, was a potential threat to our strategic and oil interests and would be a major destabilizing factor, if they won that war. And out of that it was concluded by people on high, not by me, but I think most people in the bureau agreed, that it was in our interest for Iran not to win. I actually don't see any reason to apologize for that policy today. It's not too dissimilar from what Palmerston voiced as a British Prime Minister, when he said that, "England has no permanent friends; England has permanent interest." Sometimes I think we would be more rational if we remembered that.

Q: Now, you're in Washington again for transition to a new administration. The Reagan Administration comes in in '81. Or you have the election in November

NEUMANN: Yes.

Q: The administration starts. It's always an interesting time to be at a desk during that transition period. Do you recall --

NEUMANN: Well, it was particularly interesting because my father headed the transition team in the State Department. Obviously I couldn't serve on he transition team because that would have been nepotism, but I was spending evenings talking with my father and reading transition papers. So I had a pretty good view of the transition team. I wouldn't say it was a pretty good view of the actual transition because most of the work of transition team is frankly wasted. Transition teams tend to be heavily staffed by political wannabes producing think pieces about policy changes that are mostly designed to show why they should then be put in charge of managing the policy with, of course, the commensurate position in the administration. Then eventually the real secretary designee is picked, and he or she arrives with his team and most of the transition team disappears except for a few that are actually given work. So a lot of the work is, is not terribly meaningful. It was an interesting experience because my father could not pick his team. He was given a team so keeping it in mild order and the stupidest ideas off the table were a large part of the job as well as setting some issues up for decision.

Q: We're back talking about the transition to the Reagan Administration in late '80.

NEUMANN: It was a pretty wild time. My experience now after having seen this through a number of different administrations is that the first year of every administration is bad, produces bad policy, bad follow-up, lack of coordination. Part of that is of course simply the fact that we bring in so many people who are not professionals, many of whom may be experienced in political thought or have profound views, but don't have much experience of either working together or making an organization run. They all have to learn that. And that process is somewhat painful. A lot of true believers came in at the beginning of the Reagan Administration. I don't at this point remember what most of the policy differences were. I just remember a period in which NEA felt incredibly beleaguered. I remember in the bureau people talking about Wolfowitz and Bert as being very difficult people with ideas that we thought were all wrong. In fact, I remember one very senior NEA official referring to them as Bertowitz, the kamikaze twins, always together and always wrong. Which, you know, gives you a flavor of how the bureau felt about this. The first year of an administration is often taken up obsessively with why they're different than the past, particularly if the past was the other party. So it was pretty crazy in the first year of Reagan, if I remember. But you saw exactly the same thing at the beginning of the Clinton Administration, with the failure of Balkan policy. You saw it very much in the beginning of the second Bush Administration where everything done during the Clinton period was deemed to be wrong and differentiating themselves led to various mistakes. So it was crazy in the beginning of the Reagan period, but it wasn't unique.

Q: Now, as things settled out Nick became the assistant secretary. Falling in line that most NEA assistant secretaries are career officers.

NEUMANN: Have there ever been any who weren't?

Q: Well, Hal Saunders was --

NEUMANN: Well, technically Hal Saunders was not a career foreign service officer, but he had been on the NSC (National Safety Control) staff and he had been one of the key aides for the whole shuttle diplomacy leading up from Kilometer 101 to the Israeli/Egyptian cease fire and disengagement and then he remained involved. So while he was a career Civil Servant and technically not a Foreign Service officer, it's really a technical distinction because he was deeply immersed as a career officer, not just in the implementation but in the policy. In fact, I've never seen anybody who took over an office with more advanced knowledge of the organization. He'd also been a DAS in NEA as a political appointee if I remember rightly. And it was kind of funny because when Hal took over he had a very, very systematic approach first to briefings, and then came in with a very structured work schedule, trying to preserve for himself a small modicum of time each day when he could actually think. And we instantly went into crisis and blew his whole plan to hell. But it was the most systematically well thought out taking over of an organization I've ever seen by somebody who understood it intimately. But other than that, technical difference, I don't remember anybody who hasn't been a career diplomat in that job.

Q: Why don't we go ahead and break this off now.

NEUMANN: OK, I think that's probably a good place to break.

Q: Because we can go into the Yemen --

NEUMANN: Yeah. Of course the one other, as you now remind me, assistant secretary that came from a non-career background was Martin Indyk. But again, you had somebody who had been in the NCS, been part of policy formulation, been part of Camp David, and been ambassador to Israel. So in both non-career cases you had people who had been intimately involved, not just in the policies, but in the nuts and bolts of managing diplomacy and managing policy.

Q: Sounds good. Thank you, sir.

Hello. It is the 2nd of January, 2011. We're returning to our interview with Ambassador Neumann for the Association Diplomatic Studies and Training. Just before we start our session, we were talking about how adequately we had covered the Iran/Iraq jockeying between '71 and '75 and the rule of the Kurds in that. Ambassador Neumann, you want to continue that conversation?

NEUMANN: Sure. I went to the U.S. Consulate in Tabriz in the northwest of Iran in 1974 as vice consul, which was a job that was vice consul/admin officer/consular officer, but also a good deal of political reporting. Tabriz was a somewhat unique post in terms of today's positions because it existed as a political reporting post. It did consular work because we were there. But the consular load was very small. The consulate had existed since the early 20th century because of the presence of American missionaries in that area. In fact, one of them, Mr. Baskerville, had been killed in the rebellion of 1909 fighting with the rebels and was buried in a small cemetery across from the consulate. The consular district involved about 20% of Iran from the province of Rasht on the Caspian Sea through Hamadan, Kermanshah, and later the province of Luristan and Ilam. This put all of the Kurdish areas of the Iran/Iraq border into our consular district.

I think two subjects that are worth discussing is the degree to which we saw restiveness in Iran in those days, and what happened with the Kurds. On the subject of the Kurds, the rebellion broke out in Iraq in 1974. Retrospectively, we now know from leaks and other documents, that the United States was involved covertly in support of that rebellion. What appears to have happened is that the Shah promised Mullah Mustapha Barzani that the Shah would maintain his support. Barzani wanted a backup guarantee from the United States to give assurance that the Shah would maintain his guarantee. And the United States apparently provided that guarantee. I say apparently because I've never seen the documents. The flaw was, of course, that the United States had no capacity to determine the Shah's actions.

During the war I traveled regularly, at least once a month, in the Kurdish areas of the border. I quickly discovered that my poor Farsi would be more than made up for by not having an interpreter in the room, because Iranians were very suspicious of who an Iranian interpreter might report to. So for the balance of my tour I traveled without an interpreter. Some of the Iranian officials were extremely forthcoming, such as the then governor in Sardasht who would regularly tell me what our guns were doing. Some of them were extremely closed mouth, such as the governor out in Piranshahr. Gradually over time I built an awareness that U.S. Military equipment was flowing into Iraq. There were some very distinctive weaponry, such as the 106 recoilless rifle, which is unique in its shape, that people described to me. At another point, Iranian artillery was firing regularly into Iraq in support of the Kurds using rather large 175-millimeter guns. At one point one of these guns exploded, apparently because they didn't clean it regularly and the bore eventually got smaller than the shell. In any event, a U.S. Military team went secretly to the location of the guns and provided a report on what needed to be done. Having been in the Army, I was reasonably sure that the Iranians would not be firing artillery without having Iranian officers to on the ground to direct the fire, which gave me circumstantial evidence that the Iranians had deployed at least some personnel into Iraq. During the war in '74 the Kurds were uniquely united. They had had several previous rebellions. They had had various splits and re-combinations. But during this rebellion both the urban and more intellectual elites, particularly under Jalal Talabani's PUK, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, and the Kurdish Democratic Party of Barzani were united. There were some Kurds who fought with the Iraqis. That was basically a tribal issue. One could trace back the tribes that fought with Saddam and the tribes that didn't and look at

previous tribal confrontations and see a lot of consistency. However, despite the unity of the Kurds during 1974 the Iraqi Army made steady process in pushing them back. The Kurds continued to say, "Wait until the winter." And all of us expected that there would be a major Kurdish offensive in the winter. In fact, this did not happen.

Looking at it retrospectively, I think the Kurds were counting on a repeat on what had happened in previous wars when the Iraqi Army during the severe winter conditions would pull back out of the mountains, allowing the Kurds fairly easily to repossess the ground they had lost and fight an essentially defensive war. However, in the winter of 1974-75 the Iraqi Army did not pull back. Instead, it fortified its forward positions with barbed wire, machine guns, and artillery support. At this point, it began to become apparent that while the Kurds were extremely brave and would fight defensively very well they were not prepared to make mass attacks through barbed wire taking the kind of casualties that, for instance, the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese were prepared to take in attacking American troops. The result of this was that very few Iraqi positions were retaken and when the 1975 campaigning season opened in the spring the Iraqis were prepared to jump off from forward positions that pushed the Kurds much closer to the Iranian frontier. In fact, as 1975 went on it became apparent, to me at least, that really only the Iranian artillery support was preventing a complete Kurdish defeat. In the northern area the Kurds were preventing the Iraqis advancing through the Ruwandiz Gorge, but that was very much a factor of artillery fire. Somewhat to the south of that there's a large plain around a place called Qala Diza. The Kurds held the ridgelines closest to the Iranian frontier. But again, only the artillery was preventing a massive Iraqi attack from crossing the plain and rolling up the Kurds.

I believe, but I cannot prove this, that the Shah was finding himself in a far more dangerous position than he had ever expected. He was now getting into more and more a direct military face-off with the Iraqis, because Iraqis were getting more and more frustrated that it was Iranian direct support that was keeping the insurgency alive. This was risking something the Shah had never intended, an Iranian-Iraqi war. He had expected, I presume, that the Kurdish rebellion would drag on, as it had before, weakening the Saddam regime. In that context, and again I stress this is my own belief, when the Iraqis offered the Shah what the Iranians had wanted in the re-designation of the border along the Shatt al-Arab River the Shah accepted the deal and pulled the plug on the Iranian Kurds. The Kurds then flowed into Iran in large numbers, particularly all of the leadership of the rebellion, and went initially into camps around the Iranian border. Subsequently, the Shah decided that was too unstable to have these folks so close to his border and many of them were moved deeper into Iran and were kept under fairly close control. The Kurds in the camps were not in particularly good condition. I used to visit them regularly. And they would remind me that this was our responsibility.

During the war I had, as I said, become progressively aware of American equipment flowing into Iraq. But in my young and naive days I had presumed this was the Iranians violating their foreign military sales agreements with us, rather than evidence of the covert American support for the revolution, which was later revealed. I once asked a senior CIA official why I had not been informed. And he told me that then Ambassador

Richard Helms, formerly Director of the CIA, had had great doubts about the operation from the beginning and had told the station chief that he, Helms, thought this operation was going to go bad and anybody closely associated with it was going to have their careers damaged. He therefore instructed the station to maintain the utmost limitation on need-to-know about the operation. That said, my reporting was always allowed to go out, although generally in the form of letters, to the country directorate, rather than in cables that would have broader distribution. But I think it is interesting to note historically that Ambassador Helms never tried to prevent any of my reporting on any sensitive subject in Iran from reaching Washington. The end of the rebellion didn't really end my relationship with the Kurds. I had known in the camps many of the Kurds who later would figure in Iraq in the '90s and then after the first Gulf War I worked with them when I was director of the Iran-Iraq office and then a third time when I served in Baghdad after the second Gulf War. So I found that Kurds and Kurdish issues continued to waft in and out of my political life throughout much of the rest of my career.

On the issue of the stability of the Iranian regime, it is perhaps interesting to note that during my time in Tabriz we had a number of outbreaks of demonstrations at the university and things like this. These demonstrations and small riots had been a regular feature of Iranian political life for a number of years. The consulate in Tabriz maintained some very good back files on things of this nature that had happened previously. In each case though, the Shah had reacted very forcefully and the rebellions were put down. The point I would make is simply that we were quite well aware that there were a great many strains in Iran at this point, that there was a heavy measure of discontent with the rule of the Shah. However, what we thought we were seeing was a regular recurring pattern that whenever these things broke out into riots or small rebellions, the Shah put them down with great efficiency and violence. What did not occur to us was what subsequently happened, that is the collapse of the Shah's will and the vacillation in his tactics that appeared when the final rebellion of 1978, '79 began to come about, so that it was not a matter of ignorance of the underlying conditions, but an assumption that his ways of responding to them would continue, which turned out to be a critical error.

Q: Let's go back now to where we left off on the last tape, and that's wrapping up your last tour in NEA/ARN or the Office of Northern Arab Affairs. I'd like to focus a minute on office dynamics. What was it like working for Wat Cluverius and with Nat Howell?

NEUMANN: They were both outstanding officers. I enjoyed working with them. The office was incredibly busy. In those days, ARN included not only Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon, but also Iraq so that it was an extremely busy office. Wat Cluverius once told me that when I first came in he had some doubt about whether I was looking after everything in my portfolio, but he got so busy with whatever the crisis was at the moment that he didn't have a chance to follow up. And by the time he did he'd decided that I'd actually mastered my portfolio. However, that conversation taught me something useful about the bureaucracy that I have followed ever since, which was to keep up a continuing stream of small communications, notes in those days, emails later, telling my superiors what the problems of the day were and what I propose to do about them. I found if I knew what I was doing and told them what I was going to do then they were generally relaxed

and would leave me alone. It was a technique that prevented too many instructions. Nat Howell was an excellent boss. He'd been working on Lebanon since he had been in Lebanon. He had vast experience, and as a result vast cynicism about both what was happening in Lebanon and the American capacity to understand it. I do remember one humorous incident. We had a young associate professor who was with us for a week or so. In those days there was a program where young professors would spend a week or two in the department and they would have a kind of home in a particular office but would have a fairly extensive program during the day. Then they would come back to their "home" office in the evening. I remember the first thing that astonished this young professor was to discover that we actually worked hard in the State Department, that we would be there at 6:30 and 7:00 at night finishing up. He had always thought that government servants went home early. And with relation to Nat Howell I remember him coming back terribly excited about some crisis in Lebanon and bursting in to Nat Howell's office and saying, "Dr. Howell, Dr. Howell, how will we know when Lebanon is on the road to solution?"

And poor Nat Howell, who'd been doing this for years and was tired and overworked, looked up without any change of expression and glanced at the professor through red-rimmed eyes and responded, "When the death rate exceeds the birth rate," *(laughs).*

The professor took at least a day to recover from the shock.

Q: And actually in this timeframe, this is when Israel invaded up to the Litani River and a whole series of destabilizing events were taking place in addition to the Camp David discussions and accords. So that's a pretty busy office.

NEUMANN: It was a very busy office. I was Jordan desk officer so I was not directly involved in Lebanese matters, although occasionally I would have to step in for the Lebanon desk officer and during that invasion you mentioned I was one of many on a small task force in the operation center. In those days the crisis group has a very small little office looking out through a glass window at the operation's center without the marvelous and extensive facilities that have since been developed, just a couple of maps up on boards. But I think we followed things reasonably well. There was also a period after some of the problems in Saudi Arabia where we were not sure about Saudi ability to maintain stability in Saudi Arabia. There were a lot of consultations and discussions with the Jordanians about how they would be involved in the region. We had excellent relations with Jordan, both military and civilian, of course. And a regular review, joint military commission with the Jordanians that I participated on at least twice. On one memorably occasion we touched down in Jordan just as the news arrived of the failure of Desert 1, the operation to rescue the hostages in Iran. The Jordanians were very polite. We were, of course, all mortified. The joint military commission was largely a military operation where I was I think the only civilian. But the Jordanians were very polite to us. And their only comment on the rescue attempt was that I was too bad it failed, but that we should dust ourselves off and go back and do it again as soon as possible.

Q: One of the interesting aspects of a Washington tour and being the desk officer is that you have the opportunity to interact with the local embassy. How were your relations with the Jordanian Embassy?

NEUMANN: Relations were excellent, but the Jordanian Ambassador, although a very intelligent man -- I think his name was Abdullah, I don't remember his full name -- was not kept particularly well-informed by Amman so that the real locus of relations with Jordan was in our embassy in Amman, as it had been for many years.

Q: As your tour here in NEA/ARN ends, new administration comes to town. And we've talked about the transition. As that administration finds its appointees and gets a foothold, did you see any particular changes in the way the bureau operated?

NEUMANN: Well, the first year of a new administration is almost always chaotic. I had a unique view of the transition actually because my father headed the transition team in the State Department after Reagan's election. I couldn't participate directly on the transition teams since that would have been nepotism, but I was in regular contact with my father and was able to look at a lot of the papers they were doing. He had very little control over who was assigned to the transition team. They mostly were political wannabes, to be charitable, developing a large number of papers whose purpose seemed to be to suggest that if such and such a policy were changed in the way a particular individual suggested them, that individual should be employed to carry it out. Once Haig was appointed secretary of state he arrived with his own entourage and the transition team largely faded away. The early administration brought with it people who had some very strong ideas. There was a lot of pulling and tugging between the Middle East Bureau and Political Military Bureau and Policy Planning that were the sort of standard bearers of the new doctrine. I would say we probably won at least as many fights as we lost, but winning was usually defined as preventing something we defined as stupid from happening, rather than some affirmative policy. The result was what usually happens after a year or so. Reality imposes itself on the political ideas that the new administration has brought in. That's one reason that there's considerable consistency in U.S. policy over the years between administrations. It is a reflection of the fact that our real world interests and real world conditions don't actually change very much, even though a new group of people descend from the sunlit uplands of policy thinking to the gritty valleys of reality.

Q: The administration is inaugurated in January of '81. By May of '81 NEA has a new assistant secretary, Nick Veliotes. How does he get -- come to this position?

NEUMANN: Well, I'm not sure how he came. That is, I'm not sure exactly who recommended who. I had a close relationship with Veliotes. He had been the deputy assistant secretary earlier on in the bureau when I was a staff assistant. Then I'd been his desk officer when he was ambassador in Jordan. So we had a pretty close working relationship and I was pretty happy when he came back as assistant secretary. He knew the Middle East. He was extremely competent. And it was an easy working relationship. We had strong deputies and it was a very strong bureau in those days.

Q: Now, your situation is going to change in 1981. You're going to get a new assignment as the deputy chief of mission in Yemen. How did you get that job?

NEUMANN: Well, initially I was going to leave the Jordan desk after two years and go off to begin Arabic training. And then my replacement, who was Mark Grossman who later became under secretary of state, was working at The White House in the National Security Council and was asked to stay for another year. That was rather late in the day and I was asked if I would stay on for a third year as Jordan desk officer. I did so. At that time, the DCM in Amman, Jordan was David Zweifel. One night Secretary Haig was about to leave on a trip to Jordan, however there was a meeting at The White House. Some crisis was going on, I don't remember what it was, but it was anticipated that as a result of this crisis Haig was going to have to cancel his visit to Jordan. And there was considerable alarm that the Jordanians would read about this in the newspaper before they were informed officially. So in those days of less than immediate communication I was instructed to get Zweifel, who was then the chargé, on the telephone and keep him on the telephone on an open line until the meeting ended. This was a little hard on Zweifel, because it was the middle of the night. So I woke him up and we had a very long conversation while his poor wife tossed and turned and he lay in bed. Eventually, we had exhausted pretty much everything we could think of to talk about to keep him awake while waiting for the meeting to end. Somehow the conversation got around to the fact that he was going to Yemen as ambassador. He suddenly asked me if I would like to go to Yemen as his DCM. I don't know why he decided, but I thought it was a great idea so I accepted. Arabic training went out the window and I proceeded to go to Yemen. When I went the ambassador had already departed. That was George Lane.

NEUMANN: Edward "Skip" Gnehm, who later became various things, Director General of the Foreign Service and ambassador in multiple places, was chargé in Yemen. There was great consternation at the post that this newly promoted FS-2 was coming out to be DCM and was going to be chargé for a while until the new ambassador got out there. If I remember rightly, Lane wanted to have a month overlap between me and Gnehm. However, Joe Twinam, who was then the deputy assistant secretary who I worked for and who was responsible for the Peninsula, told me in his Carolina drawl that "they don't know you, I do, don't worry about it." The final negotiation ended up that I would have a week's overlap with Skip, but as things fell out the day I arrived he got an unfortunate telegram that his father had gone into the hospital with a terminal illness. So he left the next day and our overlap amounted to 36 hours. It was an interesting takeover because one of the last things he had done was to remove all our AID advisors from an agricultural school in the town of Ibb. There was a rebellion going on in Yemen in those days, sponsored in part by the Communist Government of South Yemen in Aden. And there was a concern that our people at the agricultural school would be caught in a crossfire because there was a high probability of an insurgent attack on Ibb. However, it was summer and school was in recess so no one was really aware that we had pulled out all the people. So my first decision as chargé was to decide whether to go to the President of Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh, and tell him that we had so little confidence in his

government that we'd taken out all our people from a project in one of Yemen's major cities or to put our people back in with some risk to them. That was an interesting first decision for a new chargé. It reminded me of training films we used to have in officer candidate school that would come to some crisis and then the screen would go blank and white letters would appear on a black background saying, "What do you do now, Lieutenant?" I was actually very determined that we weren't going to back away, but I had to be rather careful as a new chargé. So I didn't reveal any propensities to my staff. I sent my defense attaché, who was Pat Lang who became quite famous, and the AID director, I think maybe somebody else -- we didn't even have a security officer in Yemen; there was no RSO (regional security officer) -- down to look at the situation. They came back and we decided collectively that because we weren't worried about our people being the target of an attack, but rather being caught in a crossfire, that if we increased the number of vehicles, and thus their ability to withdraw from the post, and build a strong wall around their compound that would prevent them from being hit by stray fire, that we could probably safely put them back in. So we got plans from the Corps of Engineers. We built what may well be the strongest wall existing in Yemen to this day since it was designed to stop direct fire from a tank's main gun and then we proceeded to put our people back in. One pleasant moment for me, was when I think it was Colonel Lane told me that he'd really wondered if I'd be willing to put our people back in. I found that very satisfying because it proved that I had concealed my intentions quite well.

Q: Can you describe how the embassy was organized? How big was it?

NEUMANN: Oh, it was pretty small. I don't remember in any detail. We had one political officer, we had an economic officer, we had a single consular officer, you know, one of each. We had no security officer. The administrative officer, Lee Lohman, was the post security officer but had no particular extra training for that. The replacement for Colonel Lane as Defense Attaché was Colonel Ward. He became a good friend. It was pretty standard organization. The ambassador was the main outside man. I was the main inside man. But we had a good close relationship so that I could take over when he was absent. And I kept him well enough informed that he was comfortable with what we were doing internally.

Q: In 1981 what did the embassy physically look like? What kind of a building was it?

NEUMANN: Oh, we were in a wonderful old Yemeni building with this wonderful Yemeni stained glass, beautiful red and green lights would fall across my floor when the sun shone through my window. It was of course a horrible building for security. It was surrounded by a mud wall. It was in a downtown part of town reached by an alley that periodically flooded up by the trashcans when it rained. It didn't rain very often in Yemen, but when it did there was no drainage and one had to wade through some rather large puddles to get to the embassy. But it was a wonderful historic kind of building and very enjoyable. Later on it was abandoned for bad security and a new embassy was built. We had some interesting moments there. At one point we received intelligence that a group had been ordered to come north from South Yemen and assassinate the ambassador

and burn the embassy. The ambassador was gone and I was chargé. I wasn't quite sure they would understand the distinction. So we were in late at night burning cables and things like this when we got a message that came in, I don't know, about midnight from the regional security officer in Jeddah who was responsible for us, telling us to do all the things we were already doing. This produced some aggravation in my staff since they thought they were being micro-managed with an egg-sucking cable. And they wanted to reply rather angrily. I said, "No, no. We'll write a very calm message explaining that we're doing all the things we've been asked to do. But I want it marked secret, eyes only for the RSO and we'll send it as the last thing before we leave for the night." So the regional security officer in Jeddah was called back to his embassy at about 3:00 in the morning to read this entirely benign message and we were never bothered thereafter. We did have some tough times because we had a large group of Palestinians who'd been evacuated from Lebanon and then after that the massacres in Sabra and Shatilla took place. A lot of them lost their families. There was a period where we were worried about attacks on the embassy and on my house and not too confident about Yemeni security. I remember at one point that there was a very strong rumor the house was going to be attacked and just to show you the difference between security now and security in those distant days, we had, as I said, no regional security officer. We had no particular embassy guard force. I carried home a riot shotgun from the embassy, locked the compound gate, told the gardener not to let anybody in, put the dogs inside, and locked the front door. And my wife asked me if there was anything else I could do for security and I said, "Not really." I mean we would call the Yemeni Police if something happened, but we weren't too confident that they would actually respond. My wife then said to me, "Well, good. I wanted to get the sheers down off the windows and get them washed for a long time." So for the rest of the day with my shotgun propped against the door I was up and down ladders, taking down curtains, getting them washed and re-hanging them. Nothing happened and it occurred to me that probably a lot of frontier folks spent a lot of time during rumors of Indian raids forted up doing domestic chores in pretty much the same way.

Q: Now you came to post from the position as a Jordanian desk officer, but did you get much a briefing or heads up in Washington before you came out as to what was expected of the mission?

NEUMANN: Not that I remember. I'd had communication with Dave Zweifel and done some reading. Principally our interest in those days were stability of Yemen and shoring it up against pressures from the communists in the South who were probably seen as a larger threat than they actually were, but they had at one point had a little war between the two countries with tanks and things like that. So it wasn't completely fanciful on our part and there was a rebellion going on that was receiving aid from the south. We had a small AID program. We had a very small military assistance program that had been begun for what was then North Yemen principally directed against the South. We were also aware that Saudi Arabia was very concerned about Yemen and the Saudis were a very big player in Yemen with large amounts of money, some through official channels some not. We were very careful to stay in close contact with the Saudis and try to be mutually supportive in supporting the government of Ali Abdullah Saleh, but not get at

cross purposes with the Saudis. Saleh was in a early phase of what has became a rather long period of leadership. He was initially a compromise candidate after his predecessor was killed. And as often happened a compromisecandidate is picked because he looks weak to everybody and people think that he won't pose a threat. This was still an early period where Saleh was finding his feet and building his power. He didn't have anything like the degree of control he had later. His sub-tribe was a fairly small one. There was a lot of tribal violence. I remember I drove up north at some point when I was chargé to the city of Sa'dah and I was stopped several times by tribal roadblocks as well as government road blocks. My driver would tell people I was an engineer or something, he thought a diplomat might be too rich pickings for a hostage taking. And when I came back I asked the Yemeni prime minister, Dr. al-Iryani, what was going on with all these tribal roadblocks. And he said, "Well, the tribes in the north had been difficult so the Government imposed roadblocks to bring them under control and the tribes had responded with their own roadblocks, which were actually stronger." And I think that's an interesting commentary on how tenuous Saleh's power was in those days.

Q: You're talking about taking a few trips. Did you do much trouble getting around Yemen?

NEUMANN: Quite a bit. In the early part of my tour we couldn't travel very extensively in the south of what was North Yemen. We couldn't travel to South Yemen at all because we had no relations with the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, PDRY. But I traveled fairly extensively in the North. And then after the insurgency ended I was able to travel eastward over the mountains from Ibb into the tribal areas there. We still had to be careful because some of the roads hadn't been cleared of land mines. It was right in the aftermath of the rebellion and a lot of Yemenis had tribal feuds going on as a result of the insurgency and death threats or desires for revenge between tribes. Every house had the windows sandbagged and guns stacked up. And one of the first things you learned, when a Yemeni handed you a gun, which they were prone to do, was to take the magazine out before you opened the bolt to clear it because it was always loaded, and if you just opened the chamber you'd just be chambering another round when you let the bolt go. So it was a colorful tribal society.

Q: You were handed a gun for what purpose?

NEUMANN: Oh, just show you the gun. Yemenis love guns. I remember we got a new sub-machine gun for embassy security and it was an Uzi, an Israel sub-machine gun. I wasn't quite sure how having an Uzi would go down with our Yemeni local guards. We didn't have very many. But I shouldn't have worried because the day after it arrived the ambassador's portly Yemeni driver met me at the gate of the embassy clutching a fistful of Uzi magazines and said, "Let's go shoot."

Q: (laughs) Fortunately you knew which end the bullet came out of.

NEUMANN: No, no he knew how to shoot. He was a little bitty guy. We'd go out and we'd practice shooting in a trash dump outside the city. I remember when this little driver

of the ambassador, who was about all the security he had, would fire the riot shotgun it would back him slowly up the ascending dirt wall of the trash dump.

But the main thing was to support the Government. We did worry a little bit about its political conditions, but we were a lot more worried about its existence in those days. It was also extremely important to become really well-familiar with the tribal dynamics of Yemen, because it's very tribal society and has very tribal politics. The extent to which you had elections for democratic politics was really very superficial in those days. So we spent a lot of time on political reporting and on understanding tribal dynamics. We had a very good political officer, Ken Audroue who was a very good Arabist, and he would travel out in some of the tribal areas, particularly out in Marib where Hunt Oil was then doing its very early explorations that later discovered oil in Yemen. It was necessary when an embassy officer traveled there that he had a tribal friend to start with and that the tribal friend then passed him to a friend in another tribe so that he always had a host and, and therefore security by being passed from one to another. But as a result, I think we did quite a lot of, as I remember, good reporting on the tribal dynamics. And we were able to document the gradual solidifying of Saleh's political power.
Q: We're returning to our conversation about the situation in Yemen. Yemen is divided in half and you've discussed the rebellion going on there. As the inside man as the DCM, were there any particular embassy -- running the embassy issues that you had to deal with?

NEUMANN: Well, there must have been. I'm just not sure what they were at this point. We had a pretty harmonious team. Worked together pretty well, as I remember. We also had Peace Corps there as well. We went through an earthquake in Yemen, and a lot of earthquake delivery from airlift at one point. We did a lot of security drills because we were conscious that the embassy could be a subject of threat. We had several threats, as I discussed. There was one period where there was a specific threat reported of assassination. I don't know why these things seemed to favor me while I was chargé, but that one also came when I was charge. I remember it was one of the few times I've ever carried a weapon regularly but that was because this was not a kidnap threat, it was an assassination threat, so there wasn't much point in not carrying a weapon. It was one of the few times I've gone to a diplomatic cocktail party carrying a pistol.

Q: (laughs) Well, talking about cocktail parties, what was the diplomatic community in Sana'a like in those days?

NEUMANN: It was small. We had very close relations with the British. The British Ambassador, whose name I've now forgotten, but I remember he had been largely responsible for demarcating the border of the United Arab Emirates when it became the independent, having walked the whole border to ask villages to whom they paid Zakat, the religious tax, deciding which villages therefore belonged to belonged in the UAE (United Arab Emirates) and which to Oman and which to Saudi Arabia. He had then been in Yemen for a while by the time I got there and had developed an enormous fount of knowledge of the Yemeni tribes and had been doing a lot of work putting that knowledge onto a map. I used to spend quite a bit of time checking with him as well to validate what

I was learning or cross check it with what he had on various tribes. Also I had very close relations with the British Head of Chancery there, DCM, the Dutch chargé -- I don't think he was an ambassador -- was also a very close friend. There was not a large diplomatic community, probably 20 odd, something like that in those days. But --

Q: Saudi Arabia was probably one of the major actors.

NEUMANN: Saudi Arabia was a major actor. Oh, I remember one internal issue we had was working with the international school, which had been established by a very gifted but very independent American. Some of us were on the board, but the fact was the school was the baby of this particular individual. With a lot of diplomacy you could influence school polity, but you couldn't direct it. And that sometimes took some work with the American community that was used to PTAs (parent-teacher association) and having a lot more influence over the school. It was a good school though, produced good work. It had its oddities like the Yemeni villager that lived above the school on a hill who would come down and sit in the back of PTA meetings with his AK-47. He was just interested in seeing that everything went well. And he never bothered the school in any way, but some people found it odd to have an armed villager sitting in on PTA meetings.

Q: At this time doesn't the conflict between North and South Yemen resolve itself?

NEUMANN: The insurgency ended, but the collapse of South Yemen and the unification of the two didn't occur until a few years after I left. One of the interesting things historically is that during the period that I was there and for some years before the almost universal academic, intelligence, and diplomatic view was that tribalism had essentially died out in South Yemen, that the South Yemeni communist government had basically eclipsed tribalism by its repression of tribal leaders and division of land. The fascinating thing was that a few years later when rebellion broke out in South Yemen it broke out largely along tribal lines, that the tribal connections were the defining force of the rebellion that tore South Yemen apart.

Q: Actually at this time didn't we recognize the government down in the South?

NEUMANN: Not 'til later. I forget when. It was the mid-'80s. Basically it collapsed and then it was joined with the North. And I don't think we ever had separate diplomatic relations with the South but that the South ceased to exist as a separate entity. Later in the late-'90s when I was deputy assistant secretary I visited Aden and I was absolutely amazed at how decrepit a place Aden Town was. I mean the small houses that had been British Military houses were senior government houses, a lot of buildings looked like they hadn't been painted since the British left. I sort of scratched my head and wondered why we were so worried about the power projection of this place.

Q: How was the embassy's relationship with the Government of Yemen?

NEUMANN: Cautious. We were supportive, but they didn't entirely trust us, although they tried to use us as a counterweight to the Saudis. We were aware of that and we were

prepared to play that role a little bit politically, but not to get really crossways with the Saudis. Shortly before I came we resumed military aid to the Yemenis. One mark of their suspicion was that when we initially started military aid the military program was coordinated by the defense attaché who was the only U.S. Military office officer there. He had a lot of access to the Yemeni Army. As soon as we set up a separate office of military cooperation, which is the normal way we handle these military programs, the Yemenis immediately cut every tie they possibly could with the defense attaché. He was a gifted Arabist, had great personal relations with many of them and the Government clearly saw him as a spy, somebody too dangerous to allow to have more contact than they had to. One was always in this game of being supportive on the one hand and, on the other, trying to find out what was actually going on, which they didn't particularly wish us to do. One peculiarity of our military program was that the Yemenis had American F5 fighter aircraft, paid for by Saudi Arabia, and maintained by Taiwanese even thought the Yemeni government had diplomatic relations with China. It was the sort thing that caused us to say, "Only in Yemen…"

Q: Now as in any assignment overseas, not only are you looking at what's happening in the country but sometimes external events impinge on the atmosphere. And at this time again you -- Lebanon blew up, Israelis went into Lebanon again -- did that influence the environment you were working in in Yemen?

NEUMANN: Yes. It caused a lot of unhappiness throughout the Arab world, a lot of which was directed at us. And then after the temporary cease fire with the Palestinians that led to a lot of the Palestinians being evacuated to Yemen you had the massacres in Sara and Shatilla carried out by the Christians, some say the Israelis, or under their control anyway. That left a large very unhappy Palestinian population instigating a lot more unhappiness with the United States in the Arabic press and discussions and general community involvement, which again, made our relations more complicated. The Government did not want to act against us, but it needed to find ways to speak out and vent public ire.

Q: Be difficult to be the USIA (United States Information Agency) rep in this environment.

NEUMANN: Yeah, it probably was. But on the other hand, there was a huge hunger of people for U.S. culture, for English language, lots of youth that wanted contact with us even though they didn't like our politics. So the USIA rep had, had a lot of business to do. He wasn't living a sheltered life.

Q: In parallel with this event on the Mediterranean side of the Middle East, if you will, the Iran-Iraq War has begun and is in progress through the '81, '82, '83 period. Did that -- how did that impact on your working relationships and what you saw?

NEUMANN: Not very much. The Iranians did not have much of an in-road into Yemen that I recollect. Part of the Yemeni population is a kind of Shia but they follow a very different practice and there's not much receptivity to the Iranians.

Q: So that conflict at the Head of the Gulf didn't really --

NEUMANN: It affected the Saudis. It affected Saudi concerns, but I don't remember it having a huge direct impact in Yemen, although that may have been something that I've forgotten.

Q: One of the external events and changes at that time is Secretary of State changes. That was probably just a headline for you.

NEUMANN: Well, earlier it was not a headline because of what you might call a family issue.– My father had gone off as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, and we were looking forward to being neighbors. But he had then had a big falling out with Alexander Haig before I got to Yemen. So we never did quite manage to be neighbors. As a result of his leaving, Dick Murphy came in as ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Murphy and I knew each other because he'd been ambassador in Mauritania when I was on my first tour in Senegal. He used to come down to Dakar and get a good French meal without sand in it. I had a good relationship with him and would go sometimes to Saudi Arabia.
Q: This is July of '82 --

NEUMANN: Haig fell --

Q: -- and Schultz comes in.

NEUMANN: Schultz comes in. It didn't affect us very directly. Yemen was really below the tension threshold of Washington. One observed these things without being directly affected by them.

Q: I would assume if Saudi Arabia's a major actor in Yemen, relations between our embassy and Riyadh and our embassy in Sana'a were pretty close.

NEUMANN: They were although Yemen was not an issue where we always saw things eye-to-eye. The two embassies had to be a little careful because the Saudis have a certain disdain for the Yemenis as sort of uncultured hillbillies. And the Yemenis looked at the Saudis as effete nouveau riche with corresponding disdain. The embassies had to be a little careful not to get too caught up in that. But I think generally we managed that.

Q: Well, one background question I wanted to ask you, how did you get to post?

NEUMANN: We flew. But where did we fly through? I know at one point when my wife had to go home for some medical issue she went out through Dhahran and had problems being in transit without a Saudi visa and being a woman flying alone. Whether we always came in through Saudi Arabia I don't remember. I think we usually changed planes in Jeddah or Dhahran or something like that, flew American carriers as far as we could. There was no American carrier flying into Yemen. Given our American flag carrier rules I think that was the main reason we would fly into Saudi Arabia because you had

American flag carriers going there and we would take Yemenia or something into Yemen. I'm sure there were some direct flights to Europe on Air France or something like that, but we of course couldn't use those.

Q: Is there any other summary of the Yemen tour that you might want to mention, say what -- how it advanced your own skill levels and sensitivities?

NEUMANN: Well, I certainly learned a lot about management. One of the problems we have in the Foreign Service is too many political and econ officers get to be fairly senior without having had much chance at running things and learning to manage programs and people. So the fact that I had unusual opportunities, not only in the Army, but then having been chargé for a while in Bathurst and having to learn administration there and having to learn administration in Tabriz and having been DCM in Yemen, meant that I had a lot more administrative background than a lot of comparable officers did at the same level. I certainly increased my working with various aspects of the military, both in military visits and working with the new programs in Yemen. I probably learned a lot of other things I don't remember. I began studying Arabic as much as I could at post, which was of some help but limited when you're busy.

Q: You were mentioning Colonel Lane left, Colonel Ward came in. Both well-trained officers in their skill sets?

NEUMANN: Yes. Both Arabists, both foreign area officers with an Arab world background.

Q: You're -- you leave in the summer then of '83, but your next job is back to Washington. Can't you stay out of Washington?

NEUMANN: Well, I had not intended to go back to Washington. And I have no idea at this point what my other choices or hopes were, but as you know, especially in the Middle East Bureau, which is a fairly small bureau, when you start on any given year cutting for what's open, what's at grade, and what's of interest to you, sometimes you find the list of choices gets fairly small. We had certainly intended to stay out for another tour when I went to Yemen, but for whatever reasons the jobs broke, I took the job as the deputy director in the Arabian Peninsula office.

Q: And what countries would the Arab Peninsula office cover at that time?

NEUMANN: Saudi Arabia and the states of the Gulf -- the smaller states of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Kuwait, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman, as well as Saudi Arabia and Yemen. The office in those days was organized differently. It had two deputies, one for Saudi Arabia alone and Yemen. I was the deputy for Saudi Arabia and Yemen and then my colleague, Mark Handley, was the deputy for the smaller Gulf States. Brooks Wrampelmeier was the first country director and then Gordon Brown after him. I think one interesting note is in those days was that we had in the Middle East Bureau more people that I would characterize in quotation as "Gulf hands," people who had spent

multiple tours working in or on the states of the Arabian Peninsula and knew the Persian Gulf quite well. I think that's become somewhat rarer. People tend to do one or two tours and then move elsewhere within the bureau. We may be getting back to that a bit, but for quite a period more recently we've had relatively few people that have long serving experience in the Gulf. And I think that's a debility because the leadership in those countries tends to stay stable for a very long time. And they have very long memories, and we have very short ones.

Q: When you were last in Washington you were just the country director for Jordan. You're now deputy officer director in charge of a much larger portfolio. Let's look at the bureau for the moment. Who was there and how was the -- how was the front office assignments? Who is the deputy assistant secretary that was in charge of your office?

NEUMANN: Jim Placke was the deputy in charge of my office. He'd been DCM in Saudi Arabia. He'd served in Baghdad. He was an excellent officer; economic background, very penetrating mind. Dick Murphy, who I knew, was the assistant secretary. Bob Pelletreau was one of the deputies as well. And Tom Nassif had the public affairs portfolio. Bill Kirby was doing the special Middle East peace work. Howie Schaffer had South Asia. South Asia was then part of the bureau and functioned almost like a separate mini-bureau because the assistant secretary was always too busy to really spend any time on South Asia. I don't remember exactly what Schneider did.

Q: At this time now, in addition, the Iraq-Iran War, has been dragging on for years. I think the U.S. policy was to try and prevent arms coming in to the area to slow it down, wrap it up. Did that impact on your sense of what your portfolio was me of the responsibilities that your office picked up?

NEUMANN: There was a lot of stuff that went on with Iraq that we were not involved with and that I know only tangentially or from other things later but can't really speak to. I think the important thing to remember in those days was that we were all living with a lot of fear that Iraq would lose the war and that Iran, which was still seen as a very revolutionary power, would hook around the Gulf and menace Saudi Arabia and the other states. They're all very weak states militarily, even though the Saudis had great economic wealth. The potential for Iranian conquest, whether direct or not, was seen as very alarming. The Iranians had rather clearly sponsored a failed rebellion in Bahrain after the Iranian revolution. So it was still a very wild period. The hostage crisis was not very far behind us. There were a lot of reasons to be fearful of Iran and it wasn't clear at all how well the Iraqis would sustain themselves at the point when I went back to Washington.

Q: On the other hand, this was the same time that Poindexter was selling TOW missiles to the Iranians.

NEUMANN: One can only wonder about some things that happened. I was not directly involved in any of that and I can only tell you that all of us at the Middle East Bureau, at the point when that became public subscribed to the joke that said, "What's the difference between the National Security Council and a daycare center?" The answer was, "A

daycare center has adult supervision." We were quite disgusted with that whole operation, thought it was absurd.

Q: What were the kinds of issues that were coming up at this time with Saudi Arabia and Yemen?

NEUMANN: I vaguely remember that we were trying to strengthen our ties with Yemen. There was a period when the Saudis were nervous about that. The Saudis would usually imply or suggest that a lot of Yemenis were loyal to them. Prince Bandar bin Sultan was the Saudi Ambassador in those days and a very consummate diplomat who had extraordinarily good relations across Washington. I think eventually he got to the point where he probably only talked to the secretary of state. But at least in those days I could still talk to him sometimes. He would come in and spend long sessions with Assistant Secretary Murphy. Those were the less pure days when people still smoked in the department. I remember Bandar would come in, dole out his great Cuban cigars, or at least I presume they were Cuban, they were anyway very good cigars. He and Murphy would light up their cigars and I was the note-taker so in self-defense I would light up my pipe. And by the time the lengthy session ended a great cloud of blue smoke would blow out of the assistant secretary's office. Bandar was always quite companionable. At one point he came in during some crisis, it was very late at night, and he brought in pizza for the whole front office staff that was working late, which was a decent gesture. We had issues of arm's sales to Saudi Arabia, lot of work with Congress. It was after the big AWACs (Airborne Warning and Control aircraft).sale I've forgotten exactly which arms sales we were dealing with. We were growing our relations with the Gulf States. The retreat of the U.S. from Lebanon, and then the subsequent withdrawal of our support from Marcos in the Philippines were events which were quite disturbing to the Saudis and to the other Gulf leaders, because they tend to see loyalty as very personal. The fact that we would give up on Lebanon and that we would withdraw from years of support for Marcos made them worry about how much we would support them. The idea that America is basically a democratic country and when people of another country rise up it's almost impossible for the U.S. to not recognize that fact. But that didn't really compute with most of our Arab colleagues. So it was a period in which there was a lot of worry by the Arabs about how they would withstand threats from Iran, how much they could count on us; that influenced a lot of discussions.

Q: You mentioned Congress. Did you have to deal much with Congress in terms of explaining what arms sales to Saudi Arabia or what our policy was? What were congressional attitudes?

NEUMANN: Well, they were mixed. And I don't have a terribly clear memory anymore. I spent some time with staff, of course a lot of time writing responses and things, but most of the testimony and most of the burden of talking to members really fell on Murphy and the deputies.

Q: During this time what might be a typical day?

NEUMANN: Hm. Do I even remember anymore?

Q: (laughs) You'd have to read --

NEUMANN: Yeah.

Q: -- the newspapers to see what your press guidance was.

NEUMANN: Well, you generally had to read the newspapers before you got to work because you weren't going to have them there. You would always have a certain amount of time in your morning consumed with writing press guidance and getting that cleared. I can't remember whether we had a office meeting once a week or more often I don't think I can answer the question very well because I don't have a precise enough memory anymore.

Q: (laughs) Hm. This was the period in 1987 in response to what was going on in the Gulf that the U.S. reflagged Kuwaiti tankers. That must have come out of --

NEUMANN: Well --

Q: Been watched by your office.

NEUMANN: It was watched by the office, but actually I arrived as DCM in Abu Dhabi very shortly before that operation began. I remember going with Ambassador Mack, David Mack, to tell Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed, who was under secretary of foreign affairs, that we were going to start the convoy operation. The first ship, the Bridgetown was going to enter the Gulf with a U.S. flag. What remains in my mind of that meeting is while Hamdan was very polite he was so uncertain of American will and capacity at that time that it was very clear that he really wasn't at all sure that we would have the guts to maintain this operation. It's useful, I think, to remember how low our prestige in the Gulf and the Middle East generally was in 1987. The Iran-Iraq War seemed to be going on forever. We had pulled out of Lebanon after the Beirut bombings. We had, as I said, left the Philippines. –The Arab-Israeli peace process wasn't going anywhere. Our prestige in the Middle East was extraordinarily low. It's just useful to remember how much it has rebounded, gone down, come back, in short how cyclical these things are.

Q: Well, was one of the variables in that image of the U.S. the Iran-Contra business?

NEUMANN: That was there. I don't it remember being nearly as strong as Lebanon. I mean Iran-Contra was a less a matter of our courage and more a matter of raising questions about our intelligence.

Q: This desk job then ends in --

NEUMANN: Mid-'87 when I go off to be -- let's see --

Q: Do you get some Arabic training?

NEUMANN: No, I got a year of Arabic after. The desk job ended in '86, as I recollect. And '83 to '86 I was deputy director and then '86, '87 I was in Arabic. I was originally going again to have a full year two-year program, and again I didn't. This time because I was asked to become DCM in Abu Dhabi and that was such a good offer I couldn't resist.

Q: Let me step us back a moment because you were talking about being DCM in Sana'a and management lessons you learned there. As a deputy office director in Washington, certainly you might want to summarize policy lessons you learned or management on the Washington side.

NEUMANN: it's a little difficult to deconstruct at this point which lessons were learned where over a career. But both as Jordan desk officer and then as deputy director at ARP, a lot of time was spent on interagency and inner-bureau operations, clearing cables, improving policy. And one of the most important things you do in those jobs is to figure out how to advance things you and your bureau want to do that may not be the common wisdom of everybody else. Along the line, I can't tell you exactly where, I learned a number of things. One is the importance of building personal relationships, that there's nothing like people knowing you to allow you to find out what their problem is and craft solutions rather than confrontations. Email was not really a big thing yet. Maybe that was a good thing because one thing that I've noticed over the years is that officers who are younger have a lot of trouble knowing when email is *not* the best approach. If you're going to try a new idea on someone going in and talking or telephoning has great advantages. You hear voice and tone and you can react to that, and if somebody seems to be reacting negatively to an idea you can slow down, you can rephrase, you can find out why they're negative, you can try to reshape the thing. When you drop a written product cold on somebody, then you're much more likely to get back a "What the hell is this?" kind of response. And then it's much harder to reengage. Certainly both as Jordan desk officer and as deputy director working on Saudi stuff, I had a lot of dealing with the military, with both OSD, Office of Secretary of Defense -- not the office directly, but the bureaucratic organization under him, and with the joint chief's organization, dealing with the countries I was involved in; issues of arm sales, issues of deployment, status and forces agreements. All kinds of stuff. It was extraordinarily useful throughout my career to have learned how to operate with and in the Military bureaucracy as well, how to talk to them.

Q: I would think too as deputy officer director you're probably touching base with the NEA watcher and the deputy secretary's office, the under secretary for political affairs, all those seventh floor offices.

NEUMANN: Oh yes.

Q: They always have a regional bureau watcher, if you will.

NEUMANN: Yes. I built strong interpersonal relations with all of those people, which was very useful when you wanted them to do something for you, or clear something as the case may be. Also, it's not only the clearing and the persuading. It's also keeping open communication to find out what the seventh floor is thinking about, what they're worrying about.

I think one of the bureaucratic lessons that I learned somewhere along this line, maybe really going back to the Jordan desk period, is how to write usefully for my superiors. I still find that many Foreign Service officers have trouble doing this, they become experts in an area and when they write a briefing memo they want to tell somebody everything that's important. But the person they're writing for, particularly if you're talking about the secretary of state or under secretary who's dealing with a big hunk of the world, doesn't have the time to learn all that. What they need to know is what's essential for the meeting, they need to know what they're going to do. We're always good at writing their talking points. They need to know how the foreigner is likely to react to what you're about to say to them. These are the sorts of things that I find very few Foreign Service officers bother to write. They need to have a sense of why they have these talking points. I have noticed that we actually don't do a very good job of teaching people systematically to write in that vein, to look at the delivery of a memo or a briefing as a kind of an operational tool for somebody else, rather than a academic exposition of knowledge.

Q: The Department of State is going to reward you with some language training finally. But isn't language training attached to the on-going assignment? I mean --

NEUMANN: You know, I just don't remember it. I must have been assigned to Abu Dhabi. Yes, I think the decision was one year of training and then I would go out to Abu Dhabi. Exactly when I bid on this and how I got the job I don't remember anymore.

Q: Now, this is going to be one year of FSI (Foreign Service Institute) Arabic language training. In Washington?

NEUMANN: In Washington, yes.

Q: And what were those -- where was that to take place? And how were the teachers?

NEUMANN: Oh, that was in Roslyn in those days, in those horrible grim buildings we always used to study in with the green painted walls. Teachers seemed to be good. Most of the 30 odd years I was in the State Department, Arabic students fussed with Arabic language teachers about whether the course was constructed in the best possible way. Since two people rarely agreed on what that best possible way is, there was never any clear resolution. I thought it was better if I just concentrated on trying to learn what I could.

Q: Who was with you in language training? Do you recall?

NEUMANN: No, don't remember.

Q: What did you think of the Arabic language training?

NEUMANN: You know, I made a reasonable amount of progress given the debilities that the student brought to the program rather than the teachers. I think I came out of it with a 2/2, which is about where you're supposed to come out at the end of the first year. And the other thing I remember was that it totally destroyed my Farsi. I managed to maintain a reasonable level of Farsi from Iran. I remember that I had been at dinner with some Iranian friends shortly before I started studying Arabic and chatting with an Iranian wife who didn't speak much English and I had carried on most of it in Farsi. Two months later I met a friend who greeted me in Farsi and I physically opened my mouth to reply and nothing came out. Arabic had just shut it away and turned the key.

Q: (laughs) I think that's a fairly Foreign Service --

NEUMANN: Yeah, it's really disgusting after --

Q: -- circumstance.

NEUMANN: -- the amount of time one has invested in a language to find it so easily destroyed. Fortunately, it didn't seem to do anything to my French.

Q: Now, the next job you're going to is again, DCM in the Gulf, UAE. The Foreign Service at this time has a DCM's course that they give. Were you able to enroll in it this time around?

NEUMANN: No, they started this course after I had been a DCM.–twice. So I never got any of that stuff. Fortunately, I've had DCMs of my own after I became ambassador say, "You really understood this pretty well. I don't think you missed much." Although everybody has told me that the DCM course is excellent, it didn't exist when I went out to be DCM.

Q: You're coming to a country that you've covered on a desk. So you're knowledge of the issues and the stresses and the strains are pretty current. How did you arrive at post?

NEUMANN: By plane *(laughs).*

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: Since the department is unwilling to send you by ship. But you know, having been on the desk and then having been in Arabic language training I had been able to continue checking back in with the desk over the year of language training. So I was pretty well up on issues. When I got there the biggest issue was the Iran-Iraq War and the fact we were about to start the Kuwaiti tanker escort operation. As I said, within the first week or less I was going with Ambassador Mack to see Sheikh Hamdan to brief on the fact that the operation was beginning and then of course the first tanker to sail, the

Bridgetown hit an Iranian mine in the Gulf and had to go into the UAE port at Jebel Ali for repair. So we were very closely involved with the UAE and support for the tanker operations during this period.

Q: And how did they view the tanker operation?

NEUMANN: They were totally in favor. The UAE is very negative on Iran. Sometimes paranoid might not be too strong a word. But it's a reminder that paranoids have real enemies. In 1971 when the UAE became independent the Iranians seized three small islands, the Greater and Lesser Tunbs that are claimed by Ras-al-Khaimah. And they claimed Abu Musa Island that's claimed by Sharjah, one of the smaller Emirates. Iran and the UAE reached an agreement that the oil revenue from Abu Musa would be divided. But while sovereignty on the island was supposed to be shared, in fact the Iranians were really taking virtually complete control of Abu Musa and they wouldn't let the UAE citizens go into their other half of the island. So there were continual reports of buildup of Iranian Military equipment on Abu Musa, anti-aircraft equipment and other things. The question of the possession of the islands has remained to this day a divisive one with the Iranians. So the UAE was supportive of Iraq and very negative on Iran, very worried about Iranian hegemony, or pretenses of hegemony in the Gulf, and supportive of building closer military as well as political relations with the U.S..

Q: You're coming in as DCM, which generally means you're the chief inside man, as you said before. What did the mission look like?

NEUMANN: It was housed in four small former houses inside a compound. This was before we build the current embassy. It was a fairly small embassy. Good staff. Ambassador Mack is a consummate Arabist. So it was both a bit of a trial and in part an education because he was perfectly happy to have me go along to meetings, but if I went I had to be the note-taker and the meeting was as likely to be in Arabic as it was in English. On the other hand, he was very accommodating in sitting down with me after the meeting to fill in gaps. I would get 60 or 70% of the meeting, but then there'd be things that I didn't understand and he was quite good about helping me finish up the notes so I could write up the reporting cables. That was before we leaked all our reporting cables. We had an excellent team on working on Iran as well. The first consul general in Dubai was David Litt. David was a Persian (Farsi) speaking officer who had been a Peace Corps volunteer in Afghanistan, and then his place was taken by John Limbert, who had been one of the hostages; speaks marvelous Persian. The economic officer had been the Iran desk officer at one point.– One of the station people had had a great deal of work on Iran. So we had quite a strong team to do a lot of Iranian reporting from Abu Dhabi and Dubai in those days. I think one of the differences was that we weren't just talking to Iranian expatriates, although we were doing that, talking to the people who came into the consulate in Dubai for visas from a variety of social backgrounds. But we were also looking at the Iranian press and the media and doing more comprehensive reporting on Iran than just talking to a rather small slice of Iranians that would come through.

Q: So the consul general of Dubai was --

NEUMANN: Consul general of Dubai fell under the embassy.

Q: And that was a primary Iran listening post.

NEUMANN: That was a primary Iran listening post before we'd gotten to the point of designating things that way; although it was half-designated. We had one vice consular position that was regularly a Farsi language training position because a lot of the visa applicants were Iranian. My predecessor was Fred Gerlach who I knew so we had a very smooth transition. John Chamberlin was the first political officer. Paul Huygelen was a good commercial counselor. Paul had been in business and spent a lot of time in the Arab world, still does. He lives in Lebanon now and has published a very interesting book on Oman and early Africa explorations. We had a very good admin officer, Bob Seraphine and, just generally a good team.

You asked me earlier about management. I think in some ways I got even more into management issues in Abu Dhabi. One of the things I learned, to the horror of my administration staff, was to get the annual budget several days before we actually sat down with the admin staff to go over the budget. So I amused myself by trying to figure out where the admin officer had created some slack for himself., I didn't want to take that away from him. I wanted to know where it was. And one of the things we maybe do in the DCM course now, but there was no course then, was teach non-administrative officers how to read budget and how to know what is fungible, what can be changed without Washington approval and what can't be. Too often I've seen cases where the embassy front office will ask well, can we do something or other and the reply is that there's only so much money in that line item in the budget. But in fact everything in the program budget can be moved around with some discretion. In any budget the same is true. If you know these things then you know how to look and see something like–, for example, the amount spent on tires last year is a good deal lower than the amount budgeted for tires this year so you'll figure out where some surplus is that might be moved to do something else useful. So getting into that kind of thing, which sounds very pedestrian, but actually is important to maintaining the management flexibility of the front office. But I spent a lot of the time on political issues in the UAE, not just management. We were a small embassy, we were in the middle of a war so there were a lot of different things to be, to be done.

Q: In Yemen you were talking about security issues would come to floor from time to time. Did you have the same security problems in the UAE?

NEUMANN: Not as extensively in the UAE concerning internal security. We had terrorism worries, but not the way we did in the Yemen. We did things like altering routes and all the standard things about being careful about yourself. But it was not a wild place.

Q: Why don't we turn to security issues as you saw them when you arrived, because later we would have a fairly strong military presence in the UAE.

NEUMANN: This was a period of development of our security relations with the UAE. Obviously we'd already sold them a fair amount of military equipment, although a lot more was to come later. We were moving into the tanker escort operations. That gradually involved more support militarily. Remember, this was a period where the watch word still was *over the horizon* for dealing with security in the Gulf. The Gulf States were very nervous about how much on the ground presence any of them would support. So we were doing things quietly, but not anything like the size that happened later after Saddam's invasion of Kuwait. The tanker escort operations, which have almost been forgotten it seems to me now, got quite violent. You had U.S. ships, both U.S. oil tankers that were really Kuwaiti hit by Iranian patrol boats and by planes with Exocet missiles. You had our convoy operations shooting up Iranian ships, you had the Iranians trying to lay mines, or laying mines in the Gulf, and our ships catching some of their mine layers and blowing them up. You then had at various points some direct military confrontation between the U.S. and Iran with the Iranian attack on Abu Musa Island, which is shard with the UAE. One of the bizarre features of that situation was that after the Iranians shot up the oil facilities on Abu Musa there then had to be a joint survey of the facilities, by the UAE and Iranian officials, because the repair of the damage has to be deducted from profits, which were then split between the two countries. Gulf politics were always a little strange. You had our so-called operation Praying Mantis that resulted in our taking an Iranian oil platform and shooting up various Iranian ships. And the UAE was one of our major support and liberty ports. We didn't have a lot of stuff on the ground, as I remember. We were beginning to develop some relations with their big airbase, but it was still very early days at that point. But the security ties were growing tighter throughout this period. Then you had the shoot down of the Iranian Airbus accidentally in the Gulf. I actually came back from vacation, landed in Dubai, and picked up my baggage from the baggage carousel that was marked for the arrival of that flight as the next set of baggage coming in. We were developing relations. As I say, we had a lot of contacts between our military and the UAE military. And then the last thing was just coming up on what was to turn out to be Saddam's invasion of Kuwait. And this was in '90. The summer of '90. Ambassador Mack had departed. Ambassador Walker had taken over. Ambassador Walker was getting a last little bit of leave before I left so I was chargé for a week or two. Things were getting very tense with Kuwait and one night just as I was going to bed after we had had a packer in all day-- the first night I'd actually been home without a farewell party for a week or two – the telephone rang and it was Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed, the king's son who was head of the Abu Dhabi Defense Forces saying that he wanted to come and see me, which was very unusual because we always went to see him. And I said, "Don't you want me to come see you?"

And he said, "No, I'm just up by the pizza parlor. I'll be right down."

I pulled my pants on rapidly and went dashing down to tell the gate guard we were going to have a visitor. Sheikh Mohammad rolled up and told us that they were concerned that Iraq might strike down the Gulf. By 1990 the concerns had reversed from Iran as the primary concern to what was going on with Iraq and Kuwait. The UAE wanted to maintain a combat air patrol 24 hours a day as result of their fears. But in order to do that

they needed air-to-air refueling and they asked us to send aerial refueling tankers to support them. Late that night I got the necessary officials into the embassy and we wrote the reporting cable about midnight or 2 in the morning or something and sent that back to Washington. Well, this caused quite a flap in Washington because people had not yet decided that they were facing a war and they weren't ready for this. Several days went by while Washington sucked its thumb and thought about how it wanted to respond to this. At one point I got a cable saying you need to go find out if Sheikh Zayed, the ruler, is in favor of this request. Well, Sheikh Zayed totally dominated local politics. His sons would never have made any request of this magnitude without fully clearing it with Dad, so going and asking this question was going to be both stupid and insulting. But I had a direct instruction from Washington so I thought about this and then I went off to see Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed. We talked about the situation and while I was telling him that Washington was considering the request still I said to him, "This waiting for an answer must be hard on your father."

And he said, "Oh yes, he asks me constantly how the request is being handled."

I said, "Thank you very much." I now had my answer without having to ask an embarrassing question. I thought it was one of my more adroit diplomatic moments. I went back, duly reported to Washington that Sheikh Zayed was fully informed and fully supportive of the request. And we did send the tanker refueling aircraft.

Of course within a few days of my departure on leave Saddam invaded Kuwait and the entire strategic picture in the Gulf altered.

Q: On August the 2nd, 1990. Yes. Let's go back to the issue though of developing a relation -- a security relationship with a country like the UAE? You were saying starting off that they weren't forward leaning on this. What does the embassy, what does Washington do to begin to introduce this idea or begin to make it feel comfortable for them?

NEUMANN: Well, underlying it was the question of how much they could trust us, whether we had the guts to sustain the tanker ship operation. When we began the UAE was very hesitant about visible military security ties because they were afraid that they would be exposed to retaliation by the Iranians and that we wouldn't really be with them. As the tanker escort operations went on and military confrontations with the Iranians occurred it became clear that the U.S. was determined to sustain its presence. That built confidence in the UAE and it became much easier to talk about some of the things we wanted to do together. However, we were still operating largely on a "keep security over the horizon" basis. So at this point we were asking for port access and we were developing some ties with their military. But we weren't asking for basing facilities in large quantity. We weren't looking at storing military equipment and things like that. That all came later.

Q: I would presume that part of the atmosphere to make all this work would involve the embassy encouraging visitors from CENTCOM (United States Central Command) or visitors from Washington, use a high-level visitor to create this confidence that's needed.

NEUMANN: They did, particularly from CENTCOM. Arms sales were a big issue but the relationship was still in an early phase. We had a negotiation for the sale of the F16 aircraft that lasted several years. The UAE wanted systems that we initially believed were to sensitive to release. Over time we kept making exceptions and eventually we sold them an F16 that was more modern than the version in the USAF. Just before I came to Abu Dhabi we had refused a UAE request to buy Stinger anti-aircraft missiles. That went down very badly. Washington was all convulsed about the risk of stingers leaking and being used in terrorist operations, which I thought was really overblown since the world was awash with Soviet made missiles that, in terms of commercial aircraft, have all the same capabilities and are much easier to hide than Stingers. But that was our concern, and it caused a good deal of distress for Sheikh Zayed who in his lovely Gulf fashion said to our ambassador, "If a friend asks you for his rifle when he's under attack, you don't ask him how many bullets he wants."

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: This was a period where we were not selling everything to the UAE. We were overcoming their suspicions and worries. Sheikh Zayed was also very big in Arab politics. He had a kind of folksy way of delivering his thoughts, but he was a very wise man and he absolutely dominated his country. So a lot of it was the building of trust and relationships with Sheikh Zayed. The point of all this is that the whole relationship was still in an early phase and not as close as it became later during two wars with Iraq and with UAE participation in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq.

You asked about visitors. We had a fair number, but nothing like the hordes that pour through the Gulf now. General Schwarzkopf was the CENTCOM commander. I remember him visiting -- I remember going out with him and Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed hunting with falcons in the desert. So the Military was very much aware of the need to spend time building these relationships. There were rather few civilian officials visiting from Washington.

Q: What's the relationship, as you understood it, before the UAE and Saudi Arabia? And what I have in mind is the primary U.S. security in the area was with Saudi Arabia to begin with, and yet there were circumstances where we had to tell the Saudis, well, we can't sell that to you, can't go down that path. Surely the Saudis were telling the other Gulfis, you know, it's not easy to have a security relationship with the Americans.

NEUMANN: The UAE had gone through a period right after its independence of very tense relationships with Saudi Arabia with a face-off over the ownership of Buraimi Oasis, or Al Ain as it's called, on the UAE side. But Sheikh Zayed, who was a pretty far seeing person, had reached a border accommodation with the Saudis and had actually given up claims to some desert areas that the UAE had in order to reach an

accommodation with the Saudis. The UAE/Saudi relationship was good and was not one of dependency because the UAE is a major oil producer, one of the major oil producers in terms of population size. Dubai was still going great guns with its own oil. But the UAE was also very independent minded under Sheikh Zayed. They kept good relations with Saudis, but they were not tugging the forelock in any sense to the Saudis.

Q: So they were quite confident that they could set up a relationship with the Americans if the Americans satisfied their concerns.

NEUMANN: That's essentially it. I mean their concerns about their relationship with us had to do with regional dynamics, exposure, risk, all of those things. But I don't remember that they were particularly impeded by worries coming from Riyadh.

Q: Now that's the security relationship. UAE has oil. What were we doing -- what were some of the economic policy issues that arose?

NEUMANN: There were big issues of who was going to get desalination contracts, who was going to get into the national gas business. The UAE was a somewhat looser federation at that period than it is now. That is, Dubai was much more of a separate entity, although they had good relations and it was part of the UAE. But it was very much self-governing. Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid, the real power of Dubai, fortunately had strong and good personal relations with Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed, which helped smooth things. The other small Emirates lived in part on the Abu Dhabi dole. But essentially you had the Abu Dhabi Government, a Dubai Government, and a federal government. And the federal government was comparatively weak. If you went to see, for instance, the Federal Oil Ministry in Abu Dhabi it was in a rather small stucco two-story building that was rather unimpressive. If you want to see the Abu Dhabi oil folk, they were in a gleaming high-rise of steel and glass. Federal institutions were quite weak. Dubai still maintained a separate army at that point. And while there was a federal army it was really Abu Dhabi's federal army. So Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed's role as chief of that army was much more important than the so-called Defense Minister.

Q: We're getting back to our conversation, the UAE. We were just talking economics.

NEUMANN: Abu Dhabi was a major oil producer. Dubai's oil was still high but one could see on the horizon that production would decline. Dubai has a unique position in the Gulf. It is the only city that made an economic success out of trade before oil and did so under the guidelines of its former ruler, the late Sheikh Rashid Al Maktoum. He was the one that conceived of Jebel Ali as a major port and drydock. Everybody thought that was a wild and crazy idea when he did it. It led to major economic success. He conceived of the idea of the Dubai free trade zone long before there were other free trade zones. That brought about the establishment of a variety of businesses, some of them not too legal from our point of view, like copying of audio tapes and things like that. So we had a lot of issues with the government, both federal government and Dubai on protection of intellectual property rights. In fact, when I was there it seemed to me that we were never going to get them to really crack down on intellectual piracy in the Dubai free zone. They

would make gestures, but it wasn't very effective. And then what happened later was that it became apparent to them that having better law enforcement of intellectual property rights would lead to more investment. Once that was accepted then they just cracked down on their own and basically drove out of business all the illegal pirating of audiotapes. Of course nobody has audiotapes now. It's all CDs and things. They've become much more enforcement minded. Dubai was the economic hub, the one that was growing by leaps and bounds. Abu Dhabi was much quieter. It had lots of money in oil, but it didn't have the same interest at that point in developing a thriving private sector. But we had a lot of economic interests and there were some big contracts we worked on at the time trying to compete with the French. We were also very active in both looking for economic business and for selling military equipment as well. The UAE was still spreading out its arms purchases in order to spread out its foreign friends' support. So we managed to have a fairly active business. Politics was a bit different. Zayed dominated. There was a lot of question about what would happen after Zayed, questions that have now been forgotten. There was a collateral branch of the family and people wondered whether they would come back and make a bid for power. The bini Mohammad, that has all quite gone away. Sheikh Zayed sons that are now dominant. However, in my time Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed and his brothers were less the powerhouse than they are now. Mohammad was already important, but many of the others were quite young in those days. There were other figures that we dealt with as well, Sheikh Suroor, the palace chamber, was one of these. But the federation was not as tight as it is now because Dubai was still much more independent. It had more oil wealth, was maintaining a separate army, it maintained a separate intelligence service, and the police in Dubai very much reported to Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid in a way that they did not report to the Abu Dhabi federal authorities. Abu Dhabi federal authorities had very little control, or virtually no control over say, banking in Dubai. That was entirely under the Dubai rulers. A lot of that has changed over the years. Some of it hasn't. Dubai is still very separate economically, although I think there is a price to be paid for Abu Dhabi having bailed them out of their last financial imbroglio when the economy collapsed. They gave up the army eventually and decided it could not maintain itself as a competitive force anyway. So that there's much more integration of the Emirates now, but there still is a great deal of separation between the individual small -- small Emirates and the two big ones.

Q: Now, we always come back to the issue of the impact of outside forces. The Iran-Iraq cease fire is finally in place by August 20, 1988. Does taking that off the table make a difference for how the UAE sees its environment?

NEUMANN: It saw itself in that period as less immediately threatened, but it didn't really change their view that Iran was a strategic menace. That was a view that really goes back into the pre-revolutionary period. Iran under the Shah had viewed itself as a hegemonic power in the Gulf. And you remember the two-pillar doctrine in the Nixon Administration to base Gulf security on Iran and Saudi Arabia was one that left the smaller states of the Gulf, like the UAE feeling a bit pinched in their own interests. So their view was that Iran was a hegemonic and imperial power whether it was a religious one or not. Having the religious aspect and proselytizing the revolutionary impulse made them that much more dangerous, but didn't, from the UAE's point of view change the

fundamental character of the strategic menace of Iran. After all, seizing of the islands and the foundation of the modern strategic difference came under the Shah.

Q: One of the other changes at this time was on the American side. The Americans have another election. The Bush Administration comes in. Jim Baker becomes secretary of state. Do any of those changes back in Washington impact on your relations with Washington or how you're reporting?

NEUMANN: I don't remember them having any great change. Possibly because with the ending of the Iran-Iraq War the Gulf receded a bit from Washington concerns. And it wasn't as central an issue, you know, compared to Soviet relations and other things going on. I think that's illustrated by the fact that they had such difficulty coming to grips with the request that we made on Mohammad bin Zayed's behalf in 1990 for aerial tankers, not even for combat aircraft. Now that would either be going on or would be the most routine kind of thing to deal with. But the request was so out of the box in the summer of 1990 that it took some deep cogitating on Washington's part on how to respond. Secretary Weinberger wasn't at all sure he wanted to send these aircraft out.

Q: Another change for the mission is Ned Walker comes in as ambassador in November of '89. Now, you've had two ambassadors. What were they like to work for?

NEUMANN: Both very good. Both were Arabists, and both had a lot of background and training in the Arab world. Ambassador Mack probably had the stronger Arabic language. He had begun his service in Libya and was there when Qadhafi took over and decreed that all meetings after that would be in Arabic. Mack had to be the embassy's interpreter as a young officer. So his Arabic got to be very, very good indeed. And he enjoyed it. But Walker was thorough going professional. In both cases we got along very well with them and their wives. They were very low-maintenance as ambassadors go. My wife and I had really good personal relationships with them and their wives. We were friends as well as their being my boss.

Q: Getting -- coming to the end here for the UAE. What was the diplomatic community like and what were some of the major embassies that you often were touching base with?

NEUMANN: It was a more vigorous diplomatic community than in Yemen. Obviously oil attracts lots of interest. I don't remember how many countries were represented there, but probably 25 or 30, something like that, maybe more. There were a number of non-resident ambassadors as well. The biggest players probably were the other Gulf States. But that was more a relationship cultivated by Ambassador Mack. I had particularly strong relations with the with the British Embassy. The British had been the major power in the UAE up until 1971. They were still highly influential. There were still a number of British advisors and they still knew a lot about the country. After all, it was British Military support that had helped to take former ruler, Sheikh Shakhbut out and put Sheikh Zayed in. They were still very well positioned but we had a harmonious relationship. There were different interests, there were commercial interests and things. But not fundamental strategic ones. We worked a lot with them. The French has a strong

embassy as well. There was also a huge third country presence in the UAE; every foreigner you can imagine, Palestinians, Lebanese. The UAE hired people from everywhere to go into their major crash development that began when oil really came ashore and was still going on and is still going on today.

Q: The servants that you had at your house. Were they UAE --

NEUMANN: No.

Q: -- citizens?

NEUMANN: No, I never heard of a UAE servant. They were -- Elaine, you're going to have to help me out. Our servants, were they mostly Sri Lankan or?

ELAINE: No, no.
One was Sri Lankan. The other maid was possibly Pakistani or Indian.

Q: But this illustrates your point. That there's all these nationalities here.

NEUMANN: I think most of our cooks were Indian. You had a lot of Indians from Kerala in the UAE. It's interesting, because Kerala has both Christians and Muslims. And I can't remember now, but a lot of the Christian communities is in one of the Gulf States and a lot of the Muslim community from Kerala is in another. And I can't remember for sure but I think it was Muslim in Abu Dhabi and a lot of Kerala Christians in Bahrain.

Q: One of the external influences that you might have noticed was the First Intifada started in '87. Was that causing any waves in UAE?

NEUMANN: It was beginning to. But I think one of the things that really stands out in my mind, from when I was in the UAE, was how little the Gulf States really cared about Palestinian issues in those days. Until the Intifada began you could go a long time in the Gulf and never talk about Palestine. That is totally different from serving in the Gulf today. In those days if you asked people about or if it came up somehow in conversation people would make all the ritual pro-Palestinian-Arab noises. But it was without any conviction. It was not an abiding issue of concern. The more the Intifada got going the more Arab publics began to be taken up with this issue. And of course the Al Jazeera coverage was the first time that the Palestinian issues were brought into Arab homes. It had very much the impact that American television coverage of Vietnam had on the United States. It was the first time Americans had seen their war in living color. For Arabs, the Al Jazeera coverage of the Intifada had the same impact. It was the first time a lot of Arabs actually saw Palestinians and saw suffering and saw what they regarded as Israeli repression. It had an enormous mobilizing effect. So by the time the tour ended this was more and more of a major issue.

Q: In my records I have here that you got a superior honor award out of this tour. That's quite a complement.

NEUMANN: I must have done something right.

Q: Must have done something right. Well, until we remember what it was why don't we break here?

NEUMANN: I suppose I could go find the citation, then I might remember.

ELAINE: For next time.

Q: So let's take a break here for the next time and pick it up in mid-1990.

NEUMANN: OK, sounds good.

Q: Thank you very much.

Q: And introduce this. This is the 13th of December 2011. We're returning to our conversation with Ambassador Neumann. And you wanted to start with Iraq in 2004. This is after you've been ambassador to Bahrain and whatnot. So let me start by asking how did your selection occur?

NEUMANN: Jim Larocco who was the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (PDAS) in the Middle East Bureau (NEA) called me and said, "Will you go up to Baghdad and help out with Bremer?" and seemed slightly surprised when I said yes. I thought it was a non-question because if you are asked to something like that, that's part of the Foreign Service and part of your duty is you go do it. Apparently not everyone took quite the same view.

Q: When you get to Iraq, was this the CPA (Coalition Provisional Authority) period?

NEUMANN: Yes, I got there in very early February and the original notion was that I would remain until the end of the CPA period and then return to Bahrain to finish my tour as ambassador in Bahrain. Embassy Bahrain contributed heavily because several months before I went to Baghdad my DCM, Robert Ford, had been in Najaf in Iraq as a CPA officer. After he got back he took over the embassy in Bahrain while I went to Baghdad. Later on we both ended up in Baghdad. Anyway, the deal was that I would return to Bahrain at the end of CPA and finish my tour. However one night at about 11:00 when I had staggered back to my half trailer this guy named Negroponte that I had never met called me up and said that he'd like me to stay on for a year as the Political Military Counselor in the embassy. After three days of considerable head scratching and emails back and forth with my wife as we considered another separation that was going to build on top of the one we had had a few years earlier in Algeria, I agreed. While we were debating Elaine sent me an email that said she's support whatever I decided but I needed to think about the fact that I had particular skills that would be important in Iraq.

That was a very important message to me, a real reminder that she took duty as seriously as I did. It helped me make up my mind. I went back to Bahrain long enough to look on as my wife packed out and to say my farewell calls to the king, take ten days of leave with the family and then I returned to Baghdad to be the Political Military Counselor and see the embassy set up.

Q: Once the Bahrainis found out about your new assignment, did you get any particular reaction from them?

NEUMANN: Basically, a good one. They didn't like being left too long without an ambassador, but they were comfortable with Ford. And I got back a couple times for visits with the family, and each time I would make time to brief them on what was going on. The Bahrainis were overall providing support. Although they had their worries about how Iraq would go, they were doing what they could to help. Later on I think when we took another ambassador, my successor, out early and took him out of Bahrain to Iraq for a long period, I think the Bahrainis began to get a little restive with not having an ambassador. But they were OK about it while I was there.

Q: Now, the way in which the CPA was being staffed, you're a very high ranking officer in the Foreign Service now, and yet you're being asked to -- not to be the ambassador, but a second rung supportive. What was the thinking behind these appointments?

NEUMANN: Basically they wanted more senior talent in Baghdad than in a normal embassy. Remember, when CPA was stood up, in part of because of the friction between state and defense, very few senior officers went and very few of them were from the Middle East Bureau with Arab world experience. That friction eventually began to break down. I was not a part of those discussions. But the result of that was that several senior officers went to Iraq during the CPA period. Chris Ross who had been ambassador in Algeria and ambassador in Syria was there working for Bremer. Dick Jones who was ambassador to Kuwait, got to Iraq a little before me. Ron Schlicher who had not yet been an ambassador but was a Senior Foreign Service Officer was already there. We composed the Arab experience contingent of Senior Foreign Service Officers. But it was very much an ad hoc staffing. Later on it involved into this idea of having multiple ambassadors for the embassy in Baghdad, and then later on that was replicated in Kabul where we now have several people who have had ambassadorial assignments.

Q: Well now, the CPA period was the period when the Ba'ath Party was abolished.

NEUMANN: The decisions to abolish the Ba'ath Party and to disband the army were both taken before I got there. We were living with the consequences of those decisions. Perhaps it's useful to describe where we were in February. There was already violence in town. We had not yet gotten to the massive car bombings that we had later on. It was more a question of random shootings on the street. CPA was not really well equipped for this. We had no armored vehicles initially. If you wanted security you could request it, but that gave you two humvees, one in front and one behind your unarmored vehicle, which seemed to me simply to suggest which vehicle people should shoot at, so we didn't

ask for that very much. We had not yet erected a lot of the barricades and things that went up in Baghdad later. When we drove out the gate we drove very slowly through a throng of people and passed parked cars and a long line of cars, which had not yet been checked waiting to get to get a checkpoint None of that was terribly cool from a security point of view, but the situation was not as violent as it later became. My initial assignment in 2004 was to head the Foreign Ministry Section. We were still sovereign in Iraq, which meant that ultimately I directed the Foreign Ministry, but I had a very cordial relationship with the acting, later permanent minister, Hoshyar Zebari. Zebari had been Barzani's traveling foreign representative from the Kurds and I had known him before, first, briefly, in the refugee camps in Iran in 1975 and then again when I was Director of the Iran-Iraq Office. And so when I saw him in Baghdad it was a very friendly relationship as it was with the Deputy Foreign Minister Barham Salih, who had been Talabani's Washington representative. But actually I became a kind of utility diplomat available for whatever tasks Bremer had so that most of the day-to-day work with the Foreign Ministry passed to my deputy and I got various different tasks. One was to go, virtually within days of my arrival back to the Gulf, to Doha, to negotiate with the US military on how authorities would be set up for police training. The State Department had initially had direction of police training. They were not able to produce the numbers of trainers and take on this gigantic mission, which was totally unlike anything State had ever done in police training and unlike anything they were staffed really to do.

Q: Well actually, doesn't some of that go back to Vietnam when Congress took AID out of police training and State never even got into it?

NEUMANN: Yes, they passed it to State, State put it in the International Law Enforcement Division, INL, drugs and thugs. What they have done over the years were essentially small training programs. In Central America they were very important but still incredibly small compared to dealing with an entire country of around 27 million people. So anyway, there had been a report done by General Karl Eikenberry who was later to by my colleague in Afghanistan, on the police training. It had recommended that the authority for the training pass from State to DOD, something which Rumsfeld was very keen on. That was basically a Washington decision, but we had to work out the terms of reference for the transfer. I went to negotiate that. We negotiated a compromise, which left a certain amount of policy authority with the civilians, Bremer's side in the CPA. I think that later Rumsfeld rejected that and then it had to be renegotiated. But anyway, we spent three pleasant days in Doha. My wife came over and they had beer in the restaurant where I negotiated. Bremer also asked me to take on a number of issues dealing with Kurds because of my previous dealing with the Kurds both in Iraq -- both in Iran and when I was Iran-Iraq Office Director. I had a lot of meetings with the Kurds. Principle issues with the Kurds were to encourage them to lay aside views of independence which we thought delusional, and to recognize that they could best protect their interest in the future by being an important and powerful part of the central government in Baghdad. There were a lot of sensitivities between Kurds, Arabs and others in places where people had been moved out under Saddam Hussein and were trying to get back in. But we're talking about people who had been moved out in some cases 20 years before and so you'd have people whose families were moved to Kirkuk, and their children were born

there and they were young adults there by this point. So trying to settle issues of dispossession was very difficult. These things kept me involved with the north, flying up to see Barzani, see Talabani, to meet in Irbil and Sulaimaniya. But life was a little quieter at that point than it later. For instance, I drove, from Irbil to Tikrit for the transfer of authority to the First Infantry Division, and then I drove from there back up to Sulaimaniya. A year later we were not driving those roads in just a couple of vehicles.

Q: What was your understanding at the time that you arrived behind the decision to abolish the Ba'ath Party?

NEUMANN: I would not say that I have a particularly accurate view of that. The one thing I would say was that the original decision was a pretty limited decision, but that the turnover of the process of de-Ba'athification to a group under the authority of Ahmed Chalabi allowed them to turn it into a witch hunt. Now, there's a lot that's written about that in a whole variety of books, but I don't have any direct knowledge to contribute about the original decision.

Q: And at this point in the game, what was left of Iraq? I mean of its structures in the army and the Ministry? You're working with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Are there many structures of its left?

NEUMANN: The Foreign Ministry was able to function. Ambassadors were being sent out partly from political appointees with certain confessional balancing, partly from Iraq's cadre of pre-war professional diplomats. Some of them were quite good. The center of power in the Foreign Ministry was dominated by the Kurds. It was very much their ministry, with a Kurdish Foreign Minister, and deputies. Although one of these deputies as I recollect was a Shia although I don't remember whether he was from Hakim's party or Dawa. They were very careful about what they let him in on and what they didn't. So there were some tensions within the Foreign Ministry. There were a lot of deficiencies in the Ministry, lack of organization to follow through on actions, technical problems like lack of computers, some of which we were able to help them with, and they gradually, gradually stood it up. But overall the Ministry functioned reasonably well. Some of the other ministries had just been so stripped out by the de-Ba'athification that they couldn't function. I think one of the things that made the Foreign Ministry function was that Zebari had been affectively the Foreign Minister for Massoud Barzani for years. So they had a great deal of foreign experience and a lot of foreign contacts. Also some of Iraq's professional diplomats had not been Ba'ath Party members or hadn't purged so between the two they probably had relatively more foreign and technical experience in their own ministry than was the case some places where we had just stripped everybody out who were Ba'athist.

Q: Right, and stripping everybody out who's Ba'athist, is what happened to some of the other organizations then? And in one sense that's why we had to have the police-training thing? I mean Iraq used to have a good police force.

NEUMANN: No, they didn't have a good police force. The police force was the absolute bottom of the barrel in Iraq's security forces. And not only was it a poor force historically, but in addition it had a couple of other problems. One was that it had no tradition of going out and doing street patrols for crime prevention. Iraqi police historically sat in their office and waited for somebody to come in and tell them there was a problem. Secondly, Iraqi courts are based very heavily on confessions, which is almost an encouragement to mishandling of detainees: beat them 'til they confessed, then you have evidence for conviction. They had very little skill in the pre-war period in serious investigation, forensics, things like that. Many officers had left or deserted so the police force had partially dissolved. At the same time were trying to recruit people the divisional commanders in the country were standing up their own Iraqi security forces, which were often permeated by ethnic militias. I think this was a terrible mistake to let these forces be formed. It was very much driven by divisional commanders feeling "I need force to help me right now", and so they'd get these guys stood up locally. However, in many cases the forces they formed were really dominated by confessional groups. The result was that in the south, for instance, in the first Shia revolt, a lot of these guys in fact went against us and we had people that we'd given uniforms and cars to, some of them policemen, who were definitely shooting at us. So we needed a complete rebuilding of the police force, just as it was with the army. But we didn't start that with as serious an intention as we did with the army. So anyway, that was another task I was involved in, although the direct supervision of the police department didn't fall under my office, either then or later when I became Political Military Counselor. That was a separate part of the organization.

Q: How, from the level that you were at, did the CPA define its job?

NEUMANN: Well, CPA was a very confusing organization. Of course this has been written up a lot by different people in different ways. For one thing it was very much ad hoc. There's been a lot written on this pointing out that nobody had expected going in that they would have to do anything like what in the end they had to do. And so they hadn't planned for all of the staff and everything that they needed. The result of that was that everything was ad hoc and so there were people constantly coming on very short tours so that they would scarcely learn anything, if indeed they did, until they departed. It was an annoying quality. That part was very chaotic. Then in addition, Bremer ran things in a fashion that everything ran to him in stovepipes. There was a very flat staffing pattern. But the result of that was a lot of confusion. For instance , in the morning staff meeting, you might have had 30 people around the table. You'd get through the meeting in 15 or 20 minutes, it was a few seconds for each person to report whatever was interesting, or they thought interesting at the moment. And if Bremer had an order he would give it. But there was no discussion, no big explanation of where we were in policy. That flat staffing pattern caused some of us a lot of angst because the governance department would send papers directly to Bremer about highly political subjects and make recommendations for negotiation, things like that, and people like Chris Ross and Ron Schlicher and I would be completely bypassed. We'd get dropped a copy of the memo after it had gone to Bremer often late in the evening, and then we'd stay up until midnight writing some memo explaining why we thought this or that idea was pretty screwy. So you had to make a lot of your coordination yourself. It was not helped by the

fact that the personal relations between, between Bremer and General Sanchez, the Military Commander, were absolutely awful.

Q: What was the basis of that?

NEUMANN: I don't entirely know, but they were. And they just did not get along at all.

Q: On staffing issues, who worked with you? Were all the people from the State Department or were other agencies represented?

NEUMANN: My section was pretty much all State Department. The senior people were Mark Siever and Steve Seche. Not everybody was State Department because my secretary (Office Management Specialist or OMS) was actually a male retired master sergeant. Actually, that was kind of interesting because at one point I wanted to do a little sight seeing in Baghdad, and in order to do that I got a guy named Rosh who was Barzani's Chief of Security at the Foreign Ministry and confidante to take us on a tour of Baghdad. We went in his four-wheel drive vehicle with his driver and we were in the back, my secretary and I. One fellow had an AK-47 that seemed to be kind of bouncing around so we possessed that and I handed it off. So I'm riding back in the car with my secretary doing double duty in security with an AK-47. But since my secretary was a retired army master sergeant I felt pretty good about that.

Q: (laughs) How about the heads of the other sections?

NEUMANN: in the CPA period I've kind of forgotten who had what. Megan O'Sullivan and a young Cuban American lawyer named Roman Martinez worked for the governance section, , Scott Carpenter was there with them as well. Later on when I headed the Political Military Section then it was a bit different. Then Tom Duffy was my Deputy, Bill Paton was one of the political-military officers and Jerry Howard was with us as well as a number of others. My excellent OMS in the pol/mil section was Alene Richards. She not only worked for me but helped out everyone else and did a lot to boost morale. She was a tremendous help and later went with me to Afghanistan. Another officer was Amanda Pilz who did a fantastic job of building effective relations with senior generals in charge of detainee operations.

Q: Now, one of the --

NEUMANN: But in the Political Military Section we also acquired additional personnel anywhere we could get them because we didn't have enough people in the state ranks. So we had Phil Russell who was Reserve Marine Colonel and was actually a liaison officer in the First Marine Division, but we brought him into the section, we brought in Ray Keefer, we brought in four or five military officers (Karen Eifert was one). They would have been a Defense Attaché's Office except they didn't have authority for that, so we made them part of our section. In these ways we about doubled our staff.

Q: Now, there's stories from that time that some of the people in the embassy, you know, weren't from the regular government agencies. They might have just been interns or political appointees.

NEUMANN: The CPA period had all kinds of people, because you also had a lot of technical people. You had all the economic ministries. A lot of people who were with us in CPA, Scott Redd, formal admiral, came out to direct the economics side ERMO, James "Spike" Stephenson was the director of AID, later Dawn Liberi. I got along very well with both of them. But there were a lot of people who had very little overseas experience.

Q: But you're saying CPA was already short of manpower. Is that because the task was larger than the people who thought up the CPA realized?

NEUMANN: Well, CPA has been described as trying to fly an airplane and build it at the same time.

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: That pretty much captures the character of the place, people constantly coming and going, people constantly demanding additional staff, people being sent out, some who were political operatives in the US presidential campaign, and others who were professionals, others who were military, a certain number of lawyers. They were a very mixed bag. Some were very good and many were very amateurish and many stayed only a few months and then left, other people who stayed longer, got very tired of briefing eager new people. There's been a lot written on this. The Special Inspector General for Iraq has put out a book volume called "Hard Lessons" that goes into the fact that many staff only stayed three months. So it was just chaotic. And then the chaos was added to by the fact that we had moved into the Republican Palace but we didn't have everything set up. Initially, it was much worse than when I got there. Initially, they had no air conditioning and almost no computers. By the time I got there we had we had air conditioning, but we had a minimal amount of computers, especially classified computers. There were reams of fiber optic cables going down hallways, duct taped together, and going up across the top of doorways and back down the other side, just all masses of duct tape. When we moved into the Political Military Section I remember we had three classified computers initially. Later on we had more. But we had one in my office, my secretary had one, and then we had one laptop and we had a drop cord that was 30-feet long so you could whip a laptop to different people's desks when they needed to work on classified material. But you had to lift your leg and step over the drop cord to the laptop when you moved across the office. It was an OSHA inspector's nightmare. There was no global directory of phone numbers, no classified communication with the State people out in the provinces unless they were on military systems. During the CPA period they all reported in on their Hotmail and Yahoo accounts. A lot of those things just added to the frustration of trying to do basic tasks. We didn't have internet in the living quarters, so people also tended to stay in their offices to catch up with their families, and of course they'd get a little ding as an email came in from Washington at 10:00 at night and turn to that. That added to the fact that people worked very long hours anyway under rather

primitive conditions, which had nothing to do with whether they were doing their job well or badly. At one point I kept track and found that we were regularly working between 90 and 100 hours a week. I might have thought that was an exaggeration if I hadn't kept a log.

Q: Now, how did the security environment change as you were in this tour?

NEUMANN: Initially, there were fairly low security problems. They were already beginning to expand into random shootings, or not so random, but there were shootings on the street. So I got an illegal pistol and made sure we always traveled in twos, with one of us being able to shoot while the other was driving. Later on, as we moved into the embassy we got hardened vehicles and more security protection and then when I became Political Military Counselor I was finally given a team of bodyguards. That was a good thing because one day I was going off to lunch with the Jordanian ambassador at a restaurant inside the Green Zone and I was already in the car when they told me to hold because their dog with the advanced team had alerted on something. They indeed found a bomb that would have gone off while we were in the restaurant, so we didn't go to lunch that day, which was probably a good thing. Later on that restaurant was blown up. We traveled outside the Green Zone, obviously it was getting harder, but it was possible to do one's job. I was out a fair amount. Robert Ford, who came back after the embassy was created to Political Counselor, was out constantly. One of the security problems we got into was that even if we could go to somebody's house having the convoy of military vehicles pull up would mark somebody as cooperating with us. That would cause a security problem for people living in that place. One way we got around that was to meet a lot of people in hotels. You could have several meetings with different people and not have to move too far or have them come into the embassy.

Q: Now, as the security situation changed, what was behind that change? Where was the insecurity coming from?

NEUMANN: Well, the insurgency was getting worse and worse, which was a combination of al-Qaeda moving in, the Shia revolt in April, a Sunni revolt that was breaking out; lots of problems that have been written about extensively. An additional problem was that the Sunnis were very divided, which is one of the reasons that they didn't participate, they boycotted the January 2005 elections. A lot of the work that I did there, although it was more Robert Ford's work, was meeting with Sunni leaders at that point, trying to persuade them to participate in the elections, arguing that they would be better off being in than out. But one of the problems was that because they were so divided, everybody looking over their shoulder to see what somebody else was doing, it was very difficult to get somebody to make a deal. By contrast, the Shia had a few key leaders and you could make deals with them. But you couldn't do it equivalently with, with the Sunnis because there was no single leadership.

Q: Hm. So let's see. You officially depart Bahrain on June the 7th of '04 and coming back to CPA as the Pol-Mil. What are Pol-Mil issues in the Embassy at this time?

NEUMANN: We had reporting on the quality of the Iraqi Security Forces. I was the major interlocker with General Petraeus in the training command. There were huge issues that were both political and military policy and training issues of getting the forces stood up. You had cooperation with the various allied countries that kept me out and moving around. You had a certain number of issues dealing with Kurds, not as many as I had formally that were Political, but dealing with the integration or lack of integration of Kurdish Peshmerga units into the Iraqi Army. We had the issue of detainee supervision. This was a horrible issue. Not just because of Abu Ghraib. In the early period under CPA, the military just had a lot of trouble keeping track of prisoners. People would get arrested and fathers, mothers, wives couldn't find out where the person was. And we couldn't answer. It wasn't that we were trying to keep them incommunicado; the military would lose them in the system. We had problems having our own locals getting arrested. The left hand, right hand problems were quite, quite large. A one point I remember that several locals who worked with the police training got arrested and Jim Steele, a retired colonel, after a couple days found out that two of them were in a certain prison. He went there and they got one of them, and was told the other guy isn't here. As they were leaving with the one they'd gotten released he said, "How come you're not taking Mohammad?" or whatever his name was.

And they said, "Because Mohammad's not here."

And he said, "Oh yes, he is, I was just talking to him."

That's illustrative of the degree of confusion in the prisoner process. Eventually it got better and the military really worked to try to segregate people. Another one of the issues we had to deal with was the Mujahedin-e Khalq at Camp Ashraf and what to do about these people. You will remember that the Mujahedin were Iranians who were opposed to the Khomeini government. They had taken refuge in Iraq. They'd fought with Iraqis against Iran during the Iraq-Iran War. They had also targeted us. We have them on the list of terrorist groups. There is now a lot of support for taking them off that list. People talking about them as democrats. These people are ideological fanatics. The military had confined them in Camp Ashraf, which was near the Iranian border. This made us responsible for them, though we had a dual problem. On the one hand we couldn't forcibly repatriate them into Iran, or any place; that's a violation of international law. On the other hand, we couldn't just turn them over to the Iraqis because we had a responsibility for their security. Within Camp Ashraf they practiced a kind of total thought control: men and women were segregated. They couldn't marry, they couldn't talk to each other. There was really physical as well as mental repression of anybody who wanted to leave the camp. That was so severe that when some people essentially deserted their comrades and actually wanted to go back to Iran in some cases, they had to be housed in a separate part of the camp that was wired off from the rest of it so that they wouldn't be attacked by their co-religionists. There's nothing democratic about the MEK. It's a fanatical cult that has absolutely no support in Iran. They are strange people. We realized from conversations with the Red Cross that the Iranians were willing to take back a lot of them who had no particular Iranian blood on their hands. A lot of them had really been brainwashed. And so we facilitated a couple of transfers of MEK people who

wanted to go back to Iran on the understanding that this was arranged through the Red Cross, not directly with Iran since we weren't dealing with the Iranian government, that they would not be mistreated or arrested when they got back. As far as we could tell through the Red Cross, these arrangements were honored., We had two or three of these transfers where we had to work to coordinate with the military, with the Red Cross. Take them down to the border, hand them off to the Iranians, and then coordinate with the Red Cross afterwards to make sure the terms were being honored. So that issue of Camp Ashraf was also one that fell in my domain.

And then there were a lot of issues dealing with the military. I was the prime coordinator with the military in planning the Second Battle of Fallujah. There was a lot of work to decide who would do what in the humanitarian relief. How would authority be transferred to the Iraqis was an issue because by the time of the Second Battle of Fallujah there was a transitional Iraqi government, that is, they had sovereignty. There were issues of how would governance in the city be passed back to Iraqi authorities and when. And there was a lot of interaction with the military. It was completely different from the CPA period. At the First Battle of Fallujah there was such a gap between Bremer and General Sanchez that people like me, Ambassador Ross, and Ron Schleicher, would simply get no information from the U.S. Military about the operation, how long it would last, the concept of the operation. We had no context in which to give useful advice. The Second Battle of Fallujah was the complete opposite. I was out at Fallujah where the Marines had their headquarters. General Sattler, the commander, was very cordial, not only sat with me, but then took me into his whole staff, gave me a very nice introduction, "Here's a man who has walked in the same boots you have walked in," which is probably exaggerated, but it was completely open and then I was out at the rehearsals for the battle. We were integrating a lot of planning with the Civil Military Affairs Office under a two-star general, Henry "Hank" Stratman. Finally, we needed to get the battle going because we wanted to get it done before the elections. Initially we wanted to conclude before Ramadan, and the timing slipped and that was impossible. Then we wanted to at least conclude before the celebration of the Eid at the end of Ramadan, which was a bad time symbolically to be having a major battle going on. Prime Minister Allawi had become a little hesitant -- he knew we needed to do this, he'd agreed all along with the need to fight the battle, but he was a little hesitant about getting things started. He'd gone out of the country, done some business in other countries. So the last act of the civil military part was when the General Metts, who was the commander of what they called MNC-I, the multi-national corps, and I helicoptered out to an airbase so we could get a little jet that didn't have the protection equipment needed to land in Baghdad, and we flew in that jet to Amman, we got off the jet on one end of the runway, a car took us to the other end of the runway where we linked up with Allawi getting on a C130 to go back to Baghdad and for the return flight General Metts and I briefed Prime Minister Allawi together on the civil and military aspects and battle plan. We got the go ahead for the battle in the early hours of the morning when we landed in Baghdad. So we couldn't have had more outstanding civil military cooperation than that.

Q: Refresh my memory now. What did the Second Battle of Fallujah come from? What were we doing?

NEUMANN: We had stopped the first battle midway through and turned security in Fallujah over to an Iraqi group. That arrangement fell apart and was permeated by the insurgents. Fallujah became an insurgent liberated town into which nobody could go. It was a center place for making car bombs. It was a place where hostages were taken and kidnap victims were tortured. It was the centerpiece for truck hijacking business out on the roads in Al Anbar province. That was so well established that you could hire a middleman if your truck had been hijacked, to go to Fallujah and ransom your truck back. If you had low value cargo like potatoes, they'd probably still be on the truck and you could probably get them back along with the truck, and with high value cargo like computers or televisions or something they'd all been moved off and sold. The feeling was that we simply could not tolerate this kind of insurgent dominated town as a symbol of resistance and murder and torture. And we particularly couldn't tolerate it in the middle of having the first election in Iraq. So the town simply had to be re-conquered. There were a number of efforts that took weeks, even months to negotiate a solution. I think the town leaders of Fallujah had very little real authority. I think insurgents behind them were quite fanatical and really controlled the place, because the only deal they would ever offer was essentially "we'll raise the Iraqi flag and we'll call it being under the authority of Iraqi, but we appoint everybody who governs," which was a complete subterfuge. They simply would not move off that. I had one of the last meetings with sheikhs in Fallujah myself. So there was nothing doing on negotiations. We decided we had to take the town back by force, which we did with the Iraqi forces and US Marines. We thought we would have a big problem with civilians, with casualties or refugees. This didn't happen. We made it very clear we were going to have the battle. In fact, we made it clear deliberately. The result was virtually all the civilians moved out of Fallujah in the weeks before the battle, most of them moved in with families. There were very few refugees. We had camps ready, we had a lot of provisions for handling refugees. We didn't need most of it because people moved in with their families. I think there were very, very few civilians in the town at the time of the battle. I was told that almost every dead body that the military recovered in Fallujah had been effectively sanitized. They had no ID of any kind -- and Iraqis normally carry identification cards, various type of things, just as Americans carry credit cards and all kinds of things. These people who were killed in the fighting in Fallujah had none of that. Very few of the wounded identified themselves in any way, shape or form. So my sense is that there were very few civilians left in Fallujah by the time we had the battle. The Iraqi troops did play a part, it was not the lead part, in Fallujah, except for some like 36th commando group that captured the hospital in a night raid the night before the battle started, that was an Iraqi outfit. About the fourth day of the battle I took Kassim Daoud, who was the acting National Security Advisor for Prime Minister Allawi, to Fallujah in order to see what was going on and get a briefing and meet some of the Iraqi troops. We were going to drive into the center, but they told us that there was a firefight going on at the bridge we were going to go to cross, so we couldn't use that bridge. So we drove around the town, drove in the edge of it, which was kind of strange because Fallujah ends with a street that has houses only one side. The other side's a railroad embankment and from there on it's houses up to the street and then the railroad embankment, then countryside. It doesn't have a suburb like a lot of towns do.

Q: Hm.

NEUMANN: It was a bit surreal driving in with the houses all empty and bullet-pocked and a few cars burning and the occasional mortar shell going overhead, although there was very little fighting in the area we were going into. We drove in a few blocks and parked the car and walked in a few more blocks and found a few Iraqi troops who got to shake hands with Kassim, and everyone was very happy. Then we went home for the day.

Q: What are the dates of the Second Battle of Fallujah?

NEUMANN: Oh, I will have to look it up. (7 November – 23 December 2004)

Q: OK. And most of that was handled by Iraqi troops?

NEUMANN: No, most of the battle was handled by Marines with some Army reinforcement.

Q: And what was the planning part that you were involved in?

NEUMANN: Planning between the military and the Iraqi authorities for refugee relief, for help, for turnover of authority back to Iraqi civilian authorities, and for the actual go ahead from Prime Minister Allawi to launch the battle.

Q: OK. What other Pol-Mil issues came up during this period?

NEUMANN: We had people out in several divisions, Suzanne Inzerillo, for instance, was the Pol-Mil Officer with the First Infantry and then the 42nd Infantry Division in Tikrit. She later came to Afghanistan as my second Staff Assistant. So we liaisoned with a lot of the Pol-Mil officers scattered around the countryside. We had issues of contracting authority for buying U.S. weapons, we had a lot of involvement as to analysis, reporting on the quality of Iraqi forces as they were developed, although the authority for their development was with the military. I had a lot of discussions with General Casey, essentially I functioned as a partial POLAD (political advisor) to General Casey as well, although he also had Ambassador Negroponte, obviously, and DCM Jim Jeffrey -- in fact at one point Casey was asked by the Department of Defense, the Joint Chiefs, if he wanted a political advisor, a POLAD established, and he said, "No. "I've got Ford, Neumann, and Jeffrey, why do I need a POLAD?" So that was also part of our function -- and there were a lot of close liaison between the Political-Military Section and the Political Section. The Political Counselor was Robert Ford who had been my deputy in Bahrain, an extraordinarily competent Political Counselor.

Q: Now, were there political advisors to the major U.S. units around the country?

NEUMANN: They fell under the Pol-Mil Section.

Q: OK.

NEUMANN: Our domain did not cover the police training directly, although we reported on it. I guess we had some influence over the police training. Anyhow, it was mostly military by that point in Iraq. We had liaison responsibility with General Petraeus and his staff in training of the Iraqi Army. We had liaison responsibilities with the Minister of Defense and the training effort there in the Ministry, but also coordination of Iraqi actions. We had under the Political-Military Section the liaison with the detainee branch of the military and all detainee operations were from the embassy point of view our responsibility. We probably had some others, but those were the major ones that kept us busy.

Q: Right. Now, at this point in time do you recall how many U.S. troops were in country?

NEUMANN: No, I don't.

Q: And how was the distribution of the U.S. units? What did that respond to?

NEUMANN: My memory is that a great deal of the time there weren't enough troops so the military was constantly having to move people around. For example, they had the Stryker Brigade up in Mosul. But the Stryker Brigade almost never had all its battalions in Mosul, because they were always being jerked around to do other things and particularly in the early period when the Iraqi units were just getting stood up it they were stretched even further. For instance, in the 2nd Shia revolt when Muqtada al-Sadr went into the Imam Ali Shrine and we thought we would have to assault him there we needed Iraqi troops to actually assault the mosque. There were actually only three battalions that were even marginally combat ready at that point, and they had to be pulled out of other combat operations. They had to be given some emergency training for fighting in a built up area, there were just very few troops.

Q: Mm-hmm. So in general, what was the overview of what the Political-Military unit was supposed to do?

NEUMANN: Everything that involved the U.S. military and military operations were our responsibility to report on and give advice about. How much more can you have?

Q: (chuckles) Well, that's just it. It's that kind of a very comprehensive thing. And of course you're talking about Foreign Service Officers doing this kind military liaison.

NEUMANN: Primarily, yes. Although our section included military officers, some from the CIA and some temporary hires under what was called 3161 (from the reverent section of law) authority. Some of the latter were outstanding people.

Q: At the time that we're talking about from late '04 to early '06, how many Pol-Mil people would you say there were and where were they? I mean there's the embassy -- there weren't consulates at that time.

NEUMANN: No. I think I had five State Department officers under me or five positions, maybe that was including my OMS. But we had TDY people we got out from State, we had one or two analysts who were really CIA, but who we made a permanent part of our section. We had at least one liaison officer from the Marines, we had another four or five from DIA. So the Political Military Section itself in Baghdad was 10, 12 people, or more. And then we had two or three scattered around the country with the different divisions.

Q: Now, you're talking about Bremer and Sanchez not necessarily getting along, but how did -- how was the liaison between the State Pol-Mil Section and the uniformed military?

NEUMANN: Excellent. We had, we had officers that were esteemed by the military, they were out with the military, some of them got ambushed with the military. That always helps cement your relations. So I think we were doing pretty well.

Q: And I would presume that the military in its own training all those years up to this point had worked with or bumped into senior seminar and whatnot and were familiar with Foreign Service Officers and what they might be able to bring?

NEUMANN: A few. I wouldn't say it was general. But we had good relations and the fact that I had been a combat officer definitely helped with my relations. The fact that I'd been an ambassador helped also because the military can be a little rank conscious sometimes. The fact that I had both was helpful. Then I had an arrangement with the DCM, Jim Jeffrey about roles. Jim had also been in the Army and had a lot of Pol-Mil experience too, and when Negroponte asked me to take the job one of the calls I made was to Jim Jeffrey to say, I will do this if it's clear that anything the ambassador doesn't do with the military goes to me first, not to you. He made that deal and he kept it. So the result was that the military from General Casey on down knew that I spoke with the ambassador's voice and that they could also get a hearing from me and get things moved up the chain and get them reported or acted on, which was important.

Q: Mm-hmm. Is there anything further on this Pol-Mil assignment? For example, how did it affect your own ongoing career?

NEUMANN: Well, good as far as I can tell.

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: I initially was asked if I would go as ambassador to Jordan and I said yes and I filled in a lot of paperwork and all that stuff. At one point I was going out on leave through Amman although I don't think the embassy people knew I had been picked for that, and I got a phone call from Bob Pearson who was then our Director General saying that, "I understand you're going to be back in Washington tomorrow, which is a Wednesday." I said yes. And he said, "Well, the Secretary wants to see you on Thursday and it's about where you're going, but I can't tell you anymore." That of course meant I wasn't going to go to sleep right away. The result of that was that I came back the next

day and the day after that I saw the Secretary of State and she asked me if I would go as ambassador to Afghanistan.

Q: So your reputation proceeded you.

NEUMANN: Well, something did anyway.

Q: (chuckles) Well, why don't we break this off now and -- unless you have any summary thoughts on the whole process of the embassy needing a Pol-Mil Section in this way because, I mean, normal embassy Pol-Mil Sections don't have this kind of hands on duties.

NEUMANN: Well, normal embassies aren't fighting a war.

Q: Yes.

NEUMANN: Doing battle planning is a little different from the norm. Also we had a major reporting effort because whether or not the training was working was clearly a major policy issue. In fact, I remember once we did a cable on some police aspect and General Casey held the cable and his basic question was why are you reporting on this? Why isn't this my business? I sat down with George and I said, "We have a mandate to report on anything of policy significance. We've had that for a long time. We did it badly in Vietnam. The result of that was the creation of the Dissent Channel. In fact, reporting honestly for us is almost the equivalent of battlefield courage for a soldier. That is why we need to report on anything which has policy significance and if you lose the war that's a policy problem. There just can't be any "lanes" as far as reporting is concerned in a war." To his credit General Casey understood that and said OK, I see, and he cleared the cable. But there was a lot of fairly sensitive work with the military to make sure that we didn't misuse the fact that we had a very short chain of command and that we had a lot of access to their stuff. We didn't want to play "got you" with their supporting commanders and put them in an odd position with their own superiors. We had to be careful that while we were reporting the political significance of operations, we didn't report tactical details that could be a threat to our own people. So there was that complexity. Obviously in the middle of a war having close, effective working relationships between the military commander and the embassy staffs is a critical part of the mission. That's basically what I was set up to work on and what constituted my central focus. And I must say that as long as we had good people and were willing to help, which we were, the military were extraordinarily responsive. It was not an issue of their trying to run off on their own. General Stratman was the Pol-Mil guy, and he and I had very close relations. I had close working relations with the Australian two-star who was the Chief of Operations for General Casey, Major General Jim Mullen, who I saw a year ago in Australia. I would go regularly not only to the battle briefing update in the morning, but to a sort of restricted meeting of the senior generals held afterwards. It was a very close working relationship and one that was absolutely crucial to our getting along together.

Q: You're mentioning coalition issues. Did the embassy get into those?

NEUMANN: Oh yes. I got into issues with the Spanish, with the British -- I also had liaison relations with the Jordanians, with the Egyptians, and others, some of which were mixed Political-Military kind of things.

Q: Right. Now, in terms of your reporting, were you reporting through State channels or were you reporting through military channels? If I wanted to look up a cable, where would I look?

NEUMANN: In State channels. Because by that time we'd stood up an embassy.

Q: OK. I guess that was the last question I wanted to make sure I got in there. Well, I'll let you go, Doctor. We'll catch up with you.

NEUMANN: OK.

Q: OK, let's see. Today is the 22nd of February and we're returning to our conversation with Ambassador Neumann. Now Ron, we had pretty much finished your assignment as Ambassador to UAE (United Arab Emirates). Do you have any more thoughts that you might want to add to that?

NEUMANN: Did we talk about the UAE request for, for air tankers to maintain an air CAP's (Combat Air Patrol) against Iraq just before the invasion of Kuwait. I think we covered that, but I just can't remember. Do you remember?

Q: I've got it down on my list of things that we should have talked about. But why don't we just start by repeating that? We can always cut it out later.

NEUMANN: OK. Well, shortly before I left Abu Dhabi, I don't remember the exact date, but I know that it was about a week before I left or week and a half, and Ambassador Walker was getting the a little bit of vacation because there was going to be a gap before thenext DCM arrived. It was the first night that I'd been home without a farewell party for 17 days because we were packing out, I was just getting into bed when Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed who was the Chief of the Abu Dhabi Defense Forces in those days called saying that he wanted to come see me. And I said, "Don't you want me to see you?"

And he said, "No, I'm very close. I'm up by the pizza parlor, I'll come down and see you."

So I went running downstairs getting my clothes on and going out to tell the gate guard we were going to have a visitor. Just the Sheikh Mohammed arrived. Basically he said that the UAE was taking the Iraqi threats to Kuwait and the Gulf seriously and that they thought the Iraqis might attack them because of their strong support for Kuwait. They wanted to mount a 24-hour air combat patrol with UAE aircraft, but to do that they needed aerial tanker support from the United States to gas up their planes in the air. And

that was his request, that we supply air tankers. I then went into the embassy sometime around midnight and called in the Defense Attaché and various other folk and we got a cable back to Washington. Well, this was before Washington got serious or began to fear that there was a real threat, so this request for tanker support caused a lot of head scratching. Remember, this was still the time when we were operating on the principle of keeping forces "over the horizon," not the massive deployments that came later. And so Washington did not provide an immediate response. After a couple of days I got a telegram that said I was to find out if Sheikh Zayed, the ruler of the UAE, supported this request. Well, this was a really stupid instruction because Sheikh Zayed's sons would never have dreamed of making a request like this that didn't come from him. They lived in a certain amount of fear and respect of their father. To go out and ask them this I thought was going to make us look dumb, but I had an instruction which had to be carried out. So I went out to see Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed and when we were sitting around talking I said, "This waiting for an answer must be very hard on your father."

And he said, "Oh yes, my father calls me two or three times every day to ask whether we've gotten an answer."

Q:(laughs)

NEUMANN: And so I thought, "OK, thanks, I've got my answer, I can go back and report to the department that they confirm Sheik Zayed has approved the request, and we've managed not to look stupid." I felt pretty good about this small diplomatic maneuver.

Anyway, I left a few days later while our tankers were inbound and that was the end of my direct involvement with that. A few days after we left UAE and were on leave, I think we were in California, I saw the news of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Now I think we're moving into for sure the new part of the interview unless you want to break it some other way.

Q: Let me go back to one other thought. The UAE request must have meant that they had practice with aerial refueling. You just don't start up that.

NEUMANN: Oh yeah. There had been joint exercises before with CENTCOM (United States Central Command).

Q: OK. So they had experienced crews and they knew what the -- what was required.

NEUMANN: I don't remember now whether we had problems though because they didn't have as many U.S. aircraft then, and I don't remember whether the gear on our aerial tankers easily fit their fighters or whether we had to do some modification.

Q: OK. That's in there. Now, your next assignment that you went off to was to the National War College.

NEUMANN: Yes.

Q: How did that come up?

NEUMANN: In those days, as I remember, everyone who got promoted to FS-1 was screened for the National War College. I'd gotten promoted shortly before I went to Abu Dhabi so it hadn't been relevant before. I was asked whether I would like it and I said yes. It is extremely important for Foreign Service Officers to have a year like that of reflection. –While I expected to have fun at the War College, I actually was surprised by how much I learned. One thing I should mention first was that when I came back to Washington from leave, but before I had to report to the War College I volunteered to take a few shifts on the Iraq Task Force in the department. They were all looking pretty groggy by that point. So I did that for a few days before I went off to War College. And then later had a very strange experience where two of us were asked to come out of the War College to run the task force when the war started. We can talk about that later or now, whatever you want.

Q: Yeah, because that task force starts before the invasion.

NEUMANN: The task force may have been started before, but it certainly was up and running after the invasion, lasted all the way through the war. Shortly before we started the offensive part of our action, about a month or two as I remember, the Department decided to change the assignments and wanted some new directors of the task force shifts. Laurie – I want to say Laurie Johnson, but I'm not sure, she's since died of a tumor – and I were both asked to do this. We checked around to see how to manage this because the War College has an interesting tradition that goes back to General Marshall when in the first year they lost a lot of the best and brightest of their offices being poached for other duties and pulled out partway through the course. So Marshall decreed that no officer could be pulled out of the course without the personal approval of the Chief of Staff. While he couldn't make that a requirement for the civilians, the corresponding decision was if any civilian was pulled out they couldn't come back so that people wouldn't be poached to go off on little TDY's. So when the idea of our going off for a month or two to run shifts in the task force came up we wanted not to fall under this in order to be able to come back and finish our year and to go off on the War College trip at the end of the year as well. So we talked to the War College administration and they said, "Well, if you're not on orders and if you make an undefined substantive part of your classes, we won't pay attention to what you do with the rest of your time."

Then we went to the State Department and we said, "We will come and do this task force you want us to do if you do not put us on orders." And State managed for once to agree. I guess it was easier to agree not to do something than to do something unusual. So the result was that we would go to the War College sometimes until 4:00 in the afternoon and then go to a task force that went until midnight, or we'd come off at midnight to eight task force shift and do classes until four in the afternoon. We were looking pretty stretched by the time that month was over, by which point the war had been won and we were able to collapse and go back to our classes.

Q: Yeah, I think the chronology there is Iraq invades Kuwait on August the 2nd, '90 and Iraq is expelled from Kuwait by February 27, '91. So there's what, August, September, October, November, about five or six months in there.

NEUMANN: No, it was only at the end in the last week or so before the initiation of the fight that we went off to the task force, and before that it operated on --

Q: OK, the Crown Campaign begins on the 23rd of February.

NEUMANN: Yeah.

Q: OK, now back to the National War College. What was that supposed to do for your career?

NEUMANN: It does several things. One is it is a phenomenal chance to meet a lot of your peers in other agencies, particularly across the spectrum of military officers and build contacts and people you will work with. That certainly was true in my case. A leader of my, it's what they called a seminar, sort of a homeroom, was a colonel named Mosley who went on when I was a Deputy Assistant Secretary to the Middle East to be my counterpart in JCS for the planning of deployment, the bombing in Desert Fox, and who later went on to be the commander of the CENTCOM Air Force and then had that role in the Second Iraq War and then became Chief of Staff at the Air Force. So I certainly built some good contacts in the War College. The second thing it did was it gave people an opportunity to learn about areas they've never worked in so. For instance, I took two survey courses on Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and did my War College trip to Romania and Hungary. We were supposed to go to Yugoslavia as well, but the security situation was already getting difficult, and we lost that piece of the trip. So I learned about an area that I didn't know much about. It was like a wonderful, wonderful restaurant with an incredible menu of things you could study. It's also a chance to build intellectual capital, to think more broadly about the world and national security policy. I think it's frankly something that every Foreign Service officer ought to have. The military explains it in one way by saying "we train for certainty and we educate for uncertainty." War College is very much a part of education, not training. It was also a place where I learned a great deal about working with the military although that was the area that I thought I would learn the least. I had after all been a military officer in the Vietnam war, I'd done a lot of things with the military in various tours, in the State Department. So military or civil military affairs was an area I didn't expect to learn much about, and in fact I learned an *enormous* amount about how the military works and about joint planning. This lesson served me extremely well right after I came out of the War College when I became Director of the Iran-Iraq Office. I realized that a significant problem we were having with the operation of what was called Operation Provide Comfort, the operation to secure the Kurds that we'd helped come back into Northern Iraq, was a problem of cross-communication between military and civilian cultures. The military were operating under a mission statement, which didn't include some elements that we thought needed to be in it. And I don't think I would have realized

this without the War College training and we were able to fix it because of that with a somewhat deft maneuver. So it was a place where I learned a lot, but also had a tremendous amount of fun, very high-grade teaching and courses.

Q: Who were the instructors?

NEUMANN: Oh boy, this point I'm forgetting names.

Q: I mean standard academics or?

NEUMANN: It was a mix of academics, officers, Foreign Service Officers, Bob Gallucci, who later was the negotiator with the North Koreans, was the Deputy Commandant I think for the State Department, or if he wasn't the Deputy Commandant he was teaching there anywhere. There were military officers who were often very gifted instructors, But I've forgotten now most of the names.

Q: And you were there, of course, as Desert Storm unfolded. That must have been interesting luncheon conversation with your colleagues.

NEUMANN: Oh yeah, I mean we were all watching that quite intently, and then of course by the time Desert Storm actually began I was on the task force so I was watching it from the task force.

Q: Now, your onward assignment to NEA North Gulf Affairs, was that set up before you went to the National War College?

NEUMANN: No, it was somewhere late in the War college period before I was paneled for that. And I'm trying to remember, but it seems to me that of the issues there was that I was still an FS-1 and the Country Director's position is normally a Senior Officer position. If I'm not confused, I came out on the promotion list in 1990 and that solved the problem and they gave me the assignment.

Q: Mm-hmm.

NEUMANN: But they may have assigned me earlier as a stretch and then it wasn't a stretch, or the stretch fight went away. Those are the sorts of things that are terribly meaningful at the time and irrelevant years later.

Q: Now, when did you start at NEA-NGA (Bureau of North Eastern Affairs-North Gulf Affairs)? Was that a summer?

NEUMANN: I think it was May of '91.

Q: OK. Now, what did North Gulf Affairs encompass?

NEUMANN: Iran and Iraq so that when you read about the Swiss channel messages delivered to the Iranians, I wrote them. At least I wrote some of them. The business of Iranian Affairs, the business of all the coordination with the military about Iraq was part of our office, which was a much smaller office then then it has of course become now. I think we had two Iraq desk officers, one later and the Deputy Director and myself.

Q: Can you describe the NEA front office at the time, who was your primary DAS and what did that look like?

NEUMANN: John Kelly was the Assistant Secretary when I arrived. Later he was succeeded by Ed Djerejian. Most of the time there I reported to Mark Parris as the Principal Deputy. And I'm trying to remember if I had any overlap with David Mack or if he'd already left as a DAS. But in any event, the office was transferred to Mark Parris.
Q: And had you worked with him before?

NEUMANN: No, I had not, my first experience.

Q: And how was -- I mean we're just coming off Desert Storm, Iraq's been expelled, you've got the Iraq portfolio, you certainly must have had a high profile in the front office.

NEUMANN: We were busy. This was the early period of first of all Provide Comfort in the north, later on we has also begun the over-flight program in the south. The first part of my tour was the end of the Bush administration and then it was the beginning of the Clinton administration. A lot of the Iraq work involved the imposition of inspections for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) as well as sanctions and maintenance of sanctions and retaliation against violations of them. We definitely wanted Saddam Hussein to fall. There was quite a split between State and Defense, particularly JCS (Joint Chiefs of Staff), over the use of force when Saddam Hussein defied the inspectors that had to go after his weapons of mass destruction and other things. Saddam would regularly block their work. The view in State was that Saddam Hussein was very weak and that we ought to use every opportunity to push him and further weaken him. The view, particularly at JCS, where General Powell was Chairman, was that we would only use force to protect our troops. Powell wanted to use the force proportionally, that is proportional to the threat or the action which it caused us to retaliate. In my view -- I think it was generally a State view, but it was certainly my view -- this was a mistake because it meant that Saddam Hussein had no real penalty for violating the sanctions and inspection. For instance, if we wanted to inspect something which on inspection we were likely to say had to be destroyed and he refused this and it snowballed and after a lot of crisis we finally would flew an airplane and blew up what we were going to blow up anyway. He suffered no penalty for his actions. Only if the response was disproportionate would he suffer. It was also clear that he became very adroit at operating inside what I would call our decision making curve. He understood very well how we went through a series of steps and pressures to get to the point where we would use force. And so he was very adroit at resisting things and then backing off just at the point where the American government would finally use force. So then he'd constantly play inside our decision making curve.

Q: Can you go over how Southern Watch was set up? Because actually weren't the Brits flying that effort in addition to ourselves?

NEUMANN: They cooperated, we flew –most of the flights of Southern Watch and I think the French also flew for a time. Southern Watch was a very late development in my time as office director and I've forgotten all the details. Northern Watch, you remember, came in right after the Iraq war when the Shia and Kurdish rebellions fell and there was a massive flow of Kurdish refugees into Turkey. The Turks didn't want the problem. Part of getting the Kurds back into Iraq was the no-fly zone of Northern Watch and the Operation Provide Comfort to resettle Kurds. The southern operation -- you asked about Southern Watch -- came in a great deal later. There was a lot of talk, discussion for some time about creating something similar to Provide Comfort in the south. And there were those, like Mr. Chalabi who argued that if we gave them a protected zone they would build up insurgent forces and eventually would be able to strike into Iraq from there. We never did that and some of us that the argument was deficient because for one thing, if you had a secured area in the south it would act as a refugee magnet. It would draw people into the zone and the problem of supplying and maintaining the wellbeing of the refugees would get to be far larger than we could handle. If you wanted to create a military force there that could take on Saddam's armies after the capacity he'd shown to crush rebellion in '91, then you were going to have to get into a major significant training and equipment of the new force. It wasn't just going to happen by itself. So we resisted doing that kind of thing. But as Saddam's repression in the south got worse, the draining of the marches, other actions, there was a feeling we had to do more. And then after he had engaged our fighters with anti-aircraft fire at some point we had moved the no-fly zone up further, fairly close to Baghdad actually. So all Southern Watch did really was to prevent Iraqis flying in the south and it was mostly flown by us, but there was some British and French aircraft as well I think that participated. But it was in no way comparable to the Northern Watch effort because he was able to move ground forces throughout the south, he just couldn't go fly his airplanes there.

Q: And if I recall, one of the interesting things about Northern Watch or the situation in the north was that the Iraqi government put a complete embargo on any resources going to the north. Nobody got paid, no food came up, no nothing. That in fact that was a 100% embargo.

NEUMANN: That's right. You should remember, you were my Deputy.

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: The embargo and the working with the UN was quite interesting, although sometimes frustrating. I think it was it UNDP (United Nations Development Program) or the Relief Agency, I don't remember which UN body was responsible for getting food convoys up north, but they took the view that they had to ask the Iraqi government for permission, even though it was the Iraqi government that was creating the situation and necessitated the convoys. I always thought that was a somewhat convoluted UN logic. On

the other hand, the special purpose organizations, like the Organization for Nuclear Disarmament or for Nuclear Inspections, IAEA, worked pretty well and the special commission (UNSCOM) that was set up only to go after Iraqi weapons of mass destruction was very effective within what the Iraqis would let them do, but they pressed the limits very hard. So there were different cultures within the UN. Of course we were also working, as you remember, with the Kurds and with Barzani and his Kurdish Democratic Party and Talabani and his Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and they were sort of together, but not always. In fact, after my time they came to blows for a while. They had somewhat different interests. Barzani controlled all the territory along the Turkish border, so he was making money pretty steadily out of the illegal oil and gas smuggling of Iraqi petroleum products that was going into Turkey. Talabani's areas of control lay more along the Iranian border, so he had a political requirement, to maintain good relations with the Iranians, they were his backdoor. He also sought economic support from everyone because he couldn't count on Barzani splitting the money from the Turkish oil trade.

Q: Now, this would have been a particularly interesting effort in, working with the United Nations, for this period of time. Was the UN under which Desert Storm authorized, there was a great deal of international cooperation, both politically and on the ground. How did some of this policy working with the UN work out?

NEUMANN: Well, it was always awkward because we really wanted two things. We wanted sanctions enforcement, but we wanted the sanctions to result in Saddam Hussein's fall, whereas progressively other countries thought that that was not possible or a good idea, and they wanted to either see the sanctions result in minimal Iraqi acquiescence or just call it good enough and quit. So that there was a recurring effort to tighten sanctions, put on new penalties where there was resistance particularly from the French and the Russians, often I think the Chinese. But the French and the Russians were the ones that were often the most difficult players there. So this wasn't really a question of the UN as an institution, but rather the UN as a forum, the Security Council, in which the great powers find out their differences and worked them out without fighting.

Q: Yes, I recall from that time, by August the UN Security Resolution 706 was put together to handle, bridge some of that problem and keep the coalition together, and this was the one that allowed sale of Iraqi oil in exchange for food.

NEUMANN: Mm-hmm.

Q: And that was built in order to maintain the coalition and maintain the support for sanctions.

NEUMANN: Yes.

Q: Because unlike the Iraqi embargo on the Kurds, the international community says, "We're not embargoing everything, you can buy all the food and medicine and whatnot you want."

NEUMANN: Exactly. That, as you remember, posed a lot of problems then in administering it, and a lot more problems in how it worked have been found since the end of the Second Iraq War when going through UN and Iraqi documents.

Q: Well, fortunately for this policy period, the Iraqis turned it all down. The Saddam government did not implement any of these things. So.

NEUMANN: He had to do that later.

Q: Right, he began to do that later. So we got the credit for being concerned about the Iraqi people maintaining sanctions, kept the coalition together through some of these efforts.

NEUMANN: Right.

Q: Now, there's a change in the front office. Kelly leaves and then Djerejian comes in. Does any of that make a difference in how the office works and what you were doing?

NEUMANN: Not enormously. It was a little easier to work with Djerejian who was a Middle East specialist, but I had gotten along fine with Kelly, although he had a rather difficult reputation for temper with others. However, I don't remember that there was some great change. You know, we were working flat out, we were very busy, we were dealing with the Turks, we were dealing with our contemporaries in EUR who sometimes found our views very frustrating. We were dealing on UN issues and humanitarian issues and allied issues and military issues and the policy question was how to keep pressure on Saddam, how to keep him, as one used to say, in a box, how to keep the sanctions in place. None of those questions changed with the move from Kelly to Djerejian.

Q: Now, back to your own office. I recall that this was a time when the court case involving women FSO's came to some resolution. And there was a great deal of pressure to bring in a woman officer and yet, we already had a very talented person in Michelle Bernier-Toth.

NEUMANN: I remember her and I remember her being extraordinarily talented. I've forgotten, did somebody press us to add another officer? We did eventually add another, Angela Dickey on the Iraqi desk, who was also very good but I can't remember if that was some special filler or if we were desperate for help and got another position.

Q: I think we were desperate for help (laughs). But we had, we had a fairly good crew at that time, Misenheimer, Bernier-Toth.

NEUMANN: Yeah, we had an outstanding group of officers, Steven Kimmel, later Alan Misenheimer, of course you, David Litt who replaced you as deputy. Then of course we also had working indirectly for us the Iraq watcher that we had out in the field who was at one point based in northern Iraq and then that got too dangerous and we had Frank

Ricciardone based in Turkey, then based in Jordan for a while. At one point that was Frank Ricciardone and later was Barbara Schell who was killed in the friendly fire shoot down of the Black Hawk helicopters.

NEUMANN: Maybe that was after your time. She had I guess taken Frank's place. The time sequence is now a little fuzzy in my mind.

Q: Because I do remember Ricciardone.

NEUMANN: Yeah. Anyway, I forgot exactly what the time was, but we had her as the political observer assigned to follow things in Northern Iraq. These were very chewing gum and bailing wire kind of arrangements compared to all the staff we have now in the area. She was out with military on two Black Hawks over Northern Iraq and they were shot down by an American fighter through a communications error who thought they were Iraqi, I guess, flying in the no-fly zone.

Everybody on board was killed. That was quite tragic. I had recruited her for the job and we used to talk about once a week. I noticed one thing when I went to the memorial service at Arlington and the General Shalikashvili, the Chairman was there and the Chaplain of the Armed Forces and various people. And everybody was giving eulogies to the military who died in these helicopters. And the only who of these speakers who paid homage to the fact that there was also a State Department civilian who died on the helicopter was General Shalikashvili. I always honor him for that.

Q: In a separate track, you've had a long history in Near East Bureau. The Bureau of South Asian Affairs gets established in August 1992. Did you notice that or?

NEUMANN: I was dimly aware of it. The bureau, as usual, was fighting the change and it was established through legislation, sponsored by Representative Steven Solarz. NEA always had the problem that South Asia tended to be a stepchild; usually with very confident Deputy Assistant Secretaries, but it didn't have the horsepower of a bureau. And no matter what inclinations the Assistant Secretary brought to the job, the Assistant Secretary would find that he, it was always a he in those days, was totally consumed with Arab-Israeli peace issues, the Levant, Iraq War and so on. There just was no energy left to be the main driver of South Asia policy. When it spun off that bureau then had the problem that it was a very small bureau, because it had India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. But it was a very small bureau for quite a while, although it certainly got a lot more attention as the Afghan War went on. But it was a very small bureau. But I was totally consumed with Iraq and Iran stuff and paying minimal attention.

Q: Now, you're saying, prior to this you were in the National War College and now in this assignment, I mean you're probably interacting with more bureaus in the State Department to focus U.S. policy on Iraq than, you know, when you were previously on a

desk. This probably gave you a very wide view of how the U.S. government operated in the first place.

NEUMANN: Yes, it absolutely confirmed the famous aphorism of Chancellor Bismarck that the two things you should never let people see being made are policy and sausage, because both are disgusting.

Q: (laughs) You also had the advantage, if one can call it that, as you said earlier that there as a transition between administrations and the Clinton administration comes in January 1993. Now, normally in those circumstance the desk spends a lot of time doing transition papers. You know, you're already up to your ears in alligators.

NEUMANN: Yeah, well we did a lot of transition papers and a lot of transition meetings and the Clinton administration had to find its feet on this and many other issues. I don't know that anything in particular stands out in my mind from that period.

Q: Yeah, I don't even recall who was on the transition team for NEA.

NEUMANN: No, the ancient mind does not recall it.

Q: Now, after the Washington assignment, you go out again as ambassador, ambassador to Algeria.

NEUMANN: Yes.

Q: How did that assignment come up?

NEUMANN: Well, I suppose it was a mixture of my self-promotion, and others selecting me. I found the business of seeking an ambassadorship to be a little bit distasteful. If you only sit and wait to be asked you may sit by a phone that doesn't ring. And at the same time, Washington is full of people who are saying take me and take me, and I always found that a little distasteful. My personal way of dealing with this was to go see a certain number of people that are on the so called, D Committee– (it'scalled that because it's chaired by the Deputy Secretary of State), which makes recommendations to the Secretary of nominations, and say to them essentially, "You should and will make your own best judgment, but if I were to be considered for this job here's why you might consider me and here are my qualifications." I tried to avoid saying the things that I found so disgusting with other people, essentially I've earned this, I must have it, you must give it to me. I hope I never said those things..

Q: Well, Algiers was a particularly difficult situation by this time.

NEUMANN: Yes.

Q: And it was an unaccompanied tour, if I recall.

NEUMANN: It was by the time I went. When I was selected for Algiers it still allowed adult dependents. But the time I got the job my wife was no longer permitted to go. Basically the situation was that there was a huge political opening up in Algeria in 1992. The Islamists, who were a loose collection, were winning the parliamentary elections, which I guess were ’93. The funny thing of course was that they actually didn’t win a majority of the popular vote, but the Algerian government gerrymandered the electoral districts in order to control them for themselves and they screwed it up. So the result of the gerrymander was that the Islamists were winning a huge majority of the seats the way the system was designed. They were on track to win an overwhelming majority in the second round of the election, which is when the military stepped in and stopped the election. That began a resistance movement that grew into a very bloody insurgency as time went on. During the period I was there in ’94, ’95 period it was something like 10,000 people a month were being killed. In Algeria there was a blanket death threat against all foreigners. Our mission had already been reduced once. We had stopped letting people live out in the town and had crammed everybody into the embassy grounds. That led later to some very difficult discussions in the EAC (Emergency Action Committee). So it was a very difficult time. It was also a time in which the French were extremely concerned about Algeria. They of course had a long war there themselves but were still very well connected after their long period of colonial rule. The French view was that it was either side with the thugs, that is the generals, or the Islamists would take over, that there was no middle ground, there was no political solution possible and it didn’t matter how reprehensible was the government’s conduct, one had to back them.

Our view initially was that there needed to be a political solution, that there were too many pressures in the country that were not going to be solved by repression and therefore a political solution was necessary. The French pushed their view hard, in fact at one point right up to President Clinton. I thought that made it incumbent upon the embassy to maintain a very high level of political reporting so that it wouldn’t be just the ambassador saying to the president that the French president is wrong, but that we would have a very solid evidentiary base for our conclusions. That required keeping an adequate reporting staff and that led to a lot of problems. About four months after I went to Algiers I came back on leave and three days after I came back the same flight I had been on was hijacked. It was taken to Marseilles and at least one foreigner was killed, the French eventually stormed the plane, it was pretty bloody. This raised a lot of security flags. One of the things that happened was that we had a meeting in the State Department with the Undersecretary for Management, Dick Moose, and the Assistant Secretary for Security Affairs, Tony Quainton and half a dozen other people at the level of Assistant Secretary or PDAS. Moose asked me a lot of questions, which I thought I was answering reasonably well. Then at the end of the meeting he said in front of the other people that he did not think I was taking security sufficiently seriously and that I should go back to post and recommend that it be cut in half. The reason I didn’t want to do that was because of this political situation with the French. And so I told Mr. Moose in front of all the people that if he decided to cut the post in half, I would recommend to the President of the United States that we close the post because it could no longer perform its function. Well, after that our relations were not good.

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: He really wanted the post to come down in size and I thought that was a bad decision. And I had maneuvered so it would have to be an inner-agency decision, not just a State decision to cut the staff. He never had such an inner-agency meeting, probably because he knew that I'd already lined up the Defense Department and the CIA and one or two others to resist that. I had him blocked in the inner-agencies. So his solution to that was to put a great deal of pressure on me to make me recommend reducing the mission because if the ambassador says its time to go, no one's going to argue with that decision. If it had gotten bad enough I would have made such a recommendation, but I didn't feel that we needed to do that. It got pretty acrimonious between us. At one point I remember getting a management channel message, which was kind of a back channel that he controlled, telling me to make some reduction decision and saying that I should make this recommendation before I was ordered to do so. And I sent back a message that I declined to make the recommendation. Relations between us were not at all good. But we managed to keep the post alive. We had a very difficult emergency action committee (EAC) meeting lasting about two days after I went back. None of the officers on the EAC felt that the situation at that time required a further drawdown right that moment. But several thought that the situation was going to become more dangerous. And they doubted the ability of the department to finish or find ways of housing everybody within the mission compounds (we had two compounds separated by a road). We still had some people that were out in the community at that point. I was determined that we would not cut the mission if we could avoid it, and that we would somehow speed up the timeline of making new housing. We had a number of things we could do. There had been a small school that was located in what we called the DCM compound. We had a number of interlocking compounds, one where the DCM's house was on the far side of the road. I had quite a lovely compound around my residence and then that connected through a side gate into a compound where the chancellery was located. On the DCM compound there was a small school that was now closed, and on our compound there was a building that had housed the U.S. Information Service offices, and that section had been greatly reduced. We had determined that we would turn all these places into residential space. The department had been very slow in providing the means to do this. So it was the doubt about the department's willingness to meet necessarily timetables that caused many of the people on the emergency action committee to feel that we had to make a decision to cut the post down. It was a very difficult decision., We had two days of discussion. The emergency action committee literally split down the middle with very strong views of some people that we should reduce and very strong views of others that we should not reduce. And after a few days of this, I finally made the decision that we would almost not reduce. I think I gave up two or three positions. But otherwise we would not reduce and we would drive the construction and make the time table. I thought a lot about this. I didn't like having a divided staff. But in the end I decided we would not reduce much (I think we gave up one communication and one secretary) and we would push the construction. We had to do a lot of strange things to do that. In one case the department wouldn't send us the funds to rebuild the school -- it was not rebuilding outer shelves, it was configuring space. But they wouldn't give us the money unless we could get architectural drawings. And we couldn't get architectural

drawings because all the architects were French and the ones that hadn't been killed had left Algeria.

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: But my Secretary, my OMS Joan Szabados who was the only OMS at the point also liked to play around with architecture. She had a computer program that helped. And so she went off and measured all the space and we made our own architectural drawings, and that got the funding. We had problems getting some of the people to clear out the space where Public Affairs Division had been. It was very agonizing because they had a wonderful program, they had built it up just brilliantly and under the problems of the insurgency they were having to close it down because the program couldn't function with the restrictions on movement. This was really heartrending and so they wanted to do things carefully, like finding good places to give away equipment and computers and things, not just throw them out. But I needed the space cleared so we could begin the construction. At one point I told one officer that they had 24 hours to get stuff out and if not I would send a crew and stack it in a courtyard, but it was going out. Sometimes it was less friendly I suppose than others. One other agency was able to lease another compound that we could manage to connect with ours. So with one thing in another we got some extra space built. We were still very tight. When we got the school changed over we were able to create a Marine house. That got the Marines out of the DCM's residence. But throughout my tour I had living in my residence the Head of the Marine Guard, the head of my personal bodyguard detail, and anywhere from two to five to six temporary duty people because we didn't put anyone in hotels. Thus they all lived in my residence and were eating out of my refrigerator (they did contribute to the cost). But we were able to do the construction; we were able to maintain the post.

Q: The image you're projecting is almost like, you know, Bosnia/Sarajevo, you can't go out on the streets without getting shot?

NEUMANN: We went out a lot and we had a lot of people who would come in to see us as well. We had to go out under security. We had a problem for a while that the insurgents at one point were running false roadblocks in town. They would have military or police uniforms, but then you'd get killed if you stopped for the roadblock. So we didn't stop for police checkpoints and sometimes we drove, as they say, counter flow, which meant you might be on the wrong side of the road or even on the sidewalk driving your vehicle, so it was an exciting experience. I have a picture on my desk of smoke blowing off from a car bomb that exploded not too far from the embassy. My wife still remembers that at one point we were talking on the telephone and there was a loud boom in the background, and that was a bomb going off. But it was down the hill and not immediately threatening. We were not a primary target. There was a blanket death threat against all foreigners, but Americans were not a primary target anymore than any French still left in the city were a primary target. It could be dangerous if you were not careful, but there were ways to operate. There was no particular stigma on Algerians coming to seek us. We didn't have all the difficult control procedures that they later had in Iraq. So

we had very broad political contacts, although we were very restricted in our movements. People often think that if you can't move you can't know. I think this confuses form and function. We had peaceful years in Algeria, but under very strong Algerian government control. The American embassy had great freedom of movement. You could go anywhere in the country. But you didn't know very much because people were afraid to talk to you. I think we had much deeper, broader base of political understanding in the difficult years that we'd had in the peaceful ones, because everybody would talk to us. We had contacts with every one of the legal political parties, Arab, Berber, we had contacts with people who were right on the edges of the insurgency. We weren't talking to the insurgents as far as we knew, but we were talking to lawyers of imprisoned insurgents. We were talking to both major Islamist parties constantly. We were talking, of course, to the government and we were talking to students. We had much better political relations with the Islamist political parties than the French did. The French were always reputed to be the experts on Algeria, and they knew a great many people, but heavily tilted toward the older generation of the Algerian-French Revolution and heavily weighted toward the Berber community. They had many fewer contacts with youth than we did and they had fewer contacts with the Islamists. Algiers was a French language post in many respects, but it also had Arabic. And if you greeted a Berber, for instance, and said, "Salam wa aleikum" in Arabic, they were likely to say, "Je ne suis pas un Arabe, Monsieur," I'm not an Arab. If you met an Islamist, you were likely to find that where most other people in Algeria had their calling cards printed in one side in Arabic and in one side in French, they would have one side in Arabic and one in English. It was quite a cultural mixture. Anyway, I think we were able to do really quite deep political analysis. Robert Ford, who has gone off to be quite famous in Iraq and Syria and went back to Algeria as ambassador, and most recently Damascus, was my Economic Officer for two years and then he extended for the third year to become the Political Officer. He has very fine Arabic. We ended up not only using his Arabic in contacts, but we got a hold of a couple of letters that have been smuggled out of prison from one of the major insurgent leaders and then captured. We were able to do some quite remarkable political analysis -- not just reading the letters and translating them, but looking up Islamic references and charting changes of thought and behavior that was striking in these letters. We were doing quite a bit of that. I began to wonder over time whether our belief that the government was stalemated in the war was correct. We went through very interesting exercise, must have been sometime in 1996, when I asked the country team -- it was a very small country team -- to think about what we would see if the government were winning the war. We spent a month or two, off and on, talking about what would be indicators that were not ambiguous, that you would only see if the government were winning, that you wouldn't see under other conditions. We eventually developed a rather extensive list, I don't remember how many, a dozen or more things, that you would expect to see if the government were winning. I'd asked everybody to put aside what they thought they know about these things until we developed our list, and then go back, look at what we had, and try and do new reporting where we didn't have information. In some cases we had to do some very indirect things like asking the consul to ask every Algerian who came from out of town how they got there. For a period people were so scared they wouldn't travel the roads. So when we began to see that most of the out of town visa applicants were coming by road, we knew there was a popular perception of greater security on the roads. We

looked at stuff like that, as well as a variety of sensitive and unsensitive classified things, and we did that for a month or two and then we did a long cable, which I think I wrote, saying the government is actually winning the war, it's not a stalemate. That view was largely rejected in Washington when it first came in. It taught me a valuable lesson. The reason it was rejected was the people who knew a lot about Algeria had a concept in mind and they were taking each new fact as it emerged and fitting it into the concept they had, rather than doing what we had done, which was to back off from our own concepts and relook at them. It taught me also that there's a danger in people who know a lot about a situation and get out of date. They still sound authoritative. The only problem is, they're wrong.

Q: What would be the time frame for this evaluation and the cable?

NEUMANN: About '96, sometime -- because I know it was a good year before the analysis was accepted. At first it was fought by CIA, by DIA, by INR. Nobody agreed with it initially and it took a good piece of a year before people accepted it, and I was still there so it would have been some time in '96 when we started. There were other thing we went through -- I'll mention several things. One was an effort at reconciliation for us as earlier of bringing together members of the major political party, the, National Liberation Front, (FLN from the French initials) with some of the Islamist parties and others. That was done by an Italian group, the Sant'Egidio Society, and it was a very good effort. It failed in the end. We tried to support it. The Algerian military categorically rejected it. They struck back very effectively. They managed to split the FLN political party and do a kind of internal party coup that threw out the, the leader there, Mari, I think. They managed eventually also to engineer a kind of coup in one of the two Islamist parties and split it, so that effort failed although we tried to support it quite visibly. We made a number of efforts to try to support freedom of the press. Algiers had a very vibrant press, but it was getting pushed on very hard. The press had really broken free in '92 and the whole system of control had cracked open. I remember at one point where they had a number of papers located in a single building, it was called the House of the Press. One of the newspapers had been closed by government edict. There was a judicial process going on and we knew that if we spoke about the closure they would say you're interfering in a judicial process, so we arranged that I would go down and tour the building that held several newspapers, but when I came to the offices of the newspaper that was closed and the office was sealed, I would just stand there looking at the door while people took my picture, which came out in the other newspapers. The message of our concern would be very clear, but not in the way that the government could directly object to. I remember the night before we were going to do this I had several of the editors over to the house. And I said, "Look, are you really sure you want me to do this? After all, I have diplomatic immunity. Nothing's going to happen to me. But they're going to know this was a concerted effort and there could be retaliation from the government."

And the editors were unanimous in saying, "Yes, we really do want you to do this because we need this symbolic sense that somebody's watching, that somebody cares."

So we carried out the operation. It was a comparatively small thing, but seemed to give them heart. One of them later gave me a framed front page newspaper as a memento.

One major political event in Algeria was their first parliamentary election since the troubles had begun. I wanted to get international observers to see the election. I wanted to do that because I expected the election to be corrupt. I wanted to get the observers on the ground in order to generate friction, hoping that the friction would compel the government to fix some of the problems and make the election less corrupt. I would say that the strategy was only half successful. We did get foreign observers, but we got them too late in the day. They did generation friction, but the friction they generated came too late to have any positive affect. It was very difficult to get foreign observers to come out because of the security situation and I had to make a very strong passionate appeal to the National Democratic Institute, NDI, to convince them it was both a good idea to send observers and that the observers would survive. Eventually they sent I think the largest foreign contingent, and they were very, very good. That decision inspired Europeans and others also to send foreign observers. But the numbers were not great enough and the hesitation about security prevented anybody from getting on the ground really early enough for the government to have to react to the friction rather than just resent it. It also had some amusing aspects. Because I had pushed so hard to get election observers there, I felt that I needed to be out observing on election day, which was giving my security officers some pause. But we worked out a plan. I told my security people I had to go to go to various different areas. I had to be seen to go to these areas, I couldn't just be staying in my embassy. But within that, they could pick the polling stations and routes and find a safe way to do it, which they did. The other amusing thing was that I realized when we went to these places, I was sort of a magnet that would draw all the officials to me. When we saw this we developed a team approach with Robert Ford who was then a Political Officer and who spoke both Arabic and French. We would go to one of these election stations together, and usually it would be a school or an office building. Different rooms were separate polling places, but they were all in one building. So I would move slowly from room to room, and that would draw all the officials after me. Then Robert would stand back and have a great conversation with the political party observers that were also present about what was actually going on in the particular polling place. That worked very well. We did some interesting reporting, we managed to maintain embassy morale reasonably well. We had to pull up morale a little bit after that difficult EAC meeting.

At one point I was talking to my wife, Elaine, on my phone in the States and she said, "You sound grumpy."

And then I said, "*Of course* I'm not grumpy." Then I went away and thought about it and thought, "Yes, I was pretty grumpy." We were getting to be a split mission outside the EAC and I thought that's a really bad thing to do, that's not the way I ever wanted to run an embassy. I made a real effort to do what I could to pull the staff together and to help other people who had ideas. of things to improve morale. We did play readings, we did parties, we played volleyball and I started people playing the Diplomacy game, where I would get some of the staff over to my house one evening. We'd start and then pack the

game up and take it into the chancellery. Three or four mornings a week we'd get together to read the orders, the only portion of the game where you need everybody together. Then people would go negotiate with each other during the day, so it created some very interesting and unusual relationships when you found the CIA Station Chief was spending two hours with a State Department communicator negotiating game alliances. Or the Political Officer was down socializing extensively with the Marine Gunnery Sergeant. It was good for morale to create these kind of cross relationships. We managed to have a tolerably happy mission, despite all the issues.

Q: You're talking about how difficult it is for the mission. Weren't here other embassies remaining in town that you could also interact with?

NEUMANN: Oh yes, there were, I don't know, 20, 25 embassies and some of them had very good ambassadors. I had excellent relations with the British ambassador, Francois Gordon. He and his wife both remain friends to this day. We used to have a lot of interactions with volleyball games and air rifle shooting competitions. Unfortunately, Ambassador Gordon was a better shot than any of us. We had a fair amount of interaction with the French, more political than social. The Mexican ambassador I remember was active, and the Turks had a very, very good, very smart diplomat as their ambassador. Occasionally the Foreign Ministry would organize some trip for ambassadors to get us out of town on a more touristic basis. And so that got me down into the Red Deserts and out to the rocky deserts where there's a small monastery up on top of the mountain.

I was able to get out in that way, but not extensively. But we had some very close friendships. In fact, I remember at the end of my tour the British ambassador wanted to do something and we decided that it had probably gotten secure enough that we could go out of town to Tipasa, a big Carthaginian ruin that's a little ways out of Algiers. He and I and his wife and our two sets of bodyguards went. It was a strange experience. The ruins were beautiful, but we were walking alone through them. There ware no other tourists of any kind there. We' were walking with this moving cordon of guards around us. We stopped for a picnic lunch and in great British fashion Francois had brought a card table with a tablecloth, plates, sandwiches and drinks. So we're sitting having this very refined picnic in the middle of Carthaginian ruins surrounded by an outer perimeter of armed guards from two embassies.

Q: And I assume all the other embassies had reduced their size.

NEUMANN: Yes, they were all pretty small and they were all pretty well guarded. The French had an unusual process. They had a kind of double gate and when they opened the second gate there'd be a guy pointing a shotgun straight at your face, which I always found a little unnerving.

Q: Now, how about your own staff? Who was your DCM at this, during this period?

NEUMANN: My first DCM was Al Dalgliesh and the second one was Joe Stafford.

Q: And what did you leave them to do?

NEUMANN: Well, first of all they had to run the embassy, because I was out meeting people. It was very much the classic arrangement of responsibilities. The DCM had to be the inside person and I was the outside person, but they had to know enough about what I was doing that they could take over when I was away. And I had to know enough about what they were doing in running the mission to make sure that I was giving general guidance on how I wanted the mission to run. And also in classic fashion the DCM became my primary confident. You need somebody that you can talk issues over with. I've been lucky in all my DCM's that way.

Q: Now, your main reporting requirement is obviously the internal situation in Algiers, but there were there any U.S.-Algeria bilateral issues that came up during this time?

NEUMANN: Yes, there were U.S. oil exploration firms in the south so we had an Anadarko commercial issue that we were working with, there were issues dealing with the Western Sahara and Morocco that we were handling. There were consular and security issues, particularly because our travel advisory was a little nuanced. It told most Americans just to stay out of Algeria. But it left room for people to come if they thought their security would be protected by companies they were working for. The US Government was trying to leave room for the American companies to continue functioning as long as they thought they could, and not artificially throw them out of the country. At one point a big company, Bechtel, was building a 48-inch gas pipeline that went from Morocco to Gibraltar. They were down south in an area that wasn't as dangerous as the northern part of Algeria. But there was a point at which three of their foreign employees were killed. They were in a house and security apparently wasn't very good and the insurgents went from room to room killing the foreigners. I really needed to understand what was going on because I felt that since we left room for people to come and work for companies, we needed to understand whether the companies were providing proper security and whether the government was providing proper security as well. None of the three people who were killed were Americans, but there were a lot of other Americans working for the company. And so over the rather vehement objections of my security officer, I went down south and toured a lot of the pipeline, which was a fascinating experience, and I saw what the government was doing, what the company was doing. The reason I did it myself was, as I said to the security officer, if I go into the Algerian government and I say my staff reports there's a problem, they'll say, "Your staff saw it wrong, they didn't understand. It won't go anywhere."

If I walk in and say, "I've gone and I've looked myself and this is the problem," then that other reaction doesn't take place, they have to address my view of the problem. That's why I hd to go and in fact the Assistant Secretary for Security totally agreed with me. My Security Officer at post still objected and who wrote me a long memo about why I shouldn't go. I went anyway. That was one of many security issues we had to deal with.

Q: You've mentioned Western Sahara. What was the status of that issue at the time?

NEUMANN: Well, that issue had been going on for a long time. That was an issue that went back to the time when my father was Ambassador to Morocco from '73 to '76 and it was somewhere in that there that the current phase began. The Western Sahara was a Spanish enclave. At the end of Franco's time in government or just after his death the Spanish government was quite weak and the Moroccan King, Hassan II decided to take it over. He staged a civilian march, it was called the *green march* into the Western Sahara, and Morocco occupied it. Then there was an insurgency in the Western Sahara led by the POLISARIO (Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro (Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro)) and that went on for years. The Moroccans eventually beat the POLISARO back by constructing great breams across the country and thus limited their maneuverability. Eventually there was a cease fire brokered, the POLISARIO went into camps in Algeria, and then there was supposed to be some form of referendum to deal with the final status of the territory, but it was a bitter issue between Algeria and Morocco. Algeria had backed the POLISARIO in fighting. Also, just before I got there at one point the Moroccans had closed the border and a number of prominent Algerians had gotten stuck on the Moroccan side of the border and couldn't get back and felt personally aggrieved and insulted by that action. There was a lot of bad blood between the two countries, both on a personal level and about the Sahara issue. It wasn't so hot in my time in Algiers. There was no active fighting. It was mostly a matter of reporting on it. Later on when I was a Deputy Assistant Secretary for the same area I got much more involved in the issue and efforts to mediate it, none of which worked in the end.

Q: Now, this ambassadorship in Algeria during this time with such a dominating security environment, what did you take away about the operation of an embassy under these conditions?

NEUMANN: First of all, that you can still do most of your major functions including extensive and excellent political reporting, but that you have to separate function, what you're trying to accomplish, and form, the away you normally do stuff. So people would say, for example, you can't know what's going on because you can't move freely. Well, nonsense. You just have to find different techniques that are country specific in order to do things. We had a lot of people come into the embassy. We had selected meetings outside. At one point when I was going to Oran to pay a visit I sent -- again, it was Robert Ford, I sent him ahead of me as the Control Officer, but I sent him ahead of me by about three days so that he could set up in the Spanish Consulate, which was happy to house him, and he was able to see the political opposition figures in one of the major commercial cities of Algeria for several days before I got on the ground. If you know what you're trying to find out and you know who you're trying to see you can find ways to do it. How you do it depends on the country and the circumstances. Algeria people would come to see us easily because that didn't have a particular stigma. In Iraq, that became a problem, either getting into the Green Zone or later having Humvees and armed convoys outside the house, so they had to use different mechanisms. We met there often in hotels.

But the takeaway was you could still do extensive political reporting with a very small staff and in very hostile situation as long as you're inventive and the ambassador demands that you do it. If the ambassador doesn't demand quality reporting it is much less likely to happen. A second takeaway was that you have to work really hard to keep up morale. Third was not so much security related as simply the fact that even in a very, very small embassy, it is necessary to work very consciously on cross coordination between people at different agencies, that as small as we were you had to constantly push for this. People will get into their own rut, do their own thing. Probably there are some other lessons, but those are the ones that come to mind.

Q: Let me wrap up sort of the staffing at the embassy. Now, you had -- other than Foreign Officers there, you had your military guys --

NUEMANN: Defense Attaché and an Operations Coordinator, a senior NCO.

Q: And they were pulled down to the minimum also I suppose.

NUEMANN: Oh, the minimum. We had one State Communicator, one Secretary – OMS. They happened to be married, so State had to send us two rovers (temporary replacements) when they went off on leave.

Q: Mm-hmm.

NUEMANN: We had a Political Officer, an Economic Officer, a Consular Officer, and then a few from others, other agencies.

Q: Well, that's very good. I think we -- let's break here.

NUEMANN: Yeah, I think it's a good, a good place to break.

Q: OK, well I appreciate your time and we'll set up another meetings.

NUEMANN: Let me just add one more thought and I'm not sure how coherent it is. We were trying to use the Algerian crisis as a matter of policy, to open up the Algerian political system to greater political reform and democracy. We didn't expect to get to what anybody would call total democracy by a long shot, but we felt that the pressure cooker of Algeria needed political reform in order to keep them from going through periodic explosions. Economic reform was needed because the system of socialism and state enterprise was a failure. We worked very hard on those things, including freedom of the press. I have to say, in retrospect, that I don't think we actually were able to accomplish very much. We tried hard. We did do some things. The economic situation itself probably put greater pressure on the Algerians than we did, but the combination was that there was a good deal of loosening up in the Algerian economy for a while, although in later years when the oil price went back up and they had more economic freedom, they closed down some of the economic reforms. Reform of the political process didn't go very far. There were a lot of brilliant people there. Yet Algeria still has

the problem that it is not a high performing economy, it has a lot of frustrated people, it has a youth population that has a very high unemployment rate. I think the only thing that has kept Algeria really from joining the Arab Spring is there are still a lot of people who lived through an incredibly long bloody period and they don't want to go through that again. But the makings of a future explosion continue to exist in Algeria. So let's wrap it up there.

Q: OK, I appreciate that. We'll catch up with you later.

NUEMANN: OK, thank you.

Q: Good morning. We're returning to our conversation with Ambassador Neumann. It is the 9th of April. And Ron, I think we covered your time in Algeria.

NEUMANN: Yeah, I think we pretty well did that.

Q: And now, you have a good very reputation with NEA. So your next job is Deputy Assistant Secretary in NEA. But how did that opportunity come to you?

NEUMANN: Well, I got a phone call from Assistant Secretary Martin Indyk. I can't remember now if he was already Assistant Secretary or had been named and not yet taken up the office, asking me to come back as one of his deputies and I thought about that and eventually accepted. I can't remember if I'd been discussed for anything else. I think there was some discussion of another ambassadorship in the Gulf, but when he asked me to take that job it seemed a reasonable thing to do.

Q: Well now, Indyk is interesting because he is one of the very few non-career people who've been Assistant Secretary for NEA. How did he come to that job?

NEUMANN: He was the Middle East Director in the National Security Council and had been in that position when I was the Country Director for Iran/Iraq so we had worked together some at that point. He went to State from there, as other NSC Directors have to other bureaus. In fact, I think Hal Saunders, who was the only other non-Foreign Service Officer that I can think of to have been Assistant Secretary for the Middle East in recent years, was also in that NSC position at some point, although he was a Civil Servant and had also been the Director of the Intelligence and Research Office, INR.

Q: Because actually these are very serious issues, it's a very high profile job. And one of the ways to handle domestic oversight was to keep a Career Foreign Service person in there.

NEUMANN: Well, it's true to a point, but it depends on the knowledge of the person. Indyk had been deeply involved in the whole gambit of Middle East issue for several years in the NSC, and was close to the administration as well. And certainly Hal Saunders who was Assistant Secretary was one of the most professional diplomats that

I’ve ever worked for, and a brilliant leader, but he was a Civil Servant, not a Foreign Service Officer.

Q: Let’s talk about the organization of the Front Office and then your responsibilities. There was I think -- looking at my list, the PDAS was David Welch, and then yourself, and then Toni Verstandig.

NEUMANN: Right.

Q: Now, generally the Deputy Assistant Secretary covers a certain regional swatch of the bureau. What did Dave cover?

NEUMANN: Let’s see. I covered North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, which is a kind of funny hodgepodge. And Toni I think had The Levant and the Arab-Israeli peace process.. And David had Iraq and -- I don’t remember exactly what other issues. David also had Personnel and then had to run the bureau whenever Martin was traveling. Whether he had specific other portfolios, I can’t remember.

Q: Because by this time NEA is quite differently organized than before. The South Asia part is gone, Pakistan/India, and there’s this whole big office -- as you said, the Office of Peace Office and Regional Affairs, which is fairly new. But let’s talk about your duties for North Africa. You’re coming out of Algeria. What kinds of issues were you looking at when you first arrived in late 1997?

NEUMANN: There were tensions between Algeria and Morocco over the Western Sahara. Those issues grew somewhat and we went into a more intensive phase of trying to moderate them or even work on a solution and I was quite involved with the Western Sahara issues. I helped recruit Bill Eagleton, former Ambassador in Baghdad to take over the portfolio out in the Sahara. And the whole operation got a lot of extra juice when James Baker came on as the Secretary General’s Special Representative and tried to broker a settlement. So there was a fair amount of time spent on that and working with the Polisario as well as the Moroccan government. We still were working with Algeria quite a bit. My successor, Cameron Hume, was very, very involved with the Algerians. There were several trips out there. We were working on relations with the Tunisians. And then later, toward the end of my period there as DAS, we began to work on the operations that eventually resulted in the Libyans turning over Megrahi for prosecution in, in Holland. And that alone took an enormous amount of work.

Q: Well, let’s dig into that one for a bit.

NEUMANN: Well, the issue first was between us and the British, and that the question was whether we would offer the Libyans the idea of a trial in The Hague and lifting of certain sanctions, if they would agree. There was a lot of negotiation about that. The lead for those negotiations was David Welch, and I was in a supporting role, and we were pretty restricted to the number of people involved in that. Once we had basic agreement then they had to work out things like changes in British law to allow a Scots Court to sit

outside of Great Britain. Then we had to go to the Dutch and seek their agreement. And then the Dutch had to be ready to pass special enabling legislation that would allow them to hold a prisoner who was not accused of a crime in Holland, and allow a foreign court to sit in Holland and to conduct proceedings, all of which had no basis in Dutch law. So there were legal actions that had to take place both in the UK and in Holland in their parliament, and all of that had to be agreed in advance in secret and ready to go before the offer was made to the Libyans. And then once the offer was made, there was a lot of back and forth negotiation. Then Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the former Saudi Ambassador to the U.S., or maybe he still had that title, got involved trying to help. But as Bandar was running around it wasn't quite certain what he was telling the Libyans and wasn't quite certain that what he was telling us about them didn't have some extra "spin." There was a certain amount of negotiating confusion. And then, of course, there was a certain amount of criticism afterwards. I remember having to testify in Congress about it. There was an article in The New Republic accusing me of being an apologist for the Libyans. But the point that we were making to Congress and the background of the whole deal, was that this arrangement took Libya out of the terrorism business. There were certainly people who opposed the deal because they felt that we should have sought greater accountability right up to the top of the Libyan government for the blowing up of the Pan-American Airways flight. And there's a certain amount of justification to that demand. Our feeling was that if we could get Libya to give up Megrahi and to pay compensation to the families, and most importantly of all definitively get them out of the business of terrorism we were saving a lot of future lives, and that one had to look at that as well. That was the basis on which we moved on the deal. And of course, it later led to their giving up the rest of their nuclear stockpile as well.

Q: Now, you're working and negotiating with three or four governments there. Who were some of your primary contacts in Washington?

NEUMANN: Remember David Welch had the lead with the governments. And I'm trying to remember now, but it was mostly the Undersecretary for Political Affairs and whoever the Legal Advisor's Office had assigned. They were *deeply* involved in this as well.

Q: This was the initiation of this process was so closely held, I assume you weren't interacting with the British or the Dutch embassies. You were going through London and The Hague?

NEUMANN: No there was involvement with the British embassy as well. The Dutch part I think was done all in The Hague, but it was comparatively late in the day when we did that. But the British part went back and forth because we had a traveling team that would go off. Oh, Bruce Riedel was involved I now recollect. I think he was in the NSC though at that point, not the CIA. And he and David Welch particularly would travel to London, but there was a British team that would come the other way and so their embassy had to be aware of what they were doing. But the number of people in their embassy who were aware was pretty limited, as I remember.

Q: And you did some traveling to these same capitals in support?

NEUMANN: No, that was David entirely. I did travel to London and Paris on issues, but not on that issue.

Q: Mm-hmm. Now, did you get a chance in this assignment, which goes from late '97 to 2001 to travel to the countries that you covered.

NEUMANN: Oh yes. I traveled both on my own and I traveled with Martin Indyk, the Assistant Secretary. We had some memorable visits with the late King Hassan of Morocco. And then a visit very early to King Mohammad VI, Hassan's son right after Hassan died. I also went with President Clinton on the trip to Morocco for the funeral of King Hassan, which was a wild ride all by itself.

Q: I'm sorry?

NEUMANN: Well, when we got there the arrangement was that the funeral precession was going to walk from the palace in Rabat about five kilometers to a mosque where Hassan was going to be interred. And the first arrangement was that President Clinton was going to drive to the mosque and meet them there. So we all got back in the cars, a rather long motorcade, and left the palace. And then apparently Clinton changed his mind, decided that he would walk with everybody else. There was no room on the street to turn around the line of cars so we all stopped along a block and everybody piled out of the cars and walked back to the Palace. Then we hung around for quite a while in a huge, open-air courtyard, with a big domed roof over it. All the different delegations were milling around there as well waiting for the funeral procession to get organized. I had an interesting personal experience then. My father, who had been US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia had recently passed away. The Saudi delegation was led by Foreign Minister Saud bin Faisal, who is still Foreign Minister today. He had known my father and he saw me and got up from his delegation and came across this great open courtyard and expressed condolences, which I thought was a very decent humanitarian thing to do. Anyway, after some time of waiting around, we all got organized in a line inside the courtyard, and Clinton and I guess it was French Prime Minister Mitterrand were right behind the funeral byre that was going to be drawn by horses. But just before the palace gates were opened for us to move out, a throng of palace retainers came streaming out to touch the coffin. They were all dressed in their long yellowish robes and red fezzes. They hit the group of foreigners a little like an autumn wind hitting a pile of leaves-- it wasn't that they hit anybody in a physical sense, but somehow they just thrust their way into a crowd and we were totally disrupted. One minute I was standing with the whole American delegation, and the next minute I couldn't see a single other member of our delegation. And just then when this thing was in total chaos, they opened the doors to the palace and the precession started out with all the Moroccans intermingled with the dignitaries. And the police completely lost control of the dignitary part of the precession. They kept trying to regain control. They kept trying to put a line of policemen with their arms linked through the middle walking and only allow the dignitaries through and sort of strain out other people. But that didn't work and the line kept breaking down. Everybody was in the street jumbled up and all the onlookers got into the street. There was no separation of the

precession and the onlookers. It was just this incredible moving throng. It was so dense that the street began to be littered with individual's shoes because the Moroccans wear a kind of slipper-like shoe with a rather pointed toe and no heel. And in that crowd when somebody slipped a little and their foot came out of the shoe they couldn't stop to pick it up so the street was gradually getting littered with stray shoes. The throng was so dense that if you moved just a little you lost sight of the person next to you. You'd be talking to somebody and you'd look away for a second. You'd look back and they were gone. One minute I was walking next to Sandy Berger who looked liked he was going to have apoplexy in the heat. And then he was gone. Then I was walking near Baker and he was gone. And finally I fetched up by the back of the first President Bush, who had come for the funeral, and he had two bodyguards with him. He was enormously cordial. Various Moroccans would push their way up to him and he would greet them cordially. At least he had two bodyguards who were sort of keeping a little cluster of us together, so I thought I'd stay with them. We walked the five miles. President George H.W. Bush must have been in his seventies but he walked the whole thing. Then we finally got to the mosque and we turned into a passageway that narrowed. Suddenly, the crowd was so dense I literally couldn't move. The bodyguards had their hands up against Bush's back and the back of their hands against their cheeks. They were just pressed up that tightly against him. I mean they were totally useless at that point. It was the only time I've ever been in a crowd that dense, where you realized that if there were a panic or if people moved, you were totally helpless. There was nothing you were going to be able to do about it. Fortunately, it was a totally benign crowd and we blundered our way down the passage and finally sorted ourselves out in the mausoleum. It was quite an experience, that walk.

Q: The Secret Service guys must have had their hearts pounding.

NEUMANN: Yes, they were. Even when they weren't jammed in at the final part there was this complete throng around them and everybody's moving and they have no way of knowing who anybody is, so they couldn't do a whole lot.

Q: Now, is this a fairly large American delegation? You're talking about two presidents.

NEUMANN: It was a big delegation. I don't remember how large exactly. I know that we had both Air Force One and the back-up plane. Some of that must have been press. I was in the back-up plane. But there weren't very many of us on it, which was kind of fun because I got a full tour. And as you know, the back-up plane is exactly like the main plane. In fact, Air Force One is not a particular plane, it's whichever of several planes similarly equipped is flying the president.

Q: Must have been quite a bit of pressure for the embassy at that time to support this large delegation and event.

NEUMANN: I'm sure there was, but you know, we sort of dropped in from the sky and did this whole thing and then went away. Although I remember that Clinton had a couple of business meetings I don't remember who he met with. I know I was note taker in one

and I just remember that he was very, very quick on the uptake, because he really didn't have time -- or inclination, I don't know which -- to read the briefing memo that had been done in advance. But he had a very short oral briefing and he really picked up on the subjects he needed to know and did them quite well. Although at this point I can't remember what they were.

Q: Now, during this period from '97 to 2001, did you do any other traveling with the Secretary or the President?

NEUMANN: Actually, it was only 'til 2000.

Q: Oh, 2000?

NEUMANN: I don't think so. I did a lot of travel with Martin Indyk. I don't remember any other travel with the President.

Q: He traveled to your countries in North Africa in the Arabian Peninsula?

NEUMANN: Indyk did.

Q: Yes. And you were with -- now, that would have included the Saudis too.

NEUMANN: That included meeting with the Saudis. Of course, the Arabian Peninsula I had a lot of background on having served in Yemen and Abu Dhabi as well as having been Deputy Director in the Peninsula Office, so I had a fair number of contacts there.

Q: And those various meetings covered a number of standards, so -- now the Peace Process was going on at this time.

NEUMANN: That's right, and there was a lot of backup, if you will, for Peace Process in these trips, particularly trying to get Saudi support for whatever stage we were in in the negotiations and not just Saudi, but they were particularly important. There was also a pretty vibrant track two process going on that is an informal process, or a process of meeting with informal groups that aren't technically official or that are maybe official, but are largely technical. And the idea was that the track two process would produce confidence building measures to support the formal, therefore track-one, negotiation process. Toni Verstandig was really the Deputy who was in charge of all of that track-two process. And she was very active and very vibrant at it.

Q: Now, just to draw a picture here. Where was the Peace Process, the track one? What was at stake and what were we doing?

NEUMANN: Well, there's an awful lot written on this, which is better and more accurate than my memory at this point. Remember that this period of the last three years of the Clinton administration was a period mostly of great hope. Then it failed at the end in the last few months. But this was post-Oslo Agreement and the Clinton administration was

making a tremendously active effort to bring about a Palestinian-Israeli peace. There was also an effort to bring about a Syrian-Israeli peace that failed in the end, but the Palestinian effort was moving forward or seemed to be moving forward. So it was a very different period from the atmosphere one has now. Nowadays, as we're speaking, 2012, there's a feeling of impossibility that there's no partner for peace, whether you're an Israeli or Palestinian. At this time, when I was a Deputy, the feeling was quite different. It seemed like peace could be around the corner. In fact, even after the failure of the last meeting, wherever that was, Wye Plantation where Arafat did not buy into the deal offered by Barack, there were still talks going on between the Palestinians and Israelis. I remember being at one meeting, the Annual Conference for the Washington Institute for Near East Studies, which is a rather pro-Israeli think tank, but a legitimate one. There were a number of Palestinians there from the Palestinian delegation. And they were talking quite openly about how they were meeting with the Israelis and they were literally sitting down with maps of Jerusalem and discussing where to put administrative zones and things. So they were still in a very optimistic mode. And then everything broke down, Sharon visited the Temple Mount, the Intifada began, Arafat encouraged the Intifada, everything went to hell. But most of the period when I was a DAS was one that was extremely active and with a certain feeling of hope.

Q: Now, you would have been interacting with your own countries and encouraging them to look favorably on this process. Let me ask, the relationship of an NEA DAS and those local embassies, did you see the Tunisian Ambassador, Moroccan Ambassador often or --

NEUMANN: Yes. I mean for most of the embassies in my patch I would be their main interlocutor. That wouldn't necessarily be true with Saudis who could come in at a somewhat higher level. I tended to see their DCM more than their ambassador. But for all of the smaller Gulf countries and for the North African countries, they would see me more than they'd see anybody above me although the Moroccan Ambassador was extremely well connected all over Washington.

Q: And in fact you'd have a little bit more interaction than the desk?

NEUMANN: No, I don't think so. I tried to empower my desks. It would depend on the issue. But I had very good Country Directors. Ron Schlicher had, I think, a combined Egyptian and North African desk He was tremendously effective and had a very effective team. His Deputy was Philo Dibble. Robert Ford was doing the economics stuff. It was a very strong office. They maintained very effective ties with both the local ambassadors from those countries and with the U.S. ambassadors overseas. So who saw who would depend as much on the subject as on anything else. But the desk had a very active relationship with embassies.

Q: And in ARP I think at that time you had John Craig.

NEUMANN: Yes, that's correct. And John was obviously hugely knowledgeable about the Gulf.

Q: He had previously served there and --

NEUMANN: He'd previously served there. He went on later to be ambassador in Oman and he had a deep and detailed knowledge of personalities there. He was succeeded by Allen Keiswetter who was also very effective and a very good manager of people.

Q: What might a typical day of an NEA DAS look like?

NEUMANN: Oh, all I can remember is unending chaos.

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: I don't know that there was any typical day, and if it was I can't remember it. One generally got in the office somewhere between 7:30 and eight in order to have read at least a few of the major cables before the first meeting of the day that I think was at 8:30, but it could have been eight. And then it was kind of a dead run. Often you were obsessed with whatever had hit the press overnight because one had to react to it. Too much of any morning tended to get used up in clearing press guidance, if there was something controversial. There were a great many meetings. I don't think you could really talk about routine because one was often event and crisis driven, and so any time you had a routine it would be shattered. One of the recurring things was trying to maintain a certain amount of meetings with my own Office Directors so that they had a good idea of what I was doing and had enough guidance to do their own jobs. I also had one under office under me. The time I was a DAS was after USIA had been moved into State. And so we were setting up new procedures for how to handle public diplomacy within State and in the Middle East Bureau the relevant office fell under me. Very good people. We had to design the process by which they were going to function directly inside State. I think we actually had a very harmonious process where they had a lot of backing from me and a lot of freedom, but I knew what they were doing and was encouraging them. I think the integration process worked relatively better in NEA than it did in many other bureaus.

Q: That new office is the Office of Press and Public Diplomacy?

NEUMANN: That's correct.

Q: And the State Department phonebook for 2001 that says Judy Baroody was head of that office. You might have left by then.

NEUMANN: I think we overlapped briefly. Rick Ruth was Deputy. And I'm trying to remember, there was a man who was head of most of it most of the time I was there who was excellent. Judy came toward the end of the period.

Q: I've got Greg Sullivan.

NEUMANN: Yeah, Greg was in the office, very talented young officer.

Q: OK. Now, one of the things that you're doing as Deputy Assistant Secretary is official-informals with the ambassadors, or discussions with the American ambassadors. Were -- and sort of oversight of the embassies. Were there any particular problems that arose from those responsibilities?

NEUMANN: Well, there were some issues. I took that responsibility seriously and Martin Indyk delegated it seriously so that I really did have the lead job in overseeing our embassies. I suppose the ambassador in Saudi Arabia Wyche Fowler could go around me to some extent, but we had good relations and he would sometimes ask me for my ideas on working a subject inside the bureaucracy and I tried to earn that by keeping him well informed of what was happening in Washington but that was done in cooperation with the Country Director. With all the ambassadors I worked very closely with the office directors to make sure that the ambassadors had a good sense of what was going on in Washington. It is very important for an ambassador to be able to explain to his or her host government what is really going on in Washington, or at least to know that so the ambassador doesn't over stress some policy point that is being contested in the bureaucracy and may be changed. It's also important for an ambassador to have a feeling for how his communications and proposals are being received in Washington. Maintaining all these information flows creates a very strong bond with the ambassadors you're supporting and makes them more responsive to direction because they understand the reasons behind it. That's why it's possible to say that for most of the US ambassadors in my area I was their immediate superior in a practical sense, although not in the direct line sense. I didn't actually write their efficiency report, although I wrote portions of them. But I was the main go-to person for our ambassadors in the field and sometimes I was the person who called them up to remonstrate with them about something or other, most of which was not terribly serious. I can remember one or two yelling matches with one ambassador. And with another there was an issue that the person was not getting on well with the local hosts and didn't know it. And I was the one who delivered the message that and the person had to find a way to deal with the local hosts in a way that restored their confidence. So yes, that was an active portfolio.

Q: Now, did resource issues come into these discussions? I need more bodies, I need --

NEUMANN: Yes, I mean whatever it was, whether it was money or policy or resource, I would be involved.

Q: What was your impression of the resources available to NEA to staff these embassies?

NEUMANN: Things were always a little tight, but they weren't as *awful* as they got later. They were getting tight, but they weren't in the absolute panic we got into later.

Q: Mm-hmm. Now, does that include any supervision of -- or awareness of the language flow and what it took for the bureau?

NEUMANN: We never had enough Arabic language officers that were really, really competent. There were a number of reasons for that. I got very heavily involved in this actually because I got involved in driving an initiative, which failed in the end, to try to move the regional language school from Tunis to Egypt. We wanted to move because Tunisian Arabic isn't particularly intelligible to the rest of the Arabic world, and anybody with French gets seduced into speaking French on the street and they don't learn as much Arabic as they should. We were trying to get the regional school moved to Alexandria, where we had given up the Consulate General. We thought we could get the building back from the Egyptian government. It was a building we owned, but we turned it over to the government. Unfortunately, the government had turned it over to Mrs. Mubarak who'd made a museum out of it. At that point we would have had to buy new quarters. It got too expensive. But I got into a lot of the issues of why we don't have better Arabic. Some of it is our teaching. We each people primarily to speak and read, and the result is that they don't get as solid a grammatical foundation as they need for higher level Arabic, which is a very grammatical language. The result is that they're OK at a certain level, but they don't really get to be really, really good. The people I've known who are the best Arabic speakers, Chris Ross, Ron Schlicher, Robert Ford, are all people who've had Arabic either in American universities or in Arab universities. Secondly, the FSI method, which works for most countries, is basically that you get a person to a certain level in a language, then they go forth and they get better by being in the country and using the language and speaking. The problem is that in a lot of the Middle Eastern countries, people have English, not necessarily really good English, not all the people you want to talk to, but enough that many of your contacts if you speak only mediocre Arabic will switch into English. If you speak good Arabic, they'll stay in Arabic. So if you come out with weak Arabic it tends to decline rather than improve while you're at post, particularly in the Gulf. Now, that isn't true of all jobs and all contacts. You can see now with the Arab Spring going on, if you don't have Arabic there's a whole great swath of young intellectuals and Islamists and military that you're not going to talk to without Arabic. But in your day-to-day operations with the government you could get on without it to a certain degree. So the result was that not everybody who trained got to the level that they really needed to be in this very hard language. The third thing is that to get people to really good Arabic, four-four level, you need more training. But training is driven by dollars, and dollars are driven by positions. So unless you can designate positions at a higher level of language capability, you don't drive the automatic budgeting to produce that training. Therefore to send someone to a university in an Arabic country or to go back for more Arabic language after they've got a three level always has to be one off exception to normal rules. In the end I didn't produced change but I learned a lot.

Q: Well, was a good administrative exercise. I recall though that when Colin Powell became Secretary of State later, he's a bit appalled at the peace dividend that was taken out of the State Department budget. He thought State was particularly poorly resourced.

NEUMANN: Oh yes, this is certainly true and it's continued to haunt us right up to the present. In my present job in the American Academy of Diplomacy were doing quite a bit of work on that subject. But remember that the peace dividend—reducing personnel at theend of the cold war--began to be paid in '90, '91, '92 so that it was only beginning to

fully impact the department in '97-'99, period when I was working on these, on these issues. The impact has multiplied as time has gone on. But Powell was also appalled by the fact that State Department didn't do any serious training or professional education beyond language training. He once asked under Secretary Marc Grossman how much training Grossman had had. Powell had spent about 20, 25% of his military career in training of one kind or another. And Grossman answered, "Two weeks, aside from language training."

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: I verified this story with Marc Grossman at one point. Powell was just appalled that we did so little professional training. The situation, however, is now much worse than it was in those days because we've lost more officers at the top and the result now is that two-thirds of the Foreign Service of the United States has less than 10 years in the service.

Q: Hm.

NEUMANN: That is not a situation in which one can succeed by mentoring alone.

Q: Now, going back to personnel issues, we were talking about interacting with the ambassadors in the embassies. Were there any particular issues on the Washington side of the desk that you were responsible for that sort of came up, caught your attention?

NEUMANN: Well, there were no trouble issues in a personal sense, I mean none of the ambassadors were off having wild parties. But people would come in with their individual complaints. The Yemeni Ambassador came in to complain at one point about some movie that was supposed to be in Yemen, although it was supposed to be a mythical country but they called it Yemen -- I don't remember the name of the movie, but it was supposed to be about a Marine Guard who was defending the embassy and people got shot and the country was made to look very bad in the movie. The ambassador came in to complain about how his country was portrayed. Not that the State Department can do anything at all about the way Hollywood presents anything. But in this particular movie the American Ambassador, as shown in the movie, was a pusillanimous lying coward. So I asked the Yemeni Ambassador if he'd noted how the American Ambassador was portrayed, and he said he had, and I told him, "Well, when I can do something about that I can take care of how they portrayed Yemen."

Q: (chuckles)

NEUMANN: The position was good for me because when I later on went on to be ambassador in Bahrain I had come to know many of the Bahraini officials from this job. The Bahraini Ambassador when I was in Washington later became Deputy Foreign Minister in Bahrain. , I had met several times with the Prime Minister when he was coming and going in the States on medical treatment. I had gone to Bahrain with our delegation for military review and the crown prince was head of their military delegation

and so I knew many of his staff who went on to other positions. So it was a good position from which to know a lot of the Arab ambassadors.

Q: One of the things you just mentioned that comes up from time to time that we can offer and as good on the soft power side of things. You said people coming to the States for medical exams and whatnot.

NEUMANN: Oh yes, The Prime Minister of Bahrain came regularly to a particularly highfalutin clinic. Mostly these folk made their own arrangements. But sometimes they would need some particular facilitation in finding particular doctors, sometimes we facilitated entry into Walter Reed for handling the medical procedure, whatever it was. And that of course was very appreciated.

Q: Now, one of the major administrative exercises the building goes through is the spring personal evaluation writing cycle. You had been in a position to try and encourage everybody to get this job done.

NEUMANN: I would say encourage was a mild metaphor. I don't think we had any late efficiency reports. And I worked pretty conscientiously on my own.

Q: How many did you write at this stage in the game?

NEUMANN: I directly wrote those for the three Country Directors and my Secretary, my OMS. Then I was the reviewing officer for the office deputy directors. In addition I had a hand in the writing of all of the efficiency reports for the ambassadors. So that's what, seven on the peninsula and three North African, ten, which have to be produced by the desk and then vetted by me. And then at some point they went to the Assistant Secretary and out to the relevant ambassador for review and back for signature.

Q: Pretty successful venture? NEA people were later promoted?

NEUMANN: Yes. But that's also a function of the fact that we had very good people. And since we had one manner or another of constant problem verging into crisis we had lots of opportunity for them to show their ability.

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: There were a couple of other issues that perhaps one ought to note. On the Arabian Peninsula, one of our recurring issues that went on until this day, is trying to weld the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) states into a more coherent regional defense, particularly against Iran. The reason it went on then and still goes on today is that there's a limited amount of trust between the Gulf states. They will work cooperatively together when we are the linchpin of an exercise, like an air defense exercise or an air defense program. But they won't work cooperatively the same way with each other if we're taken out of the picture. The period I was a DAS was also a period of very active involvement in building up our military relations with the Gulf. We'd been through the first Gulf War.

We still didn't want to have a large military presence on the peninsula. Therefore we worked to establish a big build-up of equipment that could be staged in Kuwait and in Qatar particularly, and rapidly deployed in a crisis. There were a lot of negotiations about this. The Qataris were embarked on a new form of diplomacy. Although they had bad relations with the Saudis, they'd figured out that they could have a lot of freedom of maneuver if they had us located in the country. So they built a massive airbase, which they invited us to take over and which we eventually did. It was kind of like "Field of Dreams," if you build it, they will come. And so they built this huge airbase, which became quite vital to us and later after all of the equipment sets were moved out for the invasion of Iraq the warehouse where the equipment had been, which were all air conditioned, became the forward headquarters of the Central Command, of CENTCOM. There was a lot of joint military state activity.

This was also the period of the latter stages of containment of Iraq. And so every time things got tense in Iraq we were dealing with security issues that involved the Gulf states. I didn't do Iraqi or Iranian issues directly. That was done by the Principal Deputy. But a lot of the issues would slop over. One of the issues we went through was the '98 bombing of Iraq in Operation Desert Fox. The Iraqis were blocking the inspectors. We had a very carefully orchestrated diplomatic effort with a lot of States, not just the Peninsula States moving forces. As we got ready to do the bombing we had tremendous diplomatic support. We had terrible problems with our own military in the deployment. They had difficulty understanding that deploying to Arab bases was not like deploying to NATO countries where you could just tell them you're arriving. You actually had to get over-flight clearances. So we had all kinds of problems with the air deployment. Then right before the bombing, Clinton stopped the attack. I remember at that point I called Martin Indyk, and said I thought this was a big mistake, I thought the Iraqis were faking us out. At this time there was a document that we'd found that the Iraqis had refused to turn over to the inspectors, which showed a lot of data about their -- I think it was chemical warfare, but it might have been something else. Anyway, it was in the Air Force headquarters I think. And I said to Martin at this point, when the Iraqis were making some promises and we were stopping the attack before the planes arrived on target, "For God sake, at least have a short term goal. Require the Iraqis to deliver this document to us, something that shows they backed down and that we get something for this. Otherwise, it just looks like they out-maneuvered us." I remember Martin telling me that he thought it was a good idea, but there was nothing he could do about it because the White House was sort of locked in on itself doing intimate decision making without consultation even with the Assistant Secretary.

Well, the Iraqis of course did deceive us. We got nothing at all. A month or two later the Clinton administration decided they really had to carry out their threats. At this point the air move worked brilliantly because all the same people were still in the staff. So we didn't have any of the deployment problems we had before. But the diplomacy was in total disarray because we'd blown a part of the coalition we'd had by stopping without any achievement. And then when the Administration decided to bomb we didn't really have time or a real clear case to put the diplomacy back together again. And frankly, they didn't have any clear objective for why they were bombing. They were bombing to show

that the Iraqis couldn't get away with whatever they were getting away with. But they accepted that the bombing was going to cause a suspension of inspections. There was no objective reason to accept that one. We could have said tot the Iraqis that we were going to keep on bombing until they accepted the inspectors back and cooperated. Basically, they set the goals for the bombings so low that the bombing really didn't achieve anything. So that was another Gulf issue we worked in my time.

Q: But that's an interesting illustration of diplomacy, soft power, you know, getting your coalition together, that in fact it's important to have friends and allies.

NEUMANN: Exactly.

Q: Either so you can use their airfields or use their -- add their prestige to yours.

NEUMANN: Yeah.

Q: So that you can accomplish the objective.

NEUMANN: Exactly.

Q: Now, you were saying earlier that this assignment only went to 2000?

NEUMANN: Yeah. Before I get off the assignment, let me just mention a couple of North African things for the record. One was the development of the North African Economic Initiative. This was a brainchild of Stu Eizenstat's who was the Undersecretary for Economic and Business Affairs. It was a very sensible idea. I don't think in the end that much came of it, because I don't think the regional states were really prepared to make the effort. We had a lot of involvement with Algeria and Morocco and Tunisia. All of them were having economic problems to one extent or another. Stu realized very correctly that they all had very inefficient economic structures. Tunisia was a bit more efficient than the rest because it was more of a free market, but for all of them their major trade ties were to Europe. They had very few trade ties laterally with each other in North Africa. What Stu wanted to do was create more of an interactive market among the North African states and offer them certain economic advantages from the United States as part of a process to get that going. And so he kicked off this idea. I think it was on a trip in North Africa, pretty much on his own hook. Then we were involved in a lot of work to try to put flesh on the bones. It was a sensible idea and one we enjoyed working on. But it basically depended on the North Africans recognizing that they had an economic interest in breaking down some of the trade barriers and regulations between each other and building up more lateral trade. That didn't really happen. We made some progress, it was a logical idea, and it was worth trying. It also proves that just because you have a logical idea or one that's logical for you, it may not always overcome the political obstacles that others have.

Q: Well, then why don't we roll this up?

NEUMANN: OK, well just to end this period, I was nominated to Bahrain in 2000.

Q: Ah.

NEUMANN: I was not confirmed before the end of the administration. The Constitutional principle of Marbury versus Madison still works, the appointment of course lapses at the end of the administration. So I went off to study Arabic for a while and waited until the new Bush administration re-nominated me for Bahrain and then continued to wait. And as you will remember, the attack on New York on September 11 was on a Tuesday. That suddenly motivated Congress to think that maybe we should have ambassadors in the Gulf. And so I got a call on Thursday -- I think it was around noon -- saying that your hearing will be at five or 5:30 this afternoon, which it was, and I was voted out of committee that evening and I was voted out of the Senate the following day. And off I went to Bahrain. And I guess that's where we can pick up on the next time.

Q: OK, well I appreciate your time.

Q: Today is the 5th of June and we're returning to our conversation with Ambassador Neumann. Now Ron, we had covered up to your appointment to Bahrain. In fact, you were nominated in the year 2000 and that all fell apart or the process didn't get done. Would you go over the whole process of actually becoming the ambassador?

NEUMANN: OK. I was nominated by President Clinton and it was a very confusing year. There were several Middle East nominations. That was the year that I had the problem with the security investigation. I'd been traveling with Assistant Secretary Martin Indyk and we'd written a memo on an unclassified laptop. It was a classified memo. We did not lose the memo. We did not lose the laptop. Nobody ever got it who wasn't cleared. But about a year after that, when the department began to really crack down on security, the NEA Front Office, with my full knowledge, instructed the Executive Office to check all the laptops and make sure there was no classified on them. They duly did that and found this memo, which I had stupidly put a classification on because that was the first time I had worked on a laptop, and I was pretty ignorant in those days. Somebody found this and instead of simply erasing it, reported it to security, which then did a full investigation, and they were still doing the investigation when I was nominated. The Undersecretary for Political Affairs was nervous that that investigation would pose a problem. And so he quietly asked the committee not to have the hearing on me at that moment. Unfortunately, that turned out to be the only hearing the committee had that year for the Middle East nominations. There was a big fight over another nomination, Ambassador Larry Pope, who some of the staff in Jesse Helms' group did not like, or they didn't like General Zinni and Pope had been his political advisor, and they took out their ire at General Zinni by going after Pope. So he didn't get a hearing. In our group Rusty Deming did get to Tunisia but Marjorie Ransom who was nominated for Yemen had a complication with her nomination and she didn't get a hearing either. So several of us never got heard. The result was, of course, that all the nominations expired at the end of the year. That's a basic constitutional principle under Marbury versus

Madison. So I had to wait to be re-nominated, which I was under the Bush administration. Then I had to wait for a hearing. And nothing was moving very quickly. The 9/11 attack in New York occurred and as I said earlier I was voted confirmed very quickly. So I went from this long yearlong wait not knowing what was going on in my life, to suddenly being catapulted forward. Elaine and I had a few weeks where we packed up the house and went down to see our daughter get married, a few other things, and then I took off for Bahrain, and arrived, as I remember, 24 hours before the first bomb started dropping in Afghanistan.

Q: Now, Bahrain was a very active host to you as facilities at that time. Before you went out, did you have an opportunity to touch bases at DoD or touch bases at State or were you pretty much set?

NEUMANN: I had briefings on what we had there. I did not have a briefing on when the war would start, although the commanding admiral of the 5th Fleet who was collocated in Bahrain was kind enough to tell me so that I knew the war was about to start.

Q: (chuckles)

NEUMANN: Bahrain was involved. We flew about 20% of the aerial refueling missions from tankers in Bahrain.

Q: Now, you were saying it had --

NEUMANN: Bahrain had a lot of KC-135 tankers flying out of there and about 20% of the air missions in Afghanistan were refueled from Bahrain.

Q: Now, that equipment had been only moved in since 9/11.

NEUMANN: The aerial refueling, yes. They opened an airbase to us and we moved in temporary fuel bladders and all sorts of things. It was quite an impressive operation.

Q: And all that was put in place by the time you arrived.

NEUMANN: That was in place by the time I arrived.

Q: Now, the Fifth Fleet has been stationed in Bahrain for some time. Can you kind of describe how much they're there? How long they'd been there? How much equipment they've got? And what it was like working with them?

NEUMANN: The Fifth Fleet was originally something called Middle East Force and it was established after the British pulled out of their east of Suez defense positions in 1971. For many years, the fleet consisted only of a mother ship , the La Salle which was a landing craft painted white, and occasionally one or two other ships with I think a two-star admiral. I remember I first called on the Admiral Hal Bernsen when he was in

command in about 1985 or 1986, my first trips there. The force was expanded during the time that I was in Abu Dhabi. In the '80s it was designated as the Fifth Fleet and it became a much larger operation. It does not have many permanent ships, ships come in and out attached to a fleet, as they are to all the other naval commands. It has several critical roles. It is a huge communications hub and handles all of our naval activity from the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea, which means it also commands all the ships involved in the anti-piracy operations off of Somalia. Another problem which the naval base takes care of, is the mine clearing, holding open the Straits of Hormuz. When we went through the tanker escort operations in 1987 during the Iran-Iraq War, when the Iranians were mining the Persian Gulf and the straits, we had a very hard time doing the minesweeping because we had no minesweeping vessels. We were using helicopters. But they're really designed for a very narrow mission; they're not designed for use day after day to clear whole sea lanes, they're supposed to be used to clear channels to protect ships they're attached to. And the trouble was –that the U.S. didn't have any minesweepers in service. They were all in mothballs because under the NATO rules, minesweeping was a mission assigned to other countries. I think the Danes or Norwegians had the mission in NATO, but they weren't playing in the Persian Gulf. We were using helicopters off of rented barges, which I think were rented from Bahrain. Eventually we got our minesweepers out of mothballs, but then they had to be put on another ship because they're not designed to be ocean going vessels. And they had to be shipped out. Now we keep several minesweepers in Bahrain permanently inside the Gulf so that we have a much enhanced minesweeping capability if we ever have to deal with mines in the Persian Gulf or the Strait of Hormuz. The base is now a very, very large installation, billions of dollars of construction have been sunk into it.

Q: When you arrived -- let's start off, who was in the embassy with you? How big an embassy was it?

NEUMANN: How big was my embassy? Probably 30 or 40, something like that. I don't actually remember precisely.

Q: And who was your DCM?

NEUMANN: My DCM was Robert Ford who is now of course the Ambassador to Syria, and has become quite noted. I picked him because one of the big challenges in Bahrain was to see if we could negotiate a free trade agreement. I thought that I needed a strong economic team to back me up. I didn't so much need people that replicated my strengths in the political-military areas. So I picked Robert because he's actually an Economic Officer, and a very good one, as well as a good manager. I also picked Greg Hicks as the chief of the combined Political-Econ Section, because while Greg was a perfectly able Political Officer, he is actually an Economics Officer. So I had a very strong economics team.

Q: Now, one of your major jobs is going to be liaison with the local government and liaison with the U.S. military forces that have come in. Did you supplement your Defense Attaché Office to accomplish some of that, or how is all that organized?

NEUMANN: As I remember, when I went out there, we didn't have a Defense Attaché. We had only the Office of Military Cooperation, which was led by an Air Force Colonel. Subsequently, we did establish a Defense Attaché's Office. I think that was already underway before I got there. There'd been some questions –from my predecessors about whether they wanted one or not. I thought it would be useful and we went ahead with that. But it was not a major initiative that I undertook.

Q: Now, as you were describing, there was major U.S. forces operating out of there. Were there any other coalition forces?

NEUMANN: Oh yes, the base handled a variety of coalition operations in Afghanistan and in various naval operations in the Arabian Sea. They had French, British and Liaison Officers from all the nations working on these missions. So every fleet that was cooperating with us including, Australia, Korea, and Singaporean had contingents of personnel at the base. One of the things Bahrainis were very interested in militarily was something called "Major Non-NATO Ally Status." It's a legal status. They wanted it partly for symbolism, but also it gave them access to surplus U.S. defense articles. There are some other advantages. This had been churning for some time. One of the things I did before I went to Bahrain was to go around and consult the Pentagon and State to find out what the hang-up was. There were questions about the Bahraini position on a couple of military issues, which I didn't think were actually a problem, but people thought they were a problem. Since I understood what those were when I went to Bahrain, one of the early things that I did was to have meetings with key officials in which I asked questions specifically designed to illicit the answers that I was pretty sure they would give. I didn't script them, but I was pretty sure I knew what their positions were. And they responded as I expected and so I could then go back to Washington and say, "Well, now we've clarified these various issues. Here's the record, and we should now go ahead with Major Non-NATO Ally Status. We did, and within a very short time after my arrival. That made me look very good to the Bahraini authorities and helped boost my cooperation with them.

Q: And you were earlier saying that getting a free trade agreement was a major thing. Was that getting them to agree to something or getting the U.S. to have a position?

NEUMANN: Both. The Bahrainis were interested in a free trade agreement. It made sense because they had a very advanced modern economy. But it was not the Washington view at the time I went to Bahrain. The Washington position at that point was that we should be pursuing a unified trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council, the GCC. In fact, I didn't think that made much sense because that meant we would negotiate at the rate of the slowest or the most recalcitrant of the GCC states and I didn't think that such a negotiation was ever going to get off the ground. So I thought it made more sense to negotiate separately with Bahrain and then use that as a lever to try to influence the general positions of the other GCC states. Of course that was a position that was also sympathetic to what I wanted to do with the Bahrainis as Ambassador to Bahrain. But I thought it made sense on its own, and it has proved to be so. In any event, when I went to

Bahrain there was no U.S. policy on the free trade agreement. In fact, it was quite the contrary and it was looked at as rather a strange idea. I called on the office of the U.S. Special Trade Representative, USTR. They're a separate cabinet office. They have the controlling hand, although not a sole decision making authority, in U.S. trade negotiations. I talked with the person who was in charge of that division, Cathy Novelli, who became a very good friend. She agreed with me that it made sense to try to do a free trade agreement with Bahrain, but that it was going to be quite hard to change U.S. policy on this issue. So we worked out a somewhat complicated strategy, which it took us the better part of two years to work our way through -- actually three years -- and probably was the most complicated bureaucratic maneuver I've ever run in the U.S. government. The first stage was to get to something called a TIFA, a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement. This is basically an agreement to talk about things. It's not an agreement to do anything. It's a forum for bilateral discussions of all kinds of trade issues. First we had to explain that to the Bahrainis. And there was some ruckus in the U.S. government against even having a TIFA. We had the opportunity to move the ball forward when Vice President Cheney visited Bahrain. I went to King Hamad and I told him, "Look, you need to ask for," -- some specific jargon or phrase. I don't remember what the phrase was now, but it was jargon, language. But it meant a TIFA. And I said, "You need to ask for this and if Cheney says yes that will move the bureaucrats." And then when I was in the car with Vice President Cheney I said, "Look, if the king asks for this, all it means is that we will establish this trade investment framework agreement. It doesn't really commit the United States to do anything other than talk and it would be beneficial to relations. When they got into the meeting the king duly asked for this jargon phrase and Cheney said yes and we put that in the reporting cable and moved the bureaucracy; kind of hog heaven for an ambassador to manage to write the script for both sides of the conversation.

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: That got us to TIFA. The first TIFA meeting in Washington was one that draws together representatives from various departments with economic interest in the U.S. government, Department of Commerce, Department of Labor, Treasury, and various others. And fortunately, having the team I had with Robert Ford, with Greg Hicks, with contacts back in Washington, we understood what a lot of the questions would be. We did not tell the Bahrainis how they ought to respond to anything. That would have been very unprofessional. But what we did do is go around to the Bahraini authorities who were going to be involved in the negotiations. And we said, "Look, these are the questions you're going to get from the different departments, and so on."

The result was quite impressive. We went to Washington and we assembled for the meeting. The Americans in the meeting had had the experience of having similar first TIFA meetings with various small countries and so they expected that when they asked various questions they would in most cases get very general answers or would be told that "we have to go back and study that, we'll get you an answer." Because the Bahrainis had really prepared for the meeting, when they were asked questions they produced very detailed answers; charts, diagrams, written positions. They just blew the Americans

away. The Americans went out of that meeting saying essentially, “Wow, these guys really have their act together. This is a really modern economy and we need to think about working with them and possibly working a free trade agreement.” And so from that point, we worked through a variety of issues, first expanding the TIFA and then getting to a decision to actually negotiate a free trade agreement, which we then did. It was still in negotiation when I left Bahrain. But eventually, when I was back in Washington I was able to attend the final signing ceremony of that free trade agreement. In fact it did leverage some of the other GCC states to want to follow suit and pursue free trade negotiations. So my theory was proved to be accurate.

Q: Ron, I want to go back to 9/11 events since Bahrain is so crucial to our military conduct. How did the Bahrainis react to the military successes in Afghanistan as Herat falls in November and Kabul falls on November 13th as the year proceeded?

NEUMANN: They were generally pleased. The Bahraini government was certainly very supportive and very pleased. For the Bahraini people, it was not a big deal. I mean they understood that it was retaliation for 9/11. They were not terribly concerned with Afghanistan, with Afghan matters. It didn’t fire up public opinion the way Arab issues did. So there was no particular public opposition to the cooperation. And the cooperation wasn’t terribly visible either because while you could drive down the island and see planes at the airbase and see them taking off, it wasn’t like they were right in the city of Manama. There wasn’t a lot to provoke those who might be somewhat negative to U.S Military operations. So overall, it was not a big issue. They were much more taken up with the Arab issues.

Q: There was another question in there. The, the U.S. role in Gulf security and its relationship to bilateral defense cooperation, how did that unfold as your tour proceeded?

NEUMANN: Well, this is an issue that I’ve been involved in since the mid-‘80s when I was Deputy Director in the Arabia Peninsula Office. The Gulf Cooperation Council was never a military organization, although it made certain statements about defense cooperation and in fact had formed a small force Peninsula Shield that deployed to Saudi Arabia in response to the invasion of Kuwait. But it was not terribly well organized. Gulf States generally have always been more willing to cooperate with the U.S. as a central hub of defense planning than to cooperate with each other without us. There are various frictions between Qatar and Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and Qatar. Those get in the way of multilateral cooperation just between them when it gets to defense issues. There is a longstanding problem of having a common air defense picture that everybody can see, but if they have a common air defense picture that’s run by the Americans, that’s not a problem. So the American role in coordinating and expanding defense cooperation has been an important one for years. And that continued to be the case when I was there. There was also the mission in the Arabian Sea, which was initially one of trying to block al-Qaeda people escaping from Afghanistan. A number of nations participated in that, and that was all commanded from Bahrain as well as operationally in the Arabian Sea. I don’t remember that we actually caught much of anybody, but those were the issues.

There were a variety of specific defense issues that would be both military and diplomatic approaches to the Bahraini government. I would consult very closely with each of the admirals who had the command. There were three admirals while I was there. I got along well with all of them, we consulted very closely, and they of course had regional responsibilities, not just Bahrain. But we talked a lot about Bahrain issues and we worked a lot with the Bahraini government.

Q: Along that line, as Afghanistan was unfolding, what was the conduit for briefing the government of Bahrain, or its leadership, on how things were going?

NEUMANN: There were several different conduits. There would be smaller briefings that the admiral and I would carry out. Then you would have regular visits from, for instance, Gerald Franks and he would always go see the king so he could get an update at that point. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld came through once or twice, other senior defense officials. Gordon England, who later became Deputy Secretary of Defense, but at the point was Secretary of the Navy. Every time one of those officials came through they would also give the Bahrainis a briefing.

Q: Were there any major military accidents, plane crashes and whatnot, that had to be dealt with?

NEUMANN: Not that I remember. There had been a plane crash of a commercial plane just before I got to Bahrain, but at my time we didn't have any disasters. The military decided the planning for the Marine attack into Kandahar, which was the furthest jump the Marines had ever made from sea to a landing mission was planned on Bahrain.

Q: Now, an embassy is not only concerned with these kinds of political-military events, but you have a whole series of other issues you're dealing with. You've talked about economic ones. What was the domestic political scene in Bahrain at the time?

NEUMANN: It was slowly becoming more fractious. Bahrain had gone through a long period of fractious disputes basically between Shia and Sunni, the royal family being Sunni. And then when the old emir, Sheikh Isa died and Sheikh Hamad came to the thrown, he was very rapturously greeted initially by the Shia. He promised a new democratic process, released prisoners and let people come back from exile. And he put in place a new constitution. There was an issue in that many of the Shia leaders believed that the constitution was going to give more authority to the Elected House of Parliament than it did and the upper house would be strictly consultative. In fact, the way the constitution was drafted, the upper house, which was partially appointed, was almost co-equal and could block legislation of the lower house. There was a lot of resentment about that. However, others pointed out that the upper house included representatives of women, Jewish Bahrainis, and technocrats who probably would not have been elected to a unicameral parliament. While I was there, the first parliamentary election took place. The elections themselves were fairly honest, well run as I remember. There was an issue of gerrymandering of the electoral districts so that in the parliament, which is a quite small, 40 seats, only 18 seats could be won by Shia. So they were probably not winning

seats in accord with their population percentage, although in fact that is not well established and may be closer to 60-40 than the frequently cited 70% The major Shia opposition party, Al Wefaq decided to boycott the first elections. A number of Shia delegates did win seats in that election, but there was a great deal of political strain because the political leaders felt that they were not given the degree of power which they should have. There was and is also a considerable split within the Shia community. There is a more radical fringe group, which has great popular appeal to young people and Bahrain has a very young population. So the leaders of the Al Wefaq Party who were basically looking for political solutions, peaceful ones, were always looking over their shoulders in fear of being out maneuvered by their more radical brethren with appeals to the street for demonstrations. So there were frictions inside the opposition movement and those frictions sometimes boiled over into violence. It was quite a complex political situation for such a small place.

Q: On the visa side of things, those rules tightened up all of a sudden with 9/11. Did you feel that some International Visitor grantees couldn't come into the States or run into problems like that?

NEUMANN: I don't remember it being a big problem with Bahrainis. It became much more of a problem with third country nationals from other places. But Bahrain itself was not too big an issue as far as I'm concerned. However, there were a lot of rumors about Arab students being mistreated in the US after 9/11. We tried to counter those. Whenever I met a Bahraini who had been studying in the US or the parents of such a student I would ask about their experiences. Almost all of them had very positive impressions and talked about how individual Americans and their universities had rallied to support them.

Q: Well, the next thing I want to deal with is while you were there, then the whole Iraq thing starts. But I'm wondering if we shouldn't let that go for our next meeting.

It's the 8th of June. And we had been talking about the role of Bahrain in Afghanistan. But while you were ambassador in 2003, the Operation Iraqi Freedom cranks up. And I think the first question I want to get in here is how much did you know and when did you know it that this was coming down the pike?

NEUMANN: As 2003 unfolded, really late 2002, it was getting clearer and clearer that war was coming. General Franks was pretty clear about that when he visited on numerous occasions. There was a particular issue that we were aware of that with the troop build-up it was going to be extremely difficult to keep them without moving in the hot summer months. So that the chances were once the big deployment began, war was almost certainly going to have to follow. t It was a bit like World War I and the mobilization time tables. So we were pretty clear it was going to happen, although we didn't know the exact start date. We also had a good deal of knowledge, not total, about the war plans from senior military officials. So we had a pretty good idea. Also, we were getting requests for various kinds of support, again from Bahrain, particularly for refueling

aircrafts. We were also getting an increase of various kinds of liaison staff officers on the naval base in order to plan things there.

Q: And those kinds of requests would have to go through the embassy, I mean the embassy to the governmental brain?

NEUMANN: Oh yes, those were diplomatic requests.

Q: How much of a build-up was there on naval and air resources?

NEUMANN: I don't remember the exact numbers, but we ended up with a lot of tanker aircraft at flying out of Sheikh Isa Air Base. It wasn't anything like the build-up for the 1990 Iraq War. At that point they had all kinds of fighter aircraft at the international airport as well as Sheikh Isa. They had them stacked up on the parking ways, they had them stacked up on the space even between the runways in those days. The build up for the second Iraq was wasn't nearly as big. But about 20% of the aerial refueling missions for the war were by tanker aircraft coming out of Bahrain.

Q: Now, do you recall whether these tanker aircrafts were national guard units or regular units?

NEUMANN: I don't remember. I know they were flying KC-135's, but I don't remember what the crews were. The thing that really struck me about the ground deployment was how the Air Force brought in people from all over U.S. and foreign bases, and because they had a very standardized operating procedure they just fell in on the base and worked together very smoothly.

Q: Now, did you have an opportunity to interact with these military units? Who were you mainly dealing with as the ambassador?

NEUMANN: Well, my official dealings were with the government of Bahrain, but most of the military requests were closely coordinated between ourselves at the embassy, including the Defense Attaché's Office, and the admiral commanding the Fifth Fleet. I went out down to see the deployment and talked to people at the base, things like that. But I didn't have a need to work with them in day to day operations. My job was to get them the permission to be in the country and to do their jobs.

Q: Did your Defense Attaché Office get additional resources during this period?

NEUMANN: You know, I don't remember. We had George Zimmerman come out who was a commander in the navy and he was temporary. But whether that was because we hadn't yet set up the Defense Attaché's office or because we needed extra staff I don't remember. But if we had extra it was one person.

Q: There's a military build-up, you're the ambassador in the country, what is particularly unique about what's happening and what it's doing to your embassy and

how you're reporting? I mean you've been to an embassy where there isn't a military build-up, now that you're in one that there is. What's the atmospherics here?

NEUMANN: Well, the atmospherics were less than one might think, because the big build-up on the ground was up in Kuwait. It wasn't in Bahrain. The Air Force build-up was out in the desert and air base wasn't particularly visible. We had a few more Americans. But then any time you'd have a ship visit you might have several thousand Americans in town on a break from the ship. And we had 40 or 50 ship visits a year in Bahrain. So we had thousands of sailors and marines who would come ashore for ship visits. Thus the buildup didn't look terribly different from the normal tempo. One of the issues that did occur as we got closer to war was the question of whether we were going to evacuate dependents from the embassy. Washington was beginning to get a bit nervous about that question. They were reacting to various fears that the Iraqis might fire chemical weapons or who knows what. The Iraqis had fired a few rockets in the First Gulf War, which had come down in Bahrain, three or five or something like that. I didn't see any need to evacuate families. That becomes very disruptive to the embassy people. Sometimes the Department would reduce staff by going on what they called voluntary departure -- authorized departure is the official name for that status. It means people who want to leave can leave if they're not absolutely critical, but it also means anybody who's out of the country for any reason -- medical, TDY -- is frozen and can't get back in. It's very disruptive to the embassy and I didn't see that there was any reason for it, so I kept holding that off. At one point there was so much pressure that I thought I was going to lose control of the thing, and I called the king and said, "Look, it's possible Washington's going to make a decision to evacuate the family. I'm opposing it, but, I may not be able to stop this." King Hamad very much did not want to see us pulling families out of Bahrain. They were afraid of the impact on the business environment and income and on the general sense of Bahrain security. Thus when I called him and said, "We may have to do this" I didn't tell him what to do, but I was pretty sure he would react. The next day the Foreign Minister called me and said he wanted to call Secretary Powell, and I said, "Fine, let me call the Operations Center and make sure they know you're going to call so you get connected." He eventually got Secretary Powell who was on a plane flying somewhere or other. Powell didn't know anything about the issue and dumped it back onto Deputy Secretary Armitage. Armitage chewed on it a little bit and by the end of the day he'd come back and said, "We'll go with the decision of our ambassador."

Q: (chuckles)

NEUMANN: So that took the decision out of the hands of various worrying people in the State Department and put it back in my hands. I then proceeded to write a cable every day for about a week saying we're examining the situations but we don't need to withdraw families today. I also called the Foreign Minister and said to him, "It's a pleasure to play with a professional." He had completely understood the maneuver and laughed loudly.

Q: (laughs) That raises an interesting -- who is your back up or mentors, controllers, back in Washington? Who's the NEA Front Office and can you talk about your interaction with them?

NEUMANN: I'm trying to remember. Now, let's see. Jim Larocco was the PDAS. Who was the Assistant Secretary at that point? Bill Burns I think.

Q: OK. This was a time when Lynne Cheney was Deputy Assistant Secretary. Did she cover your area?

NEUMANN: No, she covered certain specific issues, some of which like the democracy stuff overlapped with my area. I worked quite cooperatively with her on those areas. But she was not the DAS for the Peninsula.

Q: Once the countdown begins, Operation Iraqi Freedom begins on March 19th with the air attacks on Saddam's palace. Were you in a position to tell the Bahraini government that it was go? I mean how much warning were you allowed to give them and at what level?

NEUMANN: Well, as usual, the State Department did not give us any warning because Rumsfeld wouldn't authorize the State Department to do that because -- I assume he was afraid of leaks. But my military colleagues were able to tell me so that I was able to tell the highest levels in the Bahraini government in advance that the war was about to begin.

Q: And what was their basic reaction at the highest level to this whole thing?

NEUMANN: Basically the Bahrainis were supportive. They were a little bit nervous and they were keeping their public posture fairly quiet. They didn't want to draw a lot of criticism in the Arab world, but they were supportive and we never had any problem getting authorization for various things we needed for support for the war.

Q: I mean the Americans are already in Afghanistan and now the Americans are going to go into Iraq. Did that two-pronged aspect draw any raised eyebrows from the Bahrainis?

NEUMANN: They were not terribly focused on Afghanistan. That was just too far away for them, even though they had provided support. Iraq obviously was much closer and much more dangerous. But after the First Gulf War and after 10 years of containment in Iraq, the idea of getting over with it was not particularly bothersome to the Bahrainis.

Q: The American units get to Baghdad on April 9th and on May the 1st the President suggests that mission accomplished, but all was not over in Iraq. And how did the Bahrainis -- what was their impression? Did they see that it was all over or there were some residual issues? Saddam had not been found yet.

NEUMANN: They watched it with some nervousness, but were also concerned about Iran's role, they were concerned about what would happen with the Shia, because of their own Shia population. But at the early stages everything seemed to be going well and so they were not raising any storm flags, but they wanted us to get it finished.

Q: The Sunni-Shia divide, it existed in Bahrain, it exists in Iraq. Which way is it in each of those two countries?

NEUMANN: The Shia are a majority in Bahrain. How large a majority is argued a great deal. They may be an absolute majority in Iraq. In neither country has there been a religious census so it's all guess work and estimates.

Q: Now, these two military actions of course have dominated your time in Bahrain, but you've also got a normal embassy. Did you have any particular counselor issues that came up or other sort of normal embassy things that occurred from 2001 to 2004?

NEUMANN: Well, we had a lot of issues dealing with Bahrain politics, which were very vibrant, because we were trying to encourage the Shia parties to take part in the parliament and the political process generally. We were very involved in getting Bahraini acceptance of having the National Democratic Institute, NDI allowed to work in Bahrain. That happened and NDI was very effective in my time. They worked in a very neutral way, giving politicians ideas of different ways of doing things, menus, if you will, of choices, without suggesting or counseling one thing or another so that NDI would stay neutral. We were also drawn into a lot of Bahraini internal politics. There was a particular issue that was rather unfortunate. I was asked to speak at a high school Model U.N., which is a pretty tame affair. I went and I gave a speech that was very -- what should I say -- very vanilla; there wasn't anything political to take exception to. This event included high school kids from all over Bahrain, including from the American School, which is a Department of Defense school. There were eight or 10 other ambassadors. But at the end of the program the kid who was playing the role of the Palestinian asked everyone, not just the students playing Model U.N., but the observers, ambassadors and others, to stand in a moment of silence for the innocent Palestinians killed in the Intifada. They had a television camera in the room so this put me as the American Ambassador in a very awkward position. Do I stand for innocent Palestinians or not? That's going to be a problem. Do I only stand for Palestinians? Given our politics, that's going to be a problem too but not standing would look very bad in Bahrain. So I did stand and I had 60 seconds to think about what I wanted to do and at the end of the 60 seconds as everyone was starting to sit down, in a rather loud voice I asked everyone to remain standing for another 60 seconds for the innocent Israelis killed during the Intifada. Well, that created a problem, as you might imagine. At the moment nobody knew what to do. Some people were sitting down and some of the kids were standing up and some of the Arabs were screaming at the kids to sit down and others were standing up anyway. Then the press managed to completely misreport the thing and say that it was I who politicized the event, not recognizing that they had essentially ambushed me and put me in an impossible situation.

It was all kind of sad because I think that the kid who made the call had absolutely no idea of the position he was putting me in. If I had known he was going to do that I could have said I had to take a phone call or something and just been out of the room and there would have been no issue. But as it was, I didn't think you could have the American Ambassador on television standing only for one side in the conflict, or refusing to stand

for innocent Palestinians. So I thought I didn't have any choice. Well, the result of that was demonstrations in the street and people carrying placards with my name calling for my removal from Bahrain and then mobs that start coming to the embassy. The first big one that came was supposed to be peaceful. It was coming on a Friday, which was the local holiday, and we were told that it would be peaceful and that they would deliver a letter of protest. So fine, it was a weekend, I stayed home at the request of my Security Officer. Well, in fact, it wasn't quiet because the mob included 15 or 20 people who had come to make a violent protest. They were members of the extreme fringe of the Shia group and their real purpose was to cause a confrontation with the government. That is, they were using us as an excuse to have a riot. What they really wanted was to provoke a government overreaction that would then cause a street reaction in their favor. So they came with Molotov cocktails. Obviously somebody must have prepared by buying a case of Mountain dew, because every one of the ones that didn't explode or left substantial pieces were all Mountain Dew. Go figure.

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: Anyway, they started coming over the back wall of the embassy. The embassy is elevated a bit in the back. We had brought the cars in from the outside parking lot, parked them in the gravel area behind the embassy thinking they'd be safer than being out where the mob was supposed to be. But the mob came around the other side, people started coming over the wall, they were firebombing the cars. I think we lost four, five cars totally and another four, five cars were damaged. Had they stood up on the cars and used the hoods of the car sto elevate themselves a little they could have come over the back wall that had no barbed wire or anything and reached a patio area right outside the back doors of the embassy. The back doors were glass, but they were not heavy reinforced bulletproof glass. So the chancellery could have been in danger. At that point the Security Officer and his deputy and a couple of Marines went outside the building. They came around to the back at a moment when only a couple of people were climbing over the wall and they fired one shotgun up in the air, not at the people. That scared everybody to back off.

However, we had several additional problems. One was that the Bahraini Police that were there were under very strict orders to not interfere. The government understood that the demonstrators were probably looking for a confrontation, so they had given very strict orders to the police. But they hadn't expected the confrontation would be people coming over the embassy wall. They'd expected the police to be under strain of attack. Because the police had such strong orders not to interfere they wouldn't do anything, even though we were getting firebombed, until they got orders down their rather lengthy chain of commands. So for about a half an hour police stood and watched this all go down. So lack of confidence in the police was one problem. Another was that we were trying to avoid any discussion of a shot having been fired, even though it was fired in the air, because one demonstrator subsequently had died probably from being hit with either a rubber bullet or a teargas canister fired by the police. We didn't want that death to be blamed on us as might have happened had news of our shooting gotten out. However, one of the Marines emailed some of his best friends about the incident. Of course that email

went viral, went all over the internet, was picked up by the Bahraini opposition, and it was all over the press by the next day.

The result of all this was we got follow-on demonstrations the next week. At that point, we had no real confidence that the Bahrainis were going to intervene, so we brought in a platoon of Marines trained for riot control. They drove in with normal vans with civilian clothes on and their gear in duffel bags. They changed inside the embassy and by the end of the morning we had the whole lobby of the embassy full of uniformed Marines and weapons stacked up all the way from riot gear to machine guns and we were all set up for major battle. This time I was in the embassy. And having gotten ready, then the police did exactly what they were supposed to do. They intercepted the rioters a block away from the embassy and used a lot of tear gas on the demonstration. We had yet another demonstration a few weeks later where we had a really large mob, probably several thousand that came to the embassy. The police formed a ring around the embassy and the mob was across a rather large dirt field that was on one side of the embassy. Every few minutes, a handful of demonstrators would come running out of the trees and throw rocks at the police and the police would volley back teargas. I was sitting up on the roof of the embassy watching these things, kind of like watching an 18th century battlefield. This went on for hours, I think three or four hours, and the embassy was completely cut off and surrounded by the mob and people charging the police ranks.

It was also a difficult time because there had been rumors that the mob might come to my house so my wife and her mother who lived with us were over at the DCM's residence all day long hiding out there. In the evening, the Security Officer wanted me to move into a hotel after the riots were over. I didn't want to do that for two reasons. I felt that because Bahrain was so small it would be very obvious and known that I'd gone to the hotel and that would look cowardly. But also, it could give the demonstrators the idea of going to the house in the future, although they hadn't actually done it on this occasion, and I didn't want to be putting ideas in their mind.

So I called up King Hamad. I needed a little top cover, my Security Officer was pressing me to go. I told the king what had happened during the day and I asked him what he thought, if I should go to a hotel. He could have just said, "Well, everything's OK, don't worry about it," but he very kindly and suavely said, "Why don't you get your family and come to dinner?"

So I called up my wife who with her mother was just about to sit down to dinner at the DCM's house where her cook had been working all day to prepare a suitable meat and said, "Don't eat. We're going to the king's."

Being a good diplomatic wife, of course, she said, "What do I wear?"

And I said, "It's informal."

She said, "What does that mean?"

I said, “I have no idea.”

So we went off and it was just King Hamad and the Crown Prince and a few of his bosom buddies. My mother-in-law, who was in her late eighties at that point, went in. The King greeted her, asked her a question or two and she said she was from Kansas. Well, the King had gone to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas to the Command and General Staff College as a young Bahraini Army major. Apparently he had had a wonderful experience, so he was just totally enthralled. He sat there on the couch, told my mother-in-law all about his being in Kansas and chatted until we went into dinner. Then he helped her fill her plate so she had kind of a magical evening there with the King of Bahrain, whom normally she would never have seen because usually women were not invited to dinner at the palace. It all ended well and I went home for the evening. But this period of riots was a bit tense.

Q: Now, during this period, who was interacting with Bahraini authorities?

NEUMANN: I was, as well as the Security Officer ad the Station Chief, each at our own levels but we were all coordinating our actions.

Q: That original Model United Nations event was April 4th, 2002, just to put a date on some of these things. Well, with the run-up to Iraq and whatnot, I would assume that there aren't many CODELs (congressional delegation) or visitors coming out, that that's being kept in check while preparation --

NEUMANN: I can't remember.

Q: -- for Iraq is going on.

NEUMANN: We had some. We never had a huge number of CODELs in Bahrain, not ever like Saudi Arabia. I don't remember any particular effort to stop them. I remember at one point we got Senator Biden on a surprise visit. That is, he hadn't intended it to be a surprise. He was in Afghanistan and he had come in on some kind of UN flight and they had bad weather in Afghanistan so the UN flight said they couldn't fly. However, there was a US military flight going out that he could get on. But the military flight was going to Bahrain, so we were suddenly told on very short notice that we would have Senator Biden arriving at 11 or 12:00 at night at Bahrain Airport and he would be there for most of the next day before there was a commercial flight out. So we met him at the airport and on rather short notice got him some official meetings. As I remember, I took him out to dinner at a restaurant the night before he flew back. But that was an exception.

Q: Social events in Bahrain --

NEUMANN: Many.

Q: Yeah. Yeah, that would be the first part of the question. The second part was, you know, has air condition taken affect and things start earlier in the evening, or is this a country where events are going to start at 10, 11:00 at night?

NEUMANN: Well, actually Bahrain social events started at all kinds of hours. There was a huge amount of socializing in the expatriate community as well as in the diplomatic and Bahraini community. I put my priority on attending Bahraini events. Bahrainis, unlike many of the other Peninsula states, tend to socialize as couples a great deal of the time, so there were lots and lots of couple events, but not segregated the way Kuwait or Saudi Arabia would be. The starting times for events varied greatly. There were some people that started early, there were some people who would put 9:00 on an invitation and if we showed up at nine the hostess was still getting her hair done and there was nobody in the living room. I found the only way to be sure of what time to arrive was to talk to my driver who'd been driving ambassadors in Bahrain for years and years and who always would know the answer for the particular person, whether you show up early, show up late, whatever the deal is. So I would always consult Jassim and find out what I was supposed to do.

Q: Was there much of a diplomatic community in Bahrain, and did it hang together or?

NEUMANN: Yes. There were, I don't remember exactly, 25 or 30 embassies All the major powers were there as well as most of the Arab states. One of the other big social things in Bahrain was that during Ramadan many Bahrainis would hold a majilis; a sort of open house. We would go trooping to as many of these as we could, both for political reporting and social interaction. I would be out a great many nights in Ramadan starting after dinner going from majilis to majilis and dropping in on different people. We would have to find out who was hosting which ones at which nights and work out a schedule.

Q: One of the major social events for the Americans is the July Fourth party. Was there any --

NEUMANN: We usually did it in February on President's Day because it was just too hot in the summer when temperatures would be up to 100 to 140 degrees. Also a great many people left in the summer as well, so it was a regular tradition in Bahrain that we would celebrate it in February.

Q: And was there a McDonald's in town that you used? Or what was the American aspect of the day?

NEUMANN: We would have some kind of big reception. Usually we had them in the garden of the house. We had a large house with a very large garden. In February, the weather's good so we would have the formal reception there. We wouldn't do a terribly large American community thing. There was often an American community thing organized separately by the business community. But we wouldn't try and combine them because it was just too big.

Q: A question to be moved around. The physical embassy, was that a new structure?

NEUMANN: Yes, there was a new embassy that had been opened shortly before I got to Bahrain.

Q: And what was it like? I mean did it have all these new security setbacks and all that?

NEUMANN: Oh yes. It had all the security and setbacks and classified areas and combinations and all that.

Q: Let's see. I think we've pretty much covered Bahrain there. And from there you go to Baghdad.

NEUMANN: Yes. One of the things that happened while I was in Bahrain that was war-related, but affected us, was that Robert Ford, my DCM, went to Iraq sometime in the summer of 2003, and became the Coalition Provisional Authority Officer in Najaf, in Southern Iraq. He was there for approximately six months.

Q: August to September.

NEUMANN: I think that was it. I functioned with an Acting DCM. We rotated the job among several people, but basically I was running the embassy. Then after Robert came back, I was asked if I would go to Baghdad and help out. I agreed to that and I left Bahrain in the beginning of February in 2004 and from February to May I was generally in Iraq, not in Bahrain. I came back on visits. One amusing feature of that was that I got authorization to fly as a passenger on DHL cargo planes because we had a cargo hub in Bahrain that flew into Baghdad so that saved me the one day on layover in Kuwait the way most people went into Baghdad. From the embassy in Baghdad I helicoptered to the airport usually and then would get a cargo flight. Sometimes they were quite, quite strange. One was a Russian aircraft – that had a sort of handmade area with seats but no seat belts back of the cockpit. Another flight had a Turkish crew that all smoked in the cockpit and they invited me to sit in the navigator seat. They were all smoking so I lit my pipe, I was happy as can be and the whole cockpit was full of blue smoke and eventually we arrived safely. I really was only ambassador in name in Bahrain after February.

Q: On these trips back did any of your Bahraini interlocutors try to catch you and say, you know, what's happening, what's it like, what's going on?

NEUMANN: Actually, I made a point every time I came back to see the family of having a very busy schedule of calling on all the leading Bahraini officials and as many others as I could socially to brief them on what was going on Iraq, try to encourage continued Bahraini support.

Q: And you officially depart Bahrain on June the 7th, I believe it is. And Bill Moore takes over in August.

NEUMANN: Yeah. By that time, I had been asked if I would extend my stay in Iraq. Originally the deal was that I was supposed to go up to Baghdad and help out until the

coalition returned sovereignty to the Iraqis. But then, Negroponte had called me up at about 11:00 at night after I staggered back to my trailer and asked me if I would stay on for a year as Political Military Counselor, which I eventually agreed to after some reflection and communications back and forth with my wife. Sometime in late May I left Baghdad, came back -- I could say to help pack out, but actually it was to make a lot of farewell calls while my wife was doing all the work packing the house. Then we went off and had about 10 days of vacation in England. Then my wife continued on back to the States and moved into our house and I went back to Baghdad.

Q: Now, during this period, Colin Powell is Secretary of State. Did you have an opportunity to personally work with him?

NEUMANN: I saw him on his trips particularly to Iraq. He was very friendly to me. But I didn't have a lot of dealings with him directly. Occasionally I'd be on a classified media conference from Iraq with the Deputy's Committees sometimes or with the principals, including Secretary Powell.

Q: Right.

NEUMANN: Special interactions with Secretary Powell.

Q: And Armitage?

NEUMANN: Armitage I had seen when I went to Bahrain. I had known Armitage quite some time earlier when he was Assistant Secretary for Defense for International Security Affairs. So I had a personal relationship with him. And I occasionally interacted with him whenever I came back to Washington. Armitage came to Iraq for New Year's of 2005. After the official meetings I had his whole group up to my office for drinks and cigars (and my pipe).

Q: As you said, we covered your CPA time and the next thing would be to jump to Kabul. I don't know if you want to get in that today or?

NEUMANN: I think why don't we leave that for another, another day.

Q: OK. Let me turn the recorder off for the moment then. Today is the 19th of June and we're getting back to our conversation with Ambassador Neumann. Ron, we stopped last time when you were with the CPA in Baghdad. And from there you get the honor of going to Afghanistan as the ambassador. Now, you have discussed much of that assignment in your book, The Other War: Winning and Losing in Afghanistan. And we could almost put that text in here, but I have a couple of themes I'd like to pull out of that material. But let's start off with my standard question, how did you get this job? How did they come to you? I mean are you that politically connected or --

NEUMANN: As to why they gave it to me, I don't know. I can tell you that I was on my way back from Baghdad, I was stopping over in Amman, partly out of curiosity because

I'd already been selected as Ambassador to Jordan and put in all my paperwork, although nobody in the embassy there knew that that was the case. Just as I was going to bed, I received a telephone call from the Director General, who said that he understood that I was going to be back in Washington the next day and I needed to see Secretary Rice on Thursday, the next day, and it was about where I was going, but it wasn't where I thought. And with that cheerful bit of suspense he ended the call and I of course didn't go to sleep so early. I got back to the States the day. By noon, on Thursday when I saw Secretary Rice, I had probed around the bureaucracy and knew what she was going to ask me.

I know I did not go to Jordan because King Abdullah had gotten very close to David Hale, who'd been chargé for a year, and had asked President Bush to keep David Hale as ambassador, which was a perfectly reasonable thing for the President to agree to. That took Jordan away. But as to why I was then picked for Afghanistan, I never particularly asked. Secretary Rice asked me to do it. I asked to have a little bit of time to consult with my wife, since I just would have come off of one unaccompanied assignment and would go immediately into another one. Actually, I'd already talked to my wife on the phone. And so I came back to Rice the next day and agreed to go to Afghanistan.

Q: Let me ask this. You're Career Foreign Service Officer, a great deal of experience, but there's always a tension in some of these appointments of non-career people versus career people. In the Iraq situation that you just came out of, was the administration using career people as they should be used, or was there some non-career people that were in the mix?

NEUMANN: By the time I left Baghdad or even had this conversation it was heavily career, Ambassador John Negroponte had taken over in Iraq. The major staff was mostly career. I've seen this go both ways, but I've also seen some career officers who didn't do nearly the job that I thought they should and so I think one has to really look to the person, not assume that career is always better. I wish I could take that position, but I cannot.

Q: Because in the Iraq situation and in the Afghan situation, one of the major problems is finding the staffing to fill the expected slots. And in the early days in Iraq, for example, there were all kinds of people who were not necessarily career people, but were going out and --

NEUMANN: All of the problems in Iraq were compounded by the shortness of tours, which is something we still haven't really cured although some of the early Iraq tours were absolutely ridiculous, three months, six months, but we're still largely on one-year tours. That really does handicap us. And we still have the problem of finding suitable people. We had that in Afghanistan the last couple of years with the so-called "civilian surge". We had to hire a lot of people on individual contracts under provision of Law Section 3161 so they're called 3161s. And some of them have been extraordinarily good and some of them are not good and really not suitable. The hiring process has been extraordinarily slow and the results have been very mixed, and that causes a lot of

problems. I've seen officers who were first class, but I've seen officers in positions, both covering State and AID duties, who really were not up to the job or really didn't understand it.

Q: When we're talking about Afghanistan, as you point out in your book, there are so many aspects to it. But the first one I want to approach is the issue of security. You served in Vietnam. How would you compare the war in Afghanistan with Vietnam?

NEUMANN: You're asking about how we handle civilian security or the nature of fighting itself?

Q: The nature of fighting itself. And I guess my underlying question is, is dodging IED's (improvised explosive device) war?

NEUMANN: Yes. Because one reason you're dodging IED's is because they don't like engaging you directly because they lose. In Vietnam, you had the Punji sticks, you had them further south. We fortunately didn't have too many of them where I was. But IED attacks are mixed with other attacks. It's not just people walking around getting blown up as though nothing else is happening. There have been some fairly sizeable engagements, some lasting quite a long time, in Afghanistan. That said, the nature of the two wars is extremely different in so many ways, partly because in Vietnam we were fighting as much an organized army fighting with unconventional tactics as an insurgency, as you had major inputs from North Vietnam. Where I was up in the north, close to the border of Vietnam, there were very few actual Vietcong. They were a pretty small malaria infected remnant. The people we fought were regular Vietnamese Army troops that came down across the border. In fact, the final fall of Vietnam was very much a conventional invasion backed by tanks and artillery. That's not the kind of war you've got in Afghanistan, although you have sanctuaries. Vietnam had forces controlled very closely from Hanoi. There was nothing like the mixture of forces that we lump together as "Taliban." Even the combat was very different with the Viet Cong (VC) and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) prepared to engage in very heavy direct combat. Basically, the two wars are completely different.

Q: Now, in Afghanistan when you were there, were there any -- I don't want to say major battles or major engagements of large, fairly large units?

NEUMANN: Oh yes. In 2006 there were two major battles in the area around Kandahar. In fact, in one case, the Taliban were being ordered from across the border in Pakistan to dig in and hold. I think they believed that NATO troops might crack if the opposition was big enough, and there were probably something like 500 insurgents killed in that battle and use of air power, artillery continued for a number of days. There was a follow-up battle in the same area in the fall of that year. However, these were rare and the insurgents rarely tried to close as the VC and NVA did.

Q: Now, whose job was it, if you will, to determine where NATO troops were going to be placed?

NEUMANN: Well, the basic decision on where troops would go in the handover to NATO had already been made before I arrived. That was a NATO military decision, ratified by a the North Atlantic Council (NAC) The questions that I was engaged in were more about whether the forces were adequate, whether we should hand over the command if they were not. I was not a direct player in that. I was concerned about the questions. I realized that there would be a lot of problems if the civilian ambassador opposed the NATO commander, who was General James Jones. But I made it clear that I was prepared to do that in some cases and used that as a kind of quiet pressure on some decisions. However, I think in retrospect, both General Eikenberry and I, -- we talked together about this a lot -- somewhat underestimated what we could expect from Canadian, orBritish, or Dutch battalions. We saw those issues as being more plug-in/plug-out, American Battalion moves one place, British Battalion comes in. We were more worried about things like whether you were going to have an adequate Romanian force. What we didn't realize adequately was that none of the European forces, although they had very good combat soldiers , came without the back-up and support that American units had. They had the artillery support, they didn't have the helicopter support. And so the combat power of even British Battalion was a great deal less -- what it could do in the same amount of territory was a great deal less than what an American Battalion can do, not because of the soldiers, but because of what the military would call the enablers.

Q: And you mentioned that the combat in 2006, from the Taliban side, might have been to press NATO. Was NATO still, to your mind's eye, coming up with the troops and was required to invest in the security situation?

NEUMANN: Nobody was coming up with the troops that were required to invest in the security situation. By the fall of 2005, I had reported, in combination with General Eikenberry, that we were going to face a vastly increased insurgency in the next year, in 2006, and that it was going to get much bloodier, much worse. I also said that in some public statements because I thought it was important to try to prepare the American public for that so that they wouldn't be surprised and see everything as a reverse. But that didn't change anything that we got in terms of forces or in terms of money on the economic side. I requested a $600 million economic supplemental in the fall of 2005 for the fiscal year of 2006. After months of discussion, I got $43 million approved out of that 600 million that I asked for, which is a mark of how little progress we made in getting what we needed. We spent the winter of 2005- 2006 in enormous amount of planning in Kabul trying to figure out how to get more force into the south for the offensive that we knew was coming from the insurgency. We created something called the "Policy Action Group," PAG was the acronym. That was a brainchild of General David Richards, British NATO Commander, which was specifically set up for this kind of planning with the major NATO commanders. Americans were still there. At that point, the Americans still had separate command in the east, so they participated as did the Afghans and it was very difficult to find adequate measures we could take. We wanted to put a few more competent administrators into the Afghanistan's six provinces where we thought the fighting would be particularly difficult. It took us months to find them because they

didn't exist in Afghanistan; the lack of capacity was quite large. We were scraping around for anything, for extra forces. That was where the idea came from of trying to create the Afghan Auxiliary Police (ANAP). In the end it didn't work and there's a lot of description of that in the book. But it was essentially part of a desperate effort to get more guns into the field somehow. So no way were we getting anything like the reinforcements that we needed.

Q: Now, you were mentioning one of your budgetary problems was using budget supplementals. So the war in Afghanistan is not a regular part of the budget you're looking for supplementals, which you have to rationalize and convince people. And I think there's an excellent section in the book about what you're talking about. You put in the supplemental request and OMB ultimately knocked it down. So supplementals were the major vehicle for funding Afghanistan.

NEUMANN: It was also the major vehicle for funding Iraq. Now, the Military has done this all along. The base budget for the Military is never a budget to fight a war; it's a budget to arm and equip the Armed Forces of the United States. But any time you go to war you need a supplemental to pay for it. State in the past didn't do that and it was heavily criticized for using supplementals. They are now going to a kind of separate budget, the way the Military does. It's called the Overseas Contingency Operation Budget, OCO, but they didn't have that in my day. There was a plan that Secretary Rice explained to me, she wanted each year to raise the base budget and diminish the amount of the supplemental until we would eventually get Afghanistan civilian expenses all into the base budget, as was being requested and asked for by many in Congress. That plan was still born under the budget problems of 2006 and onwards so that they never were able to do that. But that was an idea she was originally working toward.

Q: One of the themes in the book is there is a competition between Iraq and Afghanistan for high level policy attention and resources, which is sometimes turned into the quip that Iraq starved out Afghanistan. There was that competition then between the two theaters?

NEUMANN: Yes, although it's a little more complicated because Afghanistan began with a very light military footprint and a very light AID footprint. There was not in 2001 a problem of Iraq. The problem was a product of the view that we didn't want to be heavily involved in Afghanistan and we didn't want to get into major infrastructure development and do humanitarian assistance only and focus in light counterterrorism missions. It took a couple of years for that idea to go away and the funding to pick up. As the funding began to increase, - particularly in late 2004 and then the 2005 year, that's when the Iraq demands began to hit. After that I think Iraq was the fundamental problem. Now, OMB would never say that. Nobody ever said to me, "You can't have the money because we need it for Iraq." But in fact, that's what happened, that OMB was trying to hold the line on the total budget and the money simply wasn't made available. There's a lot of discussion about the inadequacy of funding both wars in a book by Dov Zakheim called A Vulcan's Tale, subtitled How We Mismanaged Afghanistan. He was the comptroller in the Department of Defense.

Q: Because in the time that you're involved in Afghanistan, you're talking about the need for these larger AID projects and in fact, arguing that you really are into nation building if you're ever going to get out of this. The tale about the Bolivian smooth stone road builders I think is indicative of that kind of project that was probably never even thought of in 2001, 2001.

NEUMANN: No, I'm sure it wasn't. But you know, neither were the big projects like the Kajaki Dam and some of the roads and things like that. When we didn't get those supplementals in 2006 we reprogrammed money in some cases to carry out some of the essential large projects. But the price we paid was very large in non-dollar as well as dollar ways. In dollar terms, we paid a price for delay because later on security got worst. Security costs became greater and what we could do with money was less. In some cases, projects just didn't get done because we couldn't handle the changes in security to do the projects at all. In other cases, what we lost was financial flexibility because we basically had used up all our flexibility in a reprogramming exercise. As we then learned more and saw different needs that we hadn't understood before we had no ways of responding to them. Remember that State has no contingency dollars. The military is differently organized. They have a very large financial pot for operations and maintenance funds. Under certain circumstances they can dig into that. When they do that they pay a price in various ways, including in maintaining their equipment and facilities if they do too much of that. But they have in place they can go in an emergency -- State simply has no equivalent. It has to cut some other budget, reprogram money, notify the Congress. It takes months. In one case, Secretary Rice, somewhere in 2006, promised President Karzai 60 million dollars for some roads. It took six months to make the money available because they had to look around in the AID budgets worldwide and find where they could reprogram money. And then they had to notify the Congress. In some cases, you had individual staffers who said, "No, you can't take five or 10 million from my favorite project, some African country, whatever." That would hold up the whole process. So it literally took six months to dig 60 million dollars out of the budget to make good on a promise of the Secretary of State.

Q: And the point in one sense is, as you were saying earlier, the State budget is not built for war. It's not built for this supplemental type of thing that DoD can do.

NEUMANN: Well, DoD's not really built for it either, but they have a bridging mechanism. So partly it's the State budget that's not built for it. But it's also our constitutional system that makes it slow for us to deploy money. Let me give you an example. We made a decision in the fall of 2006 that we were going to do various projects with supplemental funding. By late 2006 all the objections had gone away. The administration put forward a budget for a very large supplemental but that becomes part of the Fiscal Year 2007 process. Now, for example, look at road projects and that budget. You make a decision in 2006 in the fall. The budget goes to the Congress in February of 2007. Congress votes the money sometime in the summer. It then takes a couple of months to figure out exactly what Congress has done, because they never just vote the bill the administration asks for. The money is then portioned to the field. At that point, in the fall you can now sign a contract and maybe you'll get some engineering studies done

or some demining before winter closes things down. But the first time an Afghan on the ground will see any actual action to start building the road that you decided to build in the fall of 2006 will be in the spring of 2008. And that is not anybody messing up and that is not the State Department process. That's the constitution.

Q: Speaking of that sort of thing, one of the other themes that you mentioned is AID is a shadow of its former self, both in staffing and procedures, that the Congress had been chipping away at it. I think you have a figure in there that AID was 10 times larger an organization during the Vietnam War than it was during the time that you were in Afghanistan. What did AID look like as a interagency partner with you?

NEUMANN: I had outstanding personnel, as AID directors and senior personnel. But AID was a crippled organization. It had so few people that it had no ability to actually do projects. It could only do things through contracts, writing checks, which is always being criticized. But it has no choice because at the time that I was there AID's total permanent staff numbered 2,200;worldwide, their entire staff. They had five engineers in AID on the permanent staff. That was it. So it had to do these large contracts. Secondly, AID is required to contract under U.S. government contracting regulations. They have to ask for competitive bids and U.S. contractors have to be the bidders. What this means is that in many cases AID has to contract very large umbrella type projects with what they call "implementing partners". Then all of the individual smaller activities that you and I would call a project, are subprojects under this that where the "implement partner" is directed by AID to do things or finds subcontractors to do them. For instance, right now in Afghanistan, 2012, you have something like 130 major projects in AID, but they actually involve 5,000 activities, that normal people would call projects. This is a very cumbersome mechanism. It's very difficult to be flexible. In the field, we had one AID officer in each of five PRT's. But the AID officer in the field at that point had no ability to do a project anyway. They could get one of the implementing partners to do some small activity, but that decision had to loop through Kabul. What we needed in the field was a package, a larger staff capable of overseeing projects, proper authorities to manage the process, and funding to do projects. If you didn't get all three together—staff, authority, and money--you weren't going to be effective. That was part of the problem. Another was that AID was handicapped at the senior level. I argued repeatedly that we needed to expand the senior level AID staff at a minimum by one more person because they were constantly involved in crisis management, strategic planning, and priority program oversight (essentially trouble shooting). Plus, of course, you needed an AID Director. And that's a minimal of four. They never had even that four. Usually you don't even have all of the three that they did have present at one time because of leaves and vacation breaks. Today you've got way more staff in Afghanistan than I had. In my time we could not get even the minimum senior staffing at the levels that everybody agreed we needed. I was still working on that when I left Afghanistan and it was one of the major subjects of my final consultations. The sad thing was that it was not that people disagreed with me in AID. It was simply that the senior staff didn't exist. They couldn't send people they didn't have, money they weren't appropriated, or contracting changes that needed legislative fixes.

Q: Since AID has been turned into a contracting agency rather than an implementing agency, then you're quite dependent on the caliber and the quality of those contractors. Aren't you?

NEUMANN: You're very dependent on the contractors. Plus I think you have two additional problems. One is that a contractor is not going to tell you that you've hired them to do the wrong thing. Particularly in an insurgency in a fast moving situation this is a big problem. A contractor does what you hired them to do. If they walk in and tell their supervisors that they're wasting the money because they're doing the wrong thing they're unlikely to be thanked for that information nor is it in their interest to say this. So you have an information flow and an analytical problem understanding where programs need to be adapted. This makes you slow to realize if a project is badly conceived because it's not the contractor's function to tell you that the project is badly conceived; it's the contractor's function to manage the project. The second thing that derives from the slow information flow is that you end up with a slow reaction cycle for the kind of work you're doing in a counterinsurgency. When you're in a normal developmental situation, you can have a 20-year plan. But when you jump into a place like Afghanistan that you weren't planning to go to in the first place and you find yourself in a war, you're learning as you go. You've got to be a learning organization. You can't fault people for not having planned for everything, because they were given no time to plan. They couldn't say, "Well, we're going to plan and we'll be back in a couple years and you folks just stay miserable until we get here." So you jump in here, you start doing things. Then as you learn more you realize that something's not working right or it doesn't meet the goals you're seeking, and then you need to reorient, reorganize. And the contractor mechanism makes you very, very slow to have that kind of learning, and then it makes it very slow to act on the learning once you've got it.

Q: One of the things that comes out of this process in Afghanistan, one of the mechanisms that was used was the PRT. Do you recall where that idea came from and how they were organized?

NEUMANN: Well, they began before I got there. I think it was an idea of my predecessors, Ambassador Khalilzad and General Barno. I don't know which one of them sparked it first. The first one I believe was in Ghardez. The PRTs were particularly useful in Afghanistan in the early days because there was no Afghan government for the provinces. It had been completely destroyed by years of war. This was completely differet from the situation in Iraq. You couldn't realistically talk about working with a host government just because you had a governor. He had no staff, no budget no mechanisms to do anything. So the PRT was a partial solution. It had all kinds of problems, but it's difficult to see what we could have done without the PRT. You needed a mechanism to work on the government issues in the provinces and to work on those interactions in the provinces that were needed between the military, civilians and Afghan authorities. That's what sparked the idea and then it was picked up by NATO. I think at the time I left we had 13 U.S. PRT's and 11 NATO PRT's. We had State and AID officers posted in all but two PRT's. We had all kinds of troubles. We were only one State and one AID officer deep in each one, as I've said, and when we had an officer

whot turned out to be inadequate or got sick or had to curtail for some reason, we would go months with vacancies before we could re-staff the job, because we had no backup. We had all kinds of problems in a variety of ways, in money, in staffing, in numbers, in security. We certainly made mistakes but it's difficult to say that you could have done better without having them.

Q: Because one of the things that was important for the PRT to begin with was security. So many of them were imbedded in with major military units.

NEUMANN: Actually, that was more in Iraq than Afghanistan. Almost none of the Afghan PRT's were imbedded with military units. Later on some became imbedded but that was more district support teams than the PRTs themselves. In Iraq, you had a lot of imbedded PRT's, but not in Afghanistan. Also, PRT's themselves had no real security function. They were on the order of 80 to 100 people, with a few civilians, and a small military -- civilian team. But the military part of a PRT was entirely a protective force for the PRT. It could fight if it got attacked, but it had no real security function in terms of securing the surrounding area. That had to come from neighboring military maneuver units. The PRT was essentially a self-protected way of dealing with governance, training, and other functions. But it was not primarily a security function.

Q: And all these other functions, particularly as they would impact on AID programs, you'd have one AID guy in the PRT, but he's not out traveling around, he's signing contracts.

NEUMANN: He may be traveling. The AID people in a PRT could travel and often did travel. They were dependent on the military to do so, but they certainly got out. There was a problem with utilizing their eyes and ears as fully as we needed to, in two respects. One was to use them to oversea so-called national level programs. These were programs that were not specific to the province, although they might be operating in that province, but operated in a variety of provinces. They were run from Kabul. And we constantly had information flow problems between AID Kabul and the AID people in the PRT's. The AID Mission Director in Kabul was very aware of this and was sensitive to it and trying to fix it but it never worked well. But the other problem is that the AID Officer, like the State Officer in a PRT would be dependent on the Military for protection when moving. I never knew a PRT, even in the most benign parts of Afghanistan, that had the facility to mount more than three missions a day outside the perimeter. So you always had a zero sum contest going on for what had priority in the many things the PRT could be doing. The AID/State officers would have to compete over that priority to get the assets to move around to see anything. In some places it worked much better and in some places worse. A lot of that would be a function of the command of the PRT, the relationship between the civilians and the military, and sometimes just the security situation itself. But we certainly had AID officers out there. Civilians took real risks to get out and do their jobs. We had a very courageous woman in Kandahar who was out constantly. She was a real expert on the tribes' in her area, on politics and on development. She was dependent on the Canadian military to move her around because the PRT was Canadian. After a Canadian diplomat was killed in a roadside bombing the Canadians stopped all civilian

moves, so she then moved with US Special Forces. She was twice in convoys that hit roadside bombs. In one case she sat by the side of the road after one of these with a military colleague who was dying. And she still went back to work. We also put AID officers, first one and then I think eventually two, out with the Special Forces and that worked very well as an experiment. The Special Forces teams (ODA) really did have an understanding, in some cases a better understanding than the conventional military, of the interaction between development and stabilization. They really wanted the expertise of an AID person. We did this as an experiment. It was difficult to find an AID Officer who was happy traveling around the Special Forces ODAs, sometimes they got ambushed. But we found people with those qualifications and the program worked so well that we made it permanent.

Q: One of the things that you're talking about when you're talking about the PRT's and the embassy staffing is it uses large components of other U.S. agencies, you know, DEA and whatnot. How difficult was it to get the other agencies to come up with the manpower and budget?

NEUMANN: It was like pulling teeth out of a rooster.

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: It was excruciatingly difficult. I think later on it worked a lot better. I think it got more of Washington's influence later on. But we didn't have too many different agencies in the PRT's. We had more agencies in Kabul. But to give you some examples, we had very few people from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Agriculture at that point had no budget of its own to send people and they had a political issue as well. People don't want the livestock agent missing for a year from their region because the persons in Afghanistan. Now, the Department of Agriculture can bridge that by hiring recently retired people either to cover jobs in the US where they've taken somebody out or to go to Afghanistan. But they had no budget for that. We had to pay for that, with a so called, "pass through" from our AID budget, The result was that we didn't get, I think, over a dozen U.S. Department of Agriculture people in my time. We were down to seven when I left. There are now, the last time I was in Afghanistan a few months ago, 60 USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) people working in Afghanistan. That shows you the difference of scale. We were trying to get people from Homeland Security to help with the border and customs task force. I had watched some very good people from Homeland Security in Iraq and I wanted to replicate their help in Kabul. In theory we had agreement, but we couldn't get the people out there with any kind of speed. I don't know exactly what the problem was, but we just couldn't get them out. The FBI was much better. They had over 40 people there. Most of them were not in the PRT's. Most of them were actually working with the military on bomb detection and protection. Treasury I think had one person in the embassy and funded one or two advisors in the finance ministry. Bob Kimmitt, the Deputy Secretary of Treasury for most of the time I was there, was very enthusiastic about the program. But that's just all the people they had for that. So Afghanistan was very much a sideshow in terms of personnel and resources.

Q: On the security side, one of the parallels between Iraq and Afghanistan was the use of private security companies, such as Blackwater. How did that work out?

NEUMANN: From my point of view, it worked out very well. First I think I had DynCorp. Then I had Blackwater most of the time I was there for my personal security detachment. The people I had were mature, they were responsible, we slowed the convoys down, we weren't dashing around the streets running Afghan drivers off the streets. We didn't have any particular incidents.

Q: That was the basic PR (public relations) problem, wasn't it?

NEUMANN: Yeah.

Q: That the coalition convoy went down the road, everyone else had to get off.

NEUMANN: It was a huge problem, but it was a military problem as well as a civilian one. I think one has to understand that there have probably been at least as many killings of innocent civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan by the military as there have been by private contractors. In fact, there was a regular kind of pattern you could see with the military, and not just American Military, but everybody's military, that new units would come in, they'd be more jumpy, you'd get more incidents. Then as the unit got more experienced the incidents would go down and then the cycle would repeat with the next unit. At one point, when new British units came into Kandahar they had shot up the convoy of the area station chief and one of the Afghan generals. Fortunately, no one got killed in either incident. But it was a measure of how jumpy they were. You had plenty of those cases in Iraq and you had cases with the contractors. So there were questions of experience and training and discipline. There were big problems in these things. But it was not the case that there is nearly as clear a difference between civilians and military as I believe the popular perception thinks. There was another problem with private contractors, one of several, that as both wars went on the need for people got larger and larger. The private security contractors rapidly ran out of the pool of ex-military with a lot of experience in security and protective work. So they were having to bring on people who maybe had been in the military or a police force, but had no particular experience of this kind of security work and they had to train them. Some companies did better at that than others. Another problem was that the practice of using civilian contractors got out ahead of the development of international and US domestic law, and that began to raise questions about legal authority. You had violations of human rights and killings and jurisdiction wasn't clear. The development of law just moved more slowly and didn't catch up with practice for some time.

Q: And that was one of the things President Karzai's been concerned about publicly, in the last few years anyway, I don't know if it was time that you were there, is these private security companies.

NEUMANN: He's been very concerned about it. He began to be a little concerned about it when I was there. It became a much larger concern later after my time. It not only

involved the foreign security companies. It involved the Afghan security companies as well and the use of Afghan personnel. While the embassies were using primarily foreigners, like Blackwater for the security of our diplomats, the AID contractors and the military contractors, hauling military supplies for example, were heavily reliant on Afghan security personnel. Sometime this meant private Afghan security personnel hired by a foreign security company where you had a little bit of foreign oversight, or in many cases purely Afghan companies. This was also a big concern to President Karzai. It was one to which we didn't adequately respond to for a very long time, which caused the problem to get a lot worse.

Q: Let's see. Weaving in and out of the book from time to time, Afghanistan gets a number of visitors. And you talked about a visit by the Vice President at one time who didn't seem to be interested in what was going on.

NEUMANN: By the Vice President or by Rumsfeld?

Q: Oh, maybe it was Rumsfeld.

NEUMANN: Yes, I found Rumsfeld to be sort of uninterested in any debate of his conclusions. I had the impression of somebody who had made up his mind, was shopping for the details to support things that he thought he knew, but was simply not interested in a broader discussion. But that was not true of Cheney. I actually found Cheney quite supportive.

Q: And you had a lot of sort of congressional visitors.

NEUMANN: There were plenty of those. Not nearly as many as they had in Iraq, but we certainly had our share, and we had state governors as well.

Q: Now, was that part of a State Department program to try to expose the problem to as many people as possible?

NEUMANN: With the governors it was part of a military program. Every state had national guard troops that were mobilized and the governors wanted to see them.

Q: Ah.

NEUMANN: Having the governors come out and see their own troops was an excellent way of getting the story popularized at the State level. Congress comes on its own. We had some fairly large delegations. That was generally useful. In my period I took these visits as an opportunity to educate people. We always made sure we had a pretty intensive briefing at the embassy trying to give them a real understanding of what we were doing and why we were doing it and where we were going. The tension was often that the congressional visitors would want to come in quickly, have one call on President Karzai, and go shake hands with troops and have their pictures taken and get back on the flight. Not all of them. Some of them were very serious and very well informed. Some of

them were not. But they were generally fairly manageable and while they put a load on the embassy, I thought that it was an important part of our mission to educate them as they came through.

Q: One of the things that you mentioned was we were able to build and inaugurate a new embassy in Kabul. And the President came out to do the ceremony. What was that structure like? Were there any interesting stores in its development?

NEUMANN: Well, it was designed before I got there. I think there are several different features. One of course that tickled me was that the old embassy, which is now an annex, but it's right next door to the new chancellery, was inaugurated by my father who cut the ribbon in 1967 actually when I was there. And of course I cut the ribbon on the new embassy, so you have father-son plaques on the embassies. The new embassy had its problems. Overall it's a good building, but it had strange things. They had strange socket plugs that didn't fit anybody's plugs so they had to spend in special ones. When they opened the apartment building, it had all these special plugs. Several hundred table lamps couldn't be plugged in. The problem was much worse in the chancellery because you couldn't plug in any of the servers until they got the new converter plugs out.

Q: Now is that just too many cooks in the designing?

NEUMANN: I have no idea why it happened. Some of it was a little lack of attention. We had terrible problems for several weeks getting the classified communications going in the new building, and I kept being told that the problems were all technical and I couldn't expect to do anything by intervention. Finally on one Sunday I was told that we were again offline on classified and that there was one junior technician who would report into the State Department in 45 minutes, maybe. And I just thought this can't be the only issue. I called up the relevant Assistant Secretary at 8:30 on Sunday morning in Washington. I was very calm, I didn't yell or anything. But, I said "We've been going through this for weeks and we're in the middle of a war and we don't have communications. Will you please look if there's anything else that can be done?" And all of a sudden things started popping and people were going to work on Sunday, and within about 24 hours the problem had been solved. At which point of course I wondered to myself why I hadn't intervened earlier. So we had those kind of problems. And then of course we had the whole issue of persuading The White House when President Bush came out to actually do the ribbon cutting ceremony because initially The White House didn't want to do that. They wanted to do a more normal visit. But I was able to persuade National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley that this was an important symbolic message to the Afghans of our intent to stay in Afghanistan and that it would be very good optics.

Q: And you were also saying in that section that even with these new facilities and people moving from containers to apartments that your staffing exceeding your capabilities.

NEUMANN: Yes, it wasn't terribly bad at that point. It got much worse in 2009, '10, when they did the civilian surge. Then they were back to doubling up people in apartments and adding more containers, going into second decks on the containers and

things like that. We just didn't have enough apartments for everybody, but we divided them up by agency proportional to the number of people the agency had on the ground. Then it was up to the agency to determine who got a container versus who got an apartment so at least it wasn't going to be an issue that State was discriminating against AID or something like that.

Q: In your final chapter in your book you talk about wrap-up and that's, you know, the 10 lessons to learn from all this. And the epilogue is important of how we want to put things together. What do you see is the future of Afghanistan right at the moment?

NEUMANN: That's a large question.

Q: (laughs)

NEUMANN: An awful lot has happened since I wrote that book. That was 2008 when I finished the manuscript, 2009 when it came out, by which point of course it wasn't "The Other War" anymore, it was *the war*. We've now gone through a whole series of changes with President Obama. I've been back. I was back in 2010, 2011, back again last month. We've gone in some competing directions. We've added troops, we've added personnel, we've added money. At the same time we've put on artificially short deadlines and therefore telegraphed a very mixed message. Where we are right now as we speak in 2012 is that we're going to diminish greatly the troops. We're still going to have troops on the ground, but we don't know how many after 2014. We are changing the vision. The vision we conveyed in 2009 was that we would stabilize large parts of Afghanistan and then hand those off to the Afghans to hold. The realty of 2012 is that we're handing off an ongoing war. That's a very different mission from the President characterized the mission when he spoke in 2009. And the situation is very different in different parts of Afghanistan. There are some areas, like Helmand province that are pretty good but it's big security bubble, like the fringes of the Roman Empire with the barbarians all around.

Q: (chuckles)

NEUMANN: Each area is different. Kandahar has some districts which are very improved in their security, and others that we've been fighting in since 2005 and that we're still fighting in. We're going to have a lot less offensive in the east than I thought about a year ago because of the accelerated pace of troop withdrawal. We have kept changing our policies and changing our signals every year for the last three years, which gives a very confused message to the Afghans. Their government is unstable, it's weak. It's very difficult to know what will happen, partly because it's difficult to know how much we're going to keep in the country and how well our financial support will hold up. That very uncertainty of course leads Afghans to worse case things and therefore take on survival mechanisms like tightening networks of people who will fight with you, which tends to tighten the networks of the tribal corrupt warlords rather than open up the political system. So there are certain negative consequences of our timelines that push against improvements in governance. I do not believe that Afghanistan is simply going to fall apart after 2014. I think he'll have a lot of change, he'll have a lot of

accommodations but they will be different in different parts of the country. In some areas that accommodation would be basically criminals and insurgents taking over under a facade of government officials staying in their offices. In other areas that accommodation may be saying if you don't come over here, I won't go over there. In that case you will have pockets that are administered by the government that will hold, possibly for a long time and that may allow change and more development to happen. It's going to be very messy and very complex and it's going to go on for a long time.

Q: What -- going back to your book, what would you say remains a salient point that's still true and what would you say is not as salient a point as the period you were talking about?

NEUMANN: The overriding point that I believe remains true is that if we abandon Afghanistan we will pay for it very severely in our national interest, in our national security. I looked back a few months ago at most of the points I made at the end of the book and I think they hold up well. Most of the programmatic points have changed over time. But some of the big issues that we had not managed to make work then are still very true today. Our tours are too short. I'm talking about leadership levels, not everybody. We constantly make it difficult to have a learning organization because we unlearn as we change people too rapidly. And we are never going to do well in this kind of mission until we're prepared to have a far larger number of both the senior military and senior civilians stay for longer periods of time. That problem has not changed and our learning curve has not improved. We know how to throw money into things, but our processes for getting it out there are not much better. We still have all kinds of problems with contractors. And frankly, the military has huge problems with contractors too. They just haven't been as well documented as civilian ones. There are areas certainly where we have learned. I think one of the problems is we don't have a lot of capacity for hanging on to what we learn, so that we're always relearning, we're always changing our programs. When you're constantly changing your programs, you create nothing that encourages the locals to buy in and support any given program because they assume it's going to be changed again by the next crowd. There's a lot more literature on stabilization now than there was in my day in Afghanistan. But too few of those lessons have really been implemented in a way that gives you confidence we'll do better on other occasions.

Q: And let's see. Now, you retired in 2007. What did that feel like after this long and very successful career?

NEUMANN: Well, I decided that I had it about as good as I was going to have it in Afghanistan. Despite all the issues of being in a war and being separated from my wife, it was a great experience to run an embassy that large, to have those kinds of resources, to have the power of management, the capabilities that I had, as much as I wanted more to be effective. And I thought this is as good as it's going to get and I don't really want to go back to Washington and write papers to tell other people what they ought to think or go to another embassy that may seem kind of humdrum after Kabul. So I wanted to leave at a high point, go on with life and do something else. Of course, when you leave at a

high point that means that emotionally you're not really ready to leave. You're having a really good time, so there's some adjustment that you go through. I've gone through that as everybody does when they retire. But intellectually I think it was the right decision. Secretary Rice asked me if I would come back to Washington and I politely declined. She was very nice to me, she asked if I'd like something else in the field. And I declined again. But it was for the reasons that I just said. The State Department asked me to make a last tour in part of Central Asia and in Pakistan and India to talk about Afghanistan before I retired from the service, which I did. And as you know, I've continued to be involved in the subject since then with lectures, writing and return trips to Afghanistan.

Q: Pakistan is quite an enigma to most people I think. And you mention in the book struggling with things happening back across the border and whatnot. Where do you think Pakistan is going?

NEUMANN: I wish I knew the answer to that question, because it is not a failed state yet, but it is a state with enormous problems. We have a real interest in Pakistan not falling apart. We cannot afford to have Pakistan as our enemy since it's a state that involves 55, 60 million people or more with nuclear weapons. And at the same time, we cannot really have a friendship with a state that is protecting people that are attacking Afghanistan when we're at war. So we have a very complex relationship. By the same token, we've become extraordinarily unpopular with Pakistan. America's very much disliked by the Pakistani public, with a popularity of only 9 percent, This adds further pressure on Pakistani leaders even when they want to cooperate. So it's a very, very complicated subject and it's probably one that requires a complex diplomacy that uses both pressure and reward and uses them constantly and doesn't go back and forth treating them as alternatives where you do only one or only the other. You have to understand that you're going to be doing both all the time and doing them quietly. We have a lot of trouble with our public approach, we tend to get our mouth out ahead of our actions. Pride is terribly important for the Pakistanis. That is why they are so adamant that we apologize publicly for the recent air attack that killed some 24 of their soldiers. We don't want to do that because it wasn't our fault, or at least there was fault on both sides. But I think, personally, I would rather give a complete apology in public and then in private say by the way, you know, it's going to happen again if you keep messing around. But we seem to have a difficult time carrying out that kind of dual diplomacy and it's very difficult to do so with a democracy that is as open and turbulent as ours is. We don't tend to have any secrets for very long.

Q: Now, in retirement you've become the President of the American Academy of Diplomacy.

NEUMANN: That's true.

Q: How did you get that job?

NEUMANN: I didn't have any idea what I wanted to do when I left Afghanistan. In fact, I had decided that I would not look for a job until after I left. I wanted to be able to focus

on the work in Afghanistan right up until I left. I didn't want to be sending out resumes late at night or thinking that I had to leave at any particular point in order to get somewhere else. I was also determined that I was going to take some time off. During the summer after I retired I was contacted by various old colleagues, Ambassador Sam Lewis, some others who asked me if I would look at the Academy of Diplomacy as a possible job. I did and it seemed to be a good fit and that's where I ended up.

Q: Now, tell us about the academy, how big is it, what does it do?

NEUMANN: Well, the academy's an odd organization. It's been around for 29 years now as we speak. It was started by Kissinger, and David Newsome and several other distinguished career diplomats as well. It is a unique organization. It's a combination of an honor society, a think tank, and a lobbying organization. An honor society because it is deliberately small and elitist. Members elect new members. The basic criteria is two ambassadorial appointments or similar kinds of senior diplomatic assignments. It includes not just career diplomats, but some former AID, CIA, and other people. The organization as we speak is about 220 members. Again, as I said, very, very small. It's an organization of heavyweights essentially. Its purpose is strengthening American diplomacy. It's focused primarily on the organization of diplomacy but not on substantive policy. We have focused very heavily on proper sizing of the State Department, the largest study of 2008 was *A Foreign Affairs Budget of the Future*. At the time we've found that there has been no comparable study in the proceeding 30 or 40 years. All studies of the State Department were studies of function and organizations, but none asked what resources were needed to do these things. We asked that question in a great deal of detail and the report turned out to be fairly influential. We've done another report on diplomatic education and training for professional diplomacy. We've also done work on teaching the realities of diplomacy and have put a good deal of material on our web iste about that issue. We've been heavily oriented to getting people out of Washington and educating Americans on what diplomacy is all about. So that's the sort of think tank equivalent piece. But then where a think tank or a university would have concluded a project like the staffing society when they had finished the paper, for us that was a jumping off point. We went to work briefing the McCain and Obama campaigns, talking to people in the Congress, following up with the administration after the Obama administration had been elected, and we continue talking to people in the United States broadly about proper staffing of the diplomatic service, including AID. So in that sense we are a quasi-lobbying organization. We're not a pure lobbying organization because we're a charitable organization so we're educating. But clearly we're educating for a purpose.

Q: I can imagine that you'd do a lot of traveling around the country then to carry those messages.

NEUMANN: I do, and so do a lot of others. But we're a small organization and people are busy. But we've probably done 10, 12 speeches a year in various places on the staffing issues. And then we do a lot of meetings with the Congress. We work closely with AFSA. We're now trying to work more actively with the U.S. Global Leadership

Committee as well to be a force multiplier with them in working on the State/AID budget.

Q: Well Ambassador, you had a very distinguished career and I am enormously thankful that you've allowed us this time. Thank you very much.

NEUMANN: Well, it was a great ride. I've enjoyed all of it. It was good to have worked together with you in the past and good to work together on this.

Q: Excellent. Thank you very much.

NEUMANN: My pleasure, Dave.

End of interview