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

AMBASSADOR DAVID G. NEWTON

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: All right today is the 1st of November, 2005, All Saints Day. I guess it is.

NEWTON: Yes, All Saints Day it is.

Q: This is an interview with David G. Newton, N-E-W-T-O-N. What does the G stand for?

NEWTON: George.

Q: And you go by Dave or David or?

NEWTON: David.

Q: David.

NEWTON: Yes.

Q: This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I'm Charles Stewart Kennedy. David, when and where were you born?

NEWTON: I was born in Boston, Massachusetts, 13th of November, 1935.

Q: Okay, so you're moving up to your seventieth birthday.

NEWTON: Yes, just in a couple of weeks. Big event.

Q: Okay, well, now, tell me something about your family. Let's take your father's side first, and then we'll do your mother's side.

NEWTON: They both came from reasonably well to do Boston Irish families. My father was a step-son, but his father, his step-father, was in the hotel business. He ran and partly owned the first major hotel in New York, the Prince George. So my father spent a good bit of time in New York although he was, he was born in Boston. He was fairly adventuresome. He went off in 1917, joined the Royal Flying Corps but flunked the physical at the end after surviving the training. He went off and joined the Navy, and he ended up eventually in the hotel business. He wanted to become a stock broker, but had the misfortune to land such a job just before he married my mother on September 25, 1929. During his honeymoon the market and his new job crashed. Then during World War Two, the hotel he managed was bought out from under him and he went to work for Pratt and Whitney, feeding war workers.. He continued after the war in the hotel business, but for health reasons he later went to work for the City of Boston. My father was a great reader, which certainly influenced me to haunt the Boston Public Library as a kid.

Q: Well, did your father go to college?

NEWTON: No, he didn't because he was a step-son. His mother was a widow with two children who married a widower with one child. Only their two common sons were able to attend college (Yale and Amherst) and then Harvard Business School. My father was relegated to the hotel business.

Q: Did you father ever mention being in the Boston area about the Boston Irish and the, sort of the Brahmin establishment in Boston?

NEWTON: Oh yes, everybody in Boston, everybody knew it was an ethnic city, and there was a pecking order. The Brahmins came first, the Boston Irish came second, the Italians came third, etc.. It was very well organized.

Q: Yeah, I went to Boston University for a year to get my master's and with a name Kennedy, actually it's a Scottish Kennedy, but people immediately put me into a certain category, which I didn't belong. I wasn't even Catholic. But—

Q: How about on your mother's side?

NEWTON: Yes, my mother came from a pretty well-to-do family. Her father was in the first class at Boston College, and she worked before becoming engaged, but then like

most women of that age, when she became engaged to my father, she stopped. My father had been married once before, and his wife had died during the influenza epidemic. My mother then stayed home; they got married and for the rest of her life took care of her family.

Q: Now was she, had she gone to college?

NEWTON: No, she didn't. Neither one had gone to college. Her family was, I guess the person she remembered fondly was her father's first cousin Eddie Moore, who was the close associate of Ambassador Joseph Kennedy. She remembered how he would come back to the family and have all of these fantastic descriptions of life in London and things like that. My parents were a very traditional, very nice couple, happily married for 46 years..

Q: Well, now did your, how Catholic was your, I assume your family was Catholic or not?

NEWTON: Yes. I'm not Catholic anymore but my family was very much Catholic. My mother, like in most families, was more devout than my father.

Q: Did where did you grow up?

NEWTON: I grew up mostly in the Back Bay section. When I was born, my father was the manager of the Miles Standish Hotel in Kenmore Square, which is now a very large dormitory for Boston University. We lived in Boston all the time with the exception of two and a half years during the war. We lived in Connecticut, in Bristol and in Hartford.

Q: Did you have a close, you say your mother had a, did she, do you have brothers, sisters?

NEWTON: Yes, I have a sister who is three years older. She and her family have lived in Caracas, Venezuela since she married in 1958.

Q: Well, when you grew up as a kid in Boston, were you living, was it, I take it you were a city kid.

NEWTON: Yes, very much so.

Q: Did you live in a hotel more or less, an apartment, or a house?

NEWTON: Well, for seven years in a hotel, the rest of the time in apartments in various places, Newbury Street especially and Commonwealth Avenue.

Q: How did you, what was it like being a kid? Did you get out and play in the, I won't say in the streets but on the sidewalks or did you find a place to go or were you constrained or what?

NEWTON: No, I mean I suppose it doesn't seem constraining because it's what you're used to. I went to school in Brookline, to a Catholic school. I think the one thing about growing up downtown and so forth is I wandered around a lot on my own. I was pretty much a bookworm as well. I developed feelings that stayed with me for my life. Number one, people are pretty much the same no matter what they look like or where they come from. Secondly, almost everyone has something that you can learn. You just have to find out what special knowledge that person has. So I was used to diversity. Boston was a diverse place even though it was carefully segregated ethnically.

Q: Well, people who were older knew about it, but kids didn't particularly.

NEWTON: True.

Q: What about, you say you were a reader. Did you go to the BPL and—

NEWTON: Especially in my sub-teenage years, we used to go off once a week and my father and I and usually would come home with five or six books a week to read. I wasn't too selective! I'm a fast reader and I always enjoyed reading.

Q: What, can you think of any types of books when you first got into books that you were particularly interested in?

NEWTON: Well, I think particularly nonfiction, history. I remember when I was, I supposed I was, I don't know, twelve or something, maybe thirteen, I don't remember. I read the entire history of the U.S. Naval operations in World War II by Samuel Eliot Morrison.

Q: Oh yeah by Morison.

NEWTON: Samuel Eliot Morison. I read I think eighteen volumes but I read—

Q: I have it at home.

NEWTON: Yeah, history, military history, and anything about the world.

Q: Did the world intrude much when you were youngish, a young kid?

NEWTON: Well, I was interested. Maybe it was because I read a lot. I always remember my sister and I, our father took us to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston to see the Egyptology collection. That was my first interest in the Middle East. My other great love as a kid was baseball, since Boston then had two teams, the Red Sox and the Braves. I used the BPL to research addresses and amassed a major collection of old-timers' autographs.

Q: Oh did, you went to what school in Boston, your first school?

NEWTON: I went to a Catholic school that doesn't exist anymore called Saint Aidan's in Brookline. Except for two and a half years in Connecticut, I went through there right up to grade twelve.

Q: Who ran it?

NEWTON: It was run by nuns, Sisters of Saint Joseph.

Q: How did you find, one hears these stories about nuns and all.

NEWTON: My sister and I went there because my parents when they were first married lived in the area. It's the area within a few blocks of the Kennedy birthplace in Brookline. The school was a very nice school in its salad days which is a little bit before I went there. It had its own drill team. When they were very small, the Kennedy kids went to this school. Then John Kennedy went across the street to a private school called the Dexter School. Neither school exists anymore. It's all apartments.

Q: Well, did, how did you find the nuns, the teaching there?

NEWTON: It was a very traditional education. The nuns were very dedicated, and they gave us I think a very good education.

Q: Did you feel, did you come under the nun discipline and all? I mean when, it's renowned in a way or was this particularly onerous or not?

NEWTON: No, it wasn't particularly onerous. It was easier for me, I wasn't a kid likely to get in trouble and I always got very good grades. So I was always in good graces I guess with the nuns.

Q: Did any, while you were in going up to the twelfth grade, any particular types of courses suited you more than others?

NEWTON: There were no electives in a very small school. My great interest was history and anthropology. But of course at that level it would've been history. I was much more oriented even then towards the social sciences than the natural sciences.

Q: I would suspect that if being an interest in history, an awful lot was self-learned, wasn't it?

NEWTON: Oh yes. It was. I think I always said I learned as much from the Boston Public Library than I did from Harvard.

Q: Oh yeah. Well, I mean, this is, if you're interested in history, no course is going to cover everything that you'd be interested in. So you'd start reading and picking it up.

NEWTON: One of the great advantages of the BPL was it really looked like a temple of learning.

Q: It did.

NEWTON: I mean you go in there and the magnificent staircases, the murals of Puvis de Chavannes, and you go in there and you feel this is almost sort of almost, this is a really high-minded enterprise with these beautiful rooms. Upstairs the children's room was really beautiful. So it was really a pleasure to go there.

Q: I went into the basement one time, and that was quite a different matter. I mean, all these, I mean you know colonial newspapers all bundled up and crumpling, you know. Yeah, hadn't gotten around to sorting it out.

NEWTON: Yeah, they really—

Q: They gave me a flashlight.

NEWTON: I was there recently and its, the only part that's used as a library now in that building are the stacks and the main reading room. The open shelf department has moved to the new building next door.

Q: Well, did going to a Catholic school, did you find that your sort of circle of friends, I mean was there much diversity in that or was it all boys or was it mainly Irish or Italian Catholics?

NEWTON: Well, being a very small school and a high school and no sports facilities, there were twice as many girls as boys. It was overwhelmingly Boston Irish. We had six boys in my graduating class, five were Irish and one was Italian. It was a very nice school, and it didn't survive much longer after that because the neighborhood had changed completely and no longer supported a parish school. It had become largely a Jewish professional neighborhood. It was only because it was a shortage of spaces in Catholic high schools in West Roxbury that they sent all these kids from West Roxbury down every day.

Q: Well, while you were there, were you pointed towards anything?

NEWTON: Well, I was pointed towards, again I was interested in history and anthropology especially and archaeology. I guess and it's starting maybe with this trip to the Museum of Fine Arts. I became interested in the Ancient Near East at that point, whether it was history or archaeology.

Q: Did, so did history intrude at all? The Cold War, the Korean War or that sort of McCarthyism.

NEWTON: Well, yes a bit. I graduated from high school in '53. So McCarthyism hadn't peaked. The Korean War was on. Yes, it did. But reading the news every day and listening to the news, yeah, it certainly did. But I can't say that it intruded much into my student life.

Q: What about, where did your family fall politically?

NEWTON: My family I think well, my mother maybe for obvious reasons just adored John Kennedy. [chuckling] They were certainly Democrats. But they were probably like in the old days in Massachusetts, you still have the so-called bread and butter liberals, especially liberal on economic issues but more conservative on social issues.

Q: Did you pick up anything on what's the name, the Purple Shamrock?

NEWTON: Oh yeah. James Michael Curley.

Q: Yeah. Did he come across your radar at all or—

NEWTON: Yeah, he was towards the end of his career then. I remember my father taking me I think to Fenway Park to see a baseball game of this famous amateur team, but it also included a speech by James Michael Curley, the golden orator. I remember because the, one of the girls in my class in high school was the niece of John Heinz, who was the mayor who succeeded Curley and was mayor for some time.

Q: Did, what did you do for fun in high school?

NEWTON: For fun well, it was pretty mild by today's standards I think. Only one of my friends had a car. We'd go to the typical thing, go to mixers on Friday night, and then maybe you'd have a date on Saturday night. That was on weekends. Otherwise, otherwise not very much. I had friends in the downtown area who were separate. We'd go off and play baseball or something like that. Nothing spectacular.

Q: You didn't have summer jobs or after school jobs?

NEWTON: Yeah, that's actually worked out I think well for me in a way when I was, at the end of my sophomore year, or at, let's see was it during my sophomore year. No, it must've been junior year I started delivering groceries for the local store, and my parents weren't too happy with that. But I earned ten bucks a week. It was okay. But then at the end of my junior year, the summer, I went to work for a very expensive, very exclusive men's clothing store in Boston called Scott and Company down on Washington Street and started out delivering packages. I worked for them all the way through college, afternoons and on Saturdays, and then in the summer worked full-time, for which I got my clothes for half price. So I was pretty well dressed. But the main thing was then after a while I ended up as a part-time salesman and dealing with these very successful people I think certainly taught me a lot about how to present myself.

Q: Absolutely.

NEWTON: And how to deal with people.

Q: Well, when you were getting out of high school in '53, what were you pointed towards or—

NEWTON: Well, I was pointed just towards college. I didn't at that point think of a definite profession. History and anthropology and archaeology were the things that interested me. I knew that I wanted to major in anthropology and archaeology. I also knew, expected, that after college I'd go into the military for a couple of years because that was common, and I hadn't really thought that much beyond that.

Q: Where did you go to college?

NEWTON: I went to Harvard as an undergraduate.

Q: Was this a problem because of, have a problem getting in or not or—

NEWTON: No. I had very good grades, and I came from a very small school so I was the only applicant there. But of course I was a commuter in those days, Harvard didn't take very good care, I would have to say, of commuters. In anthropology we had no tutorial, and my resident advisor pretty much nothing; all he ever I did was sign my study card. So I did okay in college. I wasn't an outstanding student. I was also in the Army ROTC. So that was the thing immediately in my future.

Q: What about in your courses, any professors or courses that stand out?

NEWTON: Well, we had some excellent professors in the anthropology department, Clyde Kluckhohn in social anthropology. That's the main one that I remember. And I took a couple of courses in American literature from Arthur Darby Nock who was a famous character. Also in the ROTC part of it they were modifying the program to make it more academic. So in my last year I think it was in the spring term of my last year, instead of an ROTC course for ROTC credit, I took of course government and defense given by Sam Huntington who's still around of course.

Q: Yeah. Well, did, was the Harvard ROTC, did that have a branch, was it a branch of the service?

NEWTON: For the first three years it was branch artillery as we were reminded, President Lowell in a burst of patriotism insisted on its establishment in World War one but said that it had to be artillery because that was the only proper branch for gentlemen. But then there was a modification of the program, branches were abolished and in my senior year we became branch general, but I then signed up for the artillery because I'd already had three year's training.

Q: Did you find there was much activism at Harvard at the time or were there lots of student politics or people trying their wings out?

NEWTON: No, no. This period,'53 to '57 was pretty genteel. The Korean War was just ending. It was the Eisenhower era. Civil rights, people thought should be a matter for the courts. There wasn't a whole lot of activism. No. I can recall at graduation one of the speeches given in my graduation was titled "In Defense of the Ivory Tower."

Q: Yeah, it's a little hard to think of that term now these days.

NEWTON: That's before deconstructionism

Q: Well, Harvard in your day was all male.

NEWTON: It was officially but Radcliffe was next door, and Radcliffe was for all purposes except administration was part of Harvard, because we took courses together. But of course the Harvard undergraduate student body was three or four times as large as Radcliffe.

Q: Did you feel being a day student, did this sort of remove you from Harvard life, classes and—

NEWTON: Yeah, it certainly did. Harvard is doing much better now, but it made really very little effort in those days. The one thing I was able to do, the program, the house which was the non-resident house, Dudley, had a program my last year in which I lived in the college. They got five double rooms on the top of Apley Court, one of the buildings close to the square. It had no boarding contract so we lived there, but we didn't really have any kind of life that you would've had in one of the resident houses.

Q: On your anthropology work, did this zero in pretty much on the Middle East or was it all over the place. I mean—

NEWTON: Well, a lot of it was theory and covered the world, but my main interest was the Middle East and speaking of professors. I couldn't go and work on digs in the summer because I was working otherwise. So the only possibility to get honors was honors in general studies, which meant instead of taking six full courses in my major I had to take eight. So in my senior year I was looking for related courses. So I took a full year's course in the medieval and modern Middle East, given by Sir Hamilton Gibbs and Richard Frye and that really turned my focus to those periods.

Q: Did you find in this period well, you were there during the '56 war in Harvard, and did Israel, was this a topic of conversation or concern?

NEWTON: No. Not as I recall not very much. The biggest topic I can remember and that was early on of course with the Army-McCarthy hearings because of I was attending the "Kremlin on the Charles" at the time. President Pusey had lived in the same boarding

house I think in Appleton, Wisconsin with Joe McCarthy and was a great foe of McCarthy.

Q: Well, did they, was there concern, I mean were you seeing any effects of McCarthyism on the university teaching or faculty at all?

NEWTON: Well, there had been some effect, but I really wasn't aware of it as an undergraduate. I mean in the previous days demands for loyalty oaths, but that's really before I went there.

Q: So there was no, it wasn't a burning issue?

NEWTON: Harvard was proud of the fact that they had stood up to McCarthy and one of the few organizations that had. But it was kind of, kind of assumed that Harvard would do that anyway because I've always said that Harvard Square is at the same time the most international and the most provincial place in the world.

Q: Well, then you graduated in fifty—

NEWTON: Seven.

Q: Seven. I take it you went into the military.

NEWTON: Yeah, to my dismay when I got my orders. I was told to report to middle of May, and I had ten and a half months to kill. So I hustled down to the student employment office and did some interviews, went on some trips, and got several job offers. Because my roommate was going there, we joined Bell Telephone Company in Pennsylvania as management trainees. He was also in the Army ROTC and, but he went back and spent his career with them, but I was just looking for a job. We went of all places to Scranton, Pennsylvania.

Q: Well, I have to, how did you find Scranton?

NEWTON: Oh Scranton was a pretty unattractive place. Maybe that's not fair, but I mean it was terribly run down and there was nothing going on really. The company had done it because we were both coming from Massachusetts. So they thought they would post us as close as possible to Massachusetts so we could get home sometimes, which I did. Once a month I got home to see my parents.

Q: Well, Scranton was sort of early rust belt, wasn't it?

NEWTON: Yeah, Scranton had of course been dependent on anthracite, which is long gone. Every once in a while you'd hear about a house that had collapsed into an old mineshaft. There was this huge pile of coal, underground coal burning I think outside the city somewhere, some miles away. It's still burning. They can't put it out because it's underground.

Q: Well, then after your ten and a half months in the pleasure palaces of Scranton, went into the military.

NEWTON: Yeah, I went off, reported to duty at Fort Sill, Oklahoma for the officers basic course.

Q: That's artillery.

NEWTON: Yeah, and since I'd had three years of artillery I had an advantage so out of fifty-eight students, I came second in the class. I was working fairly hard, but not to the exclusion of everything else. I think because I placed well in the class, I got my choice. Half of us went to Europe and the other half went to Korea. So I got to go to Germany.

Q: What type, well, when you were training, what were the guns?

NEWTON: Well, the main piece was the 105 millimeter howitzer. The medium artillery was the 155 mm Howitzer.

Q: The, were they all talking about atomic artillery at that time?

NEWTON: Well, at the time when I got to Germany we still had the 280 millimeter, the atomic cannon. It had two cabs, one on each end, a very unwieldy kind of gun.

Q: I remember seeing that thing. I was in Frankfurt in '55 to '58, and once in a while you'd run across that.

NEWTON: I had a nice trip to Germany too because I was going to fly off to Boston and then would've flown via New Jersey. Suddenly I got orders to, three of us second lieutenants, we had to go to what was then Camp Hood, now Fort Hood and pick up a so called gyropacket.. In those days they trained a thousand soldiers in basic training. And when they were ready, they assigned them to a division. We had to go by train from Fort Hood to the Brooklyn Army terminal over several days with three lieutenants in charge. Then I went on one of the old troop ships the General Patch, a nice ten-day sailing. It was November, so it was a little stormy but it here was a real adventure. I'd never been outside the United States and suddenly there was Europe.

Q: You had a cabin I take it.

NEWTON: . I think we had a double cabin.

Q: I went on the General Patch down in the hole.

NEWTON: Oh you did. But that was the punishment. You'd be put in the brig if you--

Q: Well, I was an enlisted man.

NEWTON: Oh I know and you put them in the brig in the front of the ship and going up and down.

Q: Actually I enjoyed it. I volunteered as chaplain's assistant, spent the whole time playing bridge in the chaplain's office.

NEWTON: Yeah, yeah.

Q: What, where were you assigned in Germany?

NEWTON: I was assigned to the 3rd Armored Division, to what was then Combat Command B, which became second brigade with the later reorganization. It was in Gelnhausen, which is about, forty-two kilometers northeast of Frankfurt. It's on the road to Fulda, and it's sitting right astride the famous Fulda Gap, which was the traditional invasion route, which ran from Leipzig to Frankfurt. I spent two and a half years there. I extended for a third year because I was having a good time. I'd met my future wife, and , after the first year, when I spent most of my time in the field, I had more time to travel.

Q: What, sort of what was the scenario you all were working with about sitting on a Fulda Gap, I mean (_____) for an hour or two or—

NEWTON: We were "speed bumps" I suppose. Well, we were, we had the Fourteenth Armored Cavalry out front, and we were supposed to sit on the Gap and try to deal with the Guards Tank Army as they came thundering down. Fortunately that never happened because it would've been pretty bloody, I think.

Q: What, what's the background of your future wife?

NEWTON: My wife was born in the States, but her family went back to Germany unfortunately just before the war broke out, when she was a tiny baby. So she spent the war in Germany. She ended up towards the end of the war in her parent's hometown in Silesia, now part of Poland, so they had to flee to the west. She ended up in a, first in a village near Gelnhausen and then was in Gelnhausen. By that time she was out of the German "gymnasium,". Had received a degree from a language institute and was working as a trilingual translator and a language secretary. She was working as an executive secretary for an export/import firm that did most of its business with the PX.

Q: What was your impression of sort of the German populace's attitude towards American troops and all that kind of thing?

NEWTON: Well, they can, there were certainly some people who were negative for cultural reasons, but I think in general they were happy we were there. We also contributed a good bit to the economy in those days when the Germans were still fairly poor. I belonged to a German-American friendship association. It was only later that the racial trouble started in the Army with Vietnam and so forth. There were periodically

women got attacked occasionally or something, but on the whole people got along pretty well. The GIs only made ninety-five dollars a month or something as you remember. So they couldn't go—didn't go out very much.

Q: No, I mean I came in making sixty, but I think I moved to around ninety.

NEWTON: No, I mean some of the, there were bars for the GIs and so forth. Occasionally as a lieutenant you'd get stuck on the courtesy patrol and so forth. But most of the GIs stayed on this very small post and went to the EM Club or NCO club.

Q: Well, did you find, because this is capture various periods, later there's a lot of trouble in troops situation. Did you find, what were the soldiers like?

NEWTON: Well, there was a, it was really split between the RAs, the regular army soldiers, and the draftees. The standard for the regular army troops in those days weren't very high. If we'd get a draftee who had a couple years of college maybe or better he'd end up as the battery clerk. For a while I was I think for a year, yeah, for a year I was in one of the firing batteries. I was the reconnaissance and survey officer. Had two main tasks in those days. In those days there was no GPS and you had to use—

Q: That's global positioning system.

NEWTON: Yeah—

Q: You use in satellites—

NEWTON: No, no. No, no. So you had to go out and you could with maps you could find a fixed point and then you use your aiming circles, like transits and with trig tables and things like that. You'd locate where the pieces were so that you'd know where the target is on the map. So on one side you needed some fairly well educated people to do that. The other half of my platoon consisted of laying wire, and you'd get the dumbest people to lay the wire because that was grunt work. So you had a real dichotomy in this platoon. The regular Army troops were awfully good kids. In those days you had also a lot of captains who'd been officers in World War Two, got reduced to sergeants if they wanted to stay in the Army, got their commissions back and worked back up. You had officers who had seen combat and World War Two and a lot of experience who were captains. In those days it took five years to get to be a captain in the Army. So these were people of considerable substance.

Q: Did while you were there did embassy consulates, foreign service, foreign affairs, run across, did you run across these?

NEWTON: No, not really. I visited the consulate a couple of times, go to the officer's club in Frankfurt, you'd see a few people hanging around. They weren't a very inspiring bunch I will say. No. No. I didn't. I was enjoying the Army, and my good friends were all regular officers because I liked the life. I wasn't intending to stay in, but I liked the Army

and enjoyed it and was interested in it and still have a lot of respect for it. Then also my best friend became the aide to the brigadier who commanded division artillery. My closest friend became the general's aide, and through him I attracted the interest of the division artillery executive officer, who was a colonel and a Harvard graduate. He was very nice. He actually gave us an engagement party when we got engaged. But if you read, you can read about this period because one of my fellow second lieutenants, although he was in the infantry battalion, was Second Lieutenant Colin Powell. I only knew him slightly. The main distinction was first of all officers didn't generally socialize too much outside their own battalion. You tended to be with your own friends in your battalion. But secondly, and there was a big distinction, and a reasonable distinction, between regulars and reserve officers. The regulars would get to know each other. They'd go up and see the, be invited up to the house of the Combat Command commander, a full colonel, and be advised on their career and looked at carefully and so forth. There was none of that for us. And that was perfectly reasonable because most of us, the reserve officers, were not planning to stay in anyway.

Q: Well, here you're staying three years. Three years will bring you up to when?

NEWTON: That brings me up to May 1961.

Q: What were you looking at?

NEWTON: Well, at that point I was looking, what do I want to do after the Army, and I became interested in the Foreign Service, because it seemed to me, and I think that's true that it had, seemed to me had a double advantage. Number one, it had the intellectual stimulation almost of being in the academic world. But at the same time it had all the operational challenges of being in the military. I wasn't particularly suited for the military, wasn't the physical type particularly, although I enjoyed it. But the Foreign service seemed to be a good thing to do. So I took the exam in November 1960.

Q: Where did you take it?

NEWTON: I took it in Frankfort.

Q: That's where I took mine.

NEWTON: Yeah.

Q: Back in '54.

NEWTON: Yeah, then I heard that before I got out of the army that I passed, and I would be invited for an oral exam. I decided that, I just thought it would be better to take it in Washington. Whether it was true or not, I just thought the best thing is go to Washington. So I resigned effective in May for three years and stayed around Europe until August. Unfortunately shortly before I got out I came down with mononucleosis, which delayed my army departure for two weeks. Then I went back in time to take the orals in

Washington in August. I can recall what a happy event this was, because I had assumed that you'd take the oral and they'd say, "Well, we'll let you know in a few weeks." Instead they sat me down and said, "Congratulations you passed." I hadn't expected that at all. So then I knew essentially I was in, despite the delay. My future wife had managed a transfer in her company to be the secretary in their small New York office. So then we made plans to get married in December, which we did. We flew back to Germany, got married. Well, had a civil wedding in the States, got a church wedding in Germany and then January 2nd I reported for the A100 course in Washington.

Q: So this would be nineteen-sixty—

NEWTON: Two. I had just turned 26 in November. I think I was about the median age for my class in those days.

Q: What, how would you describe your A100 course, your basic officer course?

NEWTON: I was the new kid. I thought it was very good and informative, and it was the beginning of a great adventure. We had a very good class I think. I think that affected us. Frank Wisner was in my class. Bob Pelletreau also. Let's see who else. Well, I don't know of anyone, can't think of anyone else you might know.

Q: How about the class, sort of regards to male, female, race, or ethnic?

NEWTON: Well, the class was overwhelmingly white male. I mean there were a few females in the class. There were USIA students there too, and the females tended to be more likely to be USIA. There was one very good female officer I remember, and she left after a few years because of the way she felt that she was treated. She became a staff aide for an ambassador for Argentina, l believe. She was serving him coffee and things like that. She had a master's degree in Andean studies. Of course then if the women got married, they had to leave. So that I think only one woman of the State students remained for a full career and she had to leave to get married and then came back later. But the result is of course she didn't really have a full career.

Q: Yeah, well, then did you have any idea where or what you wanted to do?

NEWTON: Oh yeah. I wanted to go to the Arab world. But since I spoke fair German (I didn't pass the exam in German so I had to take four months of German) I got assigned to Zurich, which was a very easy way for us to start because my wife had grown up in Germany and so forth. After I got there, I applied to Arabic language school in Beirut and suddenly was transferred six months early.

Q: Well then, you were in Zurich from what about sixty--?

NEWTON: I was there from August '62 to February '64.

Q: What did we have in Zurich?

NEWTON: We had a consulate general at the time. We had in fact we had three consulates in the country. We had, I think about fifteen officers in the Zurich consulate general including an other agency contingent, we had a sizable one in Geneva separate from the mission, and we had a small consulate in Basel. While I was there, they closed both Geneva and Basel.

Q: So what were you doing?

NEWTON: Well, in those days it was a program called Central Complement if you remember that. We were supposed to rotate among the different sections in the post. Well, being a consulate most of my rotation was consular. I had eight months as a passport and citizenship officer, which was nice because there were only two of us. My boss went on leave for a while so I got to be the, sort of the one who did all the citizenship work. Then six months in the visa work. I think four months immigrant, two months non-immigrant I remember. Then four months with the commercial officer.

Q: Well, what, were there any particular problems in Zurich with the passport citizenship business?

NEWTON: No, no unusual problems. There were some famous people like Thomas Mann.

Q: Where did he live?

NEWTON: Lived, I'm not sure where he lived, but he lived in the German part. So there were quite a few of these people. In those days you had the law which said if you live overseas in a foreign country or live three years overseas in your country of origin, you're subject to losing your citizenship unless you fall into all these different, one of these different categories. So that was a chance to spend a lot of time writing these and trying to be imaginative and help these poor people to get over this hurdle.

Q: I had that job in Frankfort at one point, and every, these were people basically who came back to Germany after currency reform of '48. Things were pretty good then. So they came back and they didn't want to leave, and they were going to be losing their citizenship unless they had medical problems. So they would go find a medical doctor and they were all having to go for water treatment and all this. Did you find that in Zurich too?

NEWTON: No, you have to find different reasons, and I don't really remember all the different reasons but you could usually find something to get them through. Who was the, oh I remember getting a notarial for Paulette Goddard. She was married to Erich Maria Remarque, and they lived south of Zurich. Occasionally you would see people. We were all really upset with the consul, the head of the visa section, because we were waiting for *My Fair Lady,* and of course the heroine was not an American citizen, Audrey Hepburn.

We were all looking and he sneaked her in the back door one day and gave her the visa because she had to make a personal appearance and sneaked her out again in about five minutes. We really felt robbed. We were all waiting to see the beauteous Audrey Hepburn. It was fun. It was for the commercial part was fun too in a way because we had American week at the department store, and I had to work to get the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The store wanted an American Indian for the week for the department store, and I managed to get this professor of music at the Indian school in Santa Fe. He was a full-blooded Indian. I think he was half-Sioux and he brought a war bonnet made with human skin and everything. It was great. But we had a problem because they constructed a teepee in front of the exhibit at the department store, and basically they just wanted him to stand there and say "Ugh" every once in a while. He wasn't about to do that. So we had a crisis. We solved that by getting him together with some Swiss musician who taught him how to yodel. So after that he was happy enough to stay. So for a first tour it was fun, but I mean, it was not the kind of thing I would've liked to do for the rest of my tour. Then so at the end of eighteen months we went off. I had a very nice consul general by the way..

Q: Who was that?

NEWTON: Howard Elting. He just passed away a very few years ago. He was there about six years, in retirement lived outside San Francisco. He was one of the first FSO's to report on the Holocaust, when he served in Switzerland in World War II. Did you know him?

Q: No, I know the name though.

NEWTON: Yeah, very nice. Very nice.

Q: Well, then you had put in for Arabic training.

NEWTON: And I was accepted but told to report six months early so we got there, we left in February and got there in April of '64.

Q: There was where?

NEWTON: Beirut.

Q: Beirut and you started right in?

NEWTON: Yeah, we were in one half of a floor; the building had a small center and two wings. We were one of the wings on the fourth floor of the embassy. The building was later blown up by terrorists.

Q: So this had been sixty—

NEWTON: '64.

Q: '64.

NEWTON: Was April '64.

Q: You did that for how long?

NEWTON: Twenty-one months. My wife did the full course with me. It was a stroke of luck in a sense because they had written and said, your wife can take a short course for wives if she would be interested. Of course she was very interested since we were going to spend the rest of our career, we assumed, in the Arab world. When she got there, they said well, we're sorry we didn't have any money for this course. So the only alternative is to take the class with your husband. So we were, of the 21 months, we were in the class together for 16 months. Then we broke up the class and one of the officers who was agency got transferred out early and I got put in on an accelerated class. They did some things poorly. They wanted to train me to be an interpreter, but the way they had arranged the course, all our speaking was in colloquial, and our reading was in classical. Now when you interpret you have to speak modern standard, which is based on classical, and we've been reading this for a year but never speaking it, and so to try to change the whole speech patterns learned over more than year, year and a quarter, was difficult. I did a lot of reading on the Middle East, since it was going to be my life basically. We went to class five days a week, six hours of class a day. I started studying three hours a night, and for the last six months I think I studied six hours a night. But it was a much better course in a way because it was all in one place. Later you had a year in Washington, a year overseas in Tunis. It was better to be in the Arab world, although Beirut was not ideal for learning Arabic because of the people wanting to speak French and English. Still it was the Arab world. You were close to Damascus, which was very Arab. You just were in the middle of the Arab world.

Q: Well, what was Lebanon like '64 to '66 then?

NEWTON: Lebanon was then a very pleasant place to live. It only began to see some activity by the PLO, not much at that point. But you could see that Lebanon had significant social problems. The well-to-do class, especially the Christians, the Maronites and to some degree the Sunni Muslims, had no real sense of social conscience and the Shia in the south were poor and dispossessed and were really not part of the society or the economy.

Q: Well, the PLO or whatever it stood for, the Black September and all that was 1970 wasn't that or so?

NEWTON: Yeah, after the '67 war is really when things began to change significantly. But Lebanon was a very nice place, and of course it was the "Switzerland of the Middle East" and it was a very pleasant place to live and it was the last Levantine city. Smyrna/Izmir was gone; Alexandria was gone. Beirut was the last where making money

was the thing to do, and where the people wanted as little government control or intervention as possible.

Q: Did you have, who were some of the members of your class?

NEWTON: Let's see. As we came Hume Horan was just leaving. Rocky Suddarth was one year into the course as was David McClintock. In my class we had one other state foreign service officer who left and joined a bank, and he was something of a pain anyway, because he didn't study and one agency officer who was, I became friends with. Let me see. Who else? I can remember some other, other State people. I can't remember anyone particularly well now.

Q: Did you have much contact with the embassy?

NEWTON: Yeah, we were right in the embassy, but the director who was a very good director prevented the embassy for drafting us for duties and so forth with rare exceptions. We had to serve as duty officer. But he wanted us to study, and we were not supposed to go out during the week at all. We were supposed to study every night; and therefore we had very little social life. We just socialized with each other and just on weekends. So we had little contact with the embassy. Oh, Ed Djerejian came after me. Yeah, I think maybe a year after I did.

Q: Did, was there much contact or any contact with say the Brits who had school up higher up in the hills?

NEWTON: Yeah. I did have contact a bit with one of them whom I saw about a year ago, Hookey Walker, who was the last British ambassador in Baghdad as it happened.

Q: I met Hookey Walker.

NEWTON: Yeah.

Q: Back in fifty, well, early 1960 or late '59. I remember we went down in those days .

NEWTON: Yeah, yeah. He was studying up in Shamlan at the time.

Q: Did you get any feel for the politics of the place? Were the teachers or were others talking about the horrible Israelis or were you getting this or--?

NEWTON: No, we really they avoided the subject, and they were a mixture of Muslims and Christians. The dialect we were supposed to be learning was supposed to have been Jerusalem Arabic, but it was heavily influenced by the fact we were in Lebanon. No, they didn't, and I kind of think the director would've appreciated it. But I mean we knew. Actually I found that language training, especially intensive language training, is can really deaden your mind. It's just memorization and all it is. Although I was busy I did a lot of reading, and they had a very good library in the school. Because the reading, the

reading kind of leavened everything for me and made it, made me look forward to my assignments in the Arab world. So I did a lot of reading. But no, we really didn't get involved in the politics of the Middle East. Although I did come to one conclusion from reading and whatever discussions that came across, and that is this was well, '63, I'm sorry, '65 that the Arab-Israel issue was a dialogue of the deaf, and that I didn't want to spend my career pushing that rock uphill. So I decided to focus more on U.S.-Arab relations.

Q: Yeah.

NEWTON: I don't think we've been all that successful in that either!

Q: Matter of fact wouldn't you almost say, we have slid back.

NEWTON: Yeah.

Q: But did was there any concern about what you were learning to speak. Would that be useful in say Egypt or somewhere else?

NEWTON: Well, you were so busy learning it. I don't know that there was so much concern. I realized after I got out that I should try to switch more to modern standard Arabic, which I did. I was fortunate, I got the job I wanted. But when another person who was there ahead of me was--you might have known David McClintock. David went to Yemen but only stayed for a year, and I knew he was leaving, and that's the job I wanted simply because this was the best place to go in the Arab world and use your Arabic. There were only two officers at the post, which was separate from the embassy, and we were in the capital. We were surrounded by the important people. There was no telephone contact with the embassy or anything and very few people that spoke English.

Q: What type of dialect would they be speaking there?

NEWTON: Educated Yemenis speak a very clear Arabic from modern standard Arabic because there's very little influence of foreign languages, unlike say in Iraq, Syria, Jordan, or Lebanon.

Q: Did, was Nasser still going at the time when you were there?

NEWTON: Oh yeah, because I went there in January '66, and we got kicked out in June '67. So and the Egyptians were basically the occupying power, and they didn't like us at all, and they really harassed us and gave us a hard time. We would try to the extent we could do anything to get back at them.

Q: Well, let's see. You were in—

NEWTON: I was in Sana'a.

Q: Sana'a from sixty—

NEWTON: January '66 to June '67.

Q: What was the relationship at that time to Aden?

NEWTON: Well, Aden was still at that point under the British. Aden was a base for supplies for us. We'd take turns taking the pouch down to Aden until things got too bad. But relations were very hostile between North Yemen under the Egyptians and Aden under the British.

Q: Well, when you got to Sanaa, can you describe Sanaa?

NEWTON: Yeah, it was a nice trip I remember because my wife and I decided if we, if we went straight from Beirut to Sanaa, we might get the cultural bends like the diver coming up too fast. So we decided we'd spend a week at Cairo to kind of acclimate ourselves to something poorer. Then we flew down, in those days you came in by Asmara, Ethiopian Airlines. You could always see you going from the other world to Yemen as you got off of 707 in Asmara, Ethiopian Airlines and got on a DC3 and flew into Sanaa. But we just flew into Ta'iz on, Ethiopian Airlines. So we stayed there and they had actually set up a nice little club there and a guesthouse and everything. It was still very poor and so forth. The embassy and USAID in Taiz had a small aircraft, which we were to take to Sanaa, but for some reason it wasn't available. So we drove up with one of the USAID officers. It's a beautiful trip as you come up to Sanaa. You go up two major passes, and then you're in a dry flat plateau, and at that time Sanaa was only sixty, seventy thousand people. Now it's 1,200,000. As you approached in 1966, you came almost right to the old Turkish gate, and you could see from a distance twenty minarets as you approach the old city. It was a beautiful sight. It was still a very much a medieval old city. It was only of course three years and three months after the revolution. Some crummy Egyptian buildings had been built in the space between the two parts of the city, one of which was the old Sana'a and the other to the west was the Ottoman city. Each had its own wall, and they connected in the middle. But otherwise it was still as it was before the 1962 revolution.

Q: Well, what was the development? This was the title of the country.

NEWTON: Yeah, it was then the Yemen Arab Republic after the revolution.

Q: Well, what was the revolution all about? When did that happen?

NEWTON: The revolution was September '62. It was brewing because the imam, Imam Ahmad who had taken over after his father was assassinated in '48, had still tried to keep the country completely isolated with ever less success, transistor radios and so forth bringing in the outside world. No education to speak of, no medical system, a few foreign doctors and so forth. Pressure building up for a change. The opposition was some people exiled in Aden who were mostly western-style liberals, then Arab nationalists influenced

by Nasser, and tribal leaders who had various grievances. And finally with a lot of Egyptian connivance, the commander of the presidential guard Abdullah as-Sallal took over. Well, they had a coup and Sallal proclaimed himself president. Imam Ahmed had died the week before. He was a very strong, ruthless man. People were afraid of him, but his son, the new Imam Badr, was seen as weak and soft. So the young imam fled up north to get support from some of the tribes, and then you had a civil war, which went on for about five years.

Q: What were the Saudis doing?

NEWTON: Saudis were helping the royalists but of course the amount of help they gave was not nearly as much as the Egyptians could give. The Egyptians had 50 to 60,000 troops there at the peak.

Q: Well, while you were there, the Egyptians were all around you, or what was the situation when you arrived?

NEWTON: Yeah, the Egyptians were there. They had an advisor in every ministry, and they had their own military command. They were really the significant military force. The Yemeni Army wasn't too much. The Yemenis were already beginning to resent their heavy-hand, and the fact that the Egyptians, not being rich, were financing their presence on the back of the Yemenis. This eventually got worse and worse and then the Egyptians then had to leave after the result of the June war. They couldn't afford to keep there troops there anymore. At the end I remember hearing of the last day. I wasn't there then. We'd all gone. Some Egyptian soldiers came in town to make one last purchase, and the Yemenis cornered them and slaughtered them, the last half dozen or so. So and they were just getting very tired of them.

Q: Were the, the '67 war happened while you were there?

NEWTON: Yes, it started, actually the crisis started in late April when there was a rocket attack against an Egyptian installation in Taiz, in which I think a couple of soldiers were killed, I think Egyptian soldiers. They apparently traced the people who'd fled, and they fled out through the USAID {Agency for International Development) residential compound. So they decided , whether they believed it or not, to try to finger us and they arrested two AID officials, one of whom was a Levantine American. He was a Greek from Alexandria, had become an American citizen who spoke Arabic and was greatly suspected by them because he spoke Arabic. This created a crisis. Eventually Secretary of State intervened with the Egyptian Vice President and we managed to get them out and on a plane. But in the process we closed down the AID mission, evacuated all the AID people and cut the embassy in half, more than half. I was one of six people who were going to stay, and we had just sort of sorted this out. In fact we still had a few people who were traveling, having packed up people in Taiz, when we got the first word that the Egyptian troops had crossed the canal, headed for the Israeli border. Then of course then it really hit the fan, and within a couple of days the war had started. We were accused of

helping the Israelis. They broke relations, gave us forty-eight hours to leave, and we had to pack people out in a hurry.

Q: Well, while you were in Sanaa, what were you doing? What was your job?

NEWTON: Well, I was, there were two of us. The head of the office was, his title in the embassy was a senior political officer and was a counselor. I was the economic officer, and I was a junior officer, but basically I was the dogsbody in this little office. We had I think four outside employees and one inside local. So I did everything that the senior officer didn't do, and then for a couple of months, I was alone because the chargé (we didn't have an ambassador), was transferred, and my boss became the chargé and had to go to Taiz. So as what would now be an FS05, I was the only person in the office in the capital. When he went, he took his wife with him and his wife was our administrative officer. So I was literally alone. I'd open the door, leave the door open and go in the cage where I could sit in her office and watch the front door and take out the one-time pad and start decoding messages that had come on the Ottoman—came over the old Ottoman telegraph. Or I'd be trying to send a message on my one time pad. People would come in and I'd stick it under my, in the drawer, close the cage and go out and see people. So it was for a few months, then we began moving people to Sanaa. The previous chargé had fought tooth and nail against moving. He didn't want to go to Sanaa. But now we were going to move, and after a couple of months we began getting other people up there.

Q: Well, what was the relationship between Ta'izz and Sana'a?

NEWTON: Well, the embassy couldn't move originally because we had this large AID mission there, and all of the transportation went out of Ta'izz. We had finally finished, some months after I came, finished the road between Ta'izz and Sana'a. Before that it was almost no communication with the outside world. It was quite a job to get an embassy fixed even in the days before heavy security. I mean to get the embassy fixed, to get housing for people. So but that's where they were there, and just the two of us were there, and we had access to the government, and so we had a great time.

Q: Well, tell me about your impression of the government? What sort of things were you doing for them?

NEWTON: The Yemeni government in this case.

Q: Yeah.

NEWTON: Yeah, the Yemeni government was actually there was a split in the government. Sallal was seen as a puppet of the Egyptians, and the Egyptians had put in a couple of, by number of really unpleasant people like the minister of interior and deputy and so forth. But then there were more moderate people. The presidency actually consisted of three different people, presidential counsel, and they tried to be, well, the republican council, it wasn't a presidency. They tended to be more Yemeni and nationalist than moderate. When the Egyptians had to leave, they just brushed aside the

Egyptian puppets and took over the government. So it was a mixture of people. But they had no control. One of my jobs was to go every time the Egyptians did something to us, I'd go down to the foreign ministry to protest, and I'd see the deputy foreign minister who was in his thirties, and I'd tell him about all these awful things. He would commiserate with me, saying, "That's terrible. This shouldn't happen," and everything. But he couldn't do anything about it either. I think we developed a sense that we were suffering together with the Yemenis under this oppressive, heavy-handed Egyptian occupation. One of my neighbors I got to know one of the people in the Egyptian embassy and he had the local name. He was called Abu [san] Luc, Mr. Box because he'd make, he claimed it wasn't his. He claimed it was somebody using his name. He'd been caught in Rome airport trying to smuggle an Israeli double agent back to Cairo in a container, and the man woke up and starting moaning or something and the Egyptian police heard him moaning or something, and so he had to leave. They sent him to Yemen. They thought no one would ever find him. Anyway, he got to be known as Abu san Luc, Mr. Box. The Egyptians were terribly homesick. The typical Yemeni room was much like this room. It was long and narrow, and there would be rough hewn wooden beams in the ceiling, which were then plastered over. But you saw the beams and they were running and splitting, running in different directions. They were from trees. He said he used to lie in bed and dream he was back on the Nile, and he said, I would almost feel I was back and then I'd open my eyes, and I'd see these beams and I would realize I was still in Yemen. So the Egyptians were lonesome. They were underfunded. They were very unpopular. But it was an interesting experience. We were restricted in how much we could travel because of the war. But I did manage to do a fair amount of traveling.

Q: Well, were you looking at reporting on military developments and all that?

NEWTON: Yeah, we were not well positioned to do a lot of that. We were really doing more political, the various factions in the government, opposition to the Egyptians.

Q: One, well my impression is there were a bunch of tribal chieftains sitting up in the mountains around there or each pursuing their own agenda and all.

NEWTON: Well, Yemenis used to have this saying, "You can't buy us, you can only rent us for a while." What had harmed the loyalists is the fact that Imam Ahmad, the one who had died a week before the revolution, was a very tough guy, and he'd gone off for medical treatment in the '50s, late '50s to Italy. While he was away, his son who became Imam al-Badr decided he had been infected with Arab nationalism. I think that's certainly his father's view and wanted to build up support among the tribes. So he gave out all the money in the treasury to the tribe sheiks. His father came back, was furious and wanted to make them give it all back. He called in the paramount sheik of one of the two confederations together with his own son, and they had a fierce argument, and he sort of threw them out of the office and told someone, "Do away with them." Cooled down a little later but it was too late. They'd been beheaded. This was paramount sheik of one of the two major tribal confederations. The small but the better organized one. He became, his other son who took over who is still head of the parliament became the main tribal leader, and the tribe split as a result. Many of the tribes, maybe they were paid, but many

of them because they had followed him supported the republic. Other tribes supported the imamate. So where you would have expected the tribes to be more united behind the imam. They split because of this incident that happened.

Q: Did we have much contact? I mean were you talking to the tribal chiefs?

NEWTON: Around Sana'a you could, but you couldn't get, couldn't get out very far. The Egyptian military wouldn't, you could only go a few miles north and east of Sana'a. That's where the tribes were. You couldn't get through the check points.

Q: Did you get any feel about how the Egyptians were doing?

NEWTON: Well, yeah. The Egyptians, they sent in a lot of troops. They cleared out the populated areas and had a reasonable degree of control in the areas where people tended to live. But then they tried to get out in the wild areas and the north and east, and that's where they really began to get creamed by the tribesmen. They took a lot of losses, and they couldn't afford to keep all these troops there. So while I was there in '66, they adopted something they called the long breath strategy. They cut back the troops somewhat and sort of ceded these sparsely populated areas to the royalists. But they really controlled everything that was very significant with a couple of exceptions. They probably could've hung on for considerably longer but then with the '67 war that changed everything. They were trying to hang on because by that time the British said they were getting out of Aden. And what they really wanted to do was to hang around Yemen, and then when the British pulled out of Aden, they would be able to through their supporters in Aden they thought to become the dominant outside power in Aden, but they couldn't last that long.

Q: Well, it must've done wonders for your Arabic.

NEWTON: Yeah, it was good for my Arabic. I got up I think around four-four. When I got out of Beirut, I had a three plus, three plus, but it was, no, it was. It was excellent. Yemeni tribesmen would be impossible to understand. The dialect is so heavy and even pre-Islamic, pre-Islamic words and so forth. But anyone educated you could certainly understand.

Q: How did your wife find it?

NEWTON: Oh she loved it. She enjoyed it. Actually she was four and a half, five months pregnant when we got there, and she wanted, she was thinking of having the baby in Yemen, but everybody said, no way. The regional medical officer said over my dead body. So she went off, but across the Red Sea in Asmara where used to, you may remember we had—

Q: Kagnew Station.

NEWTON: Kagnew Station, the military hospital. So our son was born there. Then we brought him back. He thrived in the climate, the very good climate of Yemen. But he was born in April ’66 so first one year of his life he lived there.

Q: What the British are still in the, at this time.

NEWTON: Um hmm.

Q: Were they undergoing the, I can’t think of their name or acronym of what it was. But a group that was attacking them all the time. I mean were they under siege in that (__)—

NEWTON: Yeah, there were two groups of the Egyptian sponsored group by that time called FLOSY, the Federation for the Liberation of South Yemen and then a Arab nationalist group more related to the Arab nationalist movement, the National Liberation Front. The NLF was the one that carried out most of the terrorism and eventually physically eliminated after the British left they just wiped out the FLOSY people and took over the government. Of course the terrorism got worse and worse, and as the British lost contact with the population their intelligence disappeared and they became sitting ducks. Eventually they pulled out of one area after another. They pulled out of (_____), which was the main in early ’67 which was the main native quarter. Eventually they pulled out of Steamer Point where the ships were. Pulled back to (_____) which is where the airport and the military lines were. On November 30th, ’67 they all departed. They had a big fleet they sent in to take people off, and so that the governor general, I guess, was supposed to be the last one to leave. The story claimed that the military commander then re-landed his helicopter, jumped off, landed on the ground, jumped back in, took off a second time so he could be the last person to leave. Yeah, I was down there twice. The second time we had a total general strike. The thing was totally shut down. You couldn’t move around much at all.

Q: Well, I mean in a way, was it sort of the handwriting on the wall?

NEWTON: Oh yeah, by ’66 the handwriting was on the wall and sometime I forget in ’66 they announced, the Labor government took over and announced. But before that the British had said they’d reduce their bases, but they’d just have Hong Kong and then as a halfway point they would have Aden and then (_____) the UK. Middle East command of course had gone from Palestine to the Suez Canal to Cyprus then to Aden. But the battalions there, which were supposed to be available for the defense of the Gulf, were all tied up defending the sultans of Aden. So there was really no point. So they, then the Labor government came in and said and they just, they set up the South Arabian Federation with the sheiks and sultans had been their allies and their designated people. Then they just abandoned them and left.

Q: Well, now did Oman represent any force in that area?

NEWTON: No, Oman in those days was not and still, I think Sultan Taymur was still in charge.

Q: Was it Muscat Oman or--

NEWTON: Yeah, Muscat Oman was called later became Oman but before Qaboos took on the whole country was still also kept shut up, and the British had small presence in the Gulf but they were, well they announced actually in '68 that they would leave. So it was a little later.

Q: Did you, were the Egyptians harassing you? I mean, you (___)

NEWTON: Oh yeah. Yeah. I mean not physically attacking us, but I remember they stole a car from outside one of our houses. David Ransom who passed away, he chased them down to an Army base, and they denied any knowledge of it but he found the keys of the car when he saw the car so they couldn't drive it away. They, they'd harassed us with a lot of little things. They told us we had to have a permit every time we wanted to leave the city. The problem was our trash, our garbage truck was going out dumping the garbage. So when they told us that we took the garbage truck and parked it in front of the ministry of interior for a couple of days until they decided, until it needed to be moved. It was constant harassment, but it was petty harassment. I mean I can't think, nobody beat us up or like that.

Q: Well, did you, at the time you were there was there an ambassador?

NEWTON: No, we never had an ambassador until Crawford went there in end of '72. No, we had a chargé.

Q: Who was the chargé?

NEWTON: Well, when I came was Harlan Clark. Then Harlan as I say, he left around the fourth of July, '66 and Lee Dinsmore who was the head of the office then became chargé. Then of course they broke relations, and I think it was in '71, David McClintock, David McClintock went there. A sixth person interest section and I forget the next one. Should remember because I went, I was down there for the resumption of relations. I'd gone down to (_____) help him with the arrangements. Then that was July '72, and then it took a few months until then Bill Crawford arrived in December. But no we never had a resident ambassador until December of '72.

Q: Did you have, while you were there was there much contact with the Arabian Peninsular desk or anything or were you pretty much (_____)?

NEWTON: Well, actually, a good break for me. Bill Brewer who was the country director for ARP came through I guess maybe in March, February or March just not long before the crisis. I put him up. Some reason or another Lee couldn't do so. So I put him up. When the war came along, and we were all kicked out from all over the Middle East, Bill Brewer gave Lee Dinsmore and myself jobs in ARP so we were two of the lucky ones who had a job.

Q: Yeah, because there was this terrible problem in personnel when everybody got kicked out of—

NEWTON: So we got good jobs. He got to be the deputy director in ARP and I was the economic officer and desk officer.

Q: ARP being—

NEWTON: Arabian Peninsular Affairs. Yeah. No, that was lucky, and I mean the of course contact was limited by the fact that we had, well, we just had radio communications for emergencies otherwise everything went out by pouch basically. I can't remember exactly what we had when the embassy finally showed up and we did then obviously have the ability to send cables, but for most of the time we just had the one-time pad. We'd send a telegram and it went on the old Ottoman telegraph to Ta'izz. You never knew what it would look like when you got there.

Q: What was our AID business been doing before we pulled it out?

NEWTON: Well, it actually because they'd been worried about the Soviet and Chinese presence from the late '80s, we then agreed we did two things. We built the John F. Kennedy water system in Ta'izz, which is now completely overtaken by population growth. Of course water is a huge problem. Al Ruiz who's still around who was the director of that. Then the other, the other major thing was we built the Mocha-Ta'izz-Sana'a Highway, Mocha being the old port. We built it, and it was quite an engineering feat to go up these two passes, actually three passes from Ta'izz to Sana'a. But because of the level of repair and so forth, we built it as a gravel road, which was a political mistake. Yemenis drove too fast. They would skid right off the road so it became known as the road of death. Whereas the Chinese had built a paved road from Hudaydah to Sana'a, and the Russians were in the process of building a paved road from Hudaydah to Ta'izz, which from the last portion was going to be (____) road and then they just, I think, eventually paved it. Later the West Germans came after, when countries came back in the early '70s and the West Germans paved our road from Ta'izz to Sana'a. Then once those projects were completed, then we got into a lot of small self-help projects, which are very good building farm to market roads, drilling wells, doing a lot of useful things, which the Yemenis really appreciated.

Q: Well, this is a good place to stop.

NEWTON: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And we'll pick this up. I put a (____) so we know where to pick it up. We'll pick this up in 1967.

NEWTON: Yeah, right.

Q: You come back to Washington to deal with the Arab peninsula from the Washington perspective.

NEWTON: Yeah, yeah.

Q: We'll talk about that.

NEWTON: Okay good.

Q: Okay, today is the 2nd of December, 2005. David, what was the state of play in the Arab peninsula in '67 when you got back there I mean as far as what was happening?

NEWTON: Well, the Arabs had gone through a real catharsis. It was this tremendous emotional outburst over the '67 war especially against us when we were accused of helping the Israelis.

Q: That was the Six-Day War, wasn't it?

NEWTON: The Six-Day War.

Q: But it had, when you go there the Six-Day War had already been over.

NEWTON: Yeah, I had been through that. That's when we got kicked out of Yemen as a result. But then the air went out of the balloon, a bit of Arab fanaticism. They just realized they'd been completely misled, and they were just stunned. Well, when I got back of course, many countries no longer had relations with us. I was lucky that the director of Arabian Peninsular Affairs, Bill Brewer had just a couple of months previously been out in Yemen so that then Lee Dinsmore who was the chargé and I were (_____) jobs. I was the economic officer by accident really. I never had taken a course in economics in my whole life, but anyway I got back there had no idea what I was going to do. Found out I was going to be the economic officer for the office, which consisted mainly of two things, being the petroleum officer essentially for the bureau and number two, taking care of various reimbursable aid we were giving to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The first year I also functioned as the Kuwait desk officer. Well I did that for much of the time also, part-time as Yemen desk officer.

Q: This was '67 to when?

NEWTON: Sixty-nine.

Q: Sixty-nine.

NEWTON: I remember Jim Akins was very helpful to me. He was in—

Q: This is tape two, side one with David Newton. Yeah.

NEWTON: Bill Brewer was a good boss. He was very helpful to, I was the most junior officer, desk officer in the bureau. One result was that Secretary Rusk had started out during the June War setting up a television and radio watch to find out what was happening. In those days communications were a lot slower, and this had turned into opposition to the Vietnam War watch. We were to listen to everything, and I get picked as a junior officer two of us to go down for, I think I did it for two weeks. Had to watch all the television sets, listen to the radio--it was a killer--to see what comments were being made about Vietnam, and we'd do this report every day. I volunteered to be the editor to keep from going nuts. We'd bring it up to, usually to public affairs, and they'd rush it over to the White House to find out the latest horrible thing that had been said about the administration over Vietnam. It was really kind of strange. But I enjoyed that, I enjoyed that time.

Then I, it was interesting. I knew I'd better either get to be a real economic officer and get some economics or I'd be a political officer, which is of course what I wanted to be. I wanted to be. I was an area expert or a budding one. In those days personnel was decentralized, and I had my eye on a job in Libya as the number two personnel officer. Everything was set up with AF (African Affairs) except it was decentralized, and AF had just recently refused to give up Hume Horan to go to an NEA (Near Eastern Affairs) post. So NEA would not allow any Arabist to go to AF. So Dick Murphy was then the personnel officer said, "Either you go to Kuwait as economic officer." I knew that was opening. I was dreading it because I didn't want to go since I had no background, "Or you can go to university training because personnel had recommended you." So I went off to, I accepted and went off to the University of Michigan and did my—

Q: This is what '69—

NEWTON: '69-70.

Q: Okay. Let's go back to '67. Where we concerned, was there any hint of an oil boycott of the United States or manipulation of that time sort of OPEC thing which happened?

NEWTON: Yeah, '67 was over. It came up later of course in the '73 war. At the time no, there really wasn't. The big political issue was of course the British in 1968 announced they were going to give up security responsibility for the Persian Gulf and that we would have to take it over. My boss Bill Brewer wrote the national security document, which was at the time called the "Twin Pillar Policy." This was in the era of course of Nixonization when we were not going to provide any ground troops. We would provide air cover, naval support, but local countries had to provide the soldiers. So this so called Twin Pillar policy said that in terms of ground defense that Iran and Saudi Arabia would be our pillars. Well, Iran was a big fat pillar and Saudi Arabia was a pretty thin shaky pillar because basically at that time, '68, '69 it had almost no ground forces and no equipment. That was the big issue of the day. Not—

Q: Well, were we concerned about Saudi Arabia about the stability of the house of Saud and all that thing.

NEWTON: Not at that point. Faisal was king. Although Faisal came to the throne after his peak if you will. Faisal was a good, was a good reasonable king except he developed this thing about Zionism which could sometimes be embarrassing because we never knew when he might bring it up to visitors to Saudi. He had adopted this thing called, we used to refer to it as ZCC, called Zionist Communist conspiracy. There was a Canadian reserve lieutenant commander had written a book called Pawns in the Game. He was I think certifiable. His view was that, it was the world Masonic conspiracy, which had two elements, Zionism and communism and—

Q: And Masonic stuff was in there too.

NEWTON: Yeah, well, his idea was the overarching conspiracy was Masonic with two elements, Zionist and Communist. But the king would sometimes give out his book or book to visitors, which was a little bit awkward, but on the whole he was a good king and was trying to--. He put in TV. His father had put in radio. He was trying to slowly to modernize the country.

Q: What was the situation in Iraq while you were there?

NEWTON: Well, we had no relations with Iraq. That was just, between--. The first Baathi attempt to take over was '63. That failed and Arab nationalists took over and then--. I'm sorry, in '68 the Baathis took over in July for the final time. At the time I'm thinking back now because we didn't really give much attention to Iraq, but of course at that time we didn't look on the Baath [break in tape] from what we know now. We thought they were not particularly nice people and certainly not democrats. But at least they were anti-Communist.

Q: Well, also and Syria had the Baaths taken over by this point or not.

NEWTON: Yeah, the Bath had, well, the Baaths had—

Q: Was it apparent that they were Syrian Baaths and Iraqi Baaths and never the twain shall meet or at that point had—

NEWTON: Yeah, relations were already bad. At that point after the '67 war some very extreme Baathis had taken over headed by Salah Jadid, and Assad didn't come to power until 1970. So at that time the Baath was extremely anti-American and radical in Syria.

Q: Well, had, because of the '67 war had the star of Nasser pretty well waned by this time or—

NEWTON: Yes, it had. This was a, the war was a crushing blow to Nasser. He also had to withdraw his troops from Yemen where he had hopes of taking over Aden before the war had hit him. He never really recovered. What he died about a year, about a year later. Yeah, I mean, of course the thing was many respects we were out of touch because not so

much in the peninsula but with northern Arab states. I mean, we had no relations with Syria, none with Iraq. Of course we had no relations with Egypt, with Libya, with so many Arab countries.

Q: Well, we had [intercessions?] in Egypt didn't we or—

NEWTON: But we didn't get it right away. I'm not sure of the date. Maybe we got it as early as '68 or '69. But—

Q: But I mean did you, were we getting most of our information then from reading the papers and from the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency)?

NEWTON: I suspect, yeah. I suspect we were. I was pretty junior at the time. So I'm not really able to say very much, but in the Arabian Peninsula of course the British were responsible for the Gulf. They didn't actually pull out until '72, and so we had, and we had no embassy in North Yemen. So the only embassies we had were in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait. And for about a year or so after independence, the end of '67 we had an embassy in Aden. We tried to get some aid to the South, to show that we weren't terminally hostile, but they really didn't want relations, and they broke relations with us I think in late '68 as I remember.

Q: Do you recall, did we feel that the Soviets were riding high in that part of the world at the time or not?

NEWTON: Yeah, I think we were very, we were very concerned. Certainly they looked like that in Syria and Egypt. There was concern about Iraq although perhaps somewhat less. But I mean that was of course Republican administration, and the old argument was still there. Was our major concern the Soviets or was it the situation in the area itself?

Q: Then did you, who was sort of per Arab affairs as you would get it, who was sort of the person who was in charge. Obviously at this, I won't say obviously, but apparently Dean Rusk was very much involved in Vietnam and looking at that.

NEWTON: Um hmm. Well, what happened not long after I came back with the new administration is that Joe Sisco took over as the head of NEA, and he had been very much, I think, in charge really as assistant secretary for international organizations because the action was in the UN (United Nations). Then he brought the action with him to NEA when he became assistant secretary. We had some really good people too. Of course I was junior officer. I was impressionable, but I remember such fine people. The senior deputy was Rodger Davies. Of course later murdered, Dick Parker had come back, was in charge of EGY (Egypt). Talcott Seelye was in charge of ARN (Office of Lebanon, Jordan, Syrian Arab Republic Affairs). Bill Brewer ARP (Office of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Yemen, and Aden Affairs). And Ray Atherton IAI (Office of Israeli-Arab Israeli Affairs). Some real giants in the profession. I must say what I learned from them and how things have changed. You have to remember in those days there weren't many NGOs (non-governmental organizations) around. It was pretty much left to the government to

conduct foreign affairs. Really what I learned from them was we are the people who are really dedicated to the U.S. national interests. That's our job in foreign affairs. There are other people who have other agendas. We're going to work longer and harder and smarter, and we're going to get what the national interests requires in foreign affairs. That's what I learned, and that was true for a number of years.

But of course it's no longer true, and I could see in later years we would be lucky if we could even get a piece of what the national interests required. The attitude of people changed. It became more philosophical because the sense of the department was we're not really in control of events. But that was not true in '67 when I came back. We still, it was still the old fashioned feeling that foreign policy was more for the experts and that we could still got what the national interest required.

Q: Well, were we feeling in your particular area any pressure or influence from the Jewish lobby, I mean, had gone through. Did that have any resonance in what you were doing?

NEWTON: I think in terms of supporters of Israel, I think the main pressure came from Congress because that was really the focus of pro-Israel organizations in the United States. That changed I think about the time of the first Bush administration because they really had, there was no great problem with the Congress. But that was basically the problem. But when you think even later, it was still a fight but I don't think it was a fight as late as the AWACS (airborne warning and control system) debate. But I don't think it's really an issue now.

Q: Well, then you took economic course at Michigan?

NEWTON: No, no. I took, I got out of the economic field, and actually what I studied--. I did a double MA in combined MA I should say in medieval Middle East history, Islamic history and in modern Arabic literature. So I then I went on to become a political officer, which is what I wanted to do and what I was more qualified to do.

Q: How did you find, was it Michigan State you were at?

NEWTON: No, Michigan University at Ann Arbor.

Q: Michigan University. Did you find that in their department dealing with the Arabic I take it, did they have an attitude or—I mean, as far as the Arab-Jewish or Arab-Israeli relationship is so politically sensitive in the United States. I was wondering whether you had sensed that at Michigan through the academic world had a stand in this.

NEWTON: Well, that was fairly early, I mean in terms of radicalization if you will. I was pretty early. Because we had a trimester system I avoided the spring when, the Cambodian spring. But no, I was in two different departments. One the history department, and there were four very good professors teaching there. Then in what was at that time called the Department of Near East languages and literatures, which was the old

Oriental studies department, and there I was taking courses in medieval and modern Arabic literature. NELL, Near East Languages and Literature taught other languages including Hebrew. I think the only issue was that they tried to keep the balance in the number of students in the course. So that it was probably harder to get into the Hebrew courses because of the greater numbers. But they wanted to keep the balance because they were also teaching Turkish, Persian and Arabic. No, it was strictly academic, and I must say I really enjoyed it. One of the professors there died a little while later. I got friends with Dick Mitchell was a former foreign service officer who had gone into the academic field and was the first to write about the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and wrote still I think the basic work on the history of the Brotherhood.

Q: Well, then when so nineteen—

NEWTON: '70 I graduated.

Q: You graduated, whither?

NEWTON: Well, it's funny. I was told all the time I was either going to go to Dhahran, which I was looking forward to, or Jerusalem, which I would've liked. Then suddenly in April my wife got a call while I was off at my courses that I was going to Jeddah, to the embassy. Joe Twinam had been the political office there and was going back , was being brought back to Washington a little bit early. So we went off, but in September I finally arrived there in September.

Q: You were there from September of--

NEWTON: Of '70.

Q: Of '70 to when?

NEWTON: To the, I was the beginning of January 1973. So a little bit over two years, about two years and four months.

Q: What was the situation in Saudi Arabia when you got there?

NEWTON: Saudi Arabia was a pretty quiet place. If you can imagine, given the size of our embassy now, I was the only political officer. I had grander title of principal political officer, but the other political officer position had been abolished, and there was one political officer, one economic officer, one commercial--. Well, the economic counselor was in charge of all of us. Then a commercial officer and a political/military officer. Just four of us on the state substantive side.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you got there?

NEWTON: Just, the same day I arrived was Nick Thacher. Nick passed away about a year or so ago. Very nice, very decent man. Nick was not, I think, was not really an

Arabist but he had, actually he had been DCM (deputy chief of mission) in Jeddah and then had gone on to be DCM in Tehran and then was appointed ambassador.

Q: Who was sort of the political counselor or was there one?

NEWTON: No, there wasn't one. I was the only political officer. Our friend Dick (_____) was the economic counselor, but he, he wrote my report because he was more senior. Bill Stoltzfus was the DCM for most of the time, and then Hume came as DCM. He had done very well in Oman with all, with Black September and so forth. So—

Q: Well, the ruler was Faisal while you were there.

NEWTON: Yeah, Faisal was still the ruler who was—

Q: When was he assassinated?

NEWTON: He was assassinated, I had already left I think it was '73, sometime maybe late in '73. He was assassinated after I'd left.

Q: As a political officer, what does a political officer do in a rather was it essentially no political activity? Or there was not supposed to be.

NEWTON: Yeah, that's right, and it was considered at the time unworthy of a Saudi to discuss politics. So it was a lot of tealeaf reading and reporting on visits and events. But I, even I didn't have enough to do. I remember I volunteered to fill in for the single consular officer when he went off because I had done some consul work in Jeddah. I thought this is a good way to meet Saudis and have a chance to talk to them. But the other thing I did because in my job in Arabian Peninsular Affairs I'd been involved as I said in reimbursable technical assistance. I and an aide officer really started this, how to pay for it, how to organize it because I would just, I'd get a request. I remember the Saudis wanted someone to come out to advise them about gazelles for their zoos. So I called put the director of the Washington, the National Zoo, and he agreed to go out. That's the way you did it. So I picked this up when I was in Saudi Arabia and I became basically the only officer who ever went to Riyadh. We had no embassy officers there. We did have a couple of USIS (United States Information Service) officers running an English language center, and in those days we still had the office of public safety under AID. I used to go there and they'd take care of me and they also provided, they'd tell me what's going on, what the news is in Riyadh. Very nice people. So they were kind of eyes and ears. I mean, not anything nefarious, but they would help me and I would go there and be the only officer to visit and I would off and take, I'd take care of the visitors coming because I'd go up and talk, got to know the people in royal protocol. If you can believe it, while I was there John Erwin who was the deputy secretary of state came out. He was the highest U.S. official ever to visit Saudi Arabia, and then he was followed some months later by Rogers, Secretary Rogers who then became the highest U.S. official ever to visit Saudi Arabia.

Q: Well, did what was the role of consular general in Dhahran?

NEWTON: Well, his role was mainly with ARAMCO (Arabian-American Oil Company). ARAMCO was of course American run at the time, and he reported on events in the eastern province. He tried to keep track of the Shia in the eastern province who were an important political issue, but mainly he dealt with oil affairs and with ARAMCO.

Q: Do we have much of a military program with the Saudis at the time?

NEWTON: We have and we have had for many years the U.S. military training mission which was required to be well, it had been in, it was still headquartered in Dhahran, which was another reason for consulate. But it had also a significant presence just of advisors in Riyadh with a small compound. That was the other U.S. presence there.

Q: Did you have much contact with sort of Saudis informally?

NEWTON: In those days Saudi Arabia wasn't rich yet. Only really after '73. I had a good bit of contact with people in the foreign ministry and with Saudi businessmen. I mean the social life there often revolved around well to do Saudi businessmen, but it wasn't tremendous social life. But it wasn't that easy to get contact with Saudis, but it was possible in those days because they weren't so tremendously rich and they lived normal lives. Different for various ways. Yeah, we had a fair amount of contact with Saudis.

Q: What was life like there? Were you married at the time?

NEWTON: Yeah, yeah. I was married as a matter of fact when we had one, our son by the time we got there was a little over three years old, and our daughter was born just three weeks before we left Ann Arbor. So she was just a few weeks old. Life was not particularly easy. We moved outside the compound in a kind of a large house but kind of rundown at least furnished. The problem for my wife was that there was no reliable telephone system and that she really couldn't go out with the kids. One time she went out, and she was being attacked by a pack of dogs when a Saudi came and drove them off for her. But even though it was only about a ten-minute walk, and of course the heat was tremendous for about half the year. The embassy had very limited transportation. There was a shuttle that came by once a day that could pick you up and take you off to one of the markets for shopping. That was about it. But we'd try to get the phone fixed, but it would go out within a day. So when I left in the morning, she was really trapped in the house without any communications. But that wasn't particularly easy, and it was a pretty Spartan lifestyle. The, our daughter got sick at one point, but we had a very good Lebanese pediatrician who took good care of her, but the hospital was very minimal and the medical care was minimal.

Q: Did, with your experience with Yemen was anything happening around the Yemeni border in those days?

NEWTON: No, I don't recall any, no not really much on the border. No, the Saudis in those days allowed Yemenis to come in and reside in Saudi Arabia and open businesses and work. They didn't need work permits, and they could come and stay I think for three to five years. It was much easier for Yemenis. We did get to know some of the Yemeni, actually South Arabian sultans and so forth who were living in exile in Jeddah. But it was a pretty Spartan lifestyle. Almost no restaurants. Not much to do.

Q: In Saudi Arabia while you were there, were there still disputes with the Trucial states over the Buraimi Oasis and—

NEWTON: Buraimi was over, but there were still a lot of undefined borders. The Saudis at that time were still very, very insular unlike Gulf States. There was still at least unresolved issues, I wouldn't say disputes, with most of their neighbors. It was a pretty quiet time basically. I remember Muhammad Ali came on a visit to make the—

Q: Boxing.

NEWTON: Umrah. Yeah. Yeah. The ambassador was a little nervous because I had just wrote a little airgram and I entitled "God's the greatest," "Allahu akbar."

Q: Well the, I'm just trying to think of, what about the influence of ARAMCO. Their political affairs section was, has a tendency to, I mean they had a pretty strong representation I guess in Riyadh it may have been.

NEWTON: Yeah, by the time I got there, maybe in past days ARAMCO really looked on itself as more important than the embassy but not by the time I got there. Our relations were very good, and I got to know the people in the Riyadh office, the government relations people. They'd been around a long time. They were very helpful. I think relations between the Con Gen (consul general) and ARAMCO were very good. I do remember that we got a visit from Scoop Jackson.

Q: The senator from--

NEWTON: From Washington State.

Q: From Washington, yeah.

NEWTON: I remember one of my first real introductions to Congress that the senior people at ARAMCO met him in the executive guest house, and these were people of the old ARAMCO. They'd been there since the late '30s or something. They were really good people and fine people and very knowledgeable, and Jackson began to lecture them about telling them about the oil business. It really was kind of funny. They were very polite, but I don't think he made a great impression on them because they knew a hell of a lot more about the oil business when they were asleep than he did when he was awake.

Q: Well, then after this time the I take it that I mean, was the subject of Israel something that every once in a while would crop up when you were trying to deal with something else, our relations?

NEWTON: Yeah, it would crop up from time to time. Faisal was pretty realistic, and he would bemoan the fact that the relationship with Israel would complicate relations with Saudi Arabia. Of course you didn't know when he would get on this kick about the Zionist Communist conspiracy, but it wasn't so much of an issue at that particular point. I mean there was, things were kind of on the freezer after the '67 war for a while. They didn't build up until the '73 war.

Q: Well, was the sort of the rumor accepted as fact that American planes had wiped out the Egyptian Air Force, was that still around?

NEWTON: No, that was largely wiped out within weeks, but of course when it was made at the time, it really created a huge uproar. No, that was not, but the Arabs were still in their kind of rejectionist mode. They just were still in shock. So it wasn't a big issue at the time.

Q: Well, then in '73 whither?

NEWTON: Yeah, what happened is I think it was maybe, I can't remember, maybe October or November of '72 the ambassador called me in and said, you have this offer. Well, I had gone down I should say. In summer of '72 I went down to help the chargé in Sana'a because we just had this five-person interest section with the visit of Secretary Rogers at the point in which we restored relations with North Yemen. Then I get this, and then we had appointed the new ambassador, Bill Crawford, and I was called in, maybe it was November, and Nick Thacher said to me, you've got an offer from Bill Crawford. He'd like to have you as his DCM, which was a very good deal for me. I mean I was still pretty junior. He said, "You don't have to accept. But it's a good offer. It might not come again." I sort of said, when do I leave. But I had to check with my wife. I knew she would want to come. So actually I went down in December to help Bill for the, because he was presenting his credentials. It just an amusing incident. I remember just as the morning I was to leave and the flights between Jeddah and Sana'a were not that common, maybe twice a week. I got this desperate cable from the embassy, this was the day before the credential ceremony. The Yemen band needs the music for the national anthem. So with the help of the admin officer, rushed over to the school because they had music sheets, and we copied all the parts, the page, all the parts, copied the page that had the national anthem on it. So I rushed them down, handed them to the admin officer in Yemen, and he rushed them over to the Yemen band so they could practice. So when the ceremony came we're standing there at attention. Bill is further to the front and they're playing the national anthem and then they continue on, and they break out into "God Save the Queen." I thought, "What the hell is this? What's happening?" Suddenly it came to me, the page on which I handed them the music at the bottom of the page had "My Country 'tis of Thee" at the bottom. So the Yemen band played the whole page. I always told Bill

he was the only American ambassador to have "God Save the Queen" for his credential ceremony.

Q: Well, you were in Yemen from when to when?

NEWTON: I got there then, I went back right after New Year's. I took the occasion over Christmas and New Year's to organize, lead a trip. We went all the way around Saudi Arabia, down to the sea. I had the ambassador's wife with me, which was great. It was wintertime and we came around and up through Riyadh and around the north, around Medina and back around. Then I went down. I had to leave my wife for some weeks back there in Jeddah. So I went down in early January, and I stayed until the summer of '73. For the first year and a half Bill was the ambassador, and he was funny how things turn out. He left right after the Fourth of July in '74. He said to me at the time that he was a candidate to go to Syria. He said, "Would you like to come to Syria as DCM?" I said, "Sure I'd love to come, but I don't think the department will let me go. Because you're leaving as ambassador, they'll insist I stay." In the end he didn't. In the end what happened is on the way back from home leave, he—

Q: He was in Norway.

NEWTON: This trekking in Norway, and he got the call about Rodger, that Rodger Davies had been murdered and he was sent directly to Nicosia. He never was able to even return to Yemen. So I had six months as chargé, and I must say in that time I decided not so hard running an embassy. I could do it, I thought. So I had six months practice at it, and it was an interesting period. There was a, just at the time that (_____) Hamdi the first military ruler had taken over. He'd thrown out the civilian government, and there was a lot going on. He was trying to get some American weapons to help it because he was having difficulty with the South, which was Marxist. There was an awful lot of political behind the scenes activity. So it was a very interesting time. Then I had, then Tom Scotes came as ambassador in January, and I stayed until July, finished my tour.

Q: Of seventy--

NEWTON: He came January '75.

Q: '75.

NEWTON: And I left in July of '75. Dave Ransom took my place.

Q: Well, now let's talk about Yemen at the time. You got there, who was the ruler?

NEWTON: There was a republican council. The two main people were Abdul Rahman al-Iryani and Ahmed Noaman who were two elder statesmen. But what had happened, as best I can put it, there were some disparate groups who had united in '62 to overthrow the imam. Tribal elements that the imam had misused who did not want a strong government, sort of classic western-style liberals, Arab nationalists, socialists, or just opportunists.

This group was coming apart after the, in the aftermath of the forced departure of the Egyptians these people took over the government. There was then almost a civil war in which the leftist socialists were defeated. But the other people began to conspire against each other especially the tribal types. In the, the thing was just slowly unraveling and Ibrahim al-Hamdi who was obviously ambitious and so forth and stepped in and took over.

Q: Hamdi was a--

NEWTON: Hamdi was the deputy chief of staff. He was an army lieutenant colonel, which was the highest rank at the time.

Q: Was there much of an army?

NEWTON: Not very effective, no, not much of an Army. Some several brigades with old, old Russian equipment.

Q: I sort of have a feeling that this government in Sana'a, but up in the mountains and all around were these tribal rulers who really didn't—

NEWTON: Yeah, this is still something—

Q: Their own—

NEWTON: This was of course encouraged by the Saudis who didn't want a strong government in Sana'a and who were paying subventions to many of the tribal sheiks. Yeah, it wasn't a strong government. It was very poor. We were of course building up an embassy, and we'd started an AID program, a good AID program and we started a USIS program with English language training and scholarships and so forth. So for us this was a period of build up, and it was a nice time to be there.

Q: Well, were the Yemenis, I mean at this point there were two Yemens.

NEWTON: Yes, yeah.

Q: Where the Yemenis you were in a, the northern—

NEWTON: Yeah, North Yemen. One of the Yemen Arab Republic.

Q: Were they sending their people abroad? I mean I keep thinking that rather large groups of Yemenis in Lackawanna and New York and—

NEWTON: Well, they've been immigrating for, since World War One at least. Many people went to the UK based because the way you got out of Yemen was by walking out and you'd walk down to Aden. Many of them signed on ships and so forth. They were coming to the United States, and they were doing work that other people didn't want to

do. The original work was steel mills and automobiles plants, but they were cleaning the floors and clean, they were cleaning oil tanks in New Jersey. Beyond that, later they were out in the Imperial Valley picking lettuce. There were lots of them, we have crews that were entirely Yemeni. They would live all several in a room and everything, save all their money and usually they, many of them went back to Yemen. Used the money to buy a small farm, buy a tractor. But there were, yeah, there were substantial numbers who'd come to the United States. Substantial for Yemen anyway.

Q: What was happening in South Yemen, the Marxist area?

NEWTON: Well, what had, in November 30th, they became independent, a less radical. There were two opposition groups, anti-British groups. The more radical, the NLF won and really annihilated the FLOSY, which was the Egyptian-supported group. But when they took over the NLF, National Liberation Front, the relatively more reasonable part of them took over, but there was a lot of corruption and so forth. Eventually the radicals, after about a year, forced them out and then it became very radical. They were killing a lot of tribal sheiks and other people. They were really surviving on Soviet aid. The Soviets were training the Army, the East Germans were training the intelligence services, police. The Cubans were training the militia. It had become very Marxist and very pro-Soviet. But there was a sense among Yemenis that they were real countries. So they were nevertheless contacts between the two. I can remember the British ambassador coming up from Aden one time with his Land Rover and just filling it with food to bring back because there was so little food available in the South. For example they had nationalized the fishermen. So then and when you bought fish, you bought a bag of fish for five bucks or something. You'd get fish heads and fish tails and everything because the fishermen soon realized there was no need to throw anything away. They would just throw it all in these bags and sell it. The amount of food available was really limited, and when the South Yemeni president came up one time, it was kind of scandalous because they went through the soup in Ta'izz like a bunch of locusts buying everything in sight. The South was really poor and poor but radical.

Q: Well, were there at least decent relations between the two Yemenis at that point?

NEWTON: It's hard to say because the South was organizing a guerilla campaign in the border area against them and supporting them anti-government guerillas who were controlling significant areas around the border. But there were contacts between the two governments. They did continue to talk to each other. We had an interesting, I remember one time when I was charge there was an Islamic summit going on in Pakistan, and I got called into the foreign ministry and asked for help because the southern Yemenis wanted to go to the conference but hadn't been invited. So they got in touch with the North Yemen and asked can North Yemen help. North Yemen didn't really have any contacts with Pakistan to speak of. So they asked me if I would, if the U.S. government could help. So I don't know what happened. I passed it on anyway.

Q: Yow did you find dealing with the government there?

NEWTON: Oh very easy. The Yemenis were very nice reasonable people. I made a lot of good friends, which helped me when I came back as ambassador. No, we were, we did have a number of issues and especially the Soviet influence. We were trying to reduce the Soviet influence there, and I was talking quietly to Abdullah (inaudible) who was the foreign minister at the time. He was a southerner and had been in charge of FLOSY (Front for the Liberation of South Yemen) this pro-Egyptian group that had been wiped out. They were, but they had ties by this time to the Saudis and so forth. (Inaudible) eventually got exiled. But that was an issue we were pressing on and, but we were a substantial aid donor and so forth, and our personal relations with the Yemenis were very good.

Q: What did you, in the first place we didn't have any relations with South Yemen.

NEWTON: No, no. We had had it only for about a year after they became independent, and then they'd broken with us.

Q: Did the British keep something there?

NEWTON: Yeah, the British still had an embassy there. Yeah.

Q: Did was there oil or in the offing or not?

NEWTON: At that point there was some, oil had not yet been discovered in Yemen, but there were, there were some efforts to find it or at least to get concessions. But the Yemeni government was always broke. At that point the people had more money because they had all these remittances coming in from Saudi Arabia. But the government was broke.

Q: Did, how was life there for you and your family?

NEWTON: Life was pretty simple, but we really enjoyed it. We had a pretty small house, but actually the house had been, was supposed to be prepared for the ambassador, but the, his wife took one look at the renovations being done and said she didn't want any part of it. [cough] So she stayed up at the top of this five-story house where the chargé had his quarters, beautiful place, but these were all fairly simple. There was a, we could--. I always liked to travel, and I could do much more travel at that point than I could do in '66. I got along very well with Bill Crawford. We both had a strong interest in the country, in archaeology and traveling. So we went a lot of places together.

Q: I remember when I interviewed Bill, he was quite interested and felt very pleased about the getting Yemenis—

So where did you go?

NEWTON: From there I had right after—

Q: By the way before we leave, did the Egyptians have any role there by the time you were there?

NEWTON: Very limited role. They were not liked at all. Some of their soldiers had been killed when they were pulling out at the very end because they had really run the country like an imperial power. No, what—Tom Scotes came in January, and I went with him on his calls and everything, and then I said I think I should get out of sight because I'd been there and people knew me and were used to dealing with me. So I took a couple of week's leave, and while I was on leave, I got word that my father had died. My parents were living at the same place as my sister. They were living in Venezuela, and so I flew out suddenly. While I was there I got sort of an offer with a, just that to be Near East division chief in INR (Intelligence and Research). This was a little strange because this was the remember Kissinger's GLOP program.

Q: Uh huh, Global Outlet Program.

NEWTON: Yeah, Global Outlet Policy or Program. I had said yeah, I think that's a great idea. I'd love to do it. I think it would be nice if I could go to another Muslim country in East Asia or something like that. The only thing I would ask is I'd like to do it overseas and not go to Washington. So naturally they assigned me to this, or wanted to assign me to this job and it counted because INR was not NEA so it was ridiculous. Anyway, I couldn't really even talk to people and find out well, what are the alternatives and so forth. But it was okay. So it sounded like a good job. I took it. I spent two years as the Near East division chief.

Q: Being seventy--

NEWTON: '75-'77.

Q: '75-'77.

NEWTON: What's the name, Hal Saunders became the head of INR, and of course he was his main interest was the Middle East. So this was good for us. We had very good people in the office. So I, I found it a good experience. When I came, what had happened, there were nine analysts. To show how things changed, before I came there were five in the Near East section and four in the South Asian section. When I arrived, I had six and South Asia had three. By the time I left I had seven and South Asia had two. After I left sometime after I left, they split the Near East division into two parts, which it is split now.

Q: When we're talking about South Asia, we're talking about—

NEWTON: India, Pakistan.

Q: Afghanistan.

NEWTON: And Iran.

Q: And Iran.

NEWTON: Yeah. Yeah. So it was a good job. I learned a lot. I got into the intelligence side of things. I must say I enjoyed the job.

Q: How did you find INR particularly lately has been touted as being one of the most agile and accurate predictors of what—

NEWTON: Yeah, I think it has always been that really. I thought in general it was then. But the key was that we insisted it was our right to report directly to the secretary, and we would have fights with NEA especially with Israel and Arab-Israel Affairs because they, our analyst was very good, but he was given sometimes to outrageous overstatement. Sam Roberts, hew as a Jewish from New York and was sort of that kind of personality. Spoke, talked a lot and was a little expansive, but he was a very good analyst, and they were unhappy with us for example in the election when Menachem Begin first ran. The embassy and IAI were predicting a labor party victory. We said the election's a dead heat. It's too close to call. In the end Begin won a narrow victory.

Q: Herat came in, yeah.

NEWTON: Yeah.

Q: Not too long before he had been considered sort of a laughable little—

NEWTON: Well, and he was still officially a terrorist. The British wouldn't let him into the country until he became prime minister. But I mean there were those kind of arguments with, over because they were subject to pressure from Israel and so forth. They didn't, I remember when the first settler movement, called the "Gush Emunim," the block of the faithful, and they were very unhappy with us because in one of our reports we referred to them as extremists. I refused to take it out. I said, "If the word mean what it means, if it means anything these people are zealots. They're extremists." But other than that I liaised with NEA, and I enjoyed the job. It wasn't, I didn't want to stay the rest of my career in INR or anything. As a foreign service officer, I wouldn't have anyway. But—

Q: Well, how was INR staffed at that time? Did you have a significant civil service or permanent cadre along with foreign service officers?

NEWTON: Yeah, I was split. Probably I suggest probably at the time, sixty percent civil service, forty percent foreign service.

Q: How did you find that mixture?

NEWTON: I found it very good because you had a lot of continuity. The analysts were very capable. But it was good, the foreign services came in and provided a fresh perspective on things and provided an operational perspective. But we also had good people at the top, and that made a, made a difference.

Q: Did you get any feel for the capabilities and the effectiveness of the CIA, what they were feeding to you?

NEWTON: Yeah, we were often skeptical of reports because the problem the CIA has always had is they keep rotating people because it's their career. Whereas the INR analysts stayed in their jobs. They may get promoted to division chief and maybe to office director, but they didn't rotate. So they weren't English language majors who had been brought in and they were rotated from one area to the other. So I thought we had a lot more expertise. But on the whole, I mean, I think the CIA was very good. I just think we were smaller, more agile, and we had better expertise at the analytical level.

Q: Well, then now did you feel that you were used, I mean the reports that you would give that went up the both to the secretary and the—

NEWTON: Yeah, very much so. At that point in '75 the Lebanon civil war had started, and we were doing two memoranda a day to the secretary, all-source memoranda. They were very good, and we had one particularly good analyst Graham Bannerman who took charge of that, and I knew he was good. So I let him run it, and he did an excellent job.

Q: And so you left there in '77?

NEWTON: '77, I then got selected for senior training, and I elected to go the National War College. I didn't want to move, and also I thought that would be better for my, going to a university might be good for second career, but I was still focused on my first career. So I and I had a very good year. I really enjoyed the National War College.

Q: '77-'78

NEWTON: '77-'78.

Q: Well, how was your particular class? Were there many foreign service in it?

NEWTON: Yeah, the breakdown at the time, and when I went back later was still very much the same, was roughly to put it roughly one-quarter Army, one-quarter sea service. So forty Army, forty sea services, which would be twenty-eight Navy, ten Marines and two Coast Guard and then forty Air Force and forty civilians. Half of the civilians would be foreign service, twenty, and out of those two would be AID and two would be USIA (United States Information Agency) and sixteen would be state. It was, the way it was organized the year wasn't so great in the sense that the, you always shifted from what do they call them. Well, in the classes you had some seminars and that changed. But you had a section, and traditionally these sections, the people you started with you stayed with the

whole year. In our year they rotated these sections as well as the seminars. So you got to know everybody in the class, but you didn't get to know people that well. I think that harmed the class, and they dropped that experiment. The best, the most successful person in the class was Fred Franks who later became Seventh Corps commander in Desert Storm and got his fourth star, and then there was another Army officer who made a third star. Several of us later got ambassadorships out of the foreign service side.

Q: How did you find, what were the things you were getting out of that?

NEWTON: Well, I dealing, getting, I had been in the Army three years. So I knew the military to a degree but getting to know the rest of the military and getting to talk about national security at the senior level, integrating it all. That's what I think I mostly got out of it.

Q: Well, then where did you take your trip?

NEWTON: Probably not a good choice. I went to Africa. I thought maybe this would have some relations. We went to Senegal, the Gambia, Ivory Coast and Nigeria.

Q: How did you come away from your Africa trip?

NEWTON: I got away, that I'd come away basically. I didn't find it.

Q: You didn't find it.

NEWTON: I didn't find it all that valuable. No. Maybe I should've gone to a nicer place.

Q: Well, then in, we're talking about now what seventy—

NEWTON: So that was '78.

Q: '78 and where, what happened then?

NEWTON: Well, funny, in December I was the first person to get, foreign service person to get told where I would be assigned. I was going as DCM to Damascus. I was really happy. that was a really good job. I was an 01 by that point. Then, but then I had to wait because I was, it was a stretch assignment, which wasn't so unusual in those days. But personnel had someone at grade, there was someone who had a medical issue and so forth. The ambassador, it was Dick Murphy who wanted me for and, but it, the whole process took ninety days and finally I remember Tom Caroline calling me up on Friday saying, "Congratulations, you've been paneled." So I was really feeling good over the weekend. Monday morning, I got a message to call him. I called him up. He said you can't tell anyone, but Dick Murphy is leaving. He's going to the Philippines and Talcott Seelye is going to be the new ambassador. So I had to start all over again. I had to meet Talcott and get his approval and so forth. The result is it wasn't until May that I got my orders, and by that time I was getting ready nervous because if anything had happened of

course, all the good jobs would've been picked over long before then. But in any case he agreed. So I went off I think in July, I went to Damascus.

Q: Were you in Damascus from when to when?

NEWTON: From July, okay that's July '78 to July '81. I replaced Bob Pelletreau. And I arrived just two or three weeks before Camp David, which of course changed our whole relationship. So our AID program, I remember, was 120 million dollars a year. It went from 90 to 60 to 45 to 30 to nothing and after I left they began taking money back that wasn't—

Q: What did Camp--. Well, what, when you went out there, what was, let's first take Syria per se. What sort of government, how were things running at that time?

NEWTON: Well, the Baath Assad was by that time firmly in charge. He'd gotten through the '73 war. Gotten through the Lebanon civil war. The Baath was, there was no, at least when I arrived, there was no real opposition. Later in my tour the Brotherhood started—

Q: You hadn't done what the number on that city? What was that?

NEWTON: In Hamāh where they had, but first in Hims they had gone into the artillery officer's cadet school and sprayed it with fire and killed several dozen cadets, and then things really started in Aleppo as well. But at the time I came it was pretty quiet. Talcott came shortly after that, and then we had Camp David, and Assad said, I'm really sorry that happened. I wanted good relations, but this is really going to harm relations." Talcott said, "Well, I hope it won't." Assad said, "Well I wish it wouldn't, but it will." We had a couple of bombs went off in front of the embassy. I mean they were basically harmless, powder charges. But then relations got pretty frigid.

Q: Well, what, why did Assad take the attitude of Camp David, which is essentially a settling of the Egyptian-Israeli situation?

NEWTON: Well, except it settled the Egyptian-Israeli situation at the expense of the Syrians and the Palestinians. I mean there was some language in Camp David, but it was just language about Palestinian rights. But basically it took the Egyptian military out of the equation so that war was no longer an issue. It left the Syrians and Palestinians high and dry.

Q: Well, is there any thought that Assad might say okay, I'd better get in on this thing and do something or not?

NEWTON: Well, I don't think there were any active interests on either side at that point. The Syrians obviously felt at that point they'd be in a very weak position. Their fear was they were, they were afraid that the Palestinians would jump, and the Palestinians were afraid the Jordanians would jump and that the Israelis would pick them off one at the time. In fact the Israelis later did pick off the Jordanians. Assad was trying to keep--. He

had bad relations with Arafat, and he was supporting other extremist Palestinian organizations. So there really wasn't much scope for U.S. diplomacy.

Q: What were the Syrians doing in Lebanon while you were there?

NEWTON: The Syrians of course had gone in because of the civil war, and we couldn't really object because they were going in to save the Christians from the Palestinians. But there was, there was a certain amount of bombing on both sides, and the Israelis would get the short end of the air campaigns. Trying to remember, I frankly don't remember so much as I've been involved in other things in Lebanon, and I can't kind of pick out that period anymore. But there's a, the Syrians were getting the short end of it whenever they tried to control Israeli bombing of PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) controlled areas to the south, they would regularly get shot down.

Q: What were you, what sort of embassy did we have and what were you doing?

NEWTON: Well, I was the DCM. One specific job I had which I enjoyed, I was a liaison to a Syrian Jewish community. So I kind of quietly kept track of what was happening to them and trying to help them when they get in trouble, and many of them were trying to flee a little by little usually to get out through Turkey. Of course there was a great deal of congressional interest in this—

Q: Were you getting involved with Steven Solarz trying to—

NEWTON: Oh yeah.

Q: (_____)

NEWTON: Maidens, that's right.

Q: There was this group that was trying to get Jewish young women to come to the United States.

NEWTON: Yeah, a lot of young men were escaping so there were no husbands for these women. So they had sort of fake proxy marriages, but of course it had no validity when it got to the States. They never married these men. But the Syrians went along with it. They figured it was a gesture to the U.S. But yeah, we were kind of keep track of that. I would be in touch with the head of the community also with the one person who was trying to keep us informed was the head of the Copper and Workers' Guild, which was a Jewish guild and also with the chief rabbi. We would get periodic visitors. I remember Senator Ribicoff coming. It was amusing because the head of the community was this little old man, Mr. Tuta, Mr. Mulberry, and he lived in this run down house in the old city which only one or two rooms was habitable. But he would bring the council together. Ribi, no it wasn't Ribicoff, I'm sorry. It was Steve Solarz I think. In any case Solarz was being Solarz, and they were offering him food and drink, and he was in a hurry, and he was refusing their food and drink which in the Middle East is insulting. Tuta to show he was

educated kept trying to talk French. Everybody else was talking Arabic. I'm trying to interpret for all these people, and they're all talking at once. I wasn't able to get it all. But in any case at one point he refuses, and Tuta calls across the room and says, "Mr. Solarz you can't keep refusing our food and drink. You're among Arabs." I thought I wouldn't translate that for him because of course they would say we're Jewish Arabs. Yeah. But I thought, that's one I'll pass. I won't interpret.

Q: Did was at that point was everything static on the Golan Heights?

NEWTON: Yes, yeah it was. It was—

Q: It still is.

NEWTON: It still is. Yeah. Yeah. There's nothing really going on. It was, I enjoyed the tour. I enjoyed Syria, but it was not a good time to be there. Our AID program was going downhill.

Q: How, I mean you were there during '79 when all hell broke loose in Iran. How did that, did that have any reflection in our embassy was taken over by—

NEWTON: Yeah.

Q: (_____)

NEWTON: Yeah it did. I think Assad was appalled by this privately, but the Syrians were supporting the new Iranian government. We would have regular demonstrations by the Iranians because further up the hill was the Iranian embassy, and they were having all kinds of elections for various things, and there are a lot of Iranians in town. There's an Iranian shrine Sayidda Zeinab, a big shrine in Damascus. So they would come march down the street. I was talking to someone yesterday. It was amusing because we were right across the street from the Iraqi embassy, and there was a rapprochement at one point between the Syrians and the Iraqis, but that had broken down. But then the war had, of course, had happened. When the Iranians came down marching down the street, we never knew whether they would turn left and demonstrate against us or turn right and demonstrate against the Iraqi embassy. Yeah, there was a lot of Iranians around town and so forth, had pictures of Khomeini everywhere.

Q: Well, what about terrorist groups, Abu Nidal and others. I mean was Syria at that time hosting the terrorists?

NEWTON: It was hosting some extremists. The main one was the popular front for the liberation of Palestine slash or dash general command, which was pretty radical and other smaller radical groups. But I think trying to remember at that point, I don't think at that point we had incidents of terrorism traced back to Syria. We did have one unpleasant event when a Pakistan airliner hijack showed up in Damascus and sat there for a whole week. I spent the week at the airport, and they were threatening to execute the few

Americans on board. They were supposedly three Americans on board, two of whom were drug dealers because they had been on an internal pack flight. Plus a Canadian drug dealer. One of the Americans turned out not to be an American. He was, he had a fake passport. The other one was under sealed indictment, and his father came out and gave us a really hard time. His father was a lawyer, and he was probably involved in the drug trade too. Anyway, we arranged to have him, with the Syrians, to have him escorted on a flight to Frankfurt, and when he got off, two DEA agents grabbed him and took him. But the other one was a, the son of a friend of then Vice President Bush, and he'd been trekking in the Himalayas, and we were very anxious about him particularly, and we finally got him out. The Syrians being the Syrians, when they finally came, I was there when they came off the plane. It was like, what was it Pigpen in Charlie Brown. There was this huge cloud, imagine this huge cloud of dirty air. These people had been on the plane for a week. Actually two weeks I think because they were a week in Pakistan. These Syrians then grabbed them all up and took them, simply arrested them and took them off to a military hospital to give them examinations, but shut them up, wouldn't let them communicate with anyone. We had a hard time convincing them this was not the smart thing to do, not to let them communicate.

Other than that, well, I can remember we had a kid I think he was a son of an editor of *Time* or *Newsweek* or a senior editor of some magazine. Anyway he was in Jordan and he didn't, couldn't get a, didn't have a Syrian visa, and so he decided the hell with that. I want to go to Syria. So he went to some remote spot and walked across the border. Then as he came to the hotel he realized he'd been in Israel and had Israeli stamps in his passport, and he thought that's probably not a good idea. So he tore the page out of the passport and checked into the hotel, gave them the passport. Of course he was arrested within about thirty minutes and had a very hard time getting him out. We had a, I had a contact who was I think the head of the court of appeals and through him managed to get him out. He immediately hit me for a bad visa case, which I had to give him in return. But to get this kid out. No, it was professionally it was not a lot of fun because it was all going downhill. But I enjoyed the country and it was—

Q: How about life with you and your wife and you had, how old were your kids then?

NEWTON: Yeah, our kids were in the local school. I was also my other job, I was the head of the school board, which I enjoyed. I used to tell the ambassador, you may be number one in the embassy, but I'm number one in the schools so keep your mitts off the schools, which he did. His successor did not. I mean this was joking of course. But we built up the school, and I got a lot of satisfaction out of the school. It was nine grades, up to nine grades. It was a nice little school. But and we had a lot of social life. Syrians are very nice people. I could travel a lot, and it was all very interesting, but there was nothing in my professional side that I could look at that was advancing and getting better. Our relations were going south.

Q: Well, how did the, had the Iran-Iraq war started by the time you'd left or not?

NEWTON: Yeah, I left in the summer of '81. Yeah, it had started in September 1980.

Q: How was that going? I mean how was that seen as—

NEWTON: Well, in the first year it was going pretty well for the Iraqis, and their relations were very hostile between Iraq and Syria because Syria was supporting Iran. I remember at some point the chargé going outside Damascus to some exercise. The kind of regime they had all the college students and everything enrolled and youth programs and military training, and so they put on an exercise, and it was really kind of revealing the exercise. It was narrated by Rifaat Assad, the president's brother. The scenario was that Israel had treacherously attacked. Syria was defending itself and was managing to hold off and even push back the Israelis. Meanwhile perfidious Iraqis were taking the opportunity to attack Syria from the east, and they were dropping these student battalions in a blocking position, and they actually dropped some of them out of an aircraft and everything. It was kind of silly anyway. But I was a little bit taken aback by this, by this scenario of (_____) one Arab country attacking another.

Q: That's, did, what about, Assad was fully in control, but I always think of the bazaar in Damascus that has been going for time immemorial. Was there a strong merchant element there?

NEWTON: Yeah, there was traditionally a strong merchant class in Damascus. They were suffering because of the stagnation, economic stagnation. Of course what happened, the regime became more and more corrupt and Assad was really not trying very hard anymore. Basically what happened all these merchant families, they would cook up some senior person in the Baathi-Alawi regime had an angel who would give them the political influence, and then they'd share the profits. So it was, and that's still the case.

Q: Did you see, I mean looking at this. I always thought that Syria had the potential to be a minor but still sustainable economic power in the area because it has, doesn't it have oil?

NEWTON: Yeah, it has—

Q: Natural gas and all that

NEWTON: It has oil. The oil is beginning to decline, but it doesn't have to spend money importing oil. Basically it used the, used the oil, exported and imported others in its place. Others went into the refinery. It has a good agricultural sector. Socialism harmed it, and it has a very expert merchant class so it could be much more prosperous than it has been.

Q: Well, did you see the Assad regime running this for the good of their tribe, the Alawis?

NEWTON: The Alawis, yeah.

Q: I mean was this kind of the name of the game?

NEWTON: It was for the benefit of some of the Alawis, and there were a number of Sunnis in mixed in with it. But the Alawis have complained that they haven't really benefited as much, maybe more in those days. The Alawis, the Sunnis who considered the Alawis uncultured, uneducated resented their behavior. But the Assad, it was, Assad had brought stability to the country at least.

Q: Well, did you, what was the role, what was happening with the Muslim Brotherhood at this point?

NEWTON: Well, the Brotherhood was building up in secret, and it came out in the open when it killed all these cadets in Aleppo.

Q: Was that during your time?

NEWTON: Yeah and then there was a number of terrorist incidents, hand grenades thrown in stores and other places in Damascus, and they even killed a Soviet colonel in the (_____). Then the troubles really started in Hamāh. When they rose up in Hamāh, they massacred the Baathi official security police, army. So the government certainly was facing a direct challenge to their regime. Assad held off for quite a while because he knew this would have a great affect on this popularity and, but in the end he was convinced by his security people that they couldn't, they had to do something. Then the security people went in with a lot of violence and brutality and did a lot of destruction as well in the old city of Hamāh and put it down violently.

Q: Did—

NEWTON: Part of this had become because the security people were keeping such a tight rein on Hamāh, which was known to be a stronghold of the Brotherhood. For example they would break into people's houses at night, which meant that these Muslims had to, their women had to sleep fully dressed. That kind of thing really angers people.

Q: Were we, how did we view the Brotherhood? I mean, the worse of the two evils or where did we feel they were coming from?

NEWTON: Well, they were pretty extreme. I think basically we were not taking sides. We were just observers. We didn't really have a dog in that fight. We were basically observing the regime. It was quite clear the regime really wanted to, it could put it down. In the end it did. It was also a good bit of killing up in Aleppo where they moved an entire armored division to surround the city and then went in with the Alawi security forces.

Q: Did we, were we sort, I take it we were kept pretty far away from all of that sort of action.

NEWTON: Yeah, I mean the city of Aleppo was sealed off. I remember I had been out on a trip to the desert, and I just came to the main road, and there was just an endless stream. It was the division trains of this armored division moving up to Aleppo for an hour, just one truck after the other. Yeah, no Assad finally was convinced he had to put it down. Once he let the security people loose, they were really, they really acted with a lot of brutality.

Q: How did we find, could you get out and around or did you feel yourself—

NEWTON: No, you could get out and around. I always liked to travel and well, I traveled all over the country. The only, you had to have permission to go down on the Golan, but you could easily get permission to go to Qunaytirah, the martyred city because when the Israelis pulled out as part of the Golan agreement they just destroyed the town deliberately, just smashed all the buildings.

Q: It was sort of kept as a monument, wasn't it.

NEWTON: Yeah, and the Syrians didn't rebuild it. They kept it as a kind of outdoor museum to point out all the evils of the Israelis.

Q: What about dealing with the Syrian foreign ministry and all? How did you find that?

NEWTON: They were pretty good. The direct, we had a lot of contact with the director of American affairs and the director of Western European affairs. Inaudible was the foreign minister at the time. He was not an easy person to deal with. Not a particularly good ministry, but we could do our business. It wasn't a problem.

Q: Were there attempts as part of well, the American government specifically the State Department to see, is there any, we can work with Assad or were we just sort of let's take their course?

NEWTON: Now we were willing to work with the Syrians to the degree anything could be done. I mean they were obviously a major factor in Lebanon. But they were difficult to deal with. I mean there was a, at one point they were threatening King Hussein. They moved a couple of army division down there. If you remember during Black September, they had tried to do something, but the Assad at the time, the head of the Air Force had withheld the Air Force, which made a big difference. But we didn't have a lot in common to--. Where we could, we tried to cooperate with them, but there wasn't a whole lot to do.

Q: Were we carrying any messages from the Israelis as a go between there at all?

NEWTON: Yeah, we did. Phil Habib was there. They were trying to solve problems in Lebanon and Middle East, and yeah, we were, and Habib was because of the civil war in Lebanon was shuttling back and forth going to Israel and going to Damascus and Beirut, and you remember the Israeli invasion took place at the time.

Q: Yeah, how did that, there was quite a fight with the Syrians at that point.

NEWTON: Yeah, the Syrians, they tried to defend themselves. They got bloodied a bit. Their real concern obviously and always strategically was that if the Syrians, if the Israelis had a free range to come up Bekaa Valley, they could then go through the back door into Damascus and bypass all the Golan defenses. So they were not about to give way on that, and they held on although they took something of a beating.

Q: They took a beating, but my recollection is that the Israelis got a bloody nose too. I mean it was not—

NEWTON: Yeah, the Syrians fought--.

Q: It was no longer a—

NEWTON: The Syrians got the short end of it, but they fought and fought pretty well because this was critical for them. But the main interest was going in after the Palestinians and—

Q: How did, what were we gathering about the Palestinians. The Palestinians weren't a particularly a beloved group in the Arab world. What about the Syrians? I mean were they a useful tool or what?

NEWTON: Useful tool to whom?

Q: Syria, the Palestinians, the PLO.

NEWTON: No, relations were not good between the Syrians and the PLO because the Syrians distrusted the PLO and thought they might make some kind of deal and leave the Syrians out in the cold. They didn't like Arafat. They considered him unreliable and so forth. But they couldn't, when the Palestinians were taking it on the chin from the Israelis, they couldn't, they didn't help them that much, but they couldn't really oppose them.

Q: Well, was there sort of a, I mean obviously the Israelis were not beloved in Syria, but was there a real revulsion. There were massacres in the Palestinian camps and all?

NEWTON: Yeah, this of course yeah, among Arabs certainly and well, I mean they were pretty upset about it. The Israelis were, the Israelis provided all the lighting and everything so the Christian militia could operate at night killing people. I and if you looked out, I could see much of it on television, and I remember seeing we recently had this dispute about white phosphorus. The Israelis used white phosphorus against the Palestinians in West Beirut, and I remember that AUB (American University of Beirut) said they had the bodies of young children in their morgue, and they smoldered for several days because of the white phosphorus. Quite a few, and there were reports of people jumping into the sea and everything, but of course did not good with white phosphorus. It was pretty horrible against civilians.

Q: Well, then you left there when?

NEWTON: I left there in ’81. At that point I didn’t want to go back to the United States. I’d just come out, and financially I wanted, and I preferred to be overseas anyway, but financially it was better for me. But I was facing the problem that all the people I’d worked for were either retired or were gone. Dick Murphy had gone off to the Philippines. Talcott, yeah, Talcott was retiring. Bill Brewer was retired or gone. So I didn’t have anybody really asking for me. So I was trying to figure out what to do next. By chance I was chargé when the Foreign Service Act of 1980 was coming into effect, and personnel was going around and DAS (Department of Administrative Services) was going around to post briefing us on the act. I couldn't go to the one in Cairo because I was chargé. So I went to the later in Jeddah, and Jim Placke was the DCM there, and he really put the sales pitch on me to come back to Jeddah to be the political counselor. I thought about it, and in the meantime had an offer to go to Khartoum as DCM. I didn’t think this would do anything for me. Another DCM-ship I’d be in the AF bureau where I’d never worked. So I told personnel that I didn’t want to go to Khartoum, but I volunteered to go back to Saudi Arabia because I thought, look if I’m going to go overseas, I need to get more contacts. I need to go someplace where people will see me and I’ll get to be known again. That meant the only possibilities were the political counselor jobs in Cairo and Jeddah. But Cairo was taken up by the personnel officer who was going there himself, and so I thought well, why not. I’ll go back to Jeddah. I have friends there. So I went back, and as it turned out Bob Newman was the ambassador, but then he got removed. He got in a dispute and was removed. Who ends up coming but Dick Murphy? So I ended up, I was supposed to work for Dick in Damascus, but I got to work for him Saudi Arabia. And I had a good time.

Q: So you were in Saudi Arabia from when to when?

NEWTON: From the middle of ’81 to the middle of ’84.

Q: Do you think this is a good place to stop?

NEWTON: Yeah, probably. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Q: Okay, so we’ll pick this up—. [break in taping] (_____) Saudi Arabia from ’81 to—

NEWTON: ’84. And then from there I went to Baghdad. I took a chance going as principal officer for the interest section. It was a COM job, but it was, it was obvious that relations were coming, and I took a chance that I could succeed like Dick Parker did in Algiers and get picked as ambassador, and it worked.

Q: So we’ll pick this up. We’ll hit Saudi Arabia first.

NEWTON: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Great. [break in taping]

Okay, I'm going to switch to the next tape now.

NEWTON: Okay.

Q: We're off to Saudi Arabia.

NEWTON: Okay.

Q: You went there when?

NEWTON: I went there in the summer of '84.

Q: And you were there until when?

NEWTON: I'm sorry. What am I saying? I went there in the summer of '81, and I was there until '84. It was a funny assignment in a way, and maybe I mentioned this the last time.

Q: Yeah, you were sent back.

NEWTON: Yeah, because I didn't want to go as DCM to Khartoum. All the people who helped me get jobs, good jobs were retired or gone off somewhere else. So I just decided I wanted to be in the action. So I had the DCM really put the arm in me. He was a friend of mine. So I did. I enjoyed it. Now we spent I would say an awful lot of time, the issue we spent the most time on was Lebanon again, Dick Murphy and working for Dick Murphy. We spent two summers working constantly on Lebanon I remember.

Q: Where, how did Lebanon—

NEWTON: Well, trying to end the Lebanon civil war, which had become very violent. The Saudis, we were working very closely with the Saudis, especially with Prince Bandar who was then the national security advisor to King Fahd and Rafik Hariri, the late Rafi Hariri who was essentially his deputy. Constant, I can remember then Dick got called back, I remember, to in would've been the summer of '83 went back as assistant secretary. Rocky Suddarth who was the DCM went off on leave for about three weeks. I remember being chargé for that time and missing a good two nights sleep a week because it was Ramadan and work all day and then grab a bite to eat. Then of course Saudi Arabia would wake up at night because it was Ramadan, and the department would wake up. Sometimes I'd just go straight through and just go home and change clothes and go back to the office. We were really busy on Lebanon. That was the big. Also on the peace process issue, the Reagan initiative. It was an interesting time.

Q: Well, let's talk about Lebanon. What piece of the action or what did the Saudis have to do there? I mean, what were we working with the Saudis on in Lebanon?

NEWTON: Well, the Saudis were working for peace and stability because that's what they value in the Middle East because they have so much to lose. They had been giving subventions especially to the Sunni Muslims, and they were working. But they were trying to work with all the parties to get them to end the fighting. I remember the one, a Saudi minister who had been military attaché in Lebanon and went back as ambassador was joking with us one day. He said, he checked back with his embassy when he was away and said, "How are things?" They said, "Well," said, "There was one bomb went off nearby." He said, "Are we up to date on all our payments?" They said, "Well, we are except for this one person. We couldn't find him." He said, "Find him. Pay him." So but and that's what they did. We later when I was working in ARN that's how it succeeded. IT was Saudi pressure and Saudi money, which is something that always appeals to Lebanese politicians.

Q: Well, were we working, I mean were we seeing the thing the same way the Saudis were?

NEWTON: Yes, very much so. We both want, we both realized there was a need for reform so that the Muslims would have a fairer share of the power. That was the only way you could stabilize the country. So no, we did. We were both working to try to bring about an end to the killing.

Q: Did, well, how stood things with Saudi Arabia during, this was the time of the Iran-Iraq war was waged, wasn't it, at this time?

NEWTON: Yeah, just that, that was just the first year of the war. The Saudis were very concerned about that. Saudis had always been concerned about Iraq. I remember being in the 1970s when there was very clear that the Saudis viewed their number one threat to be Iraq. When I was back the second time, they had been concerned about Iraqis trying to bribe tribesmen in Northern Saudi Arabia because they had a very large army. There was kind of long border with Saudi Arabia. So the Saudis were, the Saudis were trying very hard to, as they always do, to keep things calm. They were trying to get along with Iran. We were of course very angry at the Iranians. We had the hostage crisis. But the Saudis kept trying to keep lines open to the Iranians just to try to keep the lid on things.

Q: Were you there, had any of the sort of Shiite business gotten involved in Saudi Arabia taking over the grand mosque or anything, demonstrations or anything of that nature while you were there?

NEWTON: No, the earlier time there were radicals Sunnis, Saudi Sunnis had taken over the, taken over the shrine in Mecca. But at this point the Saudis had some concern about Iranian propaganda because they were always very sensitive about their Shia in the eastern provinces. But most of the Shia followed an Ayatollah from Iraq who was the quiet school of--. But they were concerned about maybe some of the younger people being infected by Khomeini. They always kept a pretty tight lid on the Shia in any case.

Q: Were we looking at all at that time on the what the religious schools were doing in Saudi Arabia?

NEWTON: Well, it's funny because as I was, towards the end I was trying to say to people in the embassy and among the Saudis as I could, do you realize what you're doing? I mean, you've brought in all these Muslim Brotherhood teachers and others who are theologically compatible with your (_____) School, (_____) and so forth. But they have a separate political agenda. You are using as course material if you will and people to emulate, you're using people like (_____) from Egypt and (_____) of Pakistan, fundamentalists but who are also very anti-authoritarian. Don't you realize you're infecting your students? These people are theologically compatible, but you're, they're being infected with this political message. But nobody was really focused much on that at the time. Well, one of the problems that of course came about that we still have to do deal with this, that the Saudis are very concerned that Khomeini could spread his fundamentalist view of Shia Islam around the Middle East and that it would infect the Sunni majority. They therefore really stepped up their own propaganda efforts and a lot of money, and they ended up spreading a lot of very radical Sunni fundamentalism around the area, which they funded. They built mosques. They paid for preachers. They ended up radicalizing themselves, a lot of the Sunnis, but they did stay Sunni radicals. They, but they were so anxious to block the Khomeini message that they created I think a lot of mischief for themselves and for us.

Q: Well, during this period, was this were you there I can't remember, when Israel went into Lebanon?

NEWTON: Let me see. When did, yes, yes, I believe so, it was '82, was it?

Q: I think it was '82.

NEWTON: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: This must've been, I mean this is a really nasty period, and of course no matter how you do it, we sort of have that umbilical cord to the—

NEWTON: Yeah, it was really nasty. Yeah, before that I remember Phil Habib and then he continued his efforts, and I don't know if you read the book about, I forgot whose book it was the Israelis how much they harassed Phil Habib. They buzzed his helicopter and—

Q: Yeah, and I've had a long interview with Bob Dillon too who was in Lebanon at the time. I think Cursed is the Peacemaker. It's a book that—

NEWTON: Yes, that's the book.

Q: Get involved with.

NEWTON: Yeah, the, yeah, it was bad and cost us a lot and was, it was pretty disgraceful. I mean the Israelis they provided lighting so that the Christian militia could continue their work at night in Sabra Shatila. Anyone who knew anything about Lebanon, anything, knew that if you left the Christian militia in the camps after the assassination of Bashir Gemayel, they would kill every living thing in there. Basically that's what they did. The other thing that disturbed me was, and people didn't talk about it, but recently we had the talk about American forces using white phosphorus. The Israelis used white phosphorus against civilians in West Beirut. I remember a report, AUB hospital said they had bodies of some small children in their morgue that smoldered for several days because they'd been killed by white phosphorus, people jumping into the water hoping this would save them. But it didn't of course because white phosphorus will burn until it chemically exhausts itself.

Q: Well, what, how did this affect what we were going to do?

NEWTON: Well, the Saudis, the Saudis have been through this often. They really do want to be our friends, and they look on our security umbrella, if you will, as very important for their survival. But the connection with Israel has often been very hard for them to deal with because they have a pretty hard line view of their own towards Israel. But of course the Saudis basically want peaceful solutions to things. They've generally been very responsible I think, certainly in regional politics.

Q: Well, in the region I would think during this period that there could have been sort of a split personality. One, the fear of Iraq because it has Saddam Hussein, a very large army. At the same time you have Iran with Khomeini spreading his thing. I mean, how did they, I mean were they taking any side, tactical sides at the time or—

NEWTON: Well, the Saudis were in the first year of the war gave like the other Gulf states they gave Iraq quite a bit of money because they were afraid, but of course that, it was expensive and after a year or so their contribution was reduced. I mean, basically they were, at this point I think, they were more afraid of Iran. But they were trying to deal with the Iranians and to maintain some distance from the Iraqis, but they didn't want the Iraqis to lose either. So they live in a dangerous neighborhood.

Q: Well, at any point was it implicit or discussed at all about what would happen if in the future either Iran or Iraq got so powerful that we might, they would look to the United States to introduce forces?

NEWTON: Oh they looked, they certainly looked to the United States to protect them. In extremis they certainly would've looked to that. Of course they did--. When Kuwait was overthrown, they did reluctantly agree. There were of course as you know differences of opinion. The king, King Fahd was less reluctant to have a visible American connection than crown prince, now King Abdullah. Abdullah was not anti-American at all. But he was perhaps in balance a bit more responsive to Arab opinion and so forth and a bit more nervous of the high visibility of the U.S. connection. But certainly in extremis they always looked on us to protect them. Of course we had a great stake in the country and—

Q: Was anything playing out down in Yemen, I mean on the Saudi side at all or at that time?

NEWTON: No, not very much. The Saudis, at that point not very much the Saudis did not like the Yemeni president at the time or the current one at that time they were pretty hostile and generally just rather dismissive of the Yemenis. But I don't think they, it wasn't a great deal of focus on Yemen at that point.

Q: How about—

NEWTON: I should correct though and say, let me see when it was, at that, it was later that the Arab Cooperation Council came into existence. That disturbed them. That was, I guess that, trying to think. My timing is getting a little off. But the Arab Cooperation Council pre-dated the Gulf War. Of course it was, this was later. It was Iraq arranging Jordan, Yemen and I've forgotten one other country joining in kind of a union or something like modeled after the Gulf Cooperation Council. They didn't, they did not like Yemen's ties to Iraq, which were generally were pretty good.

Q: What about Egypt and Saudi Arabia at the time?

NEWTON: Reasonably good relations, I think. Yeah, by this, the Egyptian government was moderate. They were not any real issues.

Q: Did they still have quite a few Egyptian doctors, professional people and all there in that or—

NEWTON: Yes, yes, they did. Of course on the religious side they took people from the Muslim Brotherhood, but they also had doctors and they were, as their economy with oil, when oil reached a low point, they tended to go down market. So then they would go more for Egyptians and Pakistanis who cost less.

Q: That's the market forces at work, I guess.

NEWTON: Well, I've seen it. I saw that when I was there. I mean, they might get a Brit to replace an American who would be excellent but would be cheaper, or they begin to get more and more unaccompanied males without families to save money or get Filipinos who are often well-educated and didn't cost much. Indians and so forth. But also little by little they were training their own people at least in some fields.

Q: Well, were you noticing this? I mean one of the things, I go back to the '50s, but Saudis who say went to United States to get medical training would come back and open pharmaceutical companies and immediately go into business and not practice medicine. In other words were the Saudis entering the professions?

NEWTON: Yes, they had for example some very good Saudi lawyers. Doctors, even in the '70s I remember we had an ophthalmologist in Jeddah who was very good. I think the thing you really worried about more was the quality of hospitals and so forth. Nursing care was poor. Sometimes the lab results were questionable but also had to worry about standards. Did people really keep the standards? We, very close to our embassy in Jeddah, which we then moved subsequently moved in '84 to Riyadh, was this very large surgical hospital, did a lot of cardiac bypasses and so forth and was later evaluated and found out it had a huge death rate. I think because of the lack of insistence on absolutely the top standards. But these people were well-educated. But the Saudis, I mean, the rich Saudis they would continue to go the Cleveland Clinic. I remember the mayor of Jeddah very proudly holding a reception for ambassadors and senior diplomats to, we went of course because it was in honor of Dr. DeBakey. He'd done his quadruple bypass, and I guess different countries have the premier disease. I always joke that if you wanted to really be considered a senior Saudi, you had to have a quadruple bypass. Because what happened of course is the Saudis began to eat every day what they used to eat once a month or twice a month and that is camel or sheep on rice, doused with the fat of the animal. They also got many of them got very big and fat, and we saw that with King Fahd, Prince Sultan and others. They really put on huge amounts of weight, and they ate a very unhealthy diet.

Q: Did you have to go to lots of, I used to, in Saudi, in Dhahran we used to go out to the sheep dip—

NEWTON: The military used to call these things goat crabs. No, you could see. They'd come in and take the animal fat and just spread it all over.

Q: Ghee, but I guess not.

NEWTON: Well, I think it was—they had ghee or also--

Q: Maybe not ghee but just animal fat.

NEWTON: The fat from the animal.

Q: Not good. Well, then by '84 whither?

NEWTON: Well, by '84, I had my eye on Baghdad for a couple of years. I had always wanted to go there. I got, way back when I got out of language school and went to Yemen, I was looking hoping to go to Iraq as my second choice. But the war intervened as my second tour as an Arabist. I'd been to Iraq on my field trip from Beirut from the language school. As it happened, it worked out because Bill Eagleton extended for a year and that put it right in my window, and so maybe I was the only one who applied. I don't know, but because Baghdad was really the Camp Swampy of NEA believe me. I went there on a visit a month or two ahead of time, stayed with Bill, and I was really shocked. The post was, and I don't blame him. The post, I've never seen a post poorly supported. I mean, here's the place where you couldn't get anything. Everything was, you couldn't get

anything repaired because all the people had gone off into the Army. You didn't have a single spare refrigerator, stove, washing machine, air conditioner, at the post at all. The place was, what they'd done is the post was slowly growing. It was then up to sixteen. You'd get a couple of, they'd ordered a couple of sets of furniture a year, but then they'd get two new people, and they'd give the furniture to the two new people. They'd never replace anything. A lot of furniture they resurrected from the 1967 embassy including the residence. I tell the story that Bill was very good. He realized that we were expanding and we'd need a better residence. So he took over this very nice but very rundown house that belonged to Total, the French oil company. I came in, and after I'd been there a few days as chief of mission, and I saw in the back of the living room we had this love seat and sofa and two chairs here. Up against the wall we had a high boy. I said, that looks really strange. "Why are you doing that?" I said to the houseboy. I said, "I'm going off to work." I said, "Put the sofa on the wall and put the love seat on one side and the two chairs on the other side." Which he did and I came back and I discovered why. There was a huge hole in the wall because there'd been an air conditioner in there, and the French had taken out the air conditioner and there wasn't even a board or anything over it. This was June in Baghdad. You looked out, and there was the outside. In fact in the first year, we had five fires on the compound from electrical overheating and shorts including one in the house.

Q: Well, speaking to the administrative side. Couldn't you get somebody to come out from ARA executive—

NEWTON: Yeah, we did. We began to get some money, but the difficulty was that nobody had anything. I mean, I was a little bit caught. I needed a place that was representational, but I didn't want to hog all the money and so forth. The other people in the embassy needed a decent--. So what we did first of all in the first two years is we got rid of every single house in the embassy except one which we, the DCM's house which we downgraded to a political officer's house. The housing was terrible, and we really worked on getting furniture and everything. But for the house, for the residence for example, we were still working on it four years because I was trying to do it slowly. It was not only money, but we only had so many workmen and things like that. It would've been very bad if we had monopolized all the assets of the embassy. So we tried piece by piece to build it up, and instead of throwing things away and getting new things, we insisted on reupholstering things and refinishing things and things like that. I got some help from Kuwait, the embassy in Kuwait where they could get things done.

Q: Well, you were there from '84—

NEWTON: Four to, summer of '84 to the summer of '88.

Q: That's a long tour.

NEWTON: Yeah, it's funny. I came in '84 as principal officer and chief of mission. In November Tariq Aziz came to the United States. At that time I was told I was the department's nominee to be ambassador. That whole process took about seven or eight

months. So it wasn't until July that I actually was sworn in, July of '85. So a year or so later, I said to Dick Murphy, I said, "You know, I'm starting my third year, but it's only my second year as ambassador. So don't I get to stay an extra year." He said, "No I can't do that. We have to rotate people. We have to give people a chance."

So then I was supposed to leave in '87, and I was supposed to exchange jobs with April Glaspie. April was really wound up in Lebanon. She was the action officer. That's the job I was going to take from her. She kept, so she kept delaying her departure and I kept getting extended one or two months at a time. I was eventually extended for a whole year, which was very disconcerting in a way, because it's very hard to run an embassy when you think, well, I'm leaving in two months. This is an issue I should leave for my successor. Then six months later you said, dammit I should've dealt with that issue four months ago. But I thought I was leaving. It did have one advantage, and that is my daughter was in her last year of boarding school. So that helped me financially, but it began to get rather unpleasant I mean because then in late '86 came the first news of Irangate.

The first news was so bizarre it just had to be true. You remember the thing about the cake and in the form of a cross and a Bible and everything. Well, it was amateur hour at the NSC (National Security Council) and headed by a man who was really carried away with his own what he thought was his own smarts.

Q: Talking about Ollie North.

NEWTON: Yeah, and made a terrible mess.

Q: Well, let's talk about when you arrived there. What, first place while you were there, what was the war situation? How did it, when you first arrived how did you view the war at that point?

NEWTON: Well, by that time the war was going very badly for the Iraqis. The first year they had attacked or they had basically destroyed the Iranian army, and their expectation was that Khomeini's regime would collapse. They didn't, they got (_____), but they couldn't get Abadan. So instead of course they turned this into a national struggle—

Q: The Iranians did.

NEWTON: Yeah, I mean the result of the Iraqi attack was to make this a national issue for the Iranians, and people rallied to the cause of course. The Iraqis didn't have a plan B. So they just hunkered down, and the Iranians built up and eventually drove them back across the border taking a lot of prisoners. Then in the wintertime in the offensive, they would attack, and the Iraqis would counterattack and get back most but not all the territories. So little, they were being chewed up and the Iraqis had no strategic depth because of all their people live in the eastern half of the country. It was getting pretty tricky, and we were seriously concerned that it would be a mistake on, the Iraqis would make some kind of a mistake or something unpredictable happens in war and things

would go to pieces. The Iraqis who were outnumbered substantially had better equipment, but something happened they might not get a second chance to try to retrieve the situation.

Morale among Iraqis was very bad and got worse all the time for two reasons. Number one, everybody was losing family members, were killed or wounded in the war. Number two, the living standard was going straight down. The Iraqi dinar was diving. When I arrived, it was officially $3.22. When I arrived, I think the black market value was about a dollar. When I left, it was about 40 cents. So people were not getting pay raises or anything. So their living standard was going down. Iraqis were just getting, they didn't want to quit. They didn't want to lose this war to the Iranians. But they were getting terribly weary. It seemed like a war without end.

Q: Well, had the Battle of the Cities started, the shooting of Scuds at each other?

NEWTON: Yeah, there was by that, no, by that point not yet. It came later and got much more intense toward the end. I think maybe '85 or '86 the Scuds began to come in but only one a week or something like that. As I remember later it got sometimes several a day. They were very inaccurate.

Q: But that doesn't make you feel any better.

NEWTON: No. Not, yeah. Not at all. Mostly they didn't do a lot of damage, but occasionally one would really do something horrible. For the people in the embassy it was very hard because as I say the living conditions weren't great. The working conditions in the post were very poor. Until about the last year we were using one-time tapes. We had a machine that belonged in a museum. I remember we, somebody got carried away that the non-aligned summit, which was supposed to be happening in Baghdad, that happened in Baghdad was transferred to New Delhi, and somebody got carried away in New Delhi and sent the final communiqué out by cable. It was something like twenty-five pages. Took us a whole day to get the message. It tied us up for an entire day. So things were hard.

Also things were very expensive. When I came the new people were stuck in hotels because we had no guest quarters. We'd pay the hotel bill, but you know breakfast, this is 1984 breakfast cost them ten dollars because of the exchange rate, and the temporary lodging allowance didn't come close to covering. We got a little bit extra but you had to get some pretty dedicated people, and it was, we also didn't get a lot of volunteers for Baghdad as you can imagine.

Q: Did you have family?

NEWTON: Yes, we did. Yeah, yeah. But we didn't have a suitable school so we didn't have very many children.

Q: Well, then okay, you're there for what four years.

NEWTON: Four years.

Q: Four years. What were you doing? I mean, on the first place, did you have any relations with Saddam Hussein?

NEWTON: Well, what we were doing, when the Iraqis said when we reestablished relations, they were very kind of formal about it. They said, now we can do all kinds of things we couldn't do before when we didn't have relations. We began working on the economic and commercial side. We had already started and expanded our commodity credit corporation program. That amounted at its peak to a billion dollars a year. We did manage to get some short-term credits from the XM (export import) Bank. Of course we were trying to develop business. I managed to get one fertilizer, and it was a fertilizer plant, contract, the main contract for that by saying that look you need to send American business a signal that you want them. So you should give us the contract.

We started, we had a very active USIS program under difficult circumstances. We reestablished university and university relations between University of Texas and Mosul for example. We began sending some international visitors. That didn't always work so well. I remember the, I think it was the economic officer went over their, what was it--. Their scientific research institute was interested in visiting the states. I had him go over there to talk to them and he came back and said they want to go to Lawrence Livermore. They wanted to go to all the nuclear energy labs. I said, "Don't go back. Forget about that one." So there was a lot going on and of course we were even trying to get a piece of land in the new diplomatic quarter to have a proper embassy. There was plenty to do and of course and war reporting. We were trying to keep track of what was going on in the war. So there was plenty going on.

Q: Well, what about, did you, what, were we seeing Saddam Hussein as the monster?

NEWTON: Yeah—

Q: He was portrayed.

NEWTON: Well, we knew who Saddam was. We knew what kind of a person he was. People like that sometimes change their behavior at least to some degree. I don't mean to make comparisons, but Menachem Begin in his youth was viewed as a terrorist. Eventually he won the Nobel Peace prize. Ariel Sharon by some standards committed war crimes is now considered the great man of peace in Israel. There are people who do change. I don't think any of us ever thought that Saddam was ever going to be a nice man or a democrat or anything like that. But I mean my longer term requirement was the do everything that we could to help within legal limits to make sure the Iraqis didn't lose the war. The longer term aim we had was to see Saddam's government was talking about when they resumed relations, they used the terms they said they were now mature, responsible and realistic. They never said moderate. The way I put it is that they wanted to be respectable. Saddam gave every sign that he wanted to be viewed as a statesman

and wanted to be seen as a respectable statesman. So there was a hope that he would at least ease up a little on his own population and not be as repressive and that he might, and he said he was going to stop trying to subvert his neighbors. I got quoted, it was kind of funny. You saw probably saw the book the *Arabist*, Kauffman.

Q: I, Robert Kaplan.

NEWTON: Kaplan, Robert Kaplan. He asked, I was over at the National War College, and he interviewed me, and he asked me what people thought might happen after the war with Iran. I said, "Nobody ever expected Saddam to permit the country to become a democracy. But the hope was that the level of repression in Iraq would be reduced to the level of repression in Syria, that the country would be," and that's all the Iraqis really hoped for. They, just make their life a little easier. Let them travel again and give them a little more money. Just not have to live in fear all the time from the secret police. That's all, they would've been quite satisfied with that. There was no prospect of any regime change of course. So Saddam was firmly in charge. So the only thing realistic you could look at was maybe you could encourage him along this line to be more respectable, to act more respectably, and therefore to make life a little easier for his people.

Q: Was what were our military, do we have a military attaché there?

NEWTON: Yeah, we had a defense attaché and, but of course he was very much restricted. One of them got PNGed ("persona non grata", unacceptable person), something very foolish.

Q: What happened?

NEWTON: He went, he wasn't PN, well, he went down on a food run. I mean as well all did—to Kuwait and decided somehow, he'd been in the Soviet Union before. He knew how you dealt with the Soviets. He wanted to, there was a question whether the, whether the Iraqis were getting I think MiG (Mikoyan and Gurevich) 25s, and they were getting military equipment through Kuwait. So he decided, he heard there as a shipment in the port. He decided, and that would move out. So he went out at three o'clock in the morning was sitting on one of the ring roads in Kuwait in his Jeep, four-wheel drive Jeep by the side of the road. Convoy came by and being led by Kuwaiti military police. They stopped and asked who he was, and he said who he was. They asked him what he was doing. He said, "Well, I wanted to take a look at the convoy." This was a standard procedure I guess in the Soviet Union. The problem was Kuwait did not allow military attachés. He wasn't accredited or anything. So they put him in the cooler for a couple of days and made him sleep on the floor and so forth. He got back to Iraq, and I was just waiting for the other shoe to drop. He didn't think it was going to happen, but I knew it was. Of course the Kuwaitis told the Iraqis and the Iraqis PNGed him. They did it in a friendly way, but they just said he has to leave in 48 hours. But we were kept very much at arm's length by the state of fear. We did after the Stark affair—

Q: Were you there during the Stark?

NEWTON: Yeah, yeah.

Q: You might explain what the Stark affair.

NEWTON: Yeah, it was the U.S. destroyer, which was hit by two French Exocet missiles fired by an Iraqi pilot flying in a Mirage. After that we became very, I'll talk about this a little more, but we became very much in what was called deconfliction. In other words make sure nothing like this could ever happen again. We were then allowed to send up an air force officer who was able to deal on a regular basis with the air force ministry in working out procedures to ensure that something like that, which we felt was a mistake wouldn't happen again. It was very hard to, you couldn't get near the war zone. The military attachés were watched very carefully.

Q: The story was that we were supplying the Iraqis with photos. Did you get involved in that?

NEWTON: Well, I think no one is every officially said we were. Although the Iraqis have said this repeatedly. You also to understand that of course speaking just in theoretically that the intelligence community does not give out satellite photos. They might be willing to give out information obtained from satellite photos but not to give out photos themselves. But we did have a lot of contacts with the Iraqis, and as a matter of fact, when the Iranians took Faw, Taha Yassin Ramadan who was the vice president who was not a friend of ours, said--no, he was deputy prime minister, but he was number two—

Q: This is Tariq Aziz.

NEWTON: No, this is Taha Yassin Ramadan who is number two in the government. Said the Americans deliberately misled us. They told us the attack was going to take place around Basra. Well, I remember the attack at the time, and in fact the main Iranian attack was against Basra. There were secondary attacks north and south. The secondary attack on Faw caught the, what do you call, the national guard troops, these reservists who'd been pressed back into service. It was the fog or they were asleep at night or they weren't very watchful, and once the Iranians got this bridgehead, they then switched their attack and went their way. You could tell general, from the build up because the Iranians only had a limited amount of artillery. So they would always mass their artillery against the main attack. They had massed their artillery against Basra. But then they switched when they had this opportunity to exploit it. But I used to think of Faw, Faw was the appendix of Iraq because it was the little tip on the end. But it didn't have any function and didn't lead anywhere. I mean, the Iranians were on the other side of Faw, but they couldn't go anywhere. They were blocked.

Q: Well, what, how did the Iran-Contra affair play out? There you are and we're supplying equipment to the Iranians while in order to help our people in Lebanon.

NEWTON: Yeah, I mean as you remember the case I'm sure you do. These naïve idiots were trading arms for hostages, and they did get a couple of hostages, and then the hostage takers grabbed a couple more, a couple more. So they were really terminally naïve in this. Well, it was a terrible shock to the Iraqis, and I've said this to many people. I would never use the word trust with the Iraqis. The Iraqis didn't trust anyone, but they had decided that our behavior was predictable. They'd analyzed us, and they knew from their point of view what the good things were and what the bad things were. But they felt pretty confident they predict how we would behave.

One we had been doing before was Operation Staunch, and that we were working quite hard to cut off weapons to the Iranians. At the higher tech level we were pretty successful on that. With the exception of it was the clear the Israelis were giving spare parts for the Phantoms but couldn't do much about that. But they said, "Restart Staunch," and the other thing was they wanted a resolution in the security council calling for an end to the war, demanding an end to the war. We were really pretty ashamed. So we jumped on that. Out of that came Resolution 598, which Iraq of course immediately accepted. The Iranians didn't want to accept it. Finally only at the very end did they do that. It's the only time to that point that the security council had called for an end of hostilities without having the prior agreement of the two parties. I mean it had done this before in the Arab-Israeli issue, but by that time we had worked out an agreement from both Arabs and Israelis that they would stop. In this case we had no such agreement from the Iranians. So relations resumed, but they were damaged clearly. The intelligence services who had a somewhat more benign view of us before became quite hostile. And of course the people who like Tariq Aziz and others still cooperated, but they had to be a little more careful. Then I must say in the last year or so it was just a whole series of crises. I was saying sort of to myself by the end, "Dear God let me out of here before something else happens," because then you had the Stark and the War of the Cities, Halabja, the at the same time—

Q: What is Halabja?

NEWTON: Halabja was the gassing of the Kurds.

Q: Gassing of the--

NEWTON: That whole village. The related to the fact was the fact that the Iranians had broken in through Kurdistan. The Iraqis, at a time when there was very a great deal of water coming down the rivers especially the Tigris that ran through Baghdad had to drain two of their dams, their reservoirs so that Baghdad began to sink under water. We had streets sinking and geysers appearing in the streets and so forth. Very serious threat. We came very close to having a major flood in the whole city. So it was just and of course the War of the Cities, which got the Iranians got the worst end of it. But we still got a lot of Scud missiles. In the end I think we had well over a hundred Scud missiles hitting, hitting Baghdad while I was there.

Q: Well, how about the, what was the role of the Soviets in Iraq?

NEWTON: Well, the Soviets were of course were the chief arms supplier. They also under the kind of theory that such countries had, they had party-to-party relations with the Baath, although the Baath were by principle anti-Communist. They did have advisors in the country, but the Iraqis would not let them anywhere near their combat units or their training facilities. But they were the chief arms supplier, and I constantly see or read accusations that we supplied the Iraqis with weapons. We didn't supply them with weapons. First of all it was illegal, but I suppose we could've done something like Irangate. But the second thing was they didn't need any of our weapons. They had very good Soviet weapons at a much cheaper price, and the specialized things they wanted for the tanker war that the Soviets couldn't supply they got from the French who are not neutral in the war. The French sided with the Iraqis. They provided, first they lent the plane and then sold planes, and they sold the missiles used to attack the tankers. There were, I don't know all the details because it happened before I arrived. We sold them some small Hughes helicopters, and I even saw Kim Coughlin's book from Saddam claiming that they were retrofitted with tow missiles. Well, number one these, I'm not an expert on helicopters, but I don't think these small helicopters could be retrofitted into missile firing helicopters. They're too small. Besides the Iraqis had plenty of gunships. Number two, they didn't have any tow missiles. Those are Americans. And we also sold them Bell 214 transport helicopters, which I flew in one. It was a VIP squadron. They were taking people around because it was dangerous and took a long time. They were taking people around the country or taking generals and officers back and forth to the battlefield. But we never, never provided them with any weapons. I seriously doubt that anything, certainly not on my watch, because I would, I was strongly opposed to anyone who ever suggested that provided them with weapons. That's something we didn't need to do.

Q: Talk about dealing with the government. I mean, did you, could you sit down and talk to Iraqi officials, high officials.

NEWTON: Yeah, the foreign ministry was one of the most professional. They were senior people, had some very good people. They did have some senior people at the top who were Baathis, I guess the functional equivalent of our political appointees. But the people like Tariq Aziz and Izzat ad-Douri of the senior undersecretary, two senior undersecretaries (_____) Khatani who later became a very senior UN Official and was at one point president of the general assembly who died a few years ago. Then (_____), the other senior undersecretary really fine people and long time career diplomats who were patriots, who tried to do the best that they can. They were not Ba'athis by any stretch of the imagination. We had good relations with the minister of, minister of economy because we, because of our food sales. We were highly restricted in our contacts. I mean you had to have business with people. Ordinary Iraqis were afraid to be seen with us because they would have to report it to their local Baath party cell and would have to explain the contact, could be risky for them. Nobody wanted to do that. But if we had business, we had no problem with contacts with the officials. The foreign ministry people as I say were very, very good.

Q: How about Saddam Hussein, was he, did you have any contact with him?

NEWTON: I was one of the last ambassadors to present credentials to him. He delegated that job down to his meaningless deputy after that. I think I was there with Dick Murphy once. I was there with Judge Clark, William Clark after he left the NSC. I think one other time I don't recall. You know he was very full of himself and spouting his version of wisdom. Not a stupid man by any means, and convinced he was really the father of his country. But he always managed to do most of the talking.

Q: Did, what was our, the impression that we had of the Iraqi military capability? What were we thinking of, you know, this was an army that may not make it or—

NEWTON: Well, the Iraqis had some very good generals. General Rashid whose daughter married (_____). They were, career generals were always suspect, but Saddam needed them because of the war, and at one point he really intervened in the war after Faw and made such a horrendous mess that he had to get out of trying to run the war. The Iraqis had a pretty good army, and they fought very well against the Iranians. They fought hard in '87, east of Basra to keep the Iranians back because they didn't want these people to take them over. But they were war wearied and tired. There was a certain amount of corruption in the army. The officers were taking bribes to give leaves and things like that. But they were well equipped, and they used a lot of Soviet tactics, but they used them, they used them pretty well. They used hedgehogs, defend. They generally, when there was an Iranian offensive allowed themselves to fall back a certain distance to avoid casualties, and then they would feed in the reserves. And if it got really bad, they'd feed in the republican guard, which was the strategic reserve. Then they generally recovered most of the land, but they wouldn't try to get every last inch because that would probably take unacceptable casualties. They were outnumbered three to one. But they certainly were superior in aircraft, in tanks, in artillery and in the various high tech areas.

Q: Did, were we able to do anything about looking at what was happening with the Kurds?

NEWTON: We could get some information about the Kurds, but it was really quite difficult. The problem I used to say in Baghdad it's, something happens. It's like being in the middle of the night in an electrical storm or something. There's suddenly a flash of light, and everything is clear for two or three seconds, and then it goes dark again and you think you've seen what you've seen. Well, you would hear something, but you'd have no way really of confirming it. You'd have to decide really whether it was met the smell test and if it sounded reliable. Different people, we were probably many respects better informed than anyone else. The British were well informed too. The Turks were quite well informed, especially up north. The French, if they would share much were pretty well informed, but it was a complete police state. You'd have to work very hard to get information.

Q: You're saying, were the French playing quite very much to their own game as you say or—

NEWTON: Well, the French did not declare neutrality, and they provided aircraft and missiles. They hoped to get access to Iraqi oil. They continued that all through the sanctions regime. They openly sided with the Iraqis. They also, the Iraqis I know had investments, owned some pieces of French armament companies. The French clearly thought they could benefit from the relationship with Saddam after the war.

Q: Were you there during the quietening of the tankers?

NEWTON: Yes, uh huh.

Q: How, did you get a chance to weigh in on the decision to do this or not?

NEWTON: No. Well, just to say of course this would, was very much something that the Iraqis also wanted. They wanted the tankers protected and, but I mean it wasn't that important to them who protected them. I mean they had no particular problem with the Soviets. But for them the issue was just to make sure the tankers continued to flow. And of course they continued to attack tankers going to Iran.

Q: What about, were we looking at or could we look at sort of the Kurds, Sunni, Shia equation within the country?

NEWTON: This is something of course particularly has come about after this last war that where I'm afraid we have fostered the division of the country because of course the Ba'athis would never tell you who is Shia and who is Sunni. They believed this was attacking their unity. But there wasn't, at least among educated people there wasn't such a division. Although Sunnis tended to be prejudiced down deep against Shia. But they didn't, there was no open discrimination against. The Ba'ath of course was heavily Sunni. In its early days it was much more Shia, but their Shia tended to be more radical. They had been pushed out. It wasn't really featured. I mean, the Kurds were repressed, suppressed and badly mistreated and massacred. Again we would, when we would get reports of killings and massacring, we'd get up to Kurdistan and what, you could see what you could see. You could see villages were gone. You could see the forts that had been built all around the areas so that they could keep the Kurds under control. There was a whole string of them actually built by a Kurd. There were Kurds, Kurdish tribes which were pro-government who were providing the--. The Kurds because it was legal autonomy for Kurdistan under Saddam. They had their own legislative council, their own presidential council. They had their own language. Everything except of course all the police and security people and military were Ba'athis. So they had no freedom at all, but in cultural terms and so forth, they were much freer than in Turkey. So you could see things in Kurdistan, but you couldn't really talk to people very easily. My predecessor spent a lot of time in Kurdistan, but he later wrote a book on Kurdish rugs, which I think was really probably his major purpose for going there.

Q: Yeah, I was talking to Jimmy Young who was in Oman. At the time I was saying rugs seemed to be the prime preoccupation of our ambassador to Iraq.

NEWTON: Yeah, it was. It was. He was, he still didn't have relations. He had a small embassy, and he was not allowed to have very much contact. So it wasn't nearly as busy. But Bill spoke Kurdish. He'd been in Tabriz I think at the end of World War Two and had written a book on the Kurdish republic of Mahabad republic. He was very much liked by the Kurds. But a number of Kurdish tribes were pro-government, and they provided these I said, there was autonomy. Well, one of the factors about the autonomy was that the Kurds didn't have to serve in the regular army. They could serve in their own units in the North defending Kurdistan from the Iranians. They were called the [Foresan?], the noble horsemen by the government. They were known by the other Kurds as the [Jash?], the little donkeys. People who didn't like them, but often you'd find that they would fight for the government and the daytime and shoot at the government at night. I went up, I went up to Kurdistan a number of times. I usually get permits without any difficulty and went up to Amadia way up North. The local government didn't want me to go there. But I had a permit, and it was amusing because I'd brought along my economic commercial local whose other job--. He was the desk, the American desk officer for the Iraqi intelligence service, and when the governor tried to discourage me, he flashed his Iraqi intelligence service ID. So the governor backed off. So I got up there, but to get in there I had to go into a military zone, and the governor, the military commander gave me two truckloads of soldiers, maybe around thirty soldiers to go with me. It's a beautiful area and about every ten minutes I wanted to stop and take a picture. It was just gorgeous. Every time I stopped the thirty soldiers piled out of the truck and formed a perimeter around me.

Q: What was the role of the Turks while you were there?

NEWTON: Role of, well we now had the pipeline through Turkey. and it was very important to both countries to keep that pipeline running. The Turks also were beginning to do good business. They were in the process of building the Bakhma Dam, yeah. The Bakhma Dam was on the Greater Zab River, which was one of the biggest river which fed the Tigris. Unlike the Euphrates, the Tigris has a number of rivers coming down from the mountains as it comes down into Iraq. They were building a very large dam there and there were hoping to do quite a lot of business in Iraq, and they were developing good relations with Saddam because they like the fact that Saddam was keeping his Kurds under control politically at least. For them it was a very important country. The first ambassador I was there was a very capable man, went back and became the senior permanent undersecretary in the foreign ministry, became the number two.

Q: What about Jordan?

NEWTON: Well, Jordan had very good relations with Iraq. King Hussein thought he was going to be the mentor of Saddam. He'd been around longer. He was very clever in foreign affairs and able. He saw himself as the mentor. But Saddam tended to play him as he wanted, and I remember one time the Jordanians gave a yearly credit to encourage the

Iraqis to buy things in Jordan. The Iraqis ran through the credit in about two months. The result is, then they had to clamp down then. The result is when the war came along the invasion of Kuwait and everything, the Jordanians were hurt pretty badly, quite a bit of money owed to them.

Q: During this time Kuwait was cooperating with Iraq.

NEWTON: Yeah, warily cooperating with Iraq because they knew that the Ba'athis were not nice people and that they could make a lot of trouble for them. But they were a lot of, a lot of imports into Iraq including military equipment were coming to the port of Kuwait because it was too--. Basra of course was closed because of the, from the early days of the war. Um Qasr is a rather small port with a very narrow entrance and shallow entrance. So Kuwait was very important to them. But they knew that the Iraqis were bullies, and they were afraid something would happen after the war, which it did.

Q: What about while you were there were you getting delegations, groups from the States coming in to see the elephant and all that?

NEWTON: Yeah, we got I wouldn't say a huge number. I remember we did get the house armed services committee who is, the chairman what's his name, later became the secretary of defense, Les Aspin. I told people that story. It was rather, I though rather amusing because we actually remonstrated with the Iraqis quite a bit about their use of chemical weapons. We got absolutely nowhere of course, but the Iraqis were becoming irritated by our demarches, and I don't remember whether I asked Les Aspin or whether he had instructions or how it came about. But anyway he with his dozen members of the committee raised it with Tariq Aziz, and Tariq Aziz would normally say who us, chemical weapons? What us? This time he said, "Yes, of course we're using chemical weapons." He was irritated. "Yes, yes. Of course we're using them. You have to understand we're fighting these benighted medieval Khomeini types. They want to destroy our country, conquer us, of course we'll use every means at our disposal. Why if we had nuclear weapons we'd use those too." All the jaws around the room fell open at that point. But Tariq Aziz was a little irritated. We didn't get a lot of congressmen and senators. It was still a rather unpleasant country, I suppose. I'm getting ahead of myself but in 1990 I did go back and escort Bob Dole and Allen Simpson and three other senators on a tour of the Middle East, an April tour, and they met Saddam in Mosul. But that got to be quite controversial after.

Q: Absolutely, yeah. Well, then how did you find morale at your post?

NEWTON: We worked very hard on morale. Morale I think was pretty good. It was a very tough place. I mean, and I remember when we got there, the two state communicators, both of them refused to come to the residence. We really worked hard entertaining people in the embassy and cajoled them to come and so forth. There were a couple of people who were unhappy. But on the whole I think morale was about as good as we could make it. It was difficult. But we spent a great deal of time, my wife and I, on morale trying to take care of people. We take the new people down to show them around

town. I'd lead tours around the city to show them, and whenever I took a lot of trips because I liked to, I'd always try to take a marine along or some of the staff people who wouldn't have a chance to get out, didn't speak Arabic. We really worked at it. But I'd be foolish to say morale was great. We could never make morale great. This country was at war. We had a, we began to get, I remember get a bit of a crime problem, and then when the War of the Cities started we took all the families who had children, we managed to get them placed outside the city in different camps or so forth. Anyone, almost everybody wanted to go. I also told people that if they wanted a transfer, I would support anybody who felt they, it was too much. One communicator did want to leave. His wife had just come back with a new baby. Someone had tried to break into their house, and then the War of the Cities came along. So they got transferred to Muscat. They were non-state people. We really, we knew it was a problem and worked on it very hard. There were a couple of people who were difficult personalities, didn't help the situation.

Q: Did, who was your DCM?

NEWTON: The first DCM was Ted Kattouf and then Steve Buck was my second DCM. Two years and two years.

Q: I'm interviewing Ted right now.

NEWTON: Oh you are. Yeah, Ted is a fine person. We were a lot together. I knew him a bit in Damascus. Then for personal reasons he left early. But then when I went back, from there I went back to Washington as ARN director. He became back as my deputy. When I left, he became the head of ARN. We've been friends over the years.

Q: Well, then you left there in '88.

NEWTON: '88, um hmm.

Q: Whither?

NEWTON: Well, whither back to ARN. I was drafted into this job, which I didn't want. I tried to get, in '86 I came back for a COM meeting and Dick Murphy asked to see me and told me he wanted me to switch jobs with April in '87. I remember telling Dick the thought filled me with dread because getting involved with Lebanon again and all of this. I really wanted to change. I was getting burned out. Well, at that point I wasn't, but he, and in fact the very next day I got a message that Bill Harrop was looking for me, and I called him up, and he offered me a job as a team leader with the IG [inspector general]. I said I'd like to do that. That would be fun. I'd see parts of the world I'd never seen. I told Dick Murphy found out. He called Bill Harrop and had the offer withdrawn. So I was trapped, I mean trapped. I didn't want to do it. But Dick Murphy's a friend of mine. I like him, admire him, worked with him, for him, and so I did it. And but I really needed a break. I was really getting burned out, and going through Irangate wasn't much fun and the War of the Cities and the floods. As I've said, I was saying to myself for the last six months, "Dear God let me out of here before some other crisis hit."

Q: Well, go back to the floods. I'm not quite sure, was this there was so much water coming or—

NEWTON: Well, it was the year there had been a lot of summer, winter rains. Normally the Iraqis had dams, which could handle all of this. But when the revolutionary guards broke in at the time of Halabja, they were threatening two of the dams. The Iraqis couldn't risk that they would capture the dams and just open them and this wall of water would sweep down. So they began to drain, they drained the dams in a controlled fashion. So the amount of water coming down just got higher and higher. If you look at a map of Baghdad the river coming down like this from the west. Then comes down and turns all the way back up. There's a very small piece at the end with the rivers on both sides, and actually the river at that point was one meter higher than the city, but it had a levee all the way around on both sides. They were adding sandbags and everything. But it was within, it was within about a foot of, I don't think the sandbags would've stopped it. It was within about a foot of the levees, and I know that my house was in the middle in the saucer. The Italian ambassador's house on the other side was outside the levee. He was flooded up to the ceiling of his first floor. It was like New Orleans. In that part of town streets were collapsing and huge geysers were shooting up and so forth. I would go down every day and look at the meter on the bridge to see what it was. I mean, we were completely unprepared. We tried to get sandbags, but there was not nearly enough for the different houses, and fortunately it held and then slowly began to sink. But this is in the middle of the War of the Cities.

Q: Well, then you came back. Did you get any R and R?

NEWTON: Well, you're entitled to three weeks R and R and I think I had a week, and Dick Murphy called up and said, "You have to go to Lebanon and to Syria." That's when we went to see Abdul Khalim Haddam looking for a president. When I came back, I said, "I'm taking my other two weeks." He wasn't very happy, but I needed it. I mean, I really did. I can't, I had to force myself to have enthusiasm for the job, and maybe I'm not a very good Washington person anyway. I also wasn't too crazy to be honest after the first six months about the Baker administration.

Q: Well, why don't we, this is probably a good place to stop, I think. We'll pick this up the next time when you come back. We'll talk about dealing with Lebanon and the whole thing. This would be '88 when we get started. You did that 'til when?

NEWTON: Until '90.

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

NEWTON: I can always '90, and then I went over to the national war college. I had a wonderful time for three years. I extended for a year. I still wanted to stay in Washington for my daughter. So I then went and went to work for the inspector general and worked for a little over a year, and she was graduating so I went and asked NEA if they would

send me out again. They, I said I'd like to go to either Syria or Yemen, didn't matter. They said right away, we're going to send you to Syria. Then in the end when Bob Pelletreau went up to see Christopher, Chris said, "Well, because of the peace process I think I'd rather not change ambassadors." So he left poor Chris Ross there for six years, not a favor for him. Actually I was happier to go to Yemen because it was my last tour. I had never been to the south to the Hadramaut, and I could go to a country that I knew better than anyone else, to in all honesty, and it wasn't so important in the United States that they really cared that much. So I could have a very major role in the policy. But whereas in Syria the embassy, the ambassador was really shut out by Dennis Ross, out of the peace process. So then I retired out of there. I got to stay an extra year actually.

Q: Okay. Well we'll go back to 1988 and get you into going to deal with Lebanon in Washington.

NEWTON: Yeah.

Q: Okay, today is the 23rd of January, 2006. David, we were talking about 1988.

NEWTON: Okay.

Q: You were doing what?

NEWTON: In 1988 I had been, well through December I was ambassador in Iraq. I was drafted to become director of Northern Arab States, NEA/ARN. Dick Murphy was the assistant secretary. I was political counselor in Saudi Arabia. We worked very hard through, particularly through much of two years working with the Saudis on trying to get peace for Lebanon. April Glaspie had been the office director. So he decided we would switch jobs because he wanted someone who had worked on Lebanon. Dick was really trying to bring peace to the country. Actually I tried to get out of the job because I really felt I was getting burned out in Iraq, and I needed a change of pace. But I was offered a job as one of the ambassadors in the inspection corps. But Dick killed it. So I was brought in. Dick unfortunately left after a year and a half, but in any case I did that for two years and—

Q: This is from '88 to '90.

NEWTON: From mid '88, July '88 to I guess July, yeah, the end of the July 1990. The first thing we did even while I was trying to take a little bit of home leave was to go over to Syria and try to get the new president for Lebanon. I went with Dick with our two, our two country officers for Lebanon and Syria. We spent a whole week, working week in one room with Abdul Khalim Haddam who now claims to be a great proponent of democracy in Syria. That was certainly not the view anyone ever had of him, but which wasn't a very pleasant time. We just went around and around the, and he would only give us one name. (_____) whom he claimed had been given to him by the Lebanese Muslims. I didn't really think that was true, but in any case that's all we got. Then we

made a one-day trip to Beirut to tell the Lebanese the result, not very happy result of the discussions. It had been a very chaotic election campaign.

Q: Let's talk about this. I mean, put it in perspective why were American officials going to Syria to talk about who was going to be president of Lebanon?

NEWTON: Well, because the United States had always been the protector of Lebanon, and the Lebanese had looked to us to try to, back in the Eisenhower days we'd gone in to save them. But we'd had the tragedy with the marines. So we were trying. The problem was the civil war had been going on, but at this point it looked like the whole thing might fail and the government, the country would split apart and that there would be no, there would be no president, and you wouldn't even have a common prime minister. That in fact was what happened. So we came there and basically our news was the only name we could get was (_____) who was, didn't seem to particularly offensive or difficult choice. But in any case we said to them, "Look, your choice probably is either you accept this person for president or it looks to us like the country is going to break apart."

Q: I mean why were the Syrians in such a position where they could sort of give a name and no other?

NEWTON: Well, when the Lebanese civil war started the Christians, the Christians started it by massacring some Palestinians, but then the fighting got really bad and the Palestinians had retaliated against Christians south of Beirut, the (_____) where (_____) had his strongest support. The Christians were being killed then in retaliation against the Palestinians, and they asked for, they actually asked the Syrians to come in, and we acquiesced because there really wasn't any other choice. Once, it was even clear then that once you got the Syrians in, you weren't going to get them out. So they had come in, they had their army all over the country and their security services were becoming pervasive. So the Syrians were there, and they were dominating the country. So it really was a situation where the Lebanese Muslims also really were being dominated by the Syrians. So there wasn't going to be a president unless the Syrians approved.

Q: Well, how did we read the president at that time? Had he been much of a political figure?

NEWTON: Well, the president was a political figure. His brother had been, had been killed. Remember this is what led to the massacre at Sabra and Shatila. He had taken over, but his term was coming to an end. He was from an old (_____) family, an old very political family. Families in Lebanon seem to go on and on as political figures. He somehow thought he could get a new term, which would've been against the constitution. Everybody was deluding themselves that they were, he or this other person would get to be president. But in any case it didn't work, and they of course exaggerated our ability to deliver anything for them because this was after the killing of the marines. The United States was not going to commit any military forces to Lebanon. We were not going to commit a lot of money. I mean we could, the Saudis were ready to commit a fair amount

of money. But in any case that's all we could get for them. April before me had worked very hard to try to set up reform.

One of the problems was that the Christians had a majority in the parliament from '99. I think fifty-four, forty-five which was unsupportable because they were probably now no more than a third of the population. So she had helped set up at least the framework, not yet implemented, for a parliament that would be fifty-fifty. To give more power to the prime minister who was always a Sunni Muslim and take away some of the very large powers of the president who was a Maronite Christian. Any case we came there and gave this news to people, and Dick did say at one point, "Look, we think you'd be better off accepting this man as president because of the alternative." So he went across the green line which is, I'd done once before, and it's a bit dangerous. But he went and talked to the Sunni Muslim prime minister and the Shia Muslim speaker of the house, and I went to see General (_____), of course the very powerful Christian general and also went to see the leader of the Christian militia who was a real killer. It was a strange trip first of all. Lebanese fashion in those days, we went to the general's house, his apartment house. We got stuck in the elevator. The power went off. Had to crawl out of the elevator. He met us in his bathrobe and pajamas and had a broken arm. I said, he looked about to be the least military person I'd ever seen claiming to be a general. He, I was told later thought I was going to come to tell him he'd been anointed as president of Lebanon, which is I mean, just shows the power delusion. Then we went off to see the head of the militia who was very, no senior official had ever called on him before. He was extremely soft-spoken and polite. But I've always remarked, I don't know if it's because I knew his reputation, but he had the coldest eyes of anyone I'd ever seen. He was notorious for having killed off opponents, absolutely ruthless. So and then we left town. Dick suggested I stay around another day or two, and I thought this doesn't make any sense to me.

Q: What about Jumblatt?

NEWTON: Well, Jumblatt of the Druze is a significant, still a significant political figure, but the Druze don't have any, traditionally I think they had the minister of defense portfolio. But this was really a struggle between the Maronite Christians and the Muslims. The Druze really weren't central to it in many cases.

Q: What did it mean by having power if you were one religion or another? Does that mean you got all the goodies the money, the positions and all and others didn't get anything or—? How did that seem to work out?

NEWTON: Well, it depended. The Sunni Muslims who were urbanized mostly. They did well in the government and the Maronite Christians. The main problem was the Shia among the Lebanese the Shia in the south who'd been left out of the general prosperity I guess partly because they bordered Israel, and the border was closed. They were still very much dominated by traditional people, but as Lebanon grew more prosperous the people who had the most money were very niggardly in sharing the wealth. It was a Levantine economy. The government was very weak because people wanted it to be weak. Of course the catalyst for this of course was the presence of the Palestinians. That wasn't

such a big problem until Black September and Jordan in 1970 when the PLO and the other PFLP (Popular Liberation Front for Palestine) and the other political organizations had to flee from Jordan, and they set up shop in Beirut. The Palestinians had already slowly become more of a political factor, and then suddenly there was a big jump. The Palestinians were supporting the Muslims who tended to be more to the left. At least the Muslims who were to the left, and this unbalanced the whole political delicate balance in Lebanon. But the fundamental problems I always thought were Lebanese, not Palestinians. But the Palestinians were the catalysts that speeded up this process.

Q: Was the economy beginning to come back from the civil war by this time?

NEWTON: No, not really. I don't think it's never come back that well. I mean even though there was, after the civil war there's been a lot of rebuilding. But Lebanon was the much poorer country than it was. Partly the civil war but partly because a lot of Lebanon's prosperity depended on providing services to other Arabs, particularly Gulf Arabs and they didn't need, they didn't need Lebanese banks anymore. They didn't need Lebanese middlemen. The people in the Gulf because more sophisticated and they dealt internationally with Europe, the United States—

Q: This is tape four, side one with David Newton. Yeah.

NEWTON: The Lebanese also had depended a lot on Arab tourism. That began to die off too as Arabs began to go and spend their summers in Europe and so forth. The tourism has come back probably 9/11 and the hostility they feel outside the Arab world. But the rest of the economy hasn't recovered all that well.

Q: Did, well, now your particular job covered what countries?

NEWTON: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and we also were responsible for the PLO. We were, when I came on, just as I came on the job, King Hussein had given up the right to the West Bank so our responsibilities for the West Bank ended. But we still remained responsible for the PLO. We had to write, the PLO Act that Congress passed that required a yearly report. So we had to do that. But we had a Palestinian affairs officer.

Q: Did the Israelis through their allies in Lebanon have any say in anything or were they, the political process?

NEWTON: I think the Israelis had by this point began to realize that the Maronites had actually used them more than the Israelis had used the Maronites. Even in this case—

Q: So turnabout—

NEWTON: Yeah, maybe the Israelis were out of their league. Of course the Israelis had been so damaged by the massacre in Sabra and Shatila in which they were certainly complicit. I mean they provided the lighting so the operation could go on at night. They were, anyone who knew anything about Lebanon knew that you left the Maronite militia

in there after the killing of Bashir Gemayel they would kill every living thing in there, and that's really what they did. The Israelis on the ground had to know full well what would've happened. So they were really besmirched by this. The president actually turned out the next day, the day we were there and were leaving. We were invited to lunch by the president, I mean Gemayel in the family castle up in the hills, and it was his last day. He was trying to be a good host, but every time the conversation stopped he would look kind of despondent because he'd finally realized he was not going to continue as president. I always remember his mother, his father Sheik Pierre who is a long time prominent politician, has passed away, but his mother was still there. His mother kind of reminded me of Maude Barker—

Q: We're talking about a famous gangster.

NEWTON: Yeah, and on the way out she sort of grabbed Dick Murphy and said to him in French, "Don't let those Negra take over Lebanon," meaning the Syrians. Don't let the niggers take over Lebanon.

Q: Oh boy.

NEWTON: Yeah, that kind of summed it all up for me. I didn't, Dick had suggested that I stick around, but I really didn't see. I mean if we had any hope of getting the Lebanese to accept this person as president and try to keep the country together. The only hope really lay I think in the shock value of what we'd said. To stay around and talk to people would've only I think enmeshed us in Lebanese politics. It had been a very bad election campaign. It seemed like every week there was a new name would be surfaced as the leading candidate for president. And then the Lebanese would spend the rest of the week tarring this person and ruining him, and so the next week there'd be someone new. So it was a really dirty election campaign.

Q: Who was our ambassador there?

NEWTON: John, John Kelly. He then came back and, John actually wasn't there. John had had some heart problems, and although he wanted to stay around we insisted he had to be evacuated. He really needed medical care. So he wasn't there. Dan Simpson was the chargé. We also (_____) saw the patriarch with Dan. John then came back and became the assistant secretary six months later, probably less than six months later.

Q: Did, when you went to Syria, you were not talking to him. It was the feeling Assad was running everything.

NEWTON: Oh yes, he was running everything but Abdul Khalim Haddam had the Lebanon portfolio firmly in his hand, and he was there person to talk to. He was the person they designated for us to talk to. I don't recall that we, maybe we didn't meet Assad. I don't really remember. I just remember being shut up in this room for five days with this individual who is now in Paris and accusing the government of corruption and

talking about democracy. Well, I don't think anybody was more expert at corruption. He had the reputation for being very corrupt but very significant thinker at the time.

Q: Was our reading at the time about Syrian Army and how it operated in Lebanon?

NEWTON: Well, it was an element of corruption. Also on the border there was a separate military road that crossed the border between Syria and Lebanon where things would pass without any customs. Since Syria had a controlled currency and so forth, sort of Eastern European-type system, people in the army and others made a lot of money shipping in refrigerators and all kinds of stuff in army trucks that would bypass the border. The Syrians had a couple of reasons for being in Lebanon. Number one Syria and Lebanon had in Ottoman times had been one country. The French were the protectors of the Christians, and they wanted the Christians and not Lebanon to have a separate country, but they expanded the borders to make it an economically viable state. And by expanding the borders, they made it half Muslim and half Christian. But they for example, they had a common central bank until the late '40s. They had the same currency and so forth. So the Syrians always felt, they had a special right or interest in Lebanon, besides the corruption issue, which was certainly there. The other one was strategic. They had fought two pretty bitter wars with the Israelis on the Golan Heights, and the terrain there favored the defense because it was so volcanic and so forth. But the Baka Valley offered a back door into Damascus. You could go up the valley northeast and then make a quick turn to the right, half turn to the right and just go up straight east into Damascus without really any, much of possibility of defense. That's what the French had done in the '20s. So the, that's why the Syrians resisted so hard any attempt to Israelize Lebanon, which the Israelis always hoped to be the case because it would outflank all their defenses on the Golan Heights and put them in a very weak position. If the next time the Israelis threatened them, the threat would be very real.

Q: Well, then you came back, what about, how stood we with Jordan? How did we feel one about King Hussein renouncing the West Bank, the West Bank?

NEWTON: Well, I don't know that, he did this rather hurriedly. I don't think, I think it did complicate our life. I wasn't there at the time he did it. It was a "fait accompli" (done deal) by the time I came. I don't think we made much of an issue of it. For the King it was getting to be too much of a burden. It did remove risks of confrontation between Israel and Jordan on the plus side.

Q: Did, was there much of an effort to, during the two years that you were there, to bring Jordan into the peace, to bring Jordan into a peace agreement with Israel at the time?

NEWTON: I think largely we followed King Hussein's lead in that because we had a very high regard for him as a leader in the Middle East. I knew, to think about it I don't think, I don't recall any major efforts at the time to, I mean we had very good relations with the king. I don't think we really thought much about, we were looking for a comprehensive peace agreement. We were not looking for a separate peace agreement. I know from my previous tour in Syria one of the problems was that the Palestinians were

always afraid the Jordanians would jump first. The Syrians were afraid the Jordanians would jump first followed then by the Palestinians. So they all distrusted each other and the thing that the Syrians really feared, which was largely happened, is that they would be isolated. I mean they lost Egypt, and their fear was the Israelis could kind of strip away other opponents one at a time, and the Syrians would be the last in the line. When they got down to the front of the line, there wouldn't be anything left for them and their bargaining position would be very weak.

Q: Well, then after this trip to Lebanon what was your main, what was your main occupation, what was your main occupation there?

NEWTON: Oh the main occupation, I think we spent most of our time dealing with Lebanon. It became the, because of the break up of the country, General Aoun well, Gemayel appointed General Aoun as prime minister despite the fact that the constitution said that the prime minister had to be a Sunni Muslim. There had been one other time where this was broken. Selim al-Hoss the present prime minister continued. So you had two prime ministers. It started getting pretty violent again. General Aoun was given to violence. He was impulsive, and we had an issue then with the so-called illegal ports. There was a lot of smuggling going on. I always felt that if the Syrians and the Christians and the Lebanese Muslims could agree on anything, they could agree on drug smuggling. So there was a lot of that going on too. We told General Aoun, look, he demanded that the illegal ports be shut down and that because they were losing a lot of customs revenue and so forth. We said, "Look, we agree with you in principle. It should be done. But it should not be done with violence because this is like an ammunition factory," a fireworks factory. You start using violence and the place would blow. Well, he did. Now what he did, the worst possible thing. He shelled the Syrians in West Beirut, and the Syrians then began to plaster East Beirut and the Maronite areas, and then we got into the problem. General Aoun was making irresponsible statements, and we are already becoming worried. We had what in effect was the third largest militia in Lebanon protecting the embassy in the Christian area in (_____). But there was a multi-ethnic militia. But they had already threatened a mutiny, and they had threatened our deputy security officer, assistant security officer, and then General Aoun was threatening them and holding demonstrations. So—

Q: What was the issue?

NEWTON: Just demanding that we support him basically against the Syrians. But he conducted a real public relations campaign so then the issue came up about the embassy. I wanted to close the embassy down but the ambassador was a friend of mine, John McCarthy but, and he wasn't happy with that. But I mean he couldn't, I would try to get him an okay from diplomatic security to go into West Beirut so we could talk with the Muslims. Every time we'd get to that point, inevitably some security threat, we'd pick up some security threat, and then he couldn't go. So we were out of contact completely with the Muslims in West Beirut. I just felt the security, the security threat is so great, not to close the embassy I shouldn't say, but I wanted a very major draw down. In the end, actually I worked on a memo to the secretary I remember, and the, and it, there were two

options, a smaller draw down and a bigger draw down. But the smaller draw down was easier politically because we were always under a lot of pressure from the Maronite community here who wanted us to do more for the Christians, take their side. And we were trying to avoid taking sides. But the bigger option was also protected you politically because if something really had happened in the embassy you had a major draw down you would have fewer people killed, and if you didn't draw down that much, you might be politically vulnerable. Everybody agreed on the big draw down except it got to the secretary and came back, and he opted for the smaller draw down.

Q: (_____)

NEWTON: I don't know. I think he was balancing the political, maybe assessing the danger, but he was balancing the political realities of both sides. I don't know if you would want to add that in, but I remember being a little miffed when it came back because I got a very nice little handwritten memo from Dennis Ross on that saying, "Wonderful memo. It was great. I really appreciated. Now can you change the memo take make the smaller drawer down the recommended course of action."

Q: Oh God.

NEWTON: That's the way (_____).

Q: Well, the secretary was—

NEWTON: Baker.

Q: I'm not quite sure, what was in it for us to stay around there?

NEWTON: Well, it was a, we didn't we felt we had a responsibility to try to control the violence and to find some kind of formula to end the civil war. In the end we had a lot of meetings, and I kept saying, we have to work with the Saudis. There's no choice. We have no real assets. We can't use military force. We don't have the kind of money it takes to convince these people. The Saudis have the money. We need to do that, and I remember, I think it was Dennis at one point saying, "Well, I don't, you're right. I don't see any other alternative." Then the Saudis came through. They took all the members of parliament down to Taif, which you remember, shut them up in a palace, wouldn't let them leave and gave them all money and fed them well and gave them gifts, but said you're not leaving until we fix this. So they came up with the Taif Accords, which then balanced the parliament and had, and reduced the powers of the president versus the prime minister. That did the trick. The problem was of course we could accomplish that, but we couldn't in the process get the Syrians out of Lebanon. That was just too much, couldn't be done. So we had to acquiesce, but we did get at least in the accords the Saudis got requirement the Syrians should leave (_____) leave in a year. They were supposed to begin withdrawing to the Baka, which they really didn't. But we couldn't really get them out, and the expectations the Syrians would honor the agreement of course was I think (_____) for us.

Q: Were the Israelis playing a disruptive game during all this?

NEWTON: No, I don't think so. I think they knew that this was our effort, and we were insistent on getting involved in it. The Egyptians wanted to be at least well informed and play a role, and when I went with Dick Murphy to Lebanon for that week, they were miffed because we didn't keep them briefed. But I mean we were, this was a situation we couldn't really do very much. So I had to go back a few weeks later to see Osama El-Baz and stroke him a bit and tell them we considered him to be very important because the Egyptians had a strong interest in Lebanon, but they no longer had any real leverage.

Q: Was Iran playing much of a role in those—

NEWTON: Not so much in those days. No, I don't. Doesn't come across to me that they were playing that much of a role. I mean, yes, they had, they were supporting the Shia offensive. I don't remember now in fact. It doesn't come back to me that they were, they were supplying military equipment and all that stuff. In any case, their support was aimed at Israel, aimed at getting the Shia to fight against the Israelis, not so much the political process, because the process was going their way and that the Muslims were getting more power.

Q: Did, was Iraq at all in this?

NEWTON: Yeah, Iraq was in this. Iraq had decided very cynically to support General Aoun and tried to ship weapons to him and we stopped them. Maybe the Israelis stopped them too.

Q: Was this the ship that was picked up going around—

NEWTON: Yeah, they tried to get in and we told the Syrians.

Q: I think Israelis picked them up.

NEWTON: Yeah, I think it was the Israelis, but we knew about it too, and it was easier for, but we were determined, and they were determined to not to let the Iraqis add fuel to the fire.

Q: How about Arafat? Did we have much, well I mean you had the PLO on your (____) didn't you?

NEWTON: Yeah, it was pretty inactive. There was this, before I got there, there was this rather disgraceful shutting down of the Palestinian information office here even though the people in the office were all either U.S. citizens or green card holders. Freedom of expression didn't extend to Palestinians in the United States. They were not involved in terrorism or inciting violence. But there was a great deal of pressure from Congress and they passed, I don't know the exact name of the act, but they passed about the

Palestinians. We had to report on all attacks by Palestinians and Israel. I remember that first of all they wanted to participate in drafting the report and I told this young congressional staffer, "I appreciate your interest, but we do have separation of powers and we'll draft the report and send it to you. Then they were very unhappy with us because maybe careless drafting or something, but attacks on Israelis in Lebanon were not part of the act. It was only attacks on Israel. So they were upset that the report didn't include attacks on the Israeli army and attacks on the army are not terrorism either. So they were not terribly happy with this.

Q: It sounds like you had the feeling that the pro-Israeli forces were calling the shots in Congress at this point.

NEWTON: Oh yeah, well, that's--. They were. I mean, they've always been very prominent in Congress. They weren't, they had only started becoming more prominent in the administration, but it was the people sympathetic to Israel but a little more pro-peace who and who really wanted to find a solution. My feeling at the time, my understanding at the time was that the pro-Israeli organizations really had decided when the first President Bush came in that they had, they were spending too much of their effort on Congress, which was never really a problem for them. I mean what they were doing was all perfectly legal. So they decided they would focus on two things. One is to get people in the administration. But at that time the labor party was in power, and this meant people who had good relations with labor. The argument made, which wasn't unreasonable, that they would be able to have more influence to bring the Israelis to the table and also to get the best possible deal for the Palestinians. The other thing they decided is that they wanted to have, they wanted to have a major (_____) think tank in the United States, in Washington, and that's when supporters of Israel founded the Washington Institute. But these were all moderate organizations and moderate people, and so you've got a national security advisor who was, and later assistant secretary, Martin who actually had to become an American, he'd been an Australian, had become an American to take the job and Dennis. But people who I admire, who were dedicated to trying to find, really to find peace. The unfortunate thing is that once this principle is established and the Likud came to power, you began to get people filling the same positions who were not really looking for peace. They were looking for a settlement that was very favorable to Israel. But none of this is illegal. It's all possible under our system whether you, whether you favor it or not.

Q: Well, then up to 2000 had, when did Iraq invade Kuwait?

NEWTON: In 1990 I know because I was determined, I think maybe I said before, after the job in ARN to get it changed. I managed to find the job of the number two, the deputy international affairs advisor at the National War College was open, and I was also the job included being chairman of the civilian studies department, national security policy. So I hustled over and talked with the commandant we found, who'd been in the Army in Germany at the same time I'd been a lieutenant in the artillery when he (_____) general was a lieutenant in the artillery (----------) history. So we got along very well and

I got the job. He was there for two years, and then another commandant. So I spent three years over at the National War College.

Q: I would've thought though that with the invasion of Kuwait you would've been dragged kicking and screaming back into it.

NEWTON: Well, I was in part to the department because April was here, and April was the sitting ambassador. So she's the one who went to the White House, and worked--. And I, what I did was worked with DOD (Department of Defense) as its, in an advisory group a couple of times over a couple of times a week with G5 plans and strategy or strategy and policy I forget. With J8 I forget what that was called. And with DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency)--. Right at the beginning of August I was called up by the, an old friend. He'd been the defense attaché when I was political counselor in Saudi Arabia. He'd retired, but was still the defense intelligence officer. He said that Cheney as secretary wanted a know your enemy memo from DIA so would I come over on Saturday and work with them, which I did and we put together a memo. Then Monday morning he called up and said, Cheney wants to talk to the people who did the memo and be briefed. So I went over there with him and other people. It was quite a line up of senior people, and he focused on me because I'd been ambassador there and asked me questions for about half an hour. I remember because it got a little distorted, but it got written up, in the book about the war because I said that the Iraqi army is well battled, experienced. It's well equipped, pretty well disciplined. It has absolutely no will to fight. It's exhausted by eight years of war. They'll fold after a short time. The Republican Guard will try to resist. We'll beat them, but they'll try to resist not because they're fanatics but because they're an elite and they consider themselves an elite. That's pretty much what happened. So that was just before he went off to Saudi Arabia to see King Fahd. I continued to do that, and I went over one time the basement to the air force and we looked at some targets. Did something like that. I also did a lot of public speaking in support of Desert Shield/Desert Storm. I got some nice trips to speak to World Affair Councils in Anchorage and Juno, Alaska. I joked that I'm the only serving Arabist maybe to ever go north of the Arctic Circle because the local I think BP(?) was a member of the World Affairs Council. They took me up to the day to the north slope because I worked on oil before and had an interest. Who else, I went to Maine and quite a few other places and did think tanks here and so forth. So I wasn't really involved with the department that much. That was appropriate because April was here. Maybe if she hadn't been here, it would've been different.

But also I mean, I was teaching at the war college. I didn't want to give that up. and I put together an advanced studies seminar on the Persian Gulf. I thought that was important to the students. I really liked the job, and I didn't want to, I still did everything I was supposed to do at the War College, and I did these other things in the afternoon.

Q: How did you find the war college?

NEWTON: I loved it. It's a great place. Students are terrific. Maybe the numbers are a little different, but it's designed to be one quarter Army, one quarter Air Force and one

quarter sea services, which included twenty-five percent marines and a couple coast guard and twenty-five percent civilians. Half the civilians were foreign service. So twenty of whom sixteen were foreign service officers. They played an important role, and it was a chance—

Q: How did you see their role or how--? The role of foreign service people.

NEWTON: Well, I think they were very important to the college because they made sure they had at least one foreign service officer in every seminar and in every homeroom so that there was a lot of learning on both sides. But the foreign service perspective was there in every seminar. Students got along very well. From our day or probably most of us served in the military. But by then there were very, very few foreign service officers who had ever served in the military and it was good for them to have that exposure. Military people are fun. I love their sense of humor. I had a good time in the army, and I respect the military. I just came back from commander general staff college talking with students out at Leavenworth for a couple of days, and I think it's good for them to get the foreign service perspective.

Q: Well, did you go along on any of the trips?

NEWTON: Yes, we went every year. The first, let's see. The first year I went to Poland, what was then Poland, what was then Czechoslovakia and a short stop in Austria. That was interesting because you saw the differences. The Poles obviously have a good army, and their tradition was resist to the death even against hopeless odds. The Czechs tradition was face the inevitable and preemptive surrender. I don't mean to be nasty to them because they never had a chance. They realized if you want to survive, you can't stand up to overwhelming force. Consequently, one of the things the Poles never accepted to have Soviet style uniforms. They didn't allow the Soviets in their military academies, and they have really remained Poles. Whereas the Czechs wore the Soviet uniforms only with different insignia, and they were obviously in a very bad shape at that point. The next year I went to Southeast Asia, which was Singapore, Indonesia and Australia. It was just the time of the anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea, and we had one of the students had been the air boss on the USS, the last USS Coral Sea a carrier that had been decommissioned. He carried a flag with him, which had flown on the USS Coral Sea. We presented it. There was always a (_____) and stuff like that. That, and when we went to Poland the year before I thought, I understand. I have a German mother in law, and I went out to the Westerplatte, which is where the first shot probably of World War Two was fired when the German battle cruiser Schleswig-Holstein opened up. I was laying a wreath for the very brave Polish defenders and thinking, I wonder what my mother in law would have thought. In any case that was a nice trip and the Australians were great fun.

The third year we went to Turkey and Uzbekistan. What I did on our trips, we always had two faculty members with the students and insist that we had one weekend in the middle, and we would have at least a day off on the weekend to see something. So on the trip to Poland we had gone down. We'd stopped in Krakow and Auschwitz and Czestochowa to

see the black virgin. In Indonesia we'd gone to Jogjakarta to the old capitol and saw (_____) had a (_____) evening. And finally, in Uzbekistan we spent the weekend going to summer (_____). Mostly the time was spent in Turkey because the Turks wanted us every year, and they treated us very, very well.

Q: Did you find while you were at, you were there from 1990 to '92.

NEWTON: '93.

Q: '93.

NEWTON: I managed to stay three years.

Q: Was the War College in a way adjusting its officers to looking at different worlds?

NEWTON: Very much so. We looked at that all the time to adjust the curriculum because this was just, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the war with Iraq. We worked very hard every year to look over the curriculum. We were also in the process of strengthening the place. I think we added a third to a half members of the faculty, and we started working on a program to get the program accredited for a master's degree. So it was a very good program. They were very much aware of that, adjusting the, the program was completely different. But I think it's probably now completely different from what I knew in the '90s.

Q: Well, it's interesting to think about the accord that is given to training in the military (_____) and in the State Department.

NEWTON: We're doing a bit better because we have, finally have some resources. But one of the problems is that if you're really super ambitious and very good, you refuse to take the time out. You didn't want to jump off the track for a year. I think that's short sighted. I took, I wasn't trying to be secretary or deputy secretary of state, and I took a good, mid-career year and I got my master's degree in Islamic studies, and I for senior training I decided the War College. I'll focus on my career and go to the War College because I was there as a student as well. But you have to do it like the military and make it a ticket punch. The only way you can get people to do it is if you don't make exceptions. Now again they're talking about people can't get in the senior service unless they've gone to hardship posts, and they need to speak two languages and so forth. That's all well and good, but are you really going to enforce it. That's the question and are you going to make exceptions. I, we let people out too easily. One of my arguments all the time with personnel was, we can let people slip out of assignments because they suddenly get a better offer inside the department, but once we assign people outside the department we should insist on their going and it cost us. Because the second year I was there I had a call from Jack Cline who was then the head of training and he said that Barbara Bodine had been the DCM, the heroine of Kuwait (_____) above all in the world wanted to go to the War College for a year. But they'd already assigned the students. So they couldn't take anyone off the list. I'd have to somehow get an extra slot. So I managed to

argue, I saw that the Army and the Navy had a few extra people as scholars, and they didn't take the electives in the afternoon, but they wrote a longer paper. So I got them to agree on two scholars, an additional two slots. In fact then she said she didn't want to write an extra paper so somebody, one of the students said well, I'd like to write an extra paper. So he became the scholar and she got a regular slot. Then one or two days before that she told us, and she didn't tell them directly as I remember, that she had a job, one of the DASs for counter terrorism. They were really angry. The result was they let us keep the slot for a year, but they said that's it next year. So we had a chance to get two more people into the War College and these slots were free. Of course later we ended the senior seminar. So instead of saying, I'm sorry, you've made, we've made a commitment to DOD for you and making, the Department is notorious. Maybe they've changed, but in my day they were notorious for letting people off the hook and sliding out of jobs if a better one came along. My argument always was, if you sign up for a tour with another agency, you have to go through with it.

Q: Well, then in '93, whither?

NEWTON: Well, in '93, I couldn't stay any longer at the War College. Back in the past I'd been offered one of the team leader jobs with the inspector general. I really didn't want to go back and work in the department. I'd reached that point in my life, I just didn't want to go back in that grind to be honest. The year before they'd asked me if I wanted to be, well, no the year before when I thought I might be leaving, I called up and expressed an interest, but they never called me back, and in the meantime I got extended. So I called up this time and actually Rocky Suddarth a friend of mine was a deputy IG, and he said, 'Well, why didn't you follow up last year." I said, "Well, I expressed an interest and nobody ever, it slipped through the cracks. Nobody called me back as it turned out." But so I went over to the inspector general, and I spent a little over a year there, and then in that year I got, I had, my daughter, younger child was getting out of college, and so I thought for the end I'd like to go back overseas. So that's why I went to NEA and said, I'd like to be considered for either Syria or Yemen. But I enjoyed it because I was so overspecialized. I spent my whole career in the Arab world with the exception of a year and a half in Zurich in the very beginning. Here I got to see all these other parts of the world. I went off then, in the fall I went to Ethiopia, Eritrea. We split the team at that point and half went to Uganda. I went down and saw the ambassador, and then I went off to Liberia for two and a half weeks, which was fascinating I have to say in the midst of the civil war. Then let's see. In the winter I went to Columbia for a month, another fascinating embassy. Then I spent almost a month in Caracas, which was very nice for me, because my sister lives there. In the spring we went to Ukraine, which turned out to be a major issue. The poor DCM got sacked as a result the embassy was in serious trouble because we kept adding people with no facilities and no admin back up. Then the team split up, and the deputy team leader went to Belarus. I went to Lithuania. He went up to Latvia. I went up to Estonia. Then in contrast ( ) of course Bob Frasure was the ambassador to there. The embassy got perfect ratings. He got perfect ratings. The IG picked Estonia as the post of the year. So that was pretty good, and then, no, I missed one in the beginning. In the summer I had done East Asia bureau, and so that, those are all interesting posts. I stayed around for the, I could've gone off then because I'd been

nominated to be ambassador, but I thought I owed them something and why should I just go sit around in an office. So I did an inspection in the summer since I was not going to Yemen until November and did, Econ and Business Affairs bureau.

Q: Well, out of this, how did you find the inspection process? It was a different one than the one you grew up with.

NEWTON: Yeah, I found it a real challenge be--. Yeah, it was a different one. But the tremendous pressure to be balanced and fair because inevitably embassies would feel we were being too tough on them. But when you've been back to Washington people would at least intellectually when you had kind of (_____) board type hearings afterwards, and people would say maybe you weren't tough enough on them. So you had people in Washington looking to see if you were going too easy. And the embassies seeing if you were being too tough. We had, just before we went to Colombia one of the officers had committed suicide. It was—

Q: In, at the embassy in Columbia.

NEWTON: Yeah, we had to call in the, I called in the law enforcement people from the IG's office, the investigations people. (_____) one item at least. But it was an interesting post because it was full of all these really tough type A personalities. Other agency types including ones you know of but also customs and FBI, DEA, and these were all hard striving head butting type A personalities. The poor DCM had to struggle with all of this. A very good ambassador in general.

Q: Who was that?

NEWTON: What's the name, used to be in the Navy.

Q: Well, you can fill this in later.

NEWTON: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I don't mean on the whole the inspector was bad. It wasn't, but it was a challenging inspection. We found major problems I remember in Ethiopia that was the first one. You never knew what you would find until you got there.

Q: Well, how would you find things?

NEWTON: Well, one way you find a surprising amount is because before you get there everyone in the mission is given, the state people are given a confidential questionnaire to fill out sealed. You get them back and you, sealed envelopes and you keep them very locked up, and you destroy them at the end. Gives you a big insight, and then before you go, of course you go around, you talk to the desk, you talk to INR, you talk to the other agencies. You spend several weeks talking here in Washington. So by the time you go and you talk to the admin/management people here. So by the time you go you have a pretty good idea of the (_____), but you of course are supposed to keep an open mind.

But you have, and then you get there and you open all these questionnaires and you, people really tell you a lot in general, and I don't mean disgruntled people but—

Q: Well, I mean, I'm sure most of them are quite thoughtful.

NEWTON: Yeah, they're thoughtful, and they accept this as a legitimate exercise and we try--. We operate on the basis of no surprises. I would talk to the ambassador a couple of times a week and tell them how we were coming, where we were focusing on and what the potential problem areas might be. In general I would say chiefs of mission always seemed—

Q: (_____) the Ukraine. Part of this was the residue of trying to staff all our posts in the old Soviet Union without asking for more money and not really, you know, really adequately preparing.

NEWTON: I think that was part of the problem. The bigger problem there was that the job of the embassy turned out to be much larger than anticipated. Ambassador Miller, he'd been the chief of staff of, I think the Senate select intelligence committee and (_____) representation he was excellent certainly. But they had started out on the assumption that until the Ukrainian denuclearized they wouldn't give them any assistance. That went out the window and they began doing this and they began developing much closer relations but complicated relations, and it kept growing, and he kept bringing in, he brought in agency analysts on the nuclear issue. He kept adding people, but the evidence, I was completely overwhelmed. It had no budgeting, fiscal officer, no personnel officer, at least not from Washington. The admin officer was, I had known him was a nice man. He had been my assistant GSO (general services officer) in Baghdad, and I think he was mustanged from being a communicator. I mean, he tried hard. He just had nowhere near the background, and there was a vacant admin counselor job and this is another problem of the department. They would not, I criticized them a lot. They would not direct an assignment. They tried to get a couple of people to go there, and they backed out. I said, that's inexcusable. You have to make a directed assignment of admin counselor. So this all, the DCM got it in the neck I'm afraid as a result. But that's unfortunately the way the system often works. It's not that these are bad people. But also these agencies kept, the defense attaché I think had, I don't know he had four people there. Eight on TDY (temporary duty), and he was now going to convert the eight on TDY to slots and bring eight more people. The whole thing was out of control. I put a personnel freeze on the embassy, which didn't endear me to them and things like that. But it was so much so that the undersecretary for management when I got back called a meeting and assigned Tony Quainton to deal with the, I think six or seven major recommendations to fast track them because he was, the post was just breaking down administratively. Interesting post too in the sense that on the side of, reporting side there were a number of people who had been in Moscow in Russia and so forth and others who were ethnic Ukrainians, I had several good ethnic Ukrainians there. The ethnic Ukrainians were much more ready to believe the Ukrainians were genuinely changing than the Soviet expert who tended to say well, it's the same old stuff. It's just different dressing. So there was a little bit of tension in the embassy over that. I mean not overt

tension, but in any case I found the job a lot of fun because it is challenging come up with a report which you could defend against all comers.

Q: Well, then you left that in 19—

NEWTON: Yeah, I left that in late ’94, in the fall of ’94.

Q: Then you went what, you went to Yemen?

NEWTON: I went to Yemen in November of ’94.

Q: And you were there until when?

NEWTON: I was there until December ’97, three years.

Q: Three years. What was the situation in Yemen when you got there?

NEWTON: Well, when I got there, it was about you know six months since the short civil war they had. The central government had won, and it was the southerners who were leftists tried to revolt but discovered that they didn’t have much support among their people. There was some real battles there. But that had been one. The problem with relations was of course going back to the Gulf War in ’91, the Yemenis had the misfortune of being on the security council. They had abstained on the first vote, and they were, had opposed the use of force. Right away almost all, eighty percent or more of our aid disappeared. They were in the dog house but good. They suffered greatly with the Saudis who booted out all the Yemeni workers there, and the Gulf did the same thing, Kuwait. So they were in a lot of economic difficulty. The president periodically kept saying things that were too nice about Saddam Hussein, and we would be protesting. For me it was nice because I think as I’ve said before, the prime minister, the foreign minister, minister of finance were old friends. I had some standing in the place. I was trying to get them to ease off on this, tell them—

Q: What was motivating them to get on the wrong side of this thing?

NEWTON: If you go back the Yemenis were a poor country in a rich area always, the different Yemenis all had protectors. Some had Saudi protectors. That was uncomfortable for many Yemenis because this was the big--. It was like the U.S. I used to compare it to the U.S. and Mexico, the old feelings. But the Ba’ath party had always been somewhat popular in Yemen because it wasn’t tied, the Yemenis were very independent. It wasn’t really tying them to any particular country like Nasserism would tie them to Egypt or the Saudis would tie them. So there was historically some sympathy for the Ba’ath. But I think the president also, he’s in a country where often he gives an order and people just ignore it. The government is much weaker than it would like to be. I think they sort of admired Saddam and the fact that he, everybody really snapped to when they were afraid and they all obeyed it. But they also had many of them had looked to better the far friend than the near friend. Iraq, they hoped would be a counterweight to the Saudi influence.

The president was a tough guy. He tended to be blunt and outspoken and stubborn, and he would say these things when it would've been much better for the Iraqis for him to hold his peace. So a lot of my effort was to try to turn this thing slowly around, keep as much aid as possible. The aid, even our maternal and child health was being phased out. So I did manage to get a couple of programs, one as training for police to make them a little more humanitarian. But the more valuable one was humanitarian deming which worked well.

Q: Had there been a lot of mining during the civil war?

NEWTON: Yeah, in all the civil wars going back to the '60s. We'd also had a huge flood in the east which had, had moved a lot of these mines. Nobody knew where they were. Anyway nor many people knew anyway. So it was question. Interestingly, it was a near war with Eritrea, which helped turn it around because in the beginning Eritrea was the fair haired boy of the, of the African bureau. Yemen was at the bottom in the Near East bureau, and in the beginning the Yemenis really looked like the black hat, but eventually it became very clear that the Eritreans started this, and they were behaving very irresponsibly.

Q: Why would they fight each other? Speed boats or something.

NEWTON: There were a number of islands out in the Red Sea. The Yemenis had always considered, there were some conflicting claims. They had, they were starting a little tourist operation, a dive operation. They had maybe 100 soldiers out there as police. The Eritreans landed on the island in the dark of night and killed a number of them, captured them and took the island. So they really humiliated the Yemenis. Basically what happened, Boutros Boutros Ghali came there (_____) and explained what he was trying to mediate and that he was going to ask the French because they had turned him down on a couple of things, and he felt they would be willing to do it. They had forces in Djibouti, naval forces, and so I went to the department and said, "We have to get involved in this. A war between these poor little countries would ruin both of them." So we went to the French. They went to the French and the French said, "Well, thank you very much if we need you, we'll get in touch." So I went back and said, "That's not good enough. We need to show the French that we can be helpful and we will not take credit for this," because there was an official French mediator who was a retired director general (_____). So we convinced the French that we would work, just work behind the scene. We had an ambassador in Eritrea, and we really did help. I think the Yemenis gave us a lot of information, foreign minister. We were able to, they made some missteps, but we were able to show that really it was the Eritreans that were the problem. They then went on an threatened Djibouti, said they didn't recognize the border with Djibouti, and they threatened the Ethiopians. Really, it was a country where they still thought they were in the midst of a revolution, but the revolution, they were behaving like revolutionaries. So in the end the parties agreed to mediation. The, I remember the French mediator I remember very warmly for the support we'd given behind the scenes. If we'd taken credit, of course the French would've been upset. That might have spoiled the thing.

One of the interesting problems when this broke I was trying to get us involved. The U.S. government was shut down because of the lack of a resolution. There was one person available in the Africa bureau. There were two people I think in NEA. So trying to get the department to move on this was not so easy. I felt good about it because I think, I felt good about cases where even in Iraq trying to push for an end to the war or pushing for end of the Lebanon civil war. I think that's one of the main jobs of diplomats is trying to stop the violence and stop the killing. So I felt good about it that we'd--. And I was telling, trying in a nice way to tell the Yemenis, you don't have the capability of going back and take those islands. It's just beyond you, and the president was under a lot of pressure from his military. But with the help of the foreign minister I think we convinced him, and I think he knew it that going to war would be disastrous, would be a disaster.

Q: Yeah, well you'd have a hard time getting to each other, wouldn't they?

NEWTON: Yeah, they would. They had some (_____) that could've gone out there. But the Ethiopians had a better Navy, I think. I mean, in terms of boats to take them up there, but there's no way they could support the—

Q: Well, how was the thing resolved?

NEWTON: They went to mediation. Both sides agreed to mediation, and it went to the World Court. The, in territorial terms it was found completely in the favor of the Yemenis. The Ethiopians got some acts of (_____).

Q: You say Ethiopians, you mean—

NEWTON: I'm sorry, Eritreans.

Q: You say Eritreans.

NEWTON: Eritreans, they were separate, yeah. The Yemenis were very happy in the end. The other thing I worked on very hard there was to try to help resolve the border issue with the Saudis because that had also, some bad implications. Because I'd been in Saudi Arabia I knew the people and the department was willing, and the ambassador was willing I was able to go up and go with the ambassador and go to see Prince Saud, the foreign minister. Look, I've served five years in your country. You know me. I mean, I'm a friend. I'm not, but I've also served in Yemen. I just want to tell you I think these people really do want an agreement and that if it really would be possible to (_____). I had told the Yemenis, which I think is true, historically if you look at these, Saudi border disputes with other countries, they start by taking a very hard line. But in the end the Saudis are pretty generous. They were, they solve very, find very reasonable agreements with Oman, with the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, maybe not quite so much with Qatar. But in the end the Saudis know they need a peaceful border. I tried to help keep the tempers down.

Q: Well, was there a survey or something? I mean, this is pretty rough country, wasn't it?

NEWTON: Yeah, it had been. There were pillars that had been laid out in the Western part near the mountains and so forth. Pillars had been laid out. But the other borders were just a line in a map the British had drawn. It was complicated by the fact that during the '70s and '80s, the Saudis had built a big military city. They had taken over an area, which the Yemenis had considered theirs. It came down beyond what these borders, if you drew the line out would've been. I told the Yemenis, look, the Saudis have spent billions of dollars on this. There is no way you can get back. You need to accept it and get the border to run around it and maybe get some compensatory territory somewhere else. That's how it turned out. In the end the Saudis signed an agreement. The Yemenis got more territory than they had before.

Q: Who did, were these Saudis talking to Yemenis or was there a third party?

NEWTON: No, they would not accept an official third party. They had visits back and forth, and the Saudis would come down. The Saudis tended to be a little lordly because they were rich. The Yemenis were poor. There was some historical animosities. The Yemenis always felt they were much smarter, cleverer. The Saudis felt that these people, they had been Marxist down here and so forth. They're not trustworthy. I mean these were stereotypes. But in the end they were, Prince Sultan had been responsible for the policies and minister of defense. In the end he came through along with Crown Prince Abdullah. They got I think a pretty decent deal. Then they had to go back and start demarcating the border where it had been before. Then they began having trouble with, later with some of the Yemeni tribesmen in the north who had gone freely back and forth across the border and were objecting to the border being demarcated.

Q: Well, the, were Yemenis beginning to go back to work in Saudi Arabia?

NEWTON: Yeah, they were, some had gone back to work. They had a privileged position before, I think. They were able to go for three or five year periods. They didn't need work permits. They could move freely back and forth where other people had worked, required work permits renewable every year. So they lost all these special privileges and in the meantime the Saudis had brought in non-Arabs, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Thais, other people like this and Filipinos and so forth. So they fitted much more easily into the Saudi society and economy. But they lost all of that, and they still suffer from it. They still have some camps where people dispossessed are still living. It was a huge mistake on their part.

Q: Were you noticing a difference working in Yemen, which has always been sort of the back of beyond but with a change in communications were things changing, getting able to contact the State Department easily, phone, fax, that sort of thing.

NEWTON: Huge change. I mean the first time we went there we were in a, I was in a two-man branch office in Sana'a. The embassy was further south in Ta'izz. Our only, well the plane we had an embassy aide, aide mission aircraft, small plane came up twice a week and we'd exchange bags and that sort of thing like that. Otherwise our only contact

was through the Ottoman telegraph system. We send messages back and forth if necessary if they were urgent. Otherwise you'd just have to drive down there. Our only news was BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) or VOA (Voice of America) short wave. The second time, that was '66-67. Then second time '73-75 I think we had sort of functioning, barely functioning telephone system and so forth, and we had, of course we were an embassy and we had regular pouch mail and so forth. But the third time I mean I had, of course I was living in the residence, but I had satellite TV, and I had we had phone contact with the outside world. I had a scrambler phone in the office, and I had one at home. So all of a sudden the psychological distance, and I can, well the first time in '66-67 we also had, we could send classified messages through our (_____) system. I remember we had '67 war came along, and we were sort of besieged, and we were running out of fuel. We suddenly realized we were down, only operating the communications system four hours a day, and we suddenly realized pretty soon we'd be out of communications completely. Suddenly we felt a lot more remote. The world seemed a lot bigger. Fortunately the Yemenis let us roll on some barrels of diesel fuel, and we could continue to, we could continue, and of course it makes a difference.

I think, not to go on too much about this, but psychologically of course the foreign service has changed a lot. We become more like the military. We get in our daily lives less involved in the local economy. I mean if you went back to the '50s or before my time or maybe the early '60s the, in the '50s the wives could work. They went and educated their own children, started a lot of local schools, and if you went there, you find these various little fliers and everything telling you what the local substitute for cream of tartar is this. You can't get heavy cream but you can use this. People really, the women had time. They knew the economy. But now of course the wives are working which is, or spouses are working. So we, a lot of places have commissaries, maybe not a full one but, and you don't, you have your own television. You can listen to American programs and so forth. People with the embassies become much less dependent on the local economy. In that respect we were getting a little more like the military when you're overseas. But it's inevitable. I mean, you don't have the time anymore. I know my wife when we got to Baghdad said there's so little food available. The seasonal, she always took down the new spouses down to the, showed them what was available and where you could get it and so forth. I remember one of the admin officer they both worked, and they had before that lived on pre-packaged food entirely. He was the cook, and they lived on, they popped something in the microwave for dinner. Well you get to a place like Baghdad in the middle of a war where when we first got there, the only vegetable available that entire summer was cucumbers. So suddenly you're not prepared anymore.

Q: No. Well I remember when I was in Dhahran in the '50s, you'd look at cereal, and it had an expiration date which was probably a year or two had passed. Then when you had spaghetti and things like this, you just scoop out the weevils that were on top. I mean, it's protein, but you didn't, you just kind of shut your eyes.

NEWTON: A lot of laws have changed too, and that is when you went overseas in those days, you didn't expect to enjoy a lot of the benefits and protections. I mean you had to live with the local economy. I can remember when we, the, something of a dispute when

we hired the first two blind foreign service officers. I mean, before that we didn't have, in the civil service, but that broke the requirement that you had to be worldwide available at the time. I think I said, "Well, they could only go to London and Ottawa," and I think they ended up going to London and Toronto. Other laws on disabilities and so forth suddenly apply overseas laws on safety. We never thought about using flash heaters in bathrooms. We tried to be careful. But we never thought that these various kinds of protections and laws would apply to us. We just had to do the best you could with what the country offered. I'm not saying it's better. I'm not—

Q: Well, how did you find—

NEWTON: Talking about the good old days.

Q: Yemenis as contact with them and all during this last tour?

NEWTON: Yemenis are very friendly, very nice people. Despite the high illiteracy and everything, they're very interested in the world. They're intelligent. I find they're very attractive people and always got along with them very well. They don't have a lot of complexes. They've become open to the world. They're [cough] generally pretty smart people.

Q: Was there any reflection, now at this time, there was no longer a Yemen People's Republic was there?

NEWTON: No, that ended in 1990 when they merged. It just sank. I mean without the Soviets around and the rest of the Communist world, it was no longer viable.

Q: Was there any problem of adjustment?

NEWTON: No, there was a big problem that led eventually to the civil war. It really was kind of a unity that wasn't very much of a unity. The North was the Yemen Arab Republic, the bigger part. So they were the president, vice presidents from the South, the prime minister was from the South. They mixed the various ministries, so one North, one South. They co-located a lot of army units. They brought some northern units south and southern units north. It was made to feel the people in the south they were more or less equal even though they were much smaller. Then the first elections came along. There was a conservative party, more religious reformist, Islam party, running as well as the northern government party, the General People's Congress. Then the socialists, the Yemen Socialist Party from the South. Then Yemen Socialist Party got creamed. They came in distinctly third out of three, and it was became pretty clear that they didn't have a lot of support in the South because they had, because of their misrule. Suddenly the emperor had no clothes. At that point they lost their enthusiasm and began to absent themselves, the prime minister, the vice president. They moved back to the South, and they were trying to separate themselves. What happened finally was a fight started with a couple of regiments who were co-located, and then it spread south of Sana'a, north of Sana'a to south of Sana'a, and all these co-located units began to fight and pretty soon

you had a civil war. The southern units were better trained probably and so forth. But the northern, there were more of the northerners. Eventually the north, the northern units won and invaded. There was some tank battles north of Aden. Aden was cut off, and there was pressure internationally because the water supply was cut and so forth. But the—

Q: [interruption] Yeah, we're still going.

NEWTON: The, but then fortunately and it was pressure because there was some, still some ill will towards Yemen, and Saudis and UAE and others wanted a cease fire in place and went to the security council calling for a resolution. We didn't go along with it because a cease-fire in place would've meant essentially a victory and a (____) for the south and a redivision of the country, which was not the right thing to do. We simply didn't go along with it and it died. Then the president was smart enough to sort of play this sympathetic to this idea of ending the fighting but telling his people speed up, get it over with. They won a couple of decisive victories, and then it was all over. In the process some of these right wing religious people went in and did some damage. They destroyed the brewery in Aden and the Palestinian nightclub. Ever since then it's been ill will. The northern colonels, army security police going down and acting like conquerors. But in general it's okay. It's manageable.

Q: Well, while you were there, what was the role of Aden?

NEWTON: Aden, you know Aden is the best natural port between the Mediterranean and Sri Lanka. A wonderful port. It was always designed to be dredged a little bit deeper than the Suez Canal because people would bunker in Aden and burn off some of the fuel as it came up north through the canal. Of course until, it was dying out in the '60s, but it was a busy port. They had an oil refinery with bunkering and a lot of trade. That was dying away. Sixty-seven the Suez Canal closed. The British left and the economy went in the tank and the place just ran down. The Yemenis were trying to get it up and running again, and they have dredged it. They put in a container port. It hasn't done as well as it might have. But it's doing better now. One of the things that always work out, the Navy wanted an alternative bunkering port out of the range of Iran, and so I encouraged them to refuel in Aden, and of course then the Cole got attacked later. But it's a wonderful natural port, and of course it's very close to the shipping lanes going through the canal. So it's better than Djibouti and better than East Africa. They were getting, I think they got Singapore to come in and help them and maybe Dubai is helping them now. But they also had a very low cost workforce available. So it was a natural, but they haven't developed it as much as they can. But there's a chance that it'll eventually—

Q: Well, what about fundamentalists? Were they while you were there, were they mentioned some of the problems, but was this—

NEWTON: Yeah, we had some concerns. The Islah party had these so-called scientific institutes. It's not a very good translation but sort of their own religious school. It was a lot of concern about them. But we didn't have a lot of active fundamentalism at the time. But we were keeping an eye on it. Then the government was trying to shut these schools

down, schools down little by little. The trouble is they didn't have enough money to open their own schools.

Q: Were the Saudis, you know were the Saudis supporting fundamentalist schools?

NEWTON: They had, and they had really introduced this kind of fundamentalism into Yemen, strangely enough in the north, which was Shia or at least nominally Shia. Yeah, and that helped started. The other thing was the Yemenis who fought in Afghanistan came back, and they now have a very interesting judge there who's (_____) is his name. I saw him recently. He was commissioned by the president to start something called the National Dialogue Council, I think. He went to all these captured radicals in Yemen and debated them over the true Islam and said that he has converted many of them to much more moderate and learned form of Islam. So they've rehabilitated a lot of people. A few of them have gone back and have turned up in Saudi Arabia and Iraq, but in general I think the great majority seem to have been dealt with. That's a very much a Yemeni custom to try to reintegrate people back into society.

Q: What about, was it Muscat or was it Oman, whatever they call it now?

NEWTON: Oman, the Sultanate of Oman.

Q: Was that border, how was that—

NEWTON: That was before I got to it. That was demarcated, slightly adjusted to deal with some realities. Relations were good between the Yemenis and the Omanis. The Yemenis, relations also returned with the UAE and with Kuwait. The Yemenis have always wanted to be in the Gulf Cooperation Council. I think maybe they have some things they have observer status hoping for financial support from six richer states.

Q: Did you get any high level visits or anything like that or—

NEWTON: In Yemen?

Q: Um hmm.

NEWTON: No, not, we were only starting tog et working to get CINCCOM (Commander-in-Chief, United States Central Command) to come back in. I don't, we, I think I finally got maybe a rear admiral finally. But since then relations have become much better. No, as I say they were in the doghouse much of the time. It is only gradually could we get the relationship back.

Q: Did you get back to the states from time to time?

NEWTON: Oh yeah, I got back at least once a year. Yeah.

Q: Did you find that Yemen that sometimes if your country is on the outs, the ambassador is relegated to the, or sort of takes on the aura of the country you're assigned to.

NEWTON: Well, I had one advantage. I was an old NEA hand. The assistant secretaries were friends of mine and things like that. So I was, I was maybe I could say respected and well-thought of in NEA. So that didn't affect me, but I never tried to push Yemen beyond its weight. I always tried to avoid, never get in a balance between Saudi Arabia and Yemen. That would be complete loser. I tried very hard to get a presidential visit for Yemeni president and that I couldn't manage to do that. Subsequently he's much better regarded, and he's had a couple of presidential visits. But it's time to turn this around. Ironically a lot of this is sort of, it's 9/11 and the Cole and so forth. Actually I'd started the process of working together with the Saudis on counter terrorism before 9/11 but then it really took off after 9/11.

Q: Just for people reading this. You might explain what, when you say and then the Cole, C-O-L-E. Would you explain that?

NEWTON: Yeah, the USS Cole is the navy frigate that was bombed and almost sunk with a loss of, I think, seventeen sailors in Aden harbor when a suicide boat full of ammunition or full of explosive came out and rammed it in the middle of the harbor.

Q: It was part of the bin Laden, Osama bin Laden—

NEWTON: Yes. Yeah.

Q: Network.

NEWTON: So that even tragedies create some opportunities, and the Yemenis behaved responsibly and have cooperated on terrorism because they realize the threat to them as well. That has helped relations, but it's very difficult, it takes time to turn around relations. I had to fight to keep the AID program going before I left. They wanted, AID wanted to cancel it completely, even though it was just a maternal and child health program.

Q: How about roads? We put a lot of times on roads before—

NEWTON: Well, way back in the '60s when I came. we were just finishing the major road in Yemen from the port of Mocha to Ta'izz, the southern city of North Yemen up to Sana'a. The Chinese had built a road from the main port Hudaydah east up the mountains to Sana'a. The Russians later built one between Hudaydah and Ta'izz. Yeah, and we put in a water project in Ta'izz. Then we got into self-help, and I think that stimulated the Yemenis actually when we had to leave in '67 to keep going these self-help projects. But we were not in big projects anymore.

Q: How did the Yemeni Diaspora play? I mean this is, you've got Yemenis in Lackawanna. We gave visas to them.

NEWTON: Only, certainly not politically. The only thing was on the visa issue, we had some Yemenis who got back who still had American citizenship, and we had a real problem with visa fraud and people being given old packets of phony documents, which really didn't work. Then people going to the states and with their families and trying to attach a couple more kids. We had a lot of fraud, which we worked on with social security. We got social security to come there and do electronic fingerprinting and photographing, and we were surprised how many people died suddenly just before the arrival of the social security team. There were various things. I remember one of the tricks was to declare your husband deceased when he went back to the United States to work. So the wife could get widow and child benefits. I remember one woman came in, and the fellow we had behind the counter who was the husband of one of our officers who was spoke Arabic and he said, "Well, gee that's really too bad. I need to see his passport," and took it in to the, snipped off the corners and stamped deceased and gave it back to her. [laughter] That wasn't what he had in mind at all.

But yeah, various one amusing story, not amusing. But the second time I was there, we made every applicant give us an extensive list of their brothers and sisters and everything so that later when they got to the states and they would petition for them, and often they weren't on the list. But the really amazing thing last time was that they were, we required, we started requiring DNA testing, blood samples. I mean if, they didn't have to do it, but if they wanted to avoid being, in these cases being refused they had the option of doing this. We had a Yemeni doctor doing it, and then he was being threatened so we couldn't do it. So we were sending it to London. The DNA test came back like it was two people, one related. It involved a child who was supposed to be the son of the applicants came back and looked almost like two people. We realized what must've happened. They must've drawn blood out of the so-called father and injected it into the kid just before the test. They, I'm sure they didn't type it or anything. They could've killed the poor kid. But they tried everything to, I had some very prominent people. They'd always show up with the same body guards who we then refused a couple of times before and claimed--. They needed these people, the sheik needed these people as retainers. They were getting a payment from these people to get them visas to go along with them. It was a constant struggle. But it is in many countries. It was viewed as a game. You just had to find the right—

Q: Well, then you left there when?

NEWTON: I left in December '97 just before Christmas, came home, retired the end of '98.

Q: What did you do, do in that year?

NEWTON: You mean in '98. Well, at that point I was, I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do, but I'd made an arrangement to go back to work with the inspector general. What happened is seven days after I retired, I got a call from a friend in NEA who said it was a sudden problem again with Saddam. This is the crisis that Kofi Annan eventually

defused. Said, “Maybe we didn’t tell you about this. I’m not sure but we want to send someone out as a special envoy for public diplomacy. We’ve sent the list up to the undersecretary and your name’s on the list.” This is one week after I retired, turned in my clearances and my dip passport and everything. Then he called me back forty-five minutes later. He said, “I should tell you Tom Pickering has chosen you to go. Can you leave in a few days?” I said, “I just gave up my clearances, my dip passport and everything.” Fortunately had put in, because I had been the ambassador, you could get courtesy dip passports, I’d put in for those. I said, “Well, I can, I’ll get those. I’ll use those,” because then we had to get, went to twelve different countries in fourteen days and all of them required visas. So the poor expediter in NEA was running around like a maniac. Took about a week. I had to get sworn in again as a WAE (when actually employed). I had to get my clearances restored. It was really nuts. So I became a WAE hired as an expert with NEA as a GS 15, and so I went and did this trip. It took about, well, it took two and a half weeks roughly.

Q: What were you doing?

NEWTON: I was going around with a big briefing book showing that the Iraqis had not accounted for all of their weapons of mass destruction and had not obeyed security council resolutions. I was doing, it was about half in Arabic and half in English. It was on TV, radio, press, one lecture, which is not a good idea in Bahrain, but they scheduled it without telling me and generally arguing our case. Then I came home. I, but I had, I wanted to go to work for the inspector general. So I used this WAE as a transferred funds. I also got asked beyond the group of retired ambassadors that did supposedly did the final say on freedom of information, which is interesting because that week I got April Glaspie’s cable with Saddam, and I convinced my other two colleagues to declassify it. I don’t ever never know for sure what happened to it. So I did that. I was getting ready to I did one inspection. I went back and did East Asia Pacific Bureau again for the second time with the inspector, with the IG and I was getting ready, just two of us to go and do a mini-inspection in Algiers. This was I think maybe July, and I used to get a call maybe once a month, people would ask me to come and talk to them about Iraq. They wanted to know about Iraq. So I got a call from the counselor of Radio Free Europe, said would you come over and talk to the president about Iraq. So I assume this is one of the things. I went over. I was having a nice conversation with him, and about twenty minutes into it, he offered me a job, which I hadn't known existed. Congress had just mandated the establishment of Radio Free Iraq and a similar service for Iran, awarded it to Radio Free Europe, and he offered me the job. He said, he talked to three people including Tom Pickering who’d recommended me. Peter (_____) had recommended me for the job. So I was very happy to go to Prague, and we’ve lived in Europe before. So I went and spent I was a contractor for a couple of months, and then in October of ’98 I went to Prague and went through the war and the change. I worked for them until July of 2004. Then it became obvious that the people who had started up Radio Sawa didn’t welcome any competition especially from an informational program and wanted to put us out of business. They wanted our broadcasters for Radio Sawa and TV Alhurra. So the chief editor and I resigned and, at he end of May, beginning of June.

He's now the chief of staff to the current president of Iraq, the crazy Kurd. So I stayed, and then I stayed there until more or less the end of 2004, came back to Washington.

Q: This is tape five, side one with David Newton. What, what was happening? Let's talk about this. In the first place, how did you feel about I mean one, you've gone out and made the justification about weapons of mass destruction. There's been a lot of controversy, which continues to this day about basically a justification for going to war with Iraq. I mean—

NEWTON: Yeah—

Q: Part of it was that it was supposedly connected with the terrorists, which seems based on pretty flimsy evidence.

NEWTON: Yeah.

Q: They weren't, I mean the guy was, there was no doubt about the nastiness of Saddam Hussein, but what were we in it for. How did you feel about this at the beginning and did this change any of your impressions?

NEWTON: Yeah, two things to say about that in general. One, weapons of mass destruction. People need to remember that the way this was structured, the Iraqis accepted a cease fire. In the terms of that cease fire they were required within forty-five days to identify all their weapons of mass destruction to the UN special commission, UNSCOM, and then they had another forty-five days to physically turnover all their weapons of mass destruction to UNSCOM. Of course they never did that, and it was clear that they never would. The result is they never got out from underneath the sanctions as a result.

So that when the question came up in 2003, and I'd been the special envoy before, there was no doubt that the Iraqis had not accounted for their weapons. That was the obligation. It was not the obligation of UNSCOM to find the weapons. It was the obligation of the Saudis, of the Iraqis to turn them over. Now sometimes the Iraqis said well we don't have them anymore. We destroyed them unilaterally. Well, there've been quite a few occasions with UNSCOM they were clearly hiding things, and nobody was prepared to believe that the Iraqis didn't have them and that they had unilaterally destroyed these things, but then it turns out that's probably pretty much true. So everybody believed the, I certainly believed the Iraqis still had some of these biological and chemical weapons although given the, what twelve years had gone by. Some of these things were no longer usable. But there were still some there.

The question is then okay if we tolerated this for twelve years, then why does it suddenly become intolerable. That's a question you have to ask because the administration says, well we all thought they had weapons. Yeah. Okay, we did. But why now in 2003 would it suddenly become intolerable.

The second issue is I was, I had given a talk to the local Harvard Club about Iraq before, and they asked me a couple of days before the war to come and give a semi-public lecture to the expatriates. I was being very diplomatic because the American ambassador was in the front row, Harvard graduate or maybe business school. But he was also a former owner of the Texas Rangers. And his wife was a cousin of the president. He's now ambassador to France and a capable man, nice person. I said, look, in those days we hadn't used those phrases war of choice, war of necessity but I said, there are two reasons arguable for going to war that you could make a case. Number one, we betrayed the Iraqis in 1991. We called them to rise up and then we stood around and let them get slaughtered. So you could say we still have a moral obligation to do something. Secondly, the sanctions have gone on with the Iraqis are suffering more and more. Maybe you can argue it's time to put an end to it even though we are not really the ones responsible for the suffering. But you could make a case at least to go to war.

One argument I didn't mention is of course is that the Iraqis were already under chapter seven, had been declared a threat to the peace. They were already suffering from the second highest punishment called for under chapter seven, which was economic sanctions. We had just passed a resolution threatening dire consequences if they didn't finally account. So if you're under the second most highest and you threaten dire consequences, what other dire consequences can there be than the most serious, which is military action. So one could argue that true. But I said, look, and this was centered on Prague, over the fact that the claim that Mohammed Atta had gone to Prague and had met with the chief of security in the Iraqi embassy who was responsible for Eastern Europe. But the evidence seemed very unclear and that wasn't, I didn't really see any convincing evidence that Saddam had participated in 9/11. Now this is before the war a little bit.

Secondly, the argument that Saddam had these weapons, and I accepted that he had some. But the argument that he would turn them over to terrorists to use against us didn't seem to me to make a lot of sense. He was lying low, and if he used, turned over these weapons they were used against us, we would cream him. So I didn't see we had any really convincing evidence on that score. So I didn't, I wasn't trying to say we should go to war or not. But it seemed to me we had a couple of arguments you could make if you wished, which would be a war of choice, but the fact that it was necessary to go to war didn't really seem to me to be the case that was proven. That's obvious now. I also said that about the, I thought that the war would be relatively easy, that we could do it in a few weeks because the Iraqis were really not prepared to fight also because this time we would have complete air dominance from day one. So I thought the war wouldn't be so hard. I didn't know what would happen afterwards, but I said look, the post-war situation is not going to be easy because we're talking about a fundamental restructuring change in the power relationships in Iraq. We're taking power away from the Sunnis who have held it as long as they can remember and that they're not going to take this gracefully. They're going to try somehow to resist. I mean I didn't envisage all, everything that happened by any means. But I think anybody who knew something about Iraq knew that when you're making this change that there would be a lot of resistance. It wouldn't be easy.

Q: Well, then while you were doing Radio Iraq, I know talking to people who have been with Voice of America, and there you have real battles between various dissident groups on the left, during the Cold War and the Voice of America. I would think that Radio Iraq, you'd depend on Iraqis to get the message out, and it would depend whether they were Kurds, Sunni or Shia.

NEWTON: Yeah, we started Radio Free Iraq in, we went on the air in October '98. We found broadcasters. We tried to get all three groups and responsible broadcasters. We had some pressure from Ahmed Chalabi who was the head of the Iraqi National Congress. He said, "Well give me the money. I'll do it." He didn't like it when we broadcast things that he didn't, that weren't favorable to him, and for a while he wouldn't talk to us. But we soon developed a very good audience because people realized we were trying to be objective. We also were a surrogate radio. That is we considered ourselves an Iraqi station. Everybody else was Iraqi, and this was Iraqi news for Iraqis, by Iraqis. We as a surrogate station like Radio Free Europe for example, we never broadcast presidential speeches in their entirety. We would cover it like any other station as news bulletin or maybe some analysis. But unlike Sawa when it went on the air and just endlessly repeated the state of the union message, I think, six times in one day. We would never do that. We rarely interviewed Americans, almost always only interviewed Iraqis. Of course before Saddam lost power we had to interview people outside the country, but we did a number of interesting things. For example we talked, well, actually we had one person who had witnessed the immediate aftermath of, remember the Ameria shelter. He said he lived in the area with his son and that in the weeks before that they'd gone over there and asked well, could we use the shelter in case of an attack.

Q: This is the bomb shelter.

NEWTON: In which all the women and children were killed, the Ameria shelter. They were told no this shelter is special. It's private. You're not allowed. Ordinary people can't go there. He said then the week before suddenly the party people were coming around saying, "If there's a bombing, come to our shelter. We have sewing machines for the women. We have televisions set up. You're all welcome. Come to the shelter." Then that morning it was, I guess, about four in the morning, they heard this tremendous explosion, and when first light came, he and his son walked over, and they saw from the front of the shelter bodies, pieces of bodies, badly burned, charred being carried out. This is before the press arrived, before the fire department came and flooded the place. Then they walked around the back, and they said they saw a whole line of Iraqi military bodies lined up there scarcely singed or something, all dead. Then all of a sudden hearses showed up. Hearses normally were only used by Christians who were a small minority. Hearses showed up, but they didn't load the bodies in the hearses. They came out with these large aluminum cases and started loading these cases in the hearses and taking them away. The kind which could well have had electronic equipment or something like that. Then they decided, well we'd better not stick around too long. They went away. We also talked to the brigadier who'd been, Air Force brigadier who'd been in charge of the Air Force operations when Halabja was gassed. He said the order for the attack using all available means, meaning chemical weapons had come straight from Saddam's palace. We had

people who had been to this new pleasure city he'd built. So we could get a lot of people. The two Kurdish leaders said they listened to us every day because we had as much, more news than anyone else. Our niche was, we couldn't compete with BBC or maybe even VOA in a sense but, because we were small. We were on the air ten hours a day, five of which was a repeat. But we only focused on Iraq, Iraq news for Iraqis. We had some very good culture programs--poetry, music. We had a program that came from Iraqi Jews in Israel who had preserved a lot of traditional Iraqi culture. We had a very good audience, and we had established that we were objective. So it was worth doing. Then of course we had the, when the war came along, we had to switch. But the international broadcasting people gave all the resources originally to Sawa, and we were stuck on short wave.

Q: Sawa is what?

NEWTON: Is U.S.--. It was started about that time and around 2000 or so. It's a program in Arabic aimed at young people. It's seventy-five percent streaming music like Musak, and the rest is news, correspondence reports but almost no analysis or anything. So mainly radio, and the music is very good and attracts a big audience. The issue is how much information does it give. So they were getting all the FM transmitters that were being flown in. Finally after four months we got one for Baghdad. They got six. Later we got one for Basra, but we built our audience and we had streamers everywhere. We tried very hard to do programs to promote Iraqis get along with each other or different groups. We had a very good correspondent in Kirkuk, and through a lot of social programs we had a program about Iraqi orphans and women who were now without support and a lot of cultural programs and interviewed a lot of people. We had good relations with the coalition provisional authority. They took us along on trips. But we maintained our independence, and we did very well. Then we found out the beginning of 2004, they had inserted something in the budget submission to Congress which dishonestly said we would be merged with TV Alhurra, but when we asked, we found out they simply wanted to shut us down, and they wouldn't even guarantee taking our people. In the end they took five or six because they needed. We had the only really trained Iraqis around broadcasting.

Q: Who were, was there a difference, who was running the other one, the Sawa?

NEWTON: Yeah, Sawa and Alhurra are the grandchildren of Norm Pattiz who is a Democrat but a very successful, able businessman. He runs Westwood One, which is the biggest FM operation in the States. He just recently resigned. He got in the doghouse with the Bush administration. He and Ken Tomlinson who runs the international, the broadcasting board of governors didn't get along at all. But they agreed on this new program. They shut down VOA Arabic, which had a very small audience but also had very limited resources and used the money to start first Sawa, and it's run by a Lebanese American and some of Tom, and some of Pattiz's people also in it. It's here and in Springfield. It's controversial. They're being investigated by GAO (general accounting office) now, and it was investigated by the State IG because it had responsibility for international broadcasting. There were questions about its contracting procedures and

favoring differing Lebanese and so forth. It's an expensive operation, and the issue with that is it's I think demonstratively got a really good audience, but it had very good facilities. Also since it's seventy-five percent music, does it justify the cost and shouldn't we have a more serious, information heavy effort in the Middle East. I certainly thought we should've had one for Iraq. The Radio Free Iraq has survived, but it's shrunk. And Congress refused to let it be eliminated, but they didn't give it any money either. So it's another unfunded mandate. Then Alhurra has come along, which is also very expensive. The issue with Alhurra is and some of our people work for it and ex-people and try very hard. The issue with Alhurra is whether it can build enough of an audience in a very competitive market with Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya, which is Saudi funded and is now catching up to Al-Jazeera. Lebanon now, BBC is going to once again start an Arabic service. As a, it's here in Washington. It's under pressure to show, I think, off of the administration favorably. Whether it's going to win enough audience to justify its cost is really the issue there, not content. In the beginning I think they went on the air too early. They just, he had good contacts, Norm Pattiz, and got a lot of free material. They dubbed it and, or subtitled it in Arabic. But the programs were really poor. I mean, I watched in the beginning. It was a cooking show and a fashion show, an hour show on traditional culture of Hawaii, an hour show on what was it, I can't remember. There was another hour show, which struck me as really of no interest. They were just trying to fill up the time. They wanted I think to get on the air early to show Congress they were moving quickly.

He recently resigned as I say. His name had appeared on an ad opposing Bush's reelection. Since he was a Bush appointee although the law says four appointees Democrat, four Republicans. The Bush administration said this was wrong. They wouldn't reappoint him. But he under the law he could remain until a successor was named, and Senator Biden who plays the major role in the Democratic side would not appoint a successor. So but eventually I think he got tired of, and there's a lot of fighting in the board and so forth.

Q: What was your role in Radio Free Iraq?

NEWTON: Well, my role was to represent it, run it. I mean, I didn't, together with the chief editor determine the programs, hire and fire the people and look for ways to change it to improve it, to adapt to the different circumstances.

Q: Did you get much feedback from Iraq while you were, before we went in there?

NEWTON: Yeah, we always got very good feedback from Iraqis. I say the two Kurdish leaders said they listened to it every day. People would say it's kind of like the old Soviet days. They had to list them discretely if not clandestinely, and so they would brew up a big glass of tea and go up. They knew the time of the broadcast and turn it on. We'd have a news bulletin, and then the first hour we would have all the news in depth, mixed with interviews and analysis. It was a window on the world for people. Obviously after the war, it was more competitive, and we then went largely on FM. But we didn't have FM in every city. So we developed a good stable of hardworking correspondents. They always

grumbled if they had, they had to work much harder than the Sawa correspondents whose contribution was limited to thirty to forty-five seconds because it was all very snappy. But it was all also mostly music. I think we did a good job, and I think it was unconscionable to try to put it out of business. Because we also were trying to promote by our mandate democracy, human rights, tolerance, all the kinds of things that Iraq needs.

Q: It sounds like you got caught in the political buzz saw.

NEWTON: Exactly. Yeah, there was no point. Anyway I was thinking of retiring that year, or we had hoped in January 2004, the chief editor and myself, that we could convince them to give us more resources. We didn't have enough for news bulletins even. We were up to seventeen hours a day without the resources. But we hoped we could fill some slots that had been frozen, go to twenty-four hours. Get some more slots and be a real, really good twenty-four hour station. Then the next month came this, we had known nothing about it until our public relations person sent out an email to the president. She'd noticed this in the congressional submission. A number of people knew about it, but they didn't tell us. I mean I wasn't bitter about it. I just think it was unconscionable not, given our effort in Iraq, not to have a serious station. But I had a good run, pretty close to six years. My wife and I had a great time. So we stayed around four more months enjoyed Prague and came home just about a year ago.

Q: Great. Well, David I want to thank you very much.

NEWTON: Pleasure.

End of interview