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

AMBASSADOR MARSHALL W. WILEY

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

[Note: Ambassador Wiley did not edit this interview]

Q: Mr. Ambassador, give us a little of your background. How did you become interested in foreign affairs?

WILEY: I came to the profession a little later than many of my colleagues. I was over 30 when I went to the Middle East for the State University of New York, which was conducting some aid activities under contract, in what was then called USOM, the predecessor of the aid mission. While there, I became rather interested in the problems of the Middle East and foreign affairs in general. So I took the exams out there in the Middle East, both the written and the oral exams. I passed them and came into the Foreign Service when I was about 33 years old, I guess. Since I had had some experience in the Middle East, I was assigned Arabic language in area training, and became involved in the Middle East from that point on.

Q: What type of work were you doing when you were working for the university? You said it was aid-style work.

WILEY: I was deputy chief of the aid group that was sent out by the State University of New York, and I handled all the administrative aspects of the program.

Q: What type of work were they doing?

WILEY: Recruiting, handling the payrolls, the finances, etc. The work was across-the-board technical assistance in various economic activities, such as agriculture and industry.

Q: What countries were you particularly involved in?

WILEY: My first experience out there was in Israel, when I went out with the group from the State University of New York. I took the written exam in Israel, and I took the oral exam in Lebanon.

Q: Your first assignment when you came in 1958 into the Foreign Service was going to Taiz. I get confused over the Yemens. Where does Taiz fall?

WILEY: Taiz is in north Yemen. That was back in the days of the old ruler, who kept the country quite isolated. My visa that I received to go into the--what was then the legation. It was something like the 67th visa that had ever been issued for north Yemen. [Laughter]

Q: I was doing work--on the reverse, at the other end. I was in Dhahran issuing visas to Yemenis going to Lackawanna, New York and Youngstown, Ohio. Could you describe a little of what Taiz was like at that time.

WILEY: It was the Imam that ruled the country. He moved around frequently from Taiz up to Sanaa or down to Hodeida. He was very suspicious that there were going to be coups organized against him--which, of course, there was a year or two later. Taiz in those days was very much like a city out of the Middle Ages. They locked the gates at sundown and didn't open them again until the next morning. It was an experience of, literally, going back and living in the Middle Ages. There was no water, except what you could go and hire coolies to dredge out of a muddy pond near Taiz into large containers

that you then took back and pumped up to the roof tanks in your building. There was no electricity, except for a small generator that an Italian had set up strictly as a private enterprise. He would sell you a connection up to the generator which he only ran at night. He didn't run it in the daytime. So for a refrigerator, you had to use a kerosene burner type of refrigerator, which was always smoking and the wicks burning out. [Laughter] So everyday living was something of a problem at that point.

Q: What sort of a mission did we have there?

WILEY: In those days when I first went there was just two officers, Bill S(Inaudible) was the charge, and I was his assistant in practically everything. The way it worked out, Bill did the critical reporting, and I did practically everything else, including the administrative side.

Q: What was our interest in the Yemen at that point?

WILEY: The major reason that we had opened an office there was our concern over the penetration of Communist China into the Yemen. They had come in and offered some rather substantial assistance to North Yemen, in the way of road projects and other economic assistance. This, of course, caused a number of eyebrows to rise back in Washington, and we thought that we ought to have some diplomatic representation there as well.

So the office was originally manned out of Aden. Then, later, it became fully resident, although, for awhile, it was under the ambassador in Cairo. By the time I got there, there was an independent chargé d'affaires. Then I was the number two man, although it was still not an embassy. At that point, it was a legation.

Q: Were we concerned about the penetration of--for want of a better word--Nasserism there? It certainly was a factor in other parts of the Arab world.

WILEY: This was in the late '50s. We were concerned about Nasserism, particularly in places like Aden, which was strategically considered quite important in those days. But then, at that stage, it was still a British colony. The British were concerned about possible subversion from Nasserite elements in Aden. Yemen Proper there was--that is, by Yemen proper I mean North Yemen, where I was--there was not much Nasserite penetration at the stage that I was there, because the population was pretty isolated, largely illiterate, and had very little contact with the outside world, including the more radical forces in the Arab world at the time.

Q: For one thing, one of the concerns was the spreading out of Palestinians, who were considered to be the bringers of Nasserism at that point, if I recall.

WILEY: There were almost no Palestinians in North Yemen. They were not permitted in the country. Just about the only foreigners there were a few Italians, who had established

kind of a beachhead there when they were across the Red Sea in Eritrea. But even the Italians had very small numbers present there, a few doctors that were in the country operating very primitive equipment. Then the Chinese made this move, in which they offered a lot of assistance to the Yemen, and were able to bring in a number of workers who were working on roads and so on, which is when we became more concerned about possible communist penetration of the country, of course.

Q: Well, looking at the Chinese effort there, this was certainly a wide jump from where they were, without sort of a Navy, or Air Force, or anything to support it. Looking at our assumption at the time, did we--was it borne out that this really a real danger, or was this just a sort of a peculiar Chinese effort which was doomed to failure, if it meant to have any political influence?

WILEY: Well, this was the late '50s, if you remember, when the Cold War was pretty much at its height. We were worried about any apparent increase in communist influence anyplace in the Middle East in those days. It was true that the Chinese capability was fairly limited. They certainly had no Navy or Air Force. They were definitely not a military threat to the region. I think we were more concerned about possible subversive activity. The Chinese, there, could have linked up with more radical indigenous elements and attempted to overthrow the regime, in order to establish a regime more sympathetic to them, which is basically what happened down in Aden, of course, in the southern unit later on. South Yemen is still very much dominated by the Soviet Union these days. We were concerned about the possible subversive efforts against the Imam, who was not all that popular at that time in North Yemen.

Q: What was our view of the Imam, or how did you see him at the time? Did you have any dealings with him? What type of person was he? How did he operate?

WILEY: My boss saw him a few times. I didn't see him directly. He was a rather reclusive individual. He kept to his palaces with a few of his friends and concubines around him. He did not appear in public very often. He kept a very autocratic kind of regime. He was quite capable of executing people who showed any opposition to the regime and did so publicly from time to time. But he did not have a broad base of support, except in certain of the traditional elements among the tribes, who had traditionally supported his tribe or his family. It was only a year or so later that the Egyptians overthrew him in a coup d'état, and his son came into power briefly and then he was expelled in turn. Then that started the long civil war that went on in North Yemen between the Egyptians, who sent in troops, and the Yemen army, the indigenous army who opposed Egyptians, whom they considered invaders, and eventually the Egyptians were forced to leave the country as you know. But it was mainly the Egyptians who organized the coup d'état that did overthrow the Imam.

Q: When you were there, were we watching the Egyptians rather closely? Were we concerned at that time?

WILEY: I think in that period we were rather concerned about the way Nasserism was spreading all through the lower gulf, and in the Yemens, etc. I don't think North Yemen was all that much of a strategic hot point for us. Nevertheless, we were concerned about it, more, I think, because of its relationship to Aden, which, at that point, was considered the more strategic port.

Q: How about oil? Were we thinking in terms of oil there at the time?

WILEY: There was some exploration going on. John Meekum (phonetic) came in when I was there and did some exploration, but then he was unsuccessful and he left again. Subsequently, there, they have been more successful and there is some oil now being produced in the Yemen. But it was never considered to be a major potential for oil there.

Q: So, we weren't thinking in terms of oil reserves there, or something. We were more concerned about its strategic location.

WILEY: I think, yes, in those days we were more worried about Aden, and we were worried about the lower gulf, that were rich in oil, and the possibility that our adversaries internationally could use Yemen as kind of a bridgehead to then move into these other countries that were more strategically important than North Yemen was. And also about Saudi Arabia, because they had always had a rather special relationship with North Yemen, and they still consider North Yemen to be kind of within their sphere of influence. Of course, our interests in Saudi Arabia were much greater because of the oil reserves in Saudi Arabia.

Q: You went into language training. Was this your choice, or were you sort of tabbed and said go, or how did this come about?

WILEY: No, by this point I was quite interested in the Middle East, and I volunteered for the Language-in-Area program in Arabic in Beirut, Lebanon.

Q: Historians, who I hope will be looking at this record in later years, are always very interested in, what you might call, the making of an Arabist. Looking at your class and those around you, was there a type that went into Arabic studies, or how would you describe the group that you went in with?

WILEY: We had, in those days, fairly large classes going through the program. Very few of them are still left in the Foreign Service these days, but a few of the old hands are still around. I think, back in the late '50s, the Middle East had become more important to us because of the growing importance of the oil reserves. This was still the era of fairly cheap oil, but our imports from the Middle East were rising quite rapidly, and it was becoming obvious that it was going to be an important source of energy of the future.

Most of the fellows that went into Arabic--not most of them, but some of them--actually had some experience in the Middle East previous to coming into the Foreign Service.

They had been sons of teachers or missionaries who had lived in the Middle East and things like that, and they knew some of the language already. Others of us were just interested in the area, primarily, because of its politics and because of the archeology in the historic connections of the Middle East. I think a number of the Arabists were people who did have some historical interest in the area, and because of the cultural interest that many of us had in that part of the world.

Q: Also, would you say there was a factor, too, that, at that particular time, there was a feeling that it was best to concentrate in an area for career advancement, and the Arab world looked like a fairly good place to stake out your claim?

WILEY: I think there was some feeling to that effect. Particularly, if you were interested in the political side--and in those days, the political side of the Foreign Service were the elite. It was the best way to get to the ambassadorships, to come up through the political ranks, of course. I think the Middle East was very attractive for someone who was interested in the political aspects. I always said the Middle East was probably the most interesting part of the world for diplomats and journalists. I think it probably still is, in many ways.

Q: Another thing, too, is that ambassadorial assignments and all did not go to political appointees, but mainly went to those who were in the professional service.

WILEY: Generally speaking, that was true.

Q: How about the view of Israel? Again, one of the charges made often is Arabists are basically anti-Israeli. What was the view of Israel? You were in Beirut.

WILEY: I have yet to see any of my Arabist colleagues show any anti-Semitic leanings of any kind. They have all been very intelligent, with no racial biases or religious biases that I have been able to detect. Someone who volunteers to spend a good part of their life in the Middle East, is probably not someone with strong ethnic biases to begin with, or you wouldn't volunteer for this. Although I think the Arabists have been accused of being anti-Israeli, I think this is certainly not true, in the sense that they had any inherent anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic bias. Obviously, the Arabs are Semites, too. If they are volunteering to spend their lives with the Arabs, they are, obviously, not anti-Semitic. I think that is a bum rap, in so far as that has been applied to Arabists, as it has been, sometimes, rather irresponsibly.

I think, as a result of our experiences in the Middle East, many of us ended up being pretty unhappy at the way the policy decisions were made in Washington. We did feel that the Israeli lobby had too much influence in terms of U.S. national interest, and that our elected political leadership was influenced by the domestic political factors to a greater degree than what we viewed as our long-term interest in the Middle East. I think that is probably still true of our political situation, because of the strength of the Israeli lobby here in the United States. The Arabists were constantly in a position in which they

were giving their honest judgment that a certain course of action was in the United States interest, which was opposed by the Israeli lobby back here, who had other interests as they saw it, in terms of their relationship with Israel.

So there was this built in tension, and, to some extent, I suspect this is always a problem between a career service, who are trained primarily to look at long term U.S. interests, as opposed to elected officials, who are focusing primarily on the next election. So there is always this built in tension between the two, and this was particularly acute in the case of the Middle East and Israel.

Q: In '58, this was already a feeling there. What were the U.S. long-term interests? Because things keep changing all the time.

WILEY: In '58, the Israeli lobby didn't have near the clout it has now. In fact, we didn't start selling weapons to Israel until the '60s, it was after that period. We were not an arms support of Israel, when I first came in the Foreign Service, and got involved in Middle East problems. That all started at a later date.

The Israeli lobby tightened its control over the U.S. Congress considerably over the years. In those days, they didn't have anything like the control they have now on Middle East matters in the Congress.

Q: You were language-trained from '61 to '63?

WILEY: Yes.

Q: Then you went to Jordan, where you were an economic officer from '63 to '65? What type of work were you doing there then?

WILEY: In Jordan I was the economic officer in the embassy. We had a fairly substantial aid program going with Jordan in those days, including a rather large straight cash subsidy as well as a large technical assistance program. So, my job was really to analyze the nature of the economy of Jordan, report on it, and to make recommendations to my superiors about the nature of our aid program. I used to attend all the meetings of the aid mission as well as the embassy meetings, I mean the staff meetings of the aid mission. We also had a relatively small amount of commercial relations with Jordan, largely aid finance that I became involved in, promoting our commercial relations in Jordan.

Q: The ambassador then was Robert Barnes, I believe?

WILEY: Barnes came after I was there. Butts Macomber was ambassador when I first arrived, and then Barnes came later.

Q: Ambassador Macomber is sort of a major figure in American Foreign Service. Could you describe a bit about his method of operation?

WILEY: I always got along, I think, quite well with Ambassador Macomber. He was not a career Foreign Service Officer. He had come in via the Congress, where he had been a staffer, and then, from there, went into the executive branch. So he was essentially a political appointee, but he had a strong feeling for the Service. He had been in the Marine Corps in World War II, and was oriented in terms of career services and developing career services. I think he felt strongly about that, and still does. He didn't have the kind of background that a lot of Foreign Service Officers would have, in that, he didn't come up through the ranks of the Foreign Service. He came in as an ambassador. But he was certainly not the typical political appointee either, who was there because he was a fund raiser. He was there because he did know a lot about the area, and because he knew how the political system in the Congress and the Executive Branch worked back here. As I say, I didn't have any problems with him. I always found him very devoted to his job, worked very hard, and had a very sincere interest in the United States interests in that part of the world, and took his job very seriously.

Q: In a way, you were monitoring the aid effort, there, I take it?

WILEY: Yes, and reporting on the overall economic condition of the country.

Q: Was there much economic condition in the country? Do we have any economic interest in the area? It was one of the pieces of the puzzle of the Middle East. How effective was the aid program?

WILEY: The country was very poor. Jordan doesn't have the natural resources or the oil of rich states, of course. They have a relatively well-educated population, and, in fact, a lot of Jordanians--in fact, more than half the country were Palestinians, when I was there, a lot of them refugees, of course. But a lot of them were professional people, businessmen, bankers, etc. as well.

Later on, many of the Palestinians went on to jobs in the gulf in Saudi Arabia and the oil rich countries, and sent back remittances, which became a very important part of the economy. That hadn't really started when I was there. That was just beginning at that stage. They did have this large refugee population, which was supported primarily through UNWRA, the U.N. agency. And the U.N. agency was funded, a substantial part of it, by the United States Government. So we were, either through the aid program directly, or through UNWRA, providing an awful lot of the economic support for the country.

Their resources were quite limited in terms of what they could do for themselves. Agriculture is limited by the lack of water. They don't have oil. They have developed a pretty strong service industry, which at that stage was only getting under way for that part of the world. They were helped, considerably, later on by the problems of Beirut, because a lot of companies that had regional offices in Beirut moved to Amman. That provided an in-flow of capital into Amman. That did help them a lot later on.

Q: What was the political situation in Amman when you were there? We're talking about '63 to '65?

WILEY: The king had gone through kind of a difficult period before I got there, when there were some riots and demonstrations against the king. He was still a little defensive, I would say, from that period. He always had a delicate balance to maintain of being an East banker. Actually, his family are from the Hejaz in Saudi Arabia. In a population that was more than half Palestinian in those days, many of them did not like the idea of having a king who came from the bedouin elements of the population, where as they considered themselves more sophisticated and advanced city dwellers, which a lot of the Palestinians were, of course.

So you always had to be pretty careful about Palestinian sensitivities. Of course, in those days he also had sovereignty over the West Bank, and the old city of Jerusalem which they lost then in the '67 War, when Israel occupied the West Bank in Jerusalem. But he had that large Palestinian population on the West Bank, as well, then under his sovereignty. So it was kind of a difficult political task, but he was fairly adept, I think, at balancing off the pressures upon him, and handling a delicate political situation.

Q: How did the embassy feel about him as a person?

WILEY: I think, generally speaking, the embassy was fairly impressed at his political skills. He was still quite young when I was there. He was always, at least, acceptable to the Israelis. The Israelis preferred to see the Hashemite regime in Jordan, than to one of the more radical Arab regimes taking over the place. So they never made any particular trouble for Jordan, except on some of the arms sales problems. The economic aid to Jordan didn't bother the Israeli lobby. The Israeli lobby did become quite vocal over arms sales, and that did get to be a period of real political struggle back then.

Q: Were you involved in any of that while you were there, or did that come later?

WILEY: Most of it came later, I was involved in some of the first aircraft sales to Jordan. At that point, the Israeli lobby was not as well organized as it became later on, and it didn't put up any effective opposition to the initial round. Although there was opposition in the Executive Branch in those days because, the simple reason, they didn't think Jordan could afford the more sophisticated weapons, and it would really be funded at our expense, which it was, largely, of course. They didn't see any particular reason for the king to have the more sophisticated weapons.

Q: At your level, or at the ambassadorial level that you are aware of, was there much consultation between our embassy and Tel Aviv and in Amman, or did you each go your own way?

WILEY: There was a fair amount of consultation. There was a certain amount of visiting back and forth in those days. You could go up to the old city, and you had to walk across the Mandelbaum Gate, which you could do and visit the other side for a few days, and then come back. I went over to Israel several times while I was in Amman. I think, probably, there was more visitation from Jordan into Israel, than there were from the embassy in Israel going into Jordan, except maybe to the old city to see some of the sites there. Certainly, there was a pretty wide distribution of communications between the two. We saw most of their telegrams. They saw most of ours, and airgrams etc.

Q: It was, I think, as anything can be called peaceful in the Middle East, it was relatively a peaceful period, was it, in Amman?

WILEY: Yes, it was until '57, and I was gone by then. There was, I think, some tendency, particularly, on the part of the ambassadors in Israel, who were not Arabist, who didn't have a broad experience in the Middle East to become convinced of the Israeli point of view and to push it very vigorously back in Washington, which used to annoy the ambassadors in the Arab countries around the area, of course. That tension always did go on.

Q: Then you actually got at the other end of that particular thing, because you came back to Washington in '65. What were you doing?

WILEY: I was a desk officer for Jordan and Iraq when I came back. And it was on the desk at the time of the '67 War.

Q: How did this play out, as far as, how did you hear about it, and what did you do?

WILEY: How did I hear about the war?

Q: How did this come at you? Were you ready for it?

WILEY: We were a little surprised when the war finally broke out. Obviously, the tensions had been building. And the Arabists had been saying for a long time that there has to be some kind of a settlement to this problem, or there is going to be an explosion. It was hard to predict just when the explosion was going to take place, of course. When it came about in '67, Jordan made the mistake of listening to Nasser, who talked him into joining into the war, of course, for which he paid a heavy price in losing the West Bank, which he has still lost, and has still now pretty much renounced any claim at all to the West Bank. In that period leading up to the war, I think, there was a lot of concern at the working level that our policies were not sufficiently vigorous in pursuing peace initiatives. Particularly, we were never very effective in working with the Israelis to try to get them to make an accommodation that would some how be acceptable to the Palestinians, which we still aren't very good at that.

Q: You're on the Iraqi-Jordanian desk. War comes out, I mean the Israelis. Nasser called for the U.N. to depart. The Israelis have the air strikes. Jordan came in. Were we doing anything, as far as King Hussein was concerned, saying, "For God's sake, don't get in this thing. You're going to lose your shirt," which he did? Do you know that we were involved in that, or did it just happen?

WILEY: I think this happened very quickly. The king was largely convinced as a result of a telephone call or two from Nasser, that he better join in on the first day. We, as far as I know, did not have an opportunity to make any representations to the king about this before he made up his mind. He acted very quickly based on conversations with Gamal.

Q: Gamal being Gamal Abdel Nasser.
WILEY: Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Q: What does a desk officer do, when one of the countries you're in goes to war?

WILEY: He doesn't sleep much for one thing. [Laughter] He spends a lot of time in the office.

Q: You see, these interviews are designed for people who are not overly familiar with what happens in the State Department. So I would like to get a little feel for what you were doing.

WILEY: The desk officer, of course, gets immediately deluged by people wanting to know about relatives or family members, who are in the war zone. There were some construction companies working in Jordan in the West Bank, for instance, who were then overrun by the Israeli forces--American construction companies. They were not only worried about their personnel. They were also worried about their equipment, this kind of thing, that they had there in the war zone. Of course, they all immediately came charging into the desk officer wanting to know what the situation is, and wanting help in getting their stuff out, and getting their people out.

So that takes a lot of time. Then, of course, you're getting pressure from your bosses to write position papers on what our policy ought to be--to talking points when we're calling in the Jordanian ambassador to talk to him or the Iraqi ambassador whoever. The assistant secretary will want talking points prepared by the desk officer to help him set up a line that you take with the ambassador as to what we're advising the country to do, or whatever representations we want to make to the country at that point. And there are usually other kinds of think pieces that go to a higher level, and perhaps even go to the President, about what we should do as a result of these events. Should we put pressure on the Israelis to withdraw? Do we not pressure the Israelis, let them sit in the occupied territories in hopes of bringing the Arabs into a more accommodating stance in negotiations? If we put pressure on the Israelis is this going to lead to a situation in the future in which the Arabs will feel freer to start hostilities? What's happening at the U.N.?

What are we telling our ambassador at the U.N. to say in the Security Council meetings? The desk officer gets involved in all of this.

Q: What was your thrust that you were making about Jordan, dealing with these affairs your talking about at that time?

WILEY: I was generally pushing the line that we should be putting more pressure on the Israelis to withdraw. After all, they had started the thing by their sudden strikes on the Egyptian air fields in beginning the war. I thought that we would have been in a much better situation as far as future negotiations, if we had asked the Israelis to withdraw, as we had in previous occasions when Israel had crossed the border on raids aimed at Palestinian concentrations, and so on. I thought we should have done it then, and I think probably I had support, at least up through the assistant secretary.

Q: At that time was that Raymond Hare?

WILEY: No, Luke Battle was assistant secretary. But when it got up to the seventh floor--

Q: The seventh floor being the Secretary of State.

WILEY: The Secretary and the Under Secretary, and the White House, of course, where the final decisions were made, of course. Johnson was quite close to the Israelis, and he refused to put any pressure on Israel at all about their occupation in the occupied territories.

Q: One can say one is close to the Israelis, and looking at this as a retired Foreign Service Officer, it's difficult to see what vital interest we have in Israel. Is this purely a political matter, being the Israeli lobby, which often is translated as being the Jewish voter, as sort of a rather cohesive body? Is it purely political, or is there another reason that you can see for such strong support of Israel?

WILEY: In my view, it is strictly a reaction to the strength of the domestic lobby, the Israeli lobby. The argument that Israel is a strategic asset to the United States, is essentially a rationalization for the domestic political pressures, because, in fact, they're not an asset, they're a liability. Our relationship with Israel has gotten in the way of much more important strategic relationships that we should have with Saudi Arabia, with the gulf countries, where our real interests lie in the populations, and in the wealth of the area, which is in the oil fields, primarily. Israel is only about 2 percent of the population, and because of our support for that 2 percent, we're willing to alienate the good will of the other 98 percent, which have most of the land area and most of the resources, which, I think, in terms of our national interest, is a mistake.

Q: Did you feel any pressure on you to tailor your recommendations to, you might say, the domestic political realities, or did you feel you could call it as it was, and then sit back and watch any recommendations go down the tubes, because of domestic politics?

WILEY: I think as a junior officer, I felt fairly free in giving my recommendations. Now there is a limit in how far they would go. They may not get past the assistant secretary, who I think, personally, was probably sympathetic to what I was saying, but who had to be a little more in tune with the political realities here, than I had to be. I think as a junior officer, I was free to call the shots as I saw them. The higher you get up the ladder, the more difficult that becomes. An ambassador, for instance, has to be more careful about this kind of thing. I think many ambassadors do feel that they have to be careful in their recommendations. They can't always say exactly what they believe because of the political realities back here on the domestic side.

Q: This waxes and wanes, but did you feel at the time that dealing with Middle Eastern affairs-- very sensitive Middle Eastern affairs--that recommendations you made would immediately be leaked to Congress? Did you feel comfortable at the time?

WILEY: I think, as a junior officer, I didn't worry too much about that, because no one paid that much attention to what I was saying, in any case. [Laughter] I wasn't that important that the Israeli lobby was going to single me out.

Q: One of the things that is sometimes forgotten. It really didn't make any difference.

WILEY: Exactly, yes. Within the Bureau, there has always been a very healthy relationship, in the sense that the people knew and trusted each other and really expected the other person to give honest judgments and honest opinions. I think the Middle East Bureau has always been very good for that. The Arabists, I think, are an unusually honorable group of people and always have been in this sense, and have really been concerned about the national interests of the United States, and consistently opposed the Israeli lobby, when they thought the Israeli lobby positions were contrary to those interests, which is why they are still very unpopular with the Israeli lobby, of course. I think they're a very decent, very honorable bunch of people, and supplied my bosses for the next two or three levels up. So I was, in a sense, shielded from the political problems by this being far enough down the ladder, that no one cared that much about what I was saying.

Q: At that same time you dealt with Iraq. What were our interests in Iraq? We are talking about '65 to '68.

WILEY: Iraq was going through a pretty difficult period in those days. After the overthrow of the Nuri al-Said regime back in '57, the country really went through quite an unstable period. The Baath party took over briefly in '63, and then they were in power only about nine months before they were kicked out again. Then there were various military dictatorships that ran the country, until the Baath party came back in '67, and at that time managed to hang on to control, and they are still in power now. But from '57 to '67, the country was very unstable with a series of coups and coup attempts, until the Baath party consolidated its power in '67.

Q: Were we doing much then, or did we have representation there?

WILEY: Oh, sure, we had an embassy, a rather big embassy, in fact, until the '67 War, when relations were broken. We had a fairly substantial aid mission up until '67.

Q: What were our interests in Iraq at that time?

WILEY: There were some substantial reserves of oil that we were aware of, even then, although they have since proven to be much greater than we had realized at the time. And it's one of the larger countries of the Middle East. It has a population now of about 16 million or so, a little less in those days, of course. It was potentially a fairly wealthy country. It had water. It had oil. It had a relatively well-educated population in terms of an infrastructure which the Baath party has done a lot to build, incidentally, since they have gotten into office, for which they were starting on in those days. It had a relatively key geographic position there in controlling the river valley, the Tigris and Euphrates. It was a player in the Arab and Israel situation, of course.

Q: How did Iraq fit into the Israeli equation? Again we're talking about the '65 to '68 period.

WILEY: When the Baath party consolidated its control over the country, I think it attempted to use the Israeli issue as a means of exerting some leadership in the Arab world. You see, the Baath party does not have aspirations limited to Iraq. It was a Pan-Arab party, and they had Baath parties in various Arab countries, although it is only in Iraq and in Syria where they succeeded in taking power. But they had parties in places like Jordan and even in Saudi Arabia and the gulf states, the Yemen, there is a Baath party there.

They saw the Arab-Israeli issue as a means of promoting themselves in the Pan-Arab contacts, by becoming more outspoken against the Israelis than other countries were. So they talked a very hard line. They, for a long time, maintained very cool relations with the U.S., as part of that policy, because of our support for Israel.

After the '67 War, they were one of the last countries to finally resume diplomatic relations with the United States, you know, although we had intersections in each other's countries for a long time. But the one reason that they were cool to the U.S. was that they were trying to make the point to the other Arabs that they were stronger anti-Israelis than the other Arabs were. I think that may have changed now as a result of the war. They found out, I think during the war, that it was important not to be too isolated in this world, as they had been prior to the war.

Q: When you're speaking about the war, you're speaking about the Iranian-Iraqi war that lasted about 7 years.

WILEY: It started in 1980 and just finished in '88, about an eight-year war. So the Iraqis always did try to ride that issue. At the same time, they didn't actively do much about it. They did have some terrorist groups working out of Iraq. Abdul Nidal was held up there for quite a while. Finally, they expelled Abdul Nidal.

Q: Abdul Nidal being sort of the preeminent terrorist, and we're talking about the 1980s.

WILEY: Yes, they did expel him finally. But they told us, when they expelled him, "This isn't going to help you very much because, when he was here in Iraq, we did exercise a certain amount of influence over him. When he is out of the country, we are not going to have any influence over him." They had a point. If anything, his terrorism increased, as a result of his being expelled from Iraq, at that stage.

Basically, the Iraqis came to power with a anti-Western philosophy. They felt that their country had been dominated by an elite, who were exploiting the rest of the population in cooperation with the Western capitalist countries. Their philosophy called for the overthrow of that elite, and the establishment of a socialist economy. Their role models were more in the communist bloc than in the West as far as the kind of society they wanted to set up. So there was nothing here that made them natural partners of the U.S., until the Iraq-Iran war came along. I think now, they are moving in the direction of free enterprise, as is the Soviet Union and is Eastern Europe, of course. They are part of that movement. As part of that movement they are anxious to get on better commercial and economic terms with us.

Q: In the '65-'68 period, were we trying to get them to do anything, or stay out of it? Do we have any particular control there?

WILEY: After our break in relations at the time of the '67 War, Iraq did not play an important role in the minds of the policy makers in Washington. For a long time, we didn't have any representation there at all. It finally started with an intersection, when I arrived there in late '74-'75. There had been one officer there ahead of me, Art Lowery was a head of the intersection before me for about two years. So he got there about '72, or thereabouts. But from '67 until '72, there were no diplomats at all stationed in--there was no intersection. Then it was a very low level operation until we finally resumed relations back in '85, I believe it was, when full diplomatic relations were restored.

During that time, there was minimal contact between the United States and Iraq. There was some oil activity of interest to American oil companies, but that had all been nationalized by the Iraqis in '67. They had to sell their oil, of course, and some of the international oil companies were lifting oil from Iraq. But we weren't involved in the exploration or production. That was done by the Iraqis themselves, largely with Soviet assistance, and Soviet technology in those days.

Q: We must have been quite concerned though about the penetration of Soviets into the area?

WILEY: Yes, that was a concern.

Q: Could we do anything about it? Was it sort of, "Let's hope it doesn't spread"?

WILEY: We didn't have much influence in the Iraqi regime. They, in fact, the Baath party suppressed the Communist party in Iraq, rather brutally, after they consolidated their power because they saw the Communists as a threat to their power. They managed to maintain fairly good relations with the Soviet Union, in spite of that, and, of course, the Soviet Union was their main supplier of weapons during the Iraq-Iran war. Largely, because, I think, they saw the Iraqis as being ideologically closer to the Soviet Union in terms of their social and economic structure, which they were.

Q: Again, trying to go back to this period in the mid- to the later '60s, could we look with a certain amount of lack of apprehensions--poor word--on Soviet influence in Iraq, on the assumption that here is a regime, that is, essentially, going to be doing its own thing, and it is not going to be a cat's-paw of the Soviets, or were we more concerned than that?

WILEY: I think there was probably more concern here than was warranted by the facts of the situation. The extent to which Iraq was becoming a puppet of the Soviet Union. The Iraqis are nobody's puppets. I think the Russians, at times, found them pretty difficult to deal with. They were willing to go along with the Soviets on international issues that were not of immediate concern to them in voting in the U.N. But when it came to regional politics they were very independent, and they didn't take orders from the Soviet Union or anybody else.

Q: Looking at our policy, particularly, in many of the post-war years, there is a tendency to feel that once somebody turned to the Soviet Union for assistance, they became a puppet of the Soviets, when, actually, almost all these countries had their own self-sealing devices which would prevent allowing any sort of Communist regime to take over.

WILEY: If anything, the Soviets frequently antagonized these countries when their presence there was not done in a way that made them very acceptable to the local regimes. I was in Egypt, when the Russians were kicked out of Egypt later on, and it was a similar type of situation there.

Q: Why don't we turn to that? You spent a year with the RAND Corporation.

WILEY: Yes.

Q: What were you doing in that? This was '68 to '69.

WILEY: I went there in lieu of senior training. In fact, that was my year of senior training. It was a very interesting year, because they did not have many people at RAND in those days, who had much detailed knowledge of the Middle East. So I was sort of their

resource person when they were talking about the Middle East. They were focusing more on Soviet-U.S. relations, nuclear weapons. Jim Schlesinger was the head of the strategic analysis department at RAND in those days. Bill Kwat (phonetic) was a young student, just out of MIT with RAND when I was there, who had had some experience with the Middle East. He and I were the only two Middle East people there, really. Fred Iklé was my immediate boss, who later became the number three man in the Pentagon, as you know.

So it was a rather interesting experience working with these people, many of whom became quite prominent later on, you know.

Q: What role did RAND play? You hear about a think tank, but were these people thinking, or did it go anywhere or have any effect? Was the thinking, would you say, rather to the point and helpful, or was it sort of up in the air?

WILEY: RAND was sort of a half-way house between the government and the academic world. They didn't have any students, of course, so they only did research and wrote papers, and consulted, and that kind of thing. I would say that they did have an impact in a couple of ways. In a few cases, studies done at RAND were very influential in determining our policies in the U.S. government. A famous study of overseas basing, for instance, did become policy. We stopped trying to base our bombers overseas, and instead we developed strategic capabilities that would operate in the U.S. or from submarines, you know. They were quite influential in pushing that process along, based on the studies that were generated at RAND.

The other way in which they did have a lot of influence, was that a lot of the people at RAND, it was sort of a training period for them. They later came into important jobs in the government, like Schlesinger, who became Secretary of Defense, the head of the CIA, and the head of the Atomic Energy Commission, all of them after his experiences at RAND. A lot of the knowledge that he gained in these areas came from his time at RAND, of course. Fred Iklé who became the Director of Policy for the Pentagon, was my immediate boss at RAND, and he learned a lot while he was at RAND, of course. Bill Kline, of course, went into the NSC staff, as the principal Middle East guy under Carter, and he and his training was primarily at RAND.

So, in that sense, they also did influence government policy. It was people that came out of the RAND think-tank who moved into policy positions in Washington. I think there also were a number of studies that were done at RAND that went into the file and nobody paid much attention to. And I think there is a certain level of frustration for people in think-tanks for that very reason. They do spend months doing a study, and they feel that no one really is paying any attention to it when they finish.

Q: This is, of course, true within government, too?

WILEY: Exactly, yes.

Q: We're talking about 1969. You were assigned as deputy chief of mission in Cairo.

WILEY: Actually, at that stage it was deputy principal officer, we didn't have an embassy then.

Q: Could you explain what the situation was when you went there, what our interests were, what so-called embassy or intersection was there?

WILEY: At this point, we had quite a small staff in the interests section, compared to the rather huge embassy we had there in '67.

Q: We're talking about a place where, technically, we did not have diplomatic relations.

WILEY: That's right. We broke relations at the time of the '67 War. A few months afterwards, we started feelers with the Egyptians as to whether or not they would be interested in setting up an intersection between the two sides.

I got there in '69. The intersection had been going for some months prior to that. Don Burgess was my immediate boss in those days. He was the head of the intersection, and I moved in as the number two man. The main purpose was to try to repair the ruptured relations that had taken place in '67, and to get us back onto a more solid relationship with Egypt, which continues to be a key country, of course, in the Middle East. We had stopped our major aid program, for instance, when they broke relations. We still had these large quantities of Egyptian pounds in Egyptian banks, that were sort of frozen because we didn't have any uses to put them to after our relations were broken.

The Russians, of course, had come in and had established a major influence, both with the army and the political side, supplying military equipment to the Egyptian armed forces. They were giving substantial economic aid to the Egyptians in the period from '67 until we later resumed our diplomatic relations with Egypt. Then, of course, there was the Arab-Israel equation, which Egypt was then a major player in that situation. So that our interests in Egypt were largely, at that stage, concerned with Israel because of our interest in Israel. I mean Egypt was one of the principal military threats, of course, to Israel, and the possible source of explosion which, of course, did come about in '73. We were worried that war would break out again, which it finally did in '73, of course.

Q: Was the war of attrition on at that time?

WILEY: Yes, that was, while I was there. Right.

Q: I mean, after all Egypt is a much larger, and potentially more important country than Israel.

WILEY: Not politically.

Q: Not politically, but your work there was really focused on the problem of Israel more than Egypt per se.

WILEY: I think its safe to say, that from the point of view of U.S. policy, that was our major concern, right.

Q: What about the Soviet influence there? Were we just passive by-standers?

WILEY: There wasn't too much we could do about it. We didn't even have formal diplomatic relations ourselves with the Egyptians at that point. We didn't like it, of course. We were happy when the Soviets were finally kicked out by the Egyptians, which is largely due to their own mismanagement of the relationships, rather than to anything that we did, and to Sadat's feeling that he had to swing the country's policy back more into a Western orientation from the position that Nasser had left it in when he died. It was largely under Nasser's influence.

Q: Nasser died in--

WILEY: It was when I was there. I think it was about 1970.

Q: Yes, I think it was about that time. He died in August 1970.

WILEY: And Sadat, I think, did not like the Russian presence. The Russian military was not very popular with the Egyptian military. They were pretty heavy-handed in the way they did things and joked about the Egyptians in so many ways that antagonized the Egyptians.

Q: At that time you were reporting back that the Soviet penetration of the Egyptian military was basically minimal, did we feel it at that time or not?

WILEY: It was important, militarily speaking, to the Egyptians. After all, we weren't giving them any arms. They were the main support of their weapons. And, of course, the Israeli lobby was very worried about the Russian presence in Egypt. It could be used against Israel. In the general cold war climate that still persisted, we were always worried about any Soviet increased influence, particularly, in fairly strategic places, like Egypt was.

Q: There were naval bases there, too.

WILEY: Yes, and the Russian navy was using bases, particularly in Alexandria at that time.

Q: How did you talk to the Egyptians? You didn't have diplomatic relations. How did you operate?

WILEY: We had channels set up, including one to the foreign minister who was an Egyptian named Mahmoud Riad, who was somewhat shorter in stature than his boss, so we used to call him "Little Mo", as opposed to "Big Mo", the foreign minister. [Laughter] But Mahmoud Riad was a very sophisticated Egyptian, who spent a lot of time in the U.N., loved the city of New York, loved the U.N. He was sort of our designated interlocutor. But he sat right in the foreign minister's office, so we did have access through him at a pretty high level to the foreign minister. But if we had a demarche to make, it was to Mohammed that we'd make it. He would take it in to the foreign minister.

Don Burgess occasionally did see the foreign minister, and even saw Nasser, himself, from time to time. Although the every day contact was at lower levels. Then I, as the number two, handled most of the economic matters, and I had a designated contact, who was the number-two-man in the ministry of economy. Whenever I had to discuss something of an economic nature, I took it up with him. These two men, plus one man in the Presidency, were the three points of contact that were designated for us to have, and these were all pretty high-level people.

Q: So the relationship, actually, was not overly hurt?

WILEY: No, it was much more constrained when I went to Iraq in the intersection. There, contacts were kept at a much lower level, than we had had in Egypt. In Egypt, we had pretty high level contacts.

Q: Before, we turn to Iraq, I would like to ask about what did you do, and what did we all do, during the '73 war there?

WILEY: I left there just before the '73 war, so I was not on the ground. I was there at the time of the war of attrition, that went on for some time. This was because Nasser had ordered his troops to do a certain amount of firing across the canal, just to let the world know that they didn't acquiesce in a permanent occupation of the Sinai by the Israelis. The Israelis responded in kind, and shooting back and forth began to escalate to the point where the Israeli Air Force was bombing targets around Cairo. In fact, they bombed a military camp on the outskirts of Maadi, the area of Cairo where I lived, and hit the camp which was located right next to the school where my children were going to school at the time. That was a bit disturbing. It killed a number of soldiers in the camp. That also tended to bring the Russians in, because as this escalated with the Israeli planes bombing targets in Egypt, the Egyptians began to try to stop them with both ground-to-air missiles, and their own fighter aircraft. There were a couple of clashes where a number of Egyptian planes were shot down.

Also, the Russians then decided to supply Egypt with the SAM 3 missiles, which are fairly advanced ground-to-air anti-aircraft missiles, which Egyptians began using then against the Israeli air force. So this all began escalating to the point where it was

beginning to be a serious confrontation between the two sides. It didn't really stop until the war in '73.

Q: Before leaving the Egyptian picture, and moving to Iraq, when Nasser died, what was our interest section's evaluation of Sadat at that time?

WILEY: We did not have as high an impression of Sadat as he later acquired, I would say, in the U.S. government circles. In fact, when I first went there, when Nasser was still alive, Sadat was sort of the designated anti-American. He was going around the country making speeches attacking the United States, I presume under orders from Nasser. Many times saying things that were out-right lies, that we would have to go in and protest as being, you know, falsehoods, that Sadat was saying in his speeches that were carried on the radio and put into newspapers. After, Nasser died, and Sadat took over, then he really decided he had to move their orientation more toward the U.S., so he stopped that, of course. Eventually, he became the darling of the United States government because of his decision to make peace with Israel, and to go to Israel. Of course, that happened after the war of '73. Initially, we did not have that high an opinion of him.

Q: Sort of the feeling that he probably wasn't going to last?

WILEY: I think, we probably felt that, yes, that he would not last all that long. He turned out to have more staying power, although, in fact, when he died, it didn't create anything like the popular out-pouring of grief that it did when Nasser died. He was never the hero among the Egyptian public, that Nasser was. He was much more of a hero in the U.S. than he was among his own people in Egypt.

Q: Then you served a rather solid period as the head of our U.S. interests in Iraq from '74 to '77.

WILEY: Yes, in between, I was back here for awhile and became the country director for North Africa. I held that job for about a year before I went out to Baghdad and set up an intersection there.

Q: Why don't we move to the Iraq situation. We've already talked quite a bit about Iraq, but what were you doing there? I mean, what developed during this '74 to '77 period?

WILEY: That was a very interesting period, because our relations with Iraq had really been almost non-existent from '67 on, from the time of '67 War, and after the Baath party took power in Iraq. So there we were really trying to re-establish relations. In the case of Egypt, even though we formally broke diplomatic relations, we still had a lot of dialogue back and forth, a lot of economic matters. We even had cultural programs running using the accumulating currency that we had in the bank accounts, and so on. But, in the case of Iraq, there really was very little contact between the two sides, either privately, or at the government level. So this was much more virgin territory, in a sense, where we had to start from the scratch.

Q: Were you sort of given orders to do something about it? Where did the initiative come to try to re-build the relationship?

WILEY: I don't think there was any strong urging on the part of the U.S. government to rebuild the relationship. It was, I think, just the feeling that this was a fairly large, fairly important country in Arab contexts. They seemed to be willing to establish intersections, so we would be willing to reciprocate, and have our intersections.

When I first went out there, I don't think we had any particular policy designs about Iraq, other than to gradually improve relations to the extent that the Iraqis were willing to do so, but we weren't going to force the issue. In fact, my original contacts were limited to a young lady in the protocol office of the foreign ministry. I really couldn't see anybody else when I first got there, though, later, I was able to make some higher level contacts in the foreign ministry.

Q: But what were we doing? When you are dealing with the protocol office, you are at the bottom of any list practically.

WILEY: That's right, we were. We did some reporting in Iraq. There was a dearth of information about Iraq, of course, back here in the government, since we hadn't had an embassy there. It's hard to get information there, but through contacts in the diplomatic community and elsewhere, we did do some reporting on what was happening in the country. Some assessment of the Baath party and the leading personalities of the party, and so on. Really, there was a total void of information about Iraq back in Washington in those days.

Q: I would assume, in a case such as this, more than in many other places, where you find other diplomats are coming to the United States to find out what have you heard in the diplomatic corps. I mean, there is also a sharing of information, but often you don't see this as a larger mission, and it's felt as a key player, that you must have been spending a lot of time sitting at the feet of the French and British, and other ambassadors finding out what was going on in this case?

WILEY: Yes, and some of the Arabic ambassadors were quite helpful. The Egyptian ambassador, who was pretty well plugged in there, and the Tunisian ambassador had pretty good contacts. I was on good terms with them, so I got a lot of information through them, as well.

We, again, were concerned about Iraq's rather militant anti-Israeli posture and we had hoped to moderate that, of course, when I was there. We viewed Iraq as, potentially, an important trading partner for the U.S., just because it's got the oil. The oil companies, of course, were interested in getting involved in Iraq in the long run, because of the substantial oil reserves. I still think it's going to be a very important commercial partner for the United States. If the country develops, it's going to be, probably, the most

important trading partner we have in that part of the world, if things develop properly. But these were all potentials at that stage. We had very little active going on.
Q: As far as Washington, or the State Department's, concern, it was what you might call a holding brief there. Nobody was pressing you to get things moving again?

WILEY: No, I think there was some feeling that the time had come when we probably should renew diplomatic relations, but there was no great pressure on it.

Q: This was more tidying up matters?

WILEY: Yes, we had resumed with almost all the other countries at that stage, with whom we had broken in '67, at the time of the '67 War. Iraq was practically the only hold out apart from--I guess, maybe, no, I guess--Iraq was the last one to finally resume diplomatic relations with us. The feeling was that it was potentially an important country. One that, if they ever got their act together, could be quite important, both politically and economically, in that part of the world. To the extent that we could gradually establish better government relations, fine, but there was no great pressure to do it, I don't think. There was more pressure on the reporting side, to fill this void of information that had developed about Iraq.

Q: Granted, you were not in much of a position of power, but were you concerned from your vantage point about the very close relations that, particularly, Kissinger and Nixon seemed to be pushing toward Iran? There seemed to be a loading of Iran down with a lot of armament and all this. Was this a concern?

WILEY: It was to me. In those days, Arabists commenting on Iran were not very well received in the department. There was a kind of saying going around--"Scratch an Arabist, and you'll find an anti-Iranian."

Q: That's interesting. Why was that?

WILEY: It was a feeling that you had localitis, and that the Arabs and the Iranians were enemies. You tended naturally to side with the Arabs. Therefore, you didn't like the Shah and things in Iraq. But it was a little broader than that, I think. In the bureaucracy as a whole, there was, I thought, a more objective evaluation of the Shah's regime than you found in the top levels of government. The Shah, as you know, had this great charm and he was able to work it on a succession of American Presidents. No one down in the bureaucracy could quite understand how he did it, but he was always able to convince a series of Presidents that he was their kind of man, and they really want to support him in the future. I could never quite understand the attraction that the Shah had for our Presidents, but they certainly did, and this was reflected through the bureaucracy. It was certainly reflected in Kissinger's days, where it was just not very good for your career to be too critical of the Shah.

I think a lot of people were discouraged from saying things that were critical, even if they honestly believed them about the Iranian regime, because of the interest at a high level of improving relations with Iran and making Iran kind of the linchpin of our policies in that part of the world.

Q: Were you getting any reflections, or you just really didn't have enough connection with the Iraqi government? Was anybody saying, "What the hell are you doing with these Iranians?"

WILEY: I didn't get that from the Iraqi government so much, in fact, I was in Iraq in the period following the signing of the 1975 agreement in Algiers that Kissinger brokered. In effect, where Iraq and Iran signed this agreement, whereby, Iran would stop supporting the Kurds, and Iraq would recognize Iranian planes to the Shatt al-Arab, to the Iranian boundary. I mean to the middle of the Shatt al-Arab.

Q: Shatt al-Arab being the delta river, or whatever you want to call it.

WILEY: The confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates. They flowed together.

Q: Over which the later Iran-Iraq War, that was the cause of the war.

WILEY: It was one of the causes. It's still in dispute right now. Iran claims that the deepest part of the river, should be the boundary between the two sides. Iraq claims all of the shot up to the Iranian shore, and this is what the British had given them when they were running both sides, really, back in the old days. The Iranians were claiming half the river, up to the deepest part of the river, which they still claim.

In '75 agreement had been reached where Iraq represent accepted Iran's claim to the middle of the river, and, in return, the Iranians stopped supporting the Kurds. We had been assisting the Iranians covertly to help the Kurds. So we stopped doing it, too, at that point. In other words, the Kurds were cut off, and the Iraqis were able to quell the Kurd resistance in the north as a result of that agreement. For awhile there, after that agreement, relations improved between Iraq and Iran.

In fact, I can remember an Iranian national day, where I was present, and Saddam Hussein actually showed up at the national day. That was quite a signal, you know, that he wanted better relations with Iran at that stage. He didn't come to any national days normally, and this was an exception. He showed up at the Iranian national day with all the camera men taking pictures, and it all spread in the papers the next day, and so on and so forth. So, when I was there, there was a temporary period when relations were actually improving between Iraq and Iran. Later they deteriorated again.

Q: How were you reporting on the Kurd situation, because for many, Kissinger, first we supported this and then we cut the feet out from under the Kurds, and Barzani, who was

the leader and all. We left them high and dry, and many of them went into either exile or were killed.

WILEY: Yes.

Q: Looking at it from your vantage point, what were you all saying from our interest group there?

WILEY: Generally speaking, I was always a little skeptical that we were following the right policy with our support for the Shah, and, of course, this was related to it. The Iraqis were working out a relationship with the Kurds. That, you know, left the government, obviously, in power. When you really look at the situation, they had not treated the Kurds as badly as a lot of minorities are treated around the Middle East area. The Kurds did have their own representatives in the Iraqi parliament. They were able to keep their language, their customs, their traditions, and so on. The Iraqis never tried to stop them from this, as the Turks did, for instance. The Turks refused to recognize Kurdish culture in any way, and they called them Mountain Turks, instead of Kurds. The Iraqis were more forthcoming than other countries around the area were in dealing with the minority groups.

I was never convinced that Kissinger and Nixon were on the right track with the Shah. I thought that we overdid it. Certainly, we overdid it in the arms supply relationship. Kissinger really gave orders to the bureaucracy to not question, in any way, any request that the Shah made for U.S. military equipment or support. It didn't go through any of the usual review processes, or the usual committees, didn't consider anything else. It was just automatically granted, if the Shah wanted it, and that was Kissinger's personal orders.

Q: This is one of the things that often arises in these interviews, about how there was a complete stoppage of criticism of the Shah, a real stoppage of the entire objective reporting process, of what U.S. interests were. Why was this? You know you can make your decision after hearing the other side?

WILEY: I don't know, other than the stability that the Shah had, on a personal basis, to appeal to the President and the Secretary of State, and convince them that he was their man in the area, and they didn't want any static out of the bureaucracy on this. They had made up their mind about the Shah.

Q: You were feeling some reflection of this, too, from your point, that this is territory where it's best to stick to your own country and stay out of this particular one.

WILEY: I occasionally got into disputes with Dick Helms, who was then the ambassador to Iran, when I was head of the intersection at Baghdad on things that involved Iraq and Iran. I know we had a couple of rather vigorous exchanges.

Q: Can you think of any particular issues that got you?

WILEY: Well, it had to do more of the Shah's attitude toward Arab affairs. The Shah was always looking at it from his point of view, of course. He was always concerned that maybe Syria and Iraq would get back together, to get on the same wave length, and that would be a threat to him. He was hoping that the United States, at times, would take steps that would make sure that Syria and Iraq did not get back on the same wave lengths. I would object to that, saying that does not help us with either country. We are carrying the Shah's water here, in a way, that is contrary to U.S. interests in the area. So I did get involved, sometimes, in our relations to Iran.

Before I went out to Baghdad, while I was in Washington and was the country director for North Africa, I was detailed for a brief period of time to the inspector's office to do what was called a policy inspection. Jerry Livingston and I went out and traveled all around the gulf including a visit to Tehran, and then wrote a long report on our policy to the area, where a lot of these issues did come up, not only the Arabs, but our relationship with Iran was part of this study. But even in that study, we were told by our bosses, in no uncertain way, that we should not be critical of Iran.

Q: This is how the system breaks down. If you have a strong Secretary of State who doesn't want to hear, he doesn't hear.

WILEY: That's right. He doesn't want any opposition out of the bureaucracy. Of course, Kissinger was notorious for this, anyhow. He viewed the bureaucracy as just another element to manipulate in the external environment that he had to deal with. He dealt with foreign countries. He dealt with the bureaucracy, and he played them off against each other. He retained information from the bureaucracy, if he thought it would help him in his maneuvering with the bureaucracy. I thought his policies, as far as being the head of an organization, were quite destructive to the organization. I'm sure you've gotten this feedback from others.

Q: I have. You were appointed to Oman as ambassador.

WILEY: I went to Saudi Arabia first as DCM.

Q: How long were you in Saudi Arabia?

WILEY: A little over a year. I was asked to go to Saudi Arabia by Porter, who was then the ambassador in Saudi Arabia.

Q: Which Porter?

WILEY: Not Dwight. Ambassador Porter.

Q: Yes, okay.

WILEY: He was the ambassador there at the time. By the time I got there, he had been fired, and John West had been sent out, who was governor of South Carolina. John was very much a political animal, very much a politician, and knew almost nothing about the Middle East. But he had been active in Carter's campaign, as one of his supporters. I'm not quite sure why he wanted to go to Saudi Arabia, but, in any case, he did and Carter sent him there, after firing Porter from the job.

So by the time I got there, there was a brand new political appointee on the scene, who arrived, more or less, when I did as DCM. So I had the experience of dealing with a political ambassador.

Q: How did this work? Was he able to function at all? The Arab world is a complex world, and we have real interests there. This is not Luxembourg; this is the Middle East. So how did the embassy run, and what did the ambassador do?

WILEY: Relations were never very good between Ambassador West and myself. I thought that he came in with kind of a chip on his shoulder, knowing that he was a political appointee, and that the bureaucracy would probably resent him, particularly, replacing a career Foreign Service Officer, as he did, as ambassador. As a result, he tended to strike first against the bureaucrats as he saw them in the embassy, and I was in the middle as his DCM. On many of these issues, I was much more sympathetic to the bureaucracy, than I was to West. I would tell West this in private, which he didn't particularly appreciate, having his deputy side with the people with whom he was in dispute. It was not a very happy year, I must say, although I feel my personal relationships with West were not very good.

Q: Were there any major issues that you had to deal with at that time?

WILEY: Policy issues. John, like many political appointees, felt that he was the appointee of the President. He was not really ready to take orders from the Secretary of State. At times, he would ignore, or even go contrary to instructions from the Secretary of State. I thought he should not have done that, of course. He said, "I'm not the Secretary of State's appointee; I'm the President's appointee."

Q: That is a recipe for disaster.

WILEY: Yes.

Q: Turning from that rather awkward time, in a way I am surprised that you got an appointment as an ambassador, because sometimes if you are not on the right side of a previous ambassador, particularly one who is connected, this can sometimes be the end of a career.

WILEY: John had kind of a problem looking at it from his point of view. He was dealing with a bureaucracy, and a career officer, and myself, whom was part of that bureaucracy,

that he didn't wish to antagonize totally. After all, he was a very political man, and he understands how political organizations work. I think, he did have respect for me as a substantive officer, and my knowledge of the area, and my reporting, and so on. His own reporting frequently reflected, I thought, quite a lack of knowledge about the area, and I tried to help him in this way, and, I think, generally, he did appreciate this. He knew that I was respected back in Washington, although he also knew that Washington knew that there was a conflict going on here. So he supported my nomination for an ambassadorship. This enabled him to bring in someone, whom he wanted as DCM.

Q: Promote up!

WILEY: Yes. [Laughter] So he supported my nomination to be an ambassador to Oman. So maybe it helped me.

Q: Was there any other politics or maneuvering that came about because of your appointment to Oman? Because sometimes an ambassadorship becomes very much a part of the political process within the State Department.

WILEY: I don't think there was much legislative or Presidential concern about Oman. I don't think there were any politically powerful people who wanted the job. [Laughter]

Q: It's one of the reasons why West stands out as almost an anomaly in the Middle East. For the most part, this is not the place where political animals want to go.

WILEY: No. So, as far as I know, there was no particular opposition. I think there was a little rivalry maybe, in terms of other FSO's, who would have liked to have the job. But I had the support of the Assistant Secretary in the Bureau, Roy Anthony, whom I had worked with for years, and I knew very well. I'm sure that Roy pushed me very hard to get the ambassadorship, which probably took care of the opposition back from other career Foreign Service Officers. There was no real opposition from any political appointee who wanted the job, and West was for it. He pushed me, himself, through his own political connection.

Q: Well, could you describe what were American interests in Oman at the time? We're talking about '78. Carter was just in for about a year or so at that time.

WILEY: When I went to Oman, I think, it was not, again, in the forefront of the minds of policy-makers in Washington. In fact, I was only the second resident ambassador.

Q: You had a treaty there since 1832, I think. By the way, when you talk about Oman and Muscat, is that the same?

WILEY: Yes, they use to call it Oman and Muscat, but the name was changed to where it was just Oman, after the conflict back in the '50s, when the British helped the Sultan and

put down the Imams revolt in the interior, and after that they stopped calling it Oman and Muscat, it was just called Oman after that period.

The major thing that was probably of interest to policy makers, when I went there, was what was happening in Iran, with Oman being just across the water. In fact, apart from Kuwait, I was the closest ambassador to Iran. We didn't have an ambassador in Baghdad, of course, in those days. The rather key position on the Strait of Hormuz, of course, going into the Persian Gulf, and over the oil flowing through Strait of Hormuz, and so forth. So that made it geographically important on one side of the choke point, and Iran being on the other side of the choke point. You know, into the Persian Gulf.

Q: For somebody who was not too familiar with dates, what, briefly, was happening in Iran at about this time?

WILEY: Riots and demonstrations were going on, which started while I was still in Saudi Arabia. Interestingly enough, when they first started going on, I was then in the embassy in Jeddah. We were getting lateral distribution on telegrams describing what was happening. Then, all of a sudden, we stopped getting them. Apparently, orders had gone out that any telegraphs that might indicate that the Shah was in trouble should not be distributed any place, except to the proper authorities back in Washington. Because, apparently, we didn't want it too widely known, even among the other embassies in the area, that the Shah was having problems. This was part of that cocoon, again, around the Shah.

Q: It really is amazing what happened within the bureaucracy. This was when Kissinger was out at this point, but we still were trying to preserve this relationship. If you didn't say ill things, nothing would happen.

WILEY: Well, remember Carter, himself, I think , was pretty much taken in by the Shah.

Q: Yes, he went to that coronation business.

WILEY: He made some outrageous statements, at the time, I remember.

Q: Were you beginning to get more and more indications that Oman may become a key player in the Iranian business?

WILEY: Yes, as we got to the point when, finally, when the Shah was forced to leave Iran. I sent in some--

Q: This was '79, wasn't it?

WILEY: Yes, it was '79. I sent in some telegrams that I heard later were actually given to Carter to read personally, talking about the consequences of the shift in Iran, and the

importance now of protecting the Strait of Hormuz. The access to the oil supplies, and so on, which go through the Strait of Hormuz.

Until that point, most of our cards had been based on the two-pillar policy of the Shah and the Saudis as representing our interest in the area. We gave the Shah this military equipment, presumably, on the theory that he was going to maintain security in the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, and keep the access to oil open for us. Now that he was gone, we no longer had anybody doing that. I pointed out that the supply lines in and out of the Gulf through these important oil fields was now much more tenuous. You know, we didn't really have a good security plan for that area. This, of course, started a lot of thought back in Washington. They eventually got even more concerned, because it was just after this time when the Russians invaded Afghanistan.

Q: That was in December of '79, I guess, wasn't it?

WILEY: I think that is correct, if I remember correctly, yes. So it was shortly after the Shah had left the country, and the revolutionary regime had taken over. Then you had the Russians coming into Afghanistan. So these two events really got people worried. They were afraid of military expansion by the Soviet Union into the Gulf area. At the same time, we had lost our pillar of our support there in the Shah. That's what started the whole idea of the rapid deployment force.
Carter made a speech in which he mentioned the Gulf area as a third area of vital interest to the United States. This was done after a lot of debate within the bureaucracy, implying that we would, if necessary, use military means to protect our vital interests in the Gulf area. Then when he turned to the Pentagon and asked them to tell him just how we were going to go about protecting these vital interests. The Pentagon was not really able to come up with anything, because they didn't have any military muscle that could be projected into that part of the world. This got people pretty concerned. The President was out on a limb. He had said we were going to fight, if necessary, and we didn't have the means to fight, you know, in that area.

So, in deciding what to do about it, the Pentagon developed the rapid deployment force concept, which said, in effect, that we would identify certain highly mobile units around the world that could be put into the Middle East area quickly, if need be. Then we set about trying to make basing arrangements or access agreements with various countries in the area, who would make it possible for these forces to be moved into the area quickly, if we had to do so at some future date.

We had to think about things like pre-positioning equipment, having training activities in the area, so, if the troops ever had to go in there, they would know the kind of terrain they're facing, what the problems would be, and so on. We did some pre-positioning down in the Seychelles Islands of ships with military equipment on board, and so on. All focused again on the Gulf area, and the oil resources in the Gulf.

Q: What was the government like in Oman, and then how did you deal with them on this issue?

WILEY: It was very much a one-man rule under the Sultan, and he had a group of mainly merchant families with whom he cooperated closely. These merchant families generally supplied the ministers for his cabinet, since, when he took over the country, the merchant families were the only people that could read and write, apart from some of religious establishment in the country. So he relied on them, and in return he gave them favored positions as far as being agents in government contracts, and things like this. So that you ended up with a very wealthy group of merchant families close to the Sultan who were really running the country, which was not that much different from what we had in Iran, prior to the revolution.

One major exception was that the Sultan avoided getting into an open fight with the religious establishment, where as, the Shah was in a pretty open conflict with the religious establishment in Iran. The Sultan never did that. He was able to avoid that. But it was a government run by merchant families, in effect, and the Sultan and his family. The British were still very influential. The commanding officers of all three branches of the military were Brits. The principal advisor to the Sultan was a Britisher, Tim Landen, who, again, was a military officer, British, although he had retired as a British military officer, and was on contract then with the Omanis. The Brits still had a great deal of influence in the commercial life, and in the government policy, generally, in Oman. I think Landen, who didn't always see eye-to-eye with the British government on these issues did advise the Sultan to co-operate more closely with the U.S., because the Brits were withdrawing from all over the world.

Q: We had actually taken over the responsibility with COMIDEASTFOR back in the '50s when the Brits had withdrawn most of their naval force from that area.

WILEY: Yes, but that was never much of a force.

Q: A couple of destroyer tenders, I think, something like that.

WILEY: Yes, and the one supply ship that was the admiral's flagship in the area. So our forces stayed through all of this, but it was based in Bahrain, of course, not in Oman. Then the Brits withdrew from the Masirah Island, which had been just an island just off the southern coast of Oman, which had been an important British airfield, when they had interest all through that part of the world. So Masirah Island was left unprotected, basically, after the British withdrawal.

I think the strategic thinkers around the Sultan, like Tim Landen, did encourage them to enter into some kind of a working relationship with the U.S. for his own security. The access agreements emerged out of that, where we had the rights to use certain military facilities in Oman, on condition that, first of all, we get the approval of the Omani government, on a case-by-case basis. They could be used either in an actual emergency or

for training purposes. In return, we spent quite a bit of money building up these military facilities. Hangers, aircraft, air fields--we did a lot of work down in Masirah Island in building up the facilities there, so that you could move a squadron of fighters from Europe down there if we wanted to at some future date. That was the thinking behind it.

Q: There was a confluence of interest there.

WILEY: Yes, the Brits didn't want us to go too far. They wanted us to have some kind of a protective umbrella over Oman, but they wanted to continue to run the Trucial Oman Scouts, and they wanted to continue to sell very expensive, and often quite inappropriate military equipment to Oman without U.S. interference. [Laughter]

Q: Did you have any sort of set-tos on this particular issue?

WILEY: I did locally, but I never got much backing in Washington. Washington was happy to let Oman stay British. If they wanted to waste their money on tanks that were designed for the nuclear environment in Europe, which they could never use in Oman, but which cost ten times what a normal tank would cost, that was the decision the Omanis made, and Washington was not going to get involved in it.

Let me talk a little about the strategic working out of this. I had two major concerns about the rapid deployment for us. In the first place, I thought it was oriented the wrong way militarily, and that was partially because of Pentagon politics. When this came up as an important strategic area, of course, the three services were all anxious to get a piece of the pie. A piece of the budget would go along with it, of course. The only way the Army could justify a major role in this was in the role of a U.S.-Soviet confrontation. That's the only reason that you should put anti-tank weapons, heavy armor, and so on, in Oman was in the context of a possible invasion of that region by the Soviet Union.

I thought that this was a diversion of resources. I didn't think the Russians were ever seriously going to invade that part of the world. It would have been general war. If there was general war, there were a lot better places for us to fight than there at the end of these tremendously long supply lines, and hostile environment in the Middle East, you know. So I didn't think that we should build up our forces in Oman, or in the Gulf, generally, as a counter to the Soviet Union. I thought what we should do is put in relatively light, highly mobile forces, which meant essentially Navy and Marine units, who could be used in case of local emergencies, in local conflicts, or attempts to subvert our friends in the area, that kind of thing. I thought we needed some force in the area, but the force should be in the context of the regional politics, not in the context of U.S.-Soviet relations. Of course, the army opposed this, because that would have frozen them out of the action in the Gulf area. It also made me rather unpopular with some of the military types, particularly the army, because I sent in long telegrams discussing these issues, pointing out the real purpose of our forces there should be thinking about how we can apply force quickly, if necessary, to help our friends in local disputes, and that it was only a bogeyman to talk about a Soviet threat to the area. The Pentagon, of course, wanted to use

the Soviet threat to get more money, not only for the Army, but for the military, in general, out of the Congress. So they didn't like my saying this about the Gulf area, as such.

The other concern I had was that we had to keep it low profile. If it were too high a profile, it would hurt our friends. It would hurt the Sultan, because foreign troops on Arab soil are never very popular.

Q: That's very definitely true.

WILEY: That concept was pretty hard to sell back here.

Q: How did this play out?

WILEY: We did keep a low profile. That I did succeed in doing with the help of the Sultan, who also didn't want too high a profile around there. Although he was willing, I think, to go for a higher profile than I wanted. I thought he went too far in accepting a higher profile of the U.S. military. In fact, it did work out to be a pretty low profile operation.

Q: Did you have problems with American Army people or Navy, but basically Army people, coming out and trying to sell their idea to the Omanis? You're telling them, "I'm in charge here. Don't do this." Was this a problem?

WILEY: Yes, to some extent, the debate would go on before they actually came out. The Pentagon's idea of a small presence, was not my idea of a small presence. When the Pentagon thinks of something small, they are thinking of 300 or 400 men, when I'm thinking of something small, I was thinking of a unit of 10 people. There was this constant tension this way. They would put out what they thought was a small operation, what I thought was outlandish in terms of the high profile it would create in the country. So I had a lot of debate with the policy makers on these issues. We did end up with a relatively small profile.

The one thing that I opposed, which is still going on, is the use of Oman for Marine landing exercises, as part of this Operation Bright Star in Egypt. In the Gulf area, we're still doing this on an annual basis, and we land a few Marines on the beach, and take them back onto the ships again. I thought that was bad both from the point of view of the high profile, and the simple cost. We've got beaches in California you can land marines on for training. You don't really have to send them half-way around the world to do this. The amount of money these exercises cost is fantastic, both in Egypt and in the Gulf area.

Q: The real reason for doing this sort of thing is to show that we have a commitment there. Did you feel that we shouldn't be showing that type of commitment, or did it make that much difference?

WILEY: I think the commitment is of value to the elite and the power structure in these countries, who are working with us, and this is an important commitment. The commitment is not that important to the average man in these countries, who, if anything, resents the presence of foreign troops. I thought there were ways that we could reassure the elite and the power structure without actually landing forces on the beach, where the average man could see them. I didn't think that was necessary in order to reassure the people we were trying to reassure that we were behind them, in terms of the relationships in the area.

I was rather unpopular with the Pentagon, because I was constantly trying to cut back the size of the operations that they had in mind. They had big plans about converting Masirah into kind of a "Little America" and things like this, and I was constantly opposing this.

Q: Yes, a big PX, officers' club, the whole ball of wax, I would say. What about other problems there? In the first place, obviously your attention was focused to Iran, which was going through all sorts of turmoil. Did Israel play much of a role in any thinking at that time, or was it really almost another world?

WILEY: Oman is about as far removed from the Arab-Israel situation as you can get and still be in the Arab world. Oman looks out on South Asia and Africa. A lot of the Omanis came from East Africa, where they had been forced to leave Zanzibar.

Q: Zanzibar used to be the seat of the Sultan of Muscat and Oman at one point.

WILEY: Until the British separated the two, and then they made the Caning award to Oman, which is a sum of money paid every year to Oman in return for having lost their Zanzibar colony. But a lot of Omanis stayed in Zanzibar until the '50s, when the revolution came down there, and then the Arabs were kicked out at that point, or killed, some were killed, actually.

Q: There was quite a shock when our embassy was attacked in Pakistan. There were demonstrations and fear of attack on all of our places. This was '79, I believe. Was this right after the hostage crisis started?

WILEY: I think this was in '80. This was after the hostage crisis in Tehran.

Q: The hostage crisis in Tehran, where our embassy was seized for 444 days. It started, I believe, in November of '79. So we're talking about 1980, and there was an attack on our embassy in Pakistan, in which some Americans were killed. It was burned. What happened in Oman, if I recall, there was concern there?

WILEY: Well, back in Washington, there is a tendency to look at all of these countries as being similar, to a much greater extent than, in fact, they are. Vance, at that stage, who was Secretary of State, put out an order, ordering the evacuation of all dependents, and cutting down the staffs of all the embassies in the Gulf area, after this Pakistani thing, and

the attack of Damas in Saudi Arabia came at about that point too. Except Saudi Arabia, the Saudi's desk officer went in and said we can't do it in Saudi Arabia, because we have too many people there. We can't cut back the embassy, and take out dependents, and so on.

Although the attack had taken place in Saudi Arabia, Vance still ordered that all of the lower Gulf countries--he ordered this over the vehement objection of all of the ambassadors, all of us screaming back to him, "Why are you evacuating these companies? They are safer than New York or Washington for our people."--and they were, literally. But Vance absolutely had his mind made up, and he would not listen to any of the ambassadors, or anybody else on this. He wanted all of the dependents out of these countries, and staffs cut back. We all lost our families for a period of 3 or 4 months, and we all got very quizzical inquiries from our foreign ministers, saying, "What are you afraid of here?" It was very embarrassing to answer. I'd say, "I don't know what we're afraid of." [Laughter] As far as I could see you're as safe as can be. This was orders from Washington.

Q: This shows the value of saying, "It's the ambassador on the spot who should call the situation, rather than coming from Washington."

WILEY: Vance absolutely had his mind made up on this one, and he would not to listen to any of the ambassadors, and he got very angry at the ambassadors for protesting this. The feelings got very tense between the ambassadors and Vance after awhile over this issue, because we could release no reason at all for evacuating these countries. There were no threats of any kind to our staffs, or our people, or our embassies. Why Vance did it, I still don't quite know why he was so adamant on this.

Q: I suppose that with the Tehran business, and the seizing of the embassy, the whole idea is it would never happen again, we're all prepared for the last war.

WILEY: We would send in these long telegrams pointed out as logically and as rationally as we could that there is no particular threat to the embassy here, anymore then there has always been. He would say, yes, that is what they told me from Pakistan. Then, the next day, the embassy burned down.

Q: There was talk, at one point, about basing Iraqi planes in Oman. Did you get involved in that at all?

WILEY: Yes, that was a rather brief attempt early in the war, where the Iraqis approached the Omanis in the possibility of flying sorties out of Oman against Iraq. We strongly recommended to the Sultan that he not buy this and he didn't. Whether he would have done it anyway, I don't know. We strongly advised him to stay out of the Iraq-Iran war.
Q: This would just be a lightning rod to attract Iranian counter-attacks.

WILEY: And the Omanis were not that well defended.

Q: Did you get involved at all? This was the period of the tremendous oil shock that hit all over by OPEC countries. Was Oman producing enough oil to be a player in this?

WILEY: No, Oman was a relatively small producer of oil. That actually had come about earlier in the '67 War, and the aftermath of that when the oil shock took effect, and when we had our gas lines, and so on here. The Omanis, in those days, were not producing enough, and they never were a member of OPEC, and they still are not a member of OPEC. They sold their oil either on the spot market, or in quarterly contracts to Japanese and other oil companies that lifted it out of there. Their prices fluctuated more on the spot market, than on OPEC, no fixed rates.

Q: Do you think this about covers your period in Oman, or is there anything else?

WILEY: Yes, I think, we covered most of the interesting points. I had my differences with the military on the rapid deployment force, and with Mr. Vance on his evacuation of personnel, which I found very hard to defend.

Q: Did you retire from Oman?

WILEY: Yes.

Q: We talked about your differences. Was this a retirement that you called, or was it called on you?

WILEY: No, I mean, I wasn't forced to retire. I could have stayed in. I could have become a diplomat-in-residence, I think would probably been the next thing in order, had I stayed in, at that point.

Q: A diplomat-in-residence is where formal ambassadors are assigned to give lectures at universities for about a year, which is often sort of the end of the line.

WILEY: Sometimes it is just a break before you go out in the boondocks again. But, I was at that stage--this was early in the Reagan Administration. Then, the Secretary of State and I didn't see eye to eye on a number of things.

Q: This was Alexander Haig.

WILEY: Mr. Haig came into office with the idea that we could some how set up this strategic alliance with Israel and the Arabs, and that the Arabs would all join in because they're all afraid of the Russian threat, like we are. This didn't make any sense at all, of course, in the politics of the area. To the Arabs, the threat was not the Soviet Union, the threat was Israel. Mr. Haig never seemed to grasp this. I had some rather strong differences with Haig and his approach to the Middle East and his policies.

Of course, at that stage, this was just the start of the Reagan Administration, and it looked like Haig could well have been Secretary of State for eight years. In fact, he only lasted about a year after I retired, before he was out. At the point I retired, I did not really want to work under a Secretary of State with whose policies I was in fundamental disagreement, as I was with Mr. Haig. That combined with my feelings that the bureaucracy, in general, including ambassadors, were not being compensated adequately, and I had three kids going into college at that stage. I came out and became a partner in a law firm, where my salary is now two or three times what I was making as an ambassador. With children in college, this was a sensible thing to do. So it was a combination of things, both economic and political reasons, for me to leave at that stage.

Q: Looking back on it, this is a question we try to ask of the people we interview for this series. What gave you, in your Foreign Service career, your greatest feeling of accomplishment, satisfaction, would you say?

WILEY: Well, that is an interesting question. I did feel that in Iraq I made some real progress in improving our relations with Iraq, and, of course, I was the head of the intersection there, so I was pretty much on my own in doing this, and could do it at my own initiative. I think our relations certainly didn't turn around totally, but they improved a lot during the time that I was there. I think we laid the ground work for eventually resuming diplomatic relations.

I thought in Oman I did have a constructive influence on the way our military relationships developed in that part of the world. Though I wasn't particularly liked by the Pentagon, or by some of the strategic thinkers in the White House at that stage, I think I was able to moderate some of the things that would have been harmful to us, had they gone as originally planned, particularly, on keeping it a fairly low profile kind of operation. I think the way its worked out, its been a fairly successful venture. I think it did work out, more or less, the way I wanted it to in the beginning, so I think that was a success.

Q: This is one of the advantages of being in a place in which there isn't as much high-level attention focused. You can be a real factor in developments there. My final question is, if some young student comes to you and says, "Mr. Ambassador, what about the Foreign Service as a career today?", how would you reply?

WILEY: Well, I've had a number do that, and I usually have to tell them that I think it is probably less appealing than it was when I went in. I think the Foreign Service has, unfortunately, not been treated the way it should be by a series of Presidents now, who haven't really understood the importance of having a kind of elite Foreign Service Corps, dating back to, at least to, Nixon and Johnson. Nixon, of course, disliked any bureaucrat because he thought they were all against him, as politically, probably most of them were.

Q: Professionally, I must say that in the series of interviews I've done, there is more respect for Nixon within the Foreign Service professionals, because he knew his stuff, as opposed to almost every President we've had.

WILEY: I think in substantive issues he was pretty good, but he did not like the bureaucracy, as such. There was kind of a personal animosity toward the bureaucracy. Carter couldn't stand the idea of any kind of an elite corps. He was too much of a populist for an elite Foreign Service. Reagan, of course, didn't like bureaucracy, either, he just didn't like government, in general, I think.

You really have to go back to Eisenhower, and Acheson, and maybe the Kennedy era before you find a President who really supported the concept of an elite Foreign Service. You know, above average individuals who can deal with important policy matters, and make important policy recommendations, and so on. I think that has had an effect on the Foreign Service over the years. It has been less attractive because of this, because of the lack of top level support for us.
Hopefully, that will turn around with Bush, but, unfortunately, I'm not happy about his ambassadorial appointments. He certainly appointed a whole series of fund-raisers now to ambassadorships.

Q: We are talking about the third month into the new Bush Administration. The Foreign Service, I must say, the people I have talked to, have been quite disappointed because the appointments have been of a pretty low character, as far as the type of people and their lack of political qualifications. It may improve.

WILEY: They are political payoffs. So that's been disappointing. But what I usually tell the young fellow who is considering the Foreign Service, or the young lady, is that it really depends on what you want out of life. In many ways, the Foreign Service is still a very interesting way of earning your living.

Here, in this law firm, we get extremely able and bright young top law graduates of the prestige law schools, who come in and make fabulous amounts of money. They start off at 70 or 80 thousand a year, first year out of college. By the time they are a partner seven years later, they are making 2 or 3 hundred thousand a year. But I, frankly, wouldn't trade my experience in the Foreign Service for the experience these young men are having in this law firm now, where I am an associate, because it just isn't that interesting of work. It depends what you want. If you want the money, there are places you can go and make a lot more money than you can in the Foreign Service, if you have the qualifications.

On the other hand, if you are interested in foreign affairs, interested in this kind of a life, challenged by the kind of work that you would do in the Foreign Service, then money isn't that important. In spite of the downgrading of the Foreign Service, I still think it does have a very remarkable group of individuals in it, who are quite dedicated and who provide a milieu for their fellow officers, which is not matched in the private sector. You have a feeling of working with people whom you trust, whom you respect. There is less

petty back biting and so on in the Foreign Service, than there is in any other institution I have ever been associated with.

Q: I will agree with you. I am speaking also with 30 years' experience in the Foreign Service.

WILEY: These things are all important. You know, these are intangibles, but it depends on what you want to do with your life.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, I thank you very much.

End of interview