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

AMBASSADOR ROSCOE S. SUDDARTH

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Q: Today is March 30, 1999. This is an interview with Ambassador Roscoe S. Suddarth. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. Could you tell me when and where you were born and something about your family?

SUDDARTH: I was born in Louisville, Kentucky in 1935. My father was the manager of a General Mills plant that made flour out of wheat. The plant was right next to the Louisville Colonels baseball field, so some of my earliest memories were sitting in my father's office watching baseball games at night.

Q: You say you started out in Tennessee, but your father moved.

SUDDARTH: No, I was born in Louisville, Kentucky. My father had a heart attack when I was five years old. He was 47. We then moved back to Nashville, Tennessee. He had been born in Lebanon, Tennessee and had grown up there and then went through schools in Nashville. I guess the most meaningful was being at Peabody Demonstration School. That was a school that was a demonstration school for the teaching college, Peabody College for Teachers. That is now part of Vanderbilt. They selected so-called "bright" students from around the city as well as others. We had a kind of rarified atmosphere of really tremendous coursework that was wide-ranging - music, chess, Indian beadwork, you name it.

Q: This was based on the John Dewey system. He was at Columbia at the time.

SUDDARTH: Yes, that's right. We had a regular corps of teachers, highly experienced people, but they would bring in practice teachers and watch them. I remember being given all kinds of IQ tests, aptitude tests, throughout this. We were sort of guinea pigs and took pride in being kind of a young intellectual elite. From my class of 30, we had at least four Ph.D.s, a couple of doctors, an outstanding researcher at NIH, a Rhodes scholar, two diplomats (Olaf Grobel and I both were in the Foreign Service.)... So, it was a great place to get started. Geography was a very important part, thinking about things that led you to the Foreign Service. Dr. Hodson taught us world geography and American geography. Actually, we learned American geography in a very interesting way. We did it at the time of the Indians. So, there were no political bounds in the United States. We learned what America seemed like from a geological, horticulture, natural environment. Then we would study Hiawatha, the way the Indians were looked at. And it was a great musical education. All of this I now draw on in my adult life in a way that I wouldn't have if I hadn't had that exposure.

Q: Coming from Kentucky, which was the dark and bloody ground, how was the war between the settlers and the Indians taught you at that time?

SUDDARTH: It really wasn't taught. There was the Natchez Trace, which was the Trail of Tears where the Cherokees had to move out into reservations. But the real defining experience was the Civil War. In effect, Tennessee was an underdeveloped country by most standards in 1900 when my father grew up. His father died of typhoid, impure drinking water. He had to leave his school after the fourth grade in order to help his mother support her four younger children. So, there was a perception of tremendous wrongdoing, that the South had lost the war and then had been left and in effect penalized in terms of developing itself. That was the kind of [thing] that my grandmother would put in my head, so there was a sense of grievance. On the Indians, people have a way conveniently of forgetting bad memories. I think there was a guilt about the Indians. I never heard about the Battle of Nashville or the Battle of Donaldson, where the Confederates turned tail and ran like hell! So, we were pretty selective.

Q: Those were Grant's early victories.

SUDDARTH: That's right.

Q: In folk memory, you were there part of the time as a kid. Were you picking up anything about the New Deal and Franklin Roosevelt?

SUDDARTH: Yes. That is a very deep question. Roosevelt was revered almost as a demigod. I remember my mother crying like a baby April 20, 1945 when he died. I remember sitting in the barber's chair when the radio carried the announcement. I had heard so much about Roosevelt and TVA. My sister, as a matter of fact, had worked as a bookkeeper for the Corps of Engineers during World War II. I only realized a few years ago that she was actually working on the Manhattan Project. She was recording billions of dollars worth of expenditures. That was all made possible because of TVA. But more importantly from our viewpoint was that it really developed the middle South. It allowed farmers to quit eroding the soil and opened up lakes for fishing. It just did a tremendous amount. It was like having the Marshall Plan for middle Tennessee and the middle South.

I wanted to mention also another formative influence on my, my high school principal, Dr. Yarborough, who was a celebrated historian and was principal of our school at West End High School. I transferred out of Peabody because I wanted to play football and Peabody didn't have a football team. Dr. Yarborough had written a book on U.S. diplomatic history which he had me read as a special tutorial in my senior year. That is when I decided to try to try for the Foreign Service.

Q: Did you have any discussions with him about what diplomats do and that sort of thing?

SUDDARTH: No, it was really on a policy level. I remember reading endless letters and memoranda from John Quincy Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Again, Americans have a convenient way of forgetting things. We had a pretty imperial history if you look at the Mexican wars and Cuba and all of that. So, he I think was a very liberal historian and almost a revisionist in wanting to show the blemishes of American foreign policy. I got a sense of what it was like. Just reading these policy memos and letters that Jefferson would write to Washington from Paris or that James K. Polk would be doing gave me a real sense of what diplomatic policy was all about. Unfortunately, it also involved a lot of wars.

Q: What about the post-World War II period? For a lot of people, particularly growing up away from the coast, Europe and Asia sort of disappeared from view. I take it you were getting a look at what we were up to at that time.

SUDDARTH: That wasn't true of Nashville. I almost always was a newspaper reader. Nashville had two newspapers. One was conservative; one was liberal. But they both seemed to be very interested in foreign policy. I started reading about it during the war. I remember even in my "weekly reader" in the sixth grade reading about the Common tern. I remember dramatically newspaper headlines depicting the events in China. I never felt insulated where I was. Nashville is a university center. I lived very close to Vanderbilt University. My mother and father actually took in boarders who were graduate students, some studying political science. I had parents of friends, as well as my own parents, who were very much interested in foreign affairs, probably more than one would have thought.

Q: What about the Middle East? Did that crop up?

SUDDARTH: Yes. My early memories include collecting in the movies B'nai B'rith collections for the Jewish refugees who were going to Palestine. That is my earliest memory. That was about 1946. "The man called "X"" on radio was always flying on a mission to help the Jewish refugees in Palestine, but the Middle East didn't factor at all into events that I recall. It was much more China and Europe when I was in school.

Q: What about race relations? This was not an active time in that. Things were happening, but did that intrude at all?

SUDDARTH: Well, it was part of the landscape. My mother didn't have good milk, so I was nurtured on what was called in those days a black wet nurse. We had black domestic help throughout most of my childhood. They lived in the basement. They were part of the family. My mother died of cancer when I was age 11. Julia, our maid, really helped to raise me. But it was very much the old order. I remember playing with her son. He was younger than I was, but stronger than I was. He was besting me. One of my shameful memories was saying, "You have no right to do that. I am superior to you." But at some point in probably middle through high school, I realized that this was unjust. I was an alter boy in the Episcopal Church. I remember having arguments with my father that the blacks were not inferior and they were getting a raw deal and that they deserved to have a better chance. He didn't agree with me. So, both my parents were of their time feeling that the old order was the best way of doing it.

Q: You were talking about where you went to university? How was that done?

SUDDARTH: My mother as she realized that she was going to die called on my cousin, who was in state politics, to intervene with Representative Percy Priest to get me an appointment to West Point. Percy Priest was willing to do that, but I wasn't going to be able to pass the eye exam. So, I decided to shoot for something else. My sister, who was 15 years older, had been to college herself and pushed me toward the Ivy League. The author Bob Massie was an older boy who went to Yale from Peabody when I was there. I admired him and his brother, Kim, and Jack May. A lot of the people I admired at Peabody had gone to Yale. I had a scholarship to Vanderbilt, to Southern California because my sister was living there at the time. I had full scholarships to Harvard and Yale and I chose Yale.

Q: You might mention that Robert Massie was the author...

SUDDARTH: He was the author of "Peter the Great" and "Nicholas and Alexandra." He had done a lot of very well respected historical work. I still keep up with him.

Q: You went to Yale when?

SUDDARTH: I matriculated in 1952 and got out in 1956. I was there just as Dean Acheson was finishing up as Secretary of State. He was a Yale man. So, very naturally, my interests continued, although I didn't major in political science. I majored in "history of the arts and letters." I am delighted I did. I had a whole career to spend on international relations. I'm glad I had a deeper, wider grounding in my undergraduate days.

I remember again the Middle East was interesting. I remember hearing debates from members of UN delegations, the Israeli and the Egyptians, talking about the Arab-Israeli problems. But Yale was a great experience and I really treasured it. I got a scholarship from Yale. I applied for a Rhodes scholarship and didn't get that, but I got a Keasbey scholarship to Oxford, which was a scholarship given to a competition at Yale, Princeton, and Swarthmore. The way I got really propelled into the Middle East was that I arrived at Oxford in October of 1956 when the British, French, and the Israelis were invading Egypt. Eisenhower pulled them back. I found myself, never having been abroad, just having arrived with a bunch of strange Englishmen around, who were criticizing my country for our policy in the Middle East, so I crammed like mad, read all the newspapers so I could defend myself and my country. I got so interested in it that I stayed with it.

Q: I want to move back just a touch to the time you were at Yale. 1952-1956. What about McCarthyism?

SUDDARTH: I remember McCarthy from 10th grade in high school. That's when it started. Ella Heiman, our teacher, she wouldn't be allowed to do this today, but she said that this was a terrible man who was making reckless accusations and ruining people's lives. I remember watching Welch's trenchant statement about "Have you no decency left, Sir?" That was obviously a major issue at Yale. Yale had a very conservative streak in it in some of its professors. One I recall used to say, "I'm not saying that Franklin Roosevelt was always wrong. After all, even a stopped clock is right twice a day." Also, William Buckley was debating and taking a pro-McCarthy view.

Q: He was famous for writing "God, Man, and Yale."

SUDDARTH: He was very controversial. The Yale faculty and the large majority of the student body were anti-McCarthy. Particularly with his assaults on the State Department, all those folks and Acheson himself, we thought it was something that was bad and that was subverting our democracy. That was certainly my feeling, although it does look as though now Alger Hiss probably was an agent. I heard through Yale professors at the time, which this could be of historical interest. I think he had been a graduate student. My professors in my major had known him and his wife and said they thought she was the one who was the communist who had really pushed him into doing whatever he did.

Q: It's very hard to reconstruct that time. I think particularly the eastern colleges identified very much with Alger Hiss as thinking he was being unjustly accused. It was quite a blow to the liberal establishment. I know I felt it when it became pretty apparent that Hiss was at least seriously lying.

Then did you realize that at the time, in 1952?

SUDDARTH: They reached a point, yes. I think Alistair Cook and others were writing about it. You realized there was a guy who used the term "He let down our side."

It's scary that both he and Oscar Wilde are two examples of people who sued on libel charges and ended up going to jail for perjury.

Q: You've got to pick your issue.

SUDDARTH: That's right.

Q: To Oxford, in 1956, did you find that there was a rallying around the Suez intervention cause? I would have thought that much of the intellectual elite would be opposed to Eden. Eventually, it was drugged out.

SUDDARTH: You're right. Oxford as a whole was very much against the British policy of invasion. Eden, of course, had a nervous breakdown as a result of the Suez thing and was, from all of the reading that I've done, he and Lady Eden, his wife, were both offended by Nasser. They had demonized Nasser when the British, French, and Israelis went on this course. This was a most divisive debate in New College. New College was Harold Wilson's college and Lord David Cecil and Isaiah Berlin were there. There were some really great people there. But the only subject that was more divisive in the junior common room than the Suez affair was whether or not to abolish the New College Beagle!

Q: Were these hunting dogs?

SUDDARTH: Yes. There was a train that went down that a lot of people at Oxford got on (I didn't get on it.) and they had a big really at Trafalgar Square against the Suez incursion.

Q: Were your compatriots there other foreigners?

SUDDARTH: Yes. One of my closest friends, David Suratgar, was Anglo-Persian. Through him, I met Iranians, Egyptians, Iraqis. There was a wealthy Iraqi tribal type who rode around in a red Cadillac convertible and was ostensibly there to learn English. He wasn't enrolled in the university. He lived in an expensive hotel, the Randolph, and the only thing he could say in English was "Baghdad Pact." In those days, George Kennan was visiting professor. I got to know him. Kennan wrote a very unfortunate piece where he suggested that the nuclear horror facing the superpowers was such that at least it made us take a chance on letting the Russians overrun Europe. Our strategy would be to divide ourselves into Swiss-like cantons with militias to resist. He kind of went off the deep end that year at Oxford. He did the Reith lectures, which are not his proudest moment.

Q: He was my ambassador for a while in Yugoslavia. I always felt that he was a far better intellectual than he was an ambassador. I think he took things very personally and he liked to play with ideas and he wasn't a team man. In some ways, he was much better off at Princeton.

SUDDARTH: I think you're right. My great friend, Warren Zimmerman, we had been classmates at Yale and were very close. He was at Cambridge. You just mentioned Yugoslavia. Warren was at King's College, Cambridge. We traveled together a lot in the summer and saw each other a lot. So, I take credit for having recruited Warren into the Foreign Service. He was a journalist and I had just entered for Foreign Service. I said, "Listen, this is for you." He was ambassador to Yugoslavia, the CSSE.

Q: Warren and I served together in Belgrade back in the early days. I am interviewing him now.

SUDDARTH: You'll hear other stories.

Q: Did you get out and do much traveling while you were there?

SUDDARTH: Oh, yes. You have only six week terms. The rest of the year, you were traveling. I wanted to learn French. I had French in high school and college and wanted to really learn it, so I spent a summer at the University of Grenoble along with several other Oxford mates that I persuaded to come down there. I spent another several weeks in a chateau outside Tours speaking French with a French family. I went skiing in Austria and doing the grand tour in Spain, Italy, Belgium, Flanders, Scotland. I got my wanderlust there.

Q: What courses were you taking at Oxford?

SUDDARTH: I took another BA. The tutorial system was the great thing where you tried to match wits. It was an unequal match with some recognized authority in your field. I studied modern history, which started in 32 BC and ended in 1918. The most memorable tutor was Raymond Car, who later became warden of St. Anthony and was a great authority on Spain. He found Americans very interesting. I was going to study PPE, Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. He came into my room one night. I was trying to match what was overlapping in the two fields. I knew then I wanted to go into the Foreign Service. He then talked me out of PPE. So, in effect, I'm very overeducated in history. I have both a BA at Yale and at Oxford.

Q: I'm not sure you can be overeducated in history. I am a Balkan expert. At least I spent a lot of time there. As of today, history is... 1378, the Battle of Kosovo, has brought our airplanes over to Kosovo today. So, I think you can't know too much history.

Did your studying at Oxford give you a feel for British international reflexes and did that help you later in your career to understand the British and where they were coming from?

SUDDARTH: Yes, I think so. Oxford is the breeding ground of British diplomats. John Hay Whitney came out as ambassador to the Court of St. James and lectured at Oxford and I was put in charge of his program. So, even on the American side, I had some contact. But many of my chums at Oxford ended up in the British foreign office. I got to know Marrick Goulding, who was under secretary at the UN and did a lot of work on Lebanon and the UNIFIL problem. He is now warden of St. Anthony's. There was a Metternich Society formed when I was there. A lot of British aspiring diplomats joined it. Of course, the British foreign office was very, very selective. It was often people who had gotten first class degrees in classics at Oxford and Cambridge and "MODS" and "GREATS" as they called them of the classes. Then they went into the foreign office. Particularly in the Middle East, we were very much novices and learned from the British. They had a strong tradition of Arabists. Right up until the early '90s, Arabists were the way that you got to the very top of the British foreign office. Now, you have to go through the EU, I am told. That is the route to the top office.

Q: Did you have a feeling that coming out of one institution or institutions into the foreign office, did that give a cast... Sometimes, it's not always a good thing for everybody to come out of the same pot.

SUDDARTH: I think they have broadened things a little bit. I tend to like to get people of intellectual distinction. There were Labourites as well as Conservatives as Torries that were taken in. I didn't feel that it was a narrow ideological cast. I think the British foreign office is one of the fine institutions. I have no real criticism of it.

Q: What about colonialism? You were coming in at a time when the Suez thing was one of the last gasps of an aggressive colonial policy. Did you have an feel for students and your professors about Britain's changing role in the world?

SUDDARTH: I was auditing courses and a fellow at Rhodes House and he gave a course on British colonial history. In the first lecture I remember he was talking about some of the problems and mistakes of British colonial rule. At one point, he wheeled around to the audience and said, "To all of your smirking Americans in the audience, I'd like to remind you that you have a total of 127 broken treaties with the American Indians." So, the natural American tendency was to be superior. In those days, we were nurturing the myth - and we did this in my early days in the Foreign Service in Mali - that the United States was a freed colonial possession just like Mali was and that we therefore shared a common experience.

Q: This was very much pushed.

SUDDARTH: I thought it was a bit overdrawn even at the time. But, yes, I think there was very much a feeling that the U.S. power was on the ascendant and that we were going to pick up British irons out of the fire. But as colonial policy went, the British did a pretty good job. I remember the question of devolution. They seemed to have a kind of schema, at least in a number of their Commonwealth possessions and giving over to eventual self-government.

Q: You left there in 1958?

SUDDARTH: Yes.

Q: Did you get caught up in the American military?

SUDDARTH: Yes, I did a stint, my military obligation, in the Air Force. Then my appointment for the Foreign Service came up. I went into the Foreign Service.

Q: You went into the Foreign Service when?

SUDDARTH: In 1961. We were the first class after Kennedy was inaugurated. I was very proud of that, not that we had been selected by his Administration. But at least there was a real lift that one got in this young president who was doing all this.

Q: Do you recall anything about the oral exam, any of the questions, what they were interested in?

SUDDARTH: The only thing I remember is, after taking it, I went to see "Psycho," which is horrendous. I remember some questions about "What is the second largest crop producer in the country?" I think I got it right. I think it was Texas. I don't remember any questions on the interview. I remember one guy coming out and congratulating me, saying he thought I'd do a good job in the Foreign Service. It's a total blank.

Q: What about the election of Kennedy versus Nixon? Did that particularly grab your group?

SUDDARTH: Yes. They say that the vast majority of people remain in the same party that they were brought up in. My parents were dyed in the wool Democrats. They were southern Democrats. They would probably be Republicans today. I've always been a Democrat and a relatively liberal Democrat. But I always took the Foreign Service motto "my country right or left." I was in a household of professionals living in Georgetown. I think virtually all of us were rooting for Kennedy. So, when he was elected, we really felt that things were going to be different, although I remember that the Bay of Pigs was an early blotch on his escutcheon. But he managed to survive that. But there was a feeling... Again, the Vietnam thing was coming out. I was raised in a generation becoming conscious in WWII where you saluted. Our national bias was toward our government and believing that what they did was right and that it deserved to be followed. So, my tendency was that I was choked up in "Saving Private Ryan" and things like that. I think early in my childhood - I think it came through my church - the idea of service was very ingrained.

Q: Talking about this, your entry class... Kennedy in his inauguration address said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." That struck a very responsive chord.

SUDDARTH: It did. I remember being transfixed by his inaugural address. There was a feeling in my Foreign Service class that there were important things that we had to do. But it was as much getting the world to develop as it was to combat communism. Looking back at my own career, mainly involved with Arab-Israeli things, but a lot of it was how can we develop the rest of the world the way the U.S. and the West have been developed.

Q: I maintain that many of us came in with a certain almost missionary force behind us. We've got a pretty good deal and this shouldn't be just kept to us. We should be trying to help others.

SUDDARTH: Well, that was a lot of my feeling. I got very interested in development economics. I've often regretted not doing the economics course at Oxford. I read a lot of stuff. Preparing for the Foreign Service Exam, I really had to catch up on a political-economic major in order to be certain of getting in. Arthur Lewis wrote a lot of stuff. Kindleberger. A lot of people were writing things. I remember self-sustained growth and Walt Rostow.

Q: The idea of a takeoff economy.

SUDDARTH: That's right. That was a big element. Our Foreign Service class was intent in following the events of the civil rights movement in the South. That was in 1961. A lot of things were going on there. I remember, a lot of the lecturers at the time had discovered the term "upward mobility" and they were beginning to use sociological analysis, particularly in Cuba. The A100 course was a good one.

I also remember that when we were to graduate, they always brought somebody down of some importance. Chip Bohlen wasn't doing anything that afternoon as deputy under secretary. He came down. He was a very imposing and handsome and perfectly typecast ambassador. But he said, "Take my word. You'll have a very good career in the Foreign Service if you're willing to be on call 24 hours a day seven days a week. If you're not willing to do that, get out now." That turned out to be prophetic. My career in the Foreign Service was one series of Middle Eastern crises after another.

Q: What about your class? What was their outlook?

SUDDARTH: I'd say we were probably more of the silent '50s generation. We had one guy who was obviously not cast for the Foreign Service. He was much more interested in the civil rights movement. I think he got out after our graduation. But he managed to raise all of our consciousness on civil rights problems and whatnot. I wouldn't say we had a very distinguished class. We had one or two ambassadors. We had the son of Walter Dowling, Michael Dowling, who was quite promising. His father was ambassador to Germany when we were in the class. Michael defected to affluence, got out into the private sector. I don't have any particularly distinct memories. There were a lot of very nice people, several who got out and became distinguished academics. I'd say probably half of our class was gone within five years. I was about the last one around by the time I retired. I would say we were creatures of the '50s. We were mesmerized by Kennedy. We had a kind of sophomoric skepticism about institutions. I remember being somewhat offended - It's funny how idealistic you are - that people were taking our valuable time by telling us about the retirement system, which became very important to me later on. I'm glad that somebody did it. But we were idealists and we weren't interested in the monetary side. We just wanted to get out there and get going.

Q: Where did you want to go by the time you were there?

SUDDARTH: I was interested in the Middle East. Of course, I was supposed to go to Tangier, Morocco on my first assignment. Bobby Kennedy had gone to Africa for a conference. These were the days in 1961 where the French and the British were leaving Africa and America was filling in. Africa was on our scope because we were just establishing diplomatic presences there. Bobby Kennedy went to a regional conference, who was attorney general and was a troubleshooter for the President and was offended at two things. Number one, all the people that were in Germany with so few of them were willing to go to Africa. So, the next thing we knew, about half of our German service establishment had been assigned to Africa. The other was that we had all of these French speaking posts and we didn't have many that spoke French. So, I spoke pretty good French and was moved from Tangier to Mali and moved from a political officer job to general services, which did not please me at all. But it turned out to be a very good assignment. I liked it a lot.

Q: You were in Mali from when to when?

SUDDARTH: I was there from late 1961 through 1963.

Q: What was Mali like? Could you describe the situation there?

SUDDARTH: Well, it was in a state of decolonizing. I had a personal experience because my lovely wife, Michele, of now 36 years, I met in Mali. Her father ran a company that built most of the roads in Mali, a French company that was just demobilizing and leaving. They happened to live across the street. So, I had a wonderful year and a half there, met her, wooed her. We got married in Mali. So, I picked the fruits of colonialism. My wife is very liberal in her views and always has been on those issues. But the French were pulling out.

One of the important early memories was, there was a dam on the Niger River that was very important to harness energy and keep floods from occurring. The U.S. made a kind of pass at financing this dam. It really offended the French, who immediately came up and provided the funding that they otherwise would not have provided in order to keep the U.S. from gaining a foothold in Mali. It was also a crossroads and a competition for both the Russians, the communist regimes, and China, as well as the United States. They weren't competing themselves directly, but uppermost in our minds was how to win the hearts and minds of the Malians from these communists. Of course, the French communists had cultivated the colonials in Paris. Many of them had studied in Paris. Modibo Keita, who was the president, had a politburo. So, they had the trappings of a socialist, if not a communist, regime. The U.S. was trying to use our influence to steer them toward a more neutral course.

Q: I was interviewing somebody not too long ago who was during this period going to the Sorbonne and saying how the French communist student thing would sort of go after colonial students and pair them up, make sure they got good quarters and were taken care of and all, and it seemed to be a very effective way of recruiting people or at least bringing them all to sympathy for their side.

SUDDARTH: Well, that was my experience. A lot of the top leaders in Mali had been schooled in France. There were a lot of French communists who were working in the Malian administration and were obvious influences on them. So, my memories were trying to convert the Malians to some mild form of capitalism in a country that had relatively few resources. It was mainly desert. Timbuktu was there. The French and the Office du Niger had tried a cotton irrigation scheme at the turn of the century, which hadn't worked out. So, Mali was really dependent on peanuts, cattle and very little else. They didn't have the riches of Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, and places like that.

Q: Was the problem in Algeria at all reflected down there or was it too much desert in between?

SUDDARTH: No, I remember the Algiers Accords. I mean, everybody read about it. It was an important agreement for the Common Market while I was in Mali. But it didn't have a direct effect. Mali was the head of the Casablanca Charter, which was a grouping of Ghana, Mali, and Egypt, among others. Of course, they were very supportive of the Algerian revolution and independence movement. But they weren't directly involved. I don't recall that they were supplying guerrillas or anything like that.

Q: Who was your ambassador while you were there?

SUDDARTH: Bill Handley, who later was ambassador to Turkey. He had been in USIA and was a deputy assistant secretary for the Near East as well. He was a very nice man and a fine ambassador. I liked him a lot. I was moved after a year as general services officer to the Political Section. I'm glad that I had that early year. It was very good for my French. I was working with French contractors and we were leasing houses. I had one of the better developed home repairs vocabularies in French. I've forgotten most of that stuff.

But then Bob Keeley was a great influence. He was the head of the Political Section. Bob was my predecessor here at the Middle East Institute. Bob was a brilliant officer who went on to be ambassador to Zimbabwe, Mauritius, and Greece. So, he and Louise gave me away in marriage. They are very close friends.

We had a good AID mission, Dr. Samuel Adams, a distinguished black academic was the AID director. I thought we really tried to do our best to send very good people to Africa in those days.

Q: It was considered glamorous, the way to go... It was later that there was a lot of disillusion about it. What about as a political officer, was there much of a political life to report on?

SUDDARTH: I remember going to endless party conventions. They were trying to aid the Communist Party. They were trying also to conceal the fact basically that the Bambara tribe under Modibo Keita (There were seven tribes in Mali.), were really the dominant tribe and were giving out most of their political favors and so forth. Being immersed in the French community (and also in the Lebanese community), I got a sense that there was rampant corruption and the French didn't mince any words in terms of finding ways to get contracts. It usually meant paying a bribe to some official who was important. So, it was a little disillusioning for a wet behind the ears idealist to realize that it was a society that seemed to work on bribes.

Q: What about Soviet influence? What were they doing there?

SUDDARTH: Well, they were giving Ilyushins for Air Mali. They had a barter trade agreement where they would buy peanuts. But it was pretty obvious that it was a feeble effort on both the Russians and the Chinese, although the Malians always held it up to us as a way of getting more American assistance. We were not particularly generous. We didn't really feel that we wanted to be that much of a supporter of this regime. I noticed in the paper this morning that there is a big story about Malian municipal elections, which were not occurring in my day. So, I think they've made several leaps toward a more democratic process.

Q: Thirty-five years later.

SUDDARTH: Yes. I remember being married. We had to have a civil wedding as well as a church wedding. The civil wedding was the day before. It was performed by the mayor, Mayor Coulybali, of Bamako. I had to swear that I hadn't paid more than two cows for my wife as a bride price. I told them, "In our system, you pay after rather than before the wedding." As he was going through this civil ceremony, he heard the sirens of Modibo Keita's passing entourage and realized that there was a Politburo meeting about to start. He was a member of it. So, we went through the fastest wedding ceremony on record. He was out of there in a minute's time and we had signed out.

There was another funny incident. When we first got started - it was actually just before I arrived - we moved out of the Grand Hotel. But at one point, the Russian, the Chinese, and the American missions were all in the Grand Hotel. A robber got into one of the offices and was very proud that he had looted the American safe. He had all of these dollars. It turned out it wasn't the Americans; it was the Chinese embassy that he had gotten his dollars from. But my abiding sense in Mali was competition for the hearts and minds with the French being involved. They were on our side but they didn't want us to get paramount influence.

Q: This is a theme that continues to run throughout the French part of Africa. Were you as a young officer told, "Hold back a little. Let's not upset the French. We really don't want to supplant them?

SUDDARTH: No, I was never given any guidance like that. I wasn't really doing anything that significant in that. But I don't recall that... I recall a respectful dealing... There was always a certain amount of tension when our ambassador went over to see the French ambassador. There was friendly rivalry. This was in De Gaulle's time and De Gaulle was unhappy with the NATO arrangements and the nuclear monopoly. So, there was a certain Gaullist disdain for U.S. foreign policy and then a colonial one. The French ambassador had been a colonial officer who felt somewhat possessive about that. I don't think that we had a division of labor, but I think they welcomed our aid program. But as I said, this dam project suggested that the French didn't want us to supplant them. I'm not sure that it was true, but the French used to allude to the naivetï¿½ of the United States. They said that we had sponsored a road project that ended up paving the road to the president's dacha out in the countryside, things of that sort. I don't know whether that was actually true or not.

Q: How about Mali's relations with its neighbors?

SUDDARTH: Well, they had just broken off from Senegal. They had the Mali Federation. That seemed to be pretty well established and there wasn't any feeling... I didn't have a sense that Mali had major ideological affinities with Guinea and with Ghana, who were other socialist countries. The Ivory Coast and Senegal with Houphouet-Boigny and Senghor, who was French educated, were considered the kind of models for the United States. They were free enterprise and not socialist governments. But governments that have resources can get capitalism. I have some sympathy for Mali because it was so poor they may have needed a little bit of socialism to get going. They needed some state enterprises.

Q: You left there when?

SUDDARTH: I left in June of 1963. I was sent to Arabic language training in Beirut, which is where I really got started on the career. I spent the rest of my life in the Foreign Service dealing largely with the Middle East.

Q: This was at your behest?

SUDDARTH: Yes, right. I wanted to learn a difficult language. I wanted to get involved in an area that it seemed to me would be important. I mentioned the Suez incident, but there was something that happened my senior year at Yale. I audited a course taught by a history professor who was known as a materialist because he was always looking at basic material conditions. He pointed out that the oil was running out in the United States and that the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, had 2/3 of the proven reserves in the world. So, that sort of stuck in the back of my mind. That and the Oxford experience made me feel that the Middle East was going to be an important place.

I really thought about three areas. One was China. For some reason, I wanted to learn a difficult language. But China was not open to the United States. I thought briefly about India. Again, in the mode of a developing country where I could help participate in their development. I settled on the Arab world simply because of the political juncture and the Arab-Israel problem, the Persian Gulf oil, the communists, the Soviet influence, and so forth. It seemed to me this made for an interesting cocktail.

Q: In Lebanon, you were taking Arabic from when to when?

SUDDARTH: Daylight to dawn practically. We had six hours of class and we were expected to go home and prepare for the next day with another three hours. So, I spent about nine hours a day for almost two years.

Q: This was from 1963-1965?

SUDDARTH: Yes.

Q: Did you get a feel for the orientation of your class, your group, there? One of the charges that's often laid is that Arabists concentrate on Arab things and they're not overly sympathetic or supportive of the Israelis. Could you talk about that a bit?

SUDDARTH: At that time, I would say, people did not have developed views. Most of us were young officers on our second tour in the Foreign Service. The major concern, there was a concern about Nasser. He seemed to be expansionist and the Syrians and the Egyptians had just formed a union. But we of course were immersed in reading newspapers that were very anti-Israeli. But I don't recall anybody having any predilections. I made a point that when we got these field trips. I got two field trips. One of them, I made sure I went to Israel. My earliest childhood memories were about Israel and about the Jews and the fact that they had been horribly mistreated, exterminated, in World War II. So, I think certainly in my own case, I was free of any predisposition to be against Israel. I spent a good part of my career defending Israel in Arab capitals. We had a variety of agencies that were taking Arabic. I can't think of any particular predisposition. If anything, it was anti-communist, and a certain feeling that Nasser had to be combated. But never a feeling that the Israelis were usurping the place. I think, as people got on, they got more and more exposed to those views. But my generation was pretty well clear of that. Some of the older officers who had remembered the days of pre-Israeli Middle East and certainly Lebanon... A lot of Israelis went to the American University in Beirut. They may have had predilections, but that wasn't the case in my view.

Q: What about the American University of Beirut, AUB? Did that play any role? Were people taking courses there, too?

SUDDARTH: I looked out on their tennis courts. We really had a pretty self-contained group. We had an excellent library. After pounding your head on Arabic, reading a book in English on the Middle East... So, we really were encouraged and given a book allowance to develop an area studies thing. We took some courses at Shemlan, but we didn't have any formal affiliation with AUB. I got tennis lessons from the father in law of a professor, but that is about as close as I got.

Q: The British had their school there, but they had a different style, didn't they, of teaching?

SUDDARTH: Yes. They would take a 22 year old fresh out of Oxford and Cambridge and they would teach the grammar. We thought we had a better course for teaching people to get around in the Arab world. The ideal was to produce an educated Lebanese gentleman who could handle himself in the Lebanese dialect. Only when I got to Yemen and people started laughing did I realize that I was going to have to adapt my Arabic, as one does. Now they teach the standard Arabic that you would hear on the radio anywhere in the Arab world.

Q: Was the Lebanese dialect sort of like speaking with a sophisticated lisp?

SUDDARTH: Exactly. My wife had the worst of it because she has a very good ear for language and she was taking Arabic part-time and speaking full-time with our maid, who was from the Bosta, which is the sort of blue collar area of Beirut. So, she came out speaking like someone right out of Brooklyn.

Q: How was Lebanon at the time you were there? Was there tension?

SUDDARTH: Everybody says those were the great old days and they were. There was a story of a World Bank, IMF, group that came to Lebanon to study the economy and they left saying, "We don't know what's happening, but don't change it." The Lebanese economy was working. It was the Paris of the orient. In those days, the oil rich countries were channeling their contacts with the West through Lebanon. With the civil war, that's all drained and they've now developed their direct contacts. So, there is some question about what Lebanon's role will be. But this was a little bit, five years, after the U.S. Marines landed and the Eisenhower Doctrine to safeguard Lebanon from falling to Nasserite... 1958. And there was still a feeling of goodwill from the ruling classes in Lebanon. But there was an obvious income disparity. The Palestinians that were half of the population. Around Beirut, there were refugee camps. In the south, they were very much not allowed into the economy. The Shia that were growing and are now probably the majority in Lebanon were really the dispossessed. So, there was a feeling of a great income disparity. In 1968, our embassy... Kurt Jones, to his everlasting credit, pointed out that this couldn't last. Lebanon had no social security. It was classic laissez faire. There was a social problem that was developing that eventually erupted in the 1970s. To be frank and honest about it, at the time it was only dimly perceived. But I remember having my tires on my new car punctured by a Lebanese young man. It turned out that he was a Palestinian who felt that he had been unjustly treated. Justice is a big, big term in the Islamic vocabulary.

My earliest interpreter experience (The ambassador's interpreter had left and I had had a year of Arabic.) was being called down to interpret for a young man who had asked to see the ambassador. He was a bit suspicious looking, so they had the Marines nearby. His first thing was... I should say by way of background that the ambassador had just been verbally attacked by Rashid Karami, the prime minister at the time, for something about U.S. policy. This young man said in Arabic that, "I understand that we have a mutual agreement against the prime minister and I was deprived of employment. He has now attacked you. So, I would like your sponsorship in assassinating him." I had just learned the word for "assassination." I said, "What do you mean by assassinate?" He said, "I mean to kill him." I said, "Okay" and I translated it. But because of a sense of injustice... So, there was a great sense of injustice.

Our landlord had somebody painting on the outside of our apartment building in the courtyard of the 10 story building. I pointed out to him, "Look, that guy is on a ladder that's very shaky. He could kill himself." He said, "Yes, and it could cost me 15,000 pounds." So, there was a certain sense of callousness in terms of what was happening. It was hard to get through, but you had village and family relations that seemed to count more than anything. And ethnic. You had Maronites, Greek Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Shia, and Sunni. Lebanon's constitution is built on a very precarious balancing of these sectoral divisions.

Q: I am told by those who work at the embassy that they have to be somewhat careful because it's easy to get somewhat absorbed by the wealthy Maronite community and all that. Language students, I guess, could avoid that.

SUDDARTH: Yes. I don't think we were really very conscious of that, but we had to do duty officer duties occasionally, which I enjoyed. Armin Meyer was our ambassador at the time and he would have us into his office and talk to us every month on some subject of interest. But I remember, it was an occasion of great notice when we brought in our first Shia professor teacher at the Arabic language school (also the first Shia in the embassy), who happened also to be a female, and who wore a scarf over her head. This was in 1964. So, even then, these Islamist themes were apparent, but not very much so. So, yes, the Maronites were with President Chehab and then President Helou in the ascent. In effect, there was a myth that Christians and Muslims were 50/50, but everybody knew they had to count every Lebanese christen abroad that had ever lived in Lebanon and his descendants to get to that balance.

Q: Well, they were refusing to hold a census, weren't they?

SUDDARTH: I don't think they've ever held one.

Q: I don't think they have. I think there had been a census in 1930 or something of that nature that came up with the right figure and why mess with it?

SUDDARTH: That's right.

Q: What about Syria? Did Syria play much of a role?

SUDDARTH: Well, Syria was known to have predatory designs on Lebanon. They were having internal problems, coup d'etats and what not. So, they were somewhat distracted. I do recall seeing Syrians carrying refrigerators on their backs over the Ante Lebanon mountains to get into Syria to smuggle goods in. Even in those days, Syria tended to be a statist, socialist regime, pro-Soviet and with little Lebanon as a very active center of capitalism. Syria profited from that because there was a lot of intermixture and whatnot. I remember going to Damascus in the early '60s and being struck by the cleanliness and the really gemlike character of the diplomatic area around town. It has since gotten much more crowded, but in those days, Damascus was a little gem of a city.

Q: What about Egypt? You had Nasser, but it was the big power in the area?

SUDDARTH: It was, although I think the Egyptian intelligence service was always considered feckless and they had very little effect in Lebanon, although I'm sure Lebanon was a target. I can remember people from the U.S. mission in Cairo coming to Beirut and standing on the street corner admiring the new cars that were passing along. Egypt had a socialist economy. Most of their trade was barter trade with the Soviet Union. They didn't have the kind of consumer goods. I took a field trip to Egypt at the time when I was a student and recall that you'd go into a department store and it would be filled with tuna fish. There was just one commodity because they were doing barter trade with the Bloc. Those were the days when they were putting up all kinds of apartment buildings for the engineers or the pharmacists. They were going into a lot of public works constructions, a lot of deficit financing.

I actually went up... It was kind of an amusing thing. Two incidents occurred when I took this field trip. There were three of us who went to Egypt. But two of them went to Khartoum and came down the Nile. I started in Cairo and went up the Nile. We all wanted to see the Aswan Dam. That was the big thing at the time. The Egyptian intelligence service, as we found out later (This could be apocryphal.), was following us and they thought we were going to blow up the Aswan Dam. We were just plain old diplomats, students. Nobody could believe you were an Arabic language student, you know, traveling in Egypt. I remember getting to Abu Simbel before it had to be raised by the Nile. But Egypt I recall as embarking on socialism and it turned out to be a failed experiment. But they still are suffering from statism and the permanent employment that they guarantee.

Q: Was Egypt considered to be the key? Was this the place where you kind of wanted to go?

SUDDARTH: It was. I'm hopping ahead, but I was then assigned to Yemen, where Egypt had 80,000 troops and was fighting a civil war on behalf of the Republican that had overthrown the imam against tribal forces and the imam's forces that were being backed by Saudi Arabia. But Egypt was enough of a power to project 80,000 men into Yemen.

Q: I thought we might quit at this point. In 1965, you went to Yemen?

SUDDARTH: Yes.

Q: What did you request?

SUDDARTH: I don't think I had requested anything. I wanted to go to a post where I would have to speak Arabic. I got my wish. Our two children were born in Lebanon. My wife and I were adventurous. We had a very interesting tour full of high jinks and lots of good stories for the diplomatic archives.

Q: We'll pick it up at that point. Great.

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Today is April 26, 1999. We've got you in 1965 going to Yemen. You were there until when?

SUDDARTH: 1967.

Q: '67 of course being a critical date.

SUDDARTH: That's right.

Q: Can you describe how you saw Yemen in 1965 when you arrived? Where were you? The capitals kept changing.

SUDDARTH: Well, yes. The capital was in Sanaa. It had always been, even under the imam, that they kept diplomatic missions in Taiz, which was similar to what happened in Saudi Arabia where your missions were in Jeddah and the capital was in Riyadh. There was a certain sense in both cases of xenophobia, keep the foreigners at a distance. But when I got there in 1965, the government was allowing missions to move to Sanaa. That became a major issue for the mission. Political conditions, which were fairly unstable... The situation in '65 was, there were some 50 or 60,000 Egyptian troops who had come to Yemen after the revolution in September of 1962 at the behest of the new revolutionary Yemeni government. They were being opposed by royalist forces, the forces of the ousted imam, whose son, Imam Duggad, I think, up in the mountains of Yemen, who were being sustained by the Saudis. So, you in effect had a proxy war between Egypt and Saudi Arabia with Yemen being the killing field. The Yemeni tribesmen were fierce. As Egyptian soldiers would sometimes get waylaid, often the tribesmen would send them back with their lips and their ears cut off. So, the tribesmen were pretty fierce and they were well armed.

So, you had a government somewhat under Egyptian dominance under President Sallal and Hassan Amri with a restive population. Some tribes were for the government. Some were against them. All were susceptible to bribes. Then you had a very interesting triumvirate of republican statesmen who wanted a more moderate view. They didn't want the military dictatorship. We were often dealing with them. These were three really highly respected, wonderful Yemenis - Abdul Rahman El-Iryani, who was a judge, a neighbor of ours who I got to know pretty well, the uncle of the present deputy prime minister and foreign minister; Mohammad Ali Uthman, and there was a third, Ahmed Noman. We were often at the U.S. embassy dealing with those three. The charge would have a very occasional meeting with Sallal or Amri, which was generally hostile on both sides. We were suggesting that the Yemenis should try to move to reconcile their part of the population. The Yemeni government was accusing the United States of being in league with Saudi Arabia and opposing the new revolutionary government and we would reply that, after all, our very presence there and the major decision that John Kennedy made to recognize a republican government against an oppressive regime were sufficient proof, plus the fact that we had a very large aid program. One of the structural problems of our embassy was that we had a very large AID mission in Taiz with an airplane of its own with a very senior director building a major road in Yemen, building water projects and all kinds of things with a rather junior charge d'affaires, Harlan Clark. One of the problems that we got into was that the AID mission was often being approached by these tribes that were up for grabs in terms of allegiance to do water projects. The Egyptian intelligence assumed that they were going there to scheme for overthrowing the regime. This is all part of a backdrop to the events of 1967 when they accused the United States of trying to subvert the regime.

But right after my arrival in August of 1965, there was a conference, where as I recall the royalists and the Yemeni government tried to get together on some kind of reconciliation. I'm not entirely clear on who the parties were. It may have been that the republican triumvirate and the Yemeni government were trying to get together, but I think it was the royalists. But none of that came to any fruition. So, for the two years that I was in Yemen, there was a series of battles, skirmishes, by the Egyptian army that never seemed to have much of a clear as to the battle plan. We were restricted to the triangular portion of Yemen which is from between Hodeida, Taiz, and Sanaa, whereas the rest of the country was a battle zone that was off limits to diplomats.

There was another element. Aden and South Yemen were still a colony of Britain and a major port on the route between the Suez Canal, Britain, and Australia, filled with major consumer goods and things for people to buy duty free. The Egyptians and the Soviets were sponsoring various groups that were based in Taiz to invade and overthrow the regime, which was a set of traditional rulers propped up by the British with a very active British army, British colonial, and British intelligence presence there. We were often able to go over to Aden and be the protecting power for Britain. So, I remember translating many foreign office notes protesting British overflights over Yemen. Whether or not they actually occurred or not, I'm not sure. But there were two sets of battles between the Egyptians and the royalists and also between the Yemeni Egyptian supported groups. One was known as Flossi and another was known as the MLF. Flossi was Egyptian dominated under Abdel Makowi and it was more moderate. The MLF was a semi-Marxist group that eventually prevailed in South Yemen and brought in a crypto-communist government. It was only in 1967 when the Egyptians were defeated in Yemen that the British decided to pull out and to establish a regular government there.

Q: What was your job there?

SUDDARTH: I was the political officer. Our mission was broken up into two. We had one embassy and we had a branch office in Sanaa with our embassy and charge d'affaires being in Taiz. So, I was the lone political officer in Taiz. We had an economic officer in Sanaa, David McClintock and later David Newton. Pat Quinlan was in charge of the office, who was doing political work there, although much of the work of the office in Sanaa was backstopping or keeping itself alive administratively with just those two officers. Louise Quinlan was a very inventive spouse who helped out. So, we had a very small and very divided mission. The AID mission probably had 50 people and the total embassy was probably 10-15 people altogether. Only five or six substantive officers.

My job consisted of trying to figure out what the Yemenis were doing and to report on the press on developments. I had some contacts of my own. I was the interpreter in Taiz with what they called the Republican Council, the three people I mentioned. But there were interesting things that went on. At one point, Sallal fell out with the Egyptians. President Sallal was actually exiled to Cairo. Hassan El-Amri, who was head of the army, prime minister, I think, took over. There were several suggestions of coup d'etats which were made to the United States government which we rejected that I wont really go into. Not royalists. These were people who were loyalists but reformers. There was also a group known as the Favored 40. It's kind of an interesting story. They were the technocratic backbone that we dealt with. In 1946, Yemen, was criticized at the Arab League under Imam Yah for not educating its people. So, they were forced to send 40 young boys around 12 to Brummana High School in Lebanon. Then the next year, they forgot all about those. It turned out that these 40 then went on from Brummana High School to scholarships around the world - the United States and Europe. Then when the revolution hit, it turned out they were the only 40 who had anything like a semblance of a university education. Some of the Yemenis were absolutely brilliant - University of Chicago, Sorbonne, LSE, all that sort of thing. So, these were sort of the technocratic side of the government. Many of them were ministers and are ministers today.

So, you had a rather fragmented scene with a bunch of technocrats who had been U.S. educated, while Sallal and El-Amri, who in effect followed a Nasser line. They were anti-West, anti-U.S., anti-imperialist, anti-Saudi. I should add as a backdrop to all of this that it's obvious by inference that the Russians, the Soviets, and the Chinese, decided in the late '50s that Yemen was the soft underbelly of the peninsula. Sensing the oil riches of the peninsula, they made a concerted effort to put in big aid programs in Somalia, Ethiopia to some extent (although Haile Selassie resisted a bit), but particularly into Yemen, where they built the principal road from Hodeida to Sanaa. That was the Chinese road. But the Chinese had a similar feeling. I think they felt that the traditional monarchies of the peninsula were ripe for revolution, for subversion. The way to do it was to start with the most dissolute of the areas and that was in Yemen because the court of Imam Ahmad was really extremely dissolute. This was prior to my period, but it's interesting.

I know it's been of historical interest to Hermann Eilts, who has written a lot about this area. That is, when Colonel Eddy came in 1946 on a mission after having interpreted for Roosevelt, he brought a Navy doctor with him who wrote a long report on the state of the court in the Imamate. It was a really racy document. The court turned out to be - many of them were mainliners on heroin. They had a number of Italian doctors that had come in and were mainlining them on heroin. The visiting US doctor also examined a number of these people who were in wretched states of health and it included a lot of venereal disease. Hermann Eilts has tried to track down this report. I saw it when I was in the embassies, but it's been lost track of. But it's a fascinating report on the dissolute morals and morays of the Imamate's court. Thinking on about the situation, it was unstable because the Egyptians were unable to conquer the rugged areas of northern Yemen. As a result, there was a kind of stalemate. I think that a military historian would hold this Yemen adventure, which a lot of people called "Nasser's Vietnam," partially responsible for the Egyptians' ignominious defeat in the 1967 War. They had the crack units of the Egyptian army down there trying to quell the Yemenis. They got amply rewarded. Yemen got a lot of foreign exchange which Egypt had none of. So, they by selling qat, this mild narcotic, to overseas Yemenis and selling it in Aden, plus coffee, Yemen had a fair amount of foreign exchange, which the Egyptians grabbed onto. What happened was, an officer who had served his year in Yemen was able to buy a Mercedes. An enlisted man was able to buy a refrigerator, which they would put on their backs and carry on board the ships as they were going back. So, Yemen became a kind of privileged depot for the Egyptian army, which was really the ruling class in Egypt at that time. So, it was rather lucrative for the individuals that went down there.

Q: It also meant that you didn't want to get shot.

SUDDARTH: Well, that's also true. I think the Egyptians were not particularly adventurous. It also was occasion of the first use of poison gas. This was in 1967 and it was in a remote area that we were not able to verify from the embassy, but there was reporting, which I can't verify, that Egyptian aircraft had used poison gas on some of the Yemeni royalist forces.

Thinking back on other issues, one issue was the move of the embassy to Sanaa. Harry Simms, who was in charge of our area in NEA, I remember, came out and was trying to push a reluctant Harlan Clark to move the embassy up to Sanaa. We actually did move, but Harlan Clark in retrospect may have been right. The conditions in 1966 when we were getting ready to decide on the move had heavily deteriorated politically. With Nasser in Egypt, we were on a confrontation. In Yemen, again, the mutual recriminations that the Yemenis were not broadening their government and from their point of view that we were supporting the Saudis. We were just in a very bad political situation.

In addition, during this period, the Yemenis wrapped up and charged several Yemenis with espionage and machine-gunned them in the Revolutionary Square of Sanaa. The United States was accused - and I wont get into whether this was true or not - of having had an agent who was Major General Rahumi among the people who was shot. So, that was yet another albatross around our neck. They also expelled the principle AID third country employee. He was a third country national, a Lebanese named Michel Hariz, for being implicated in this. So, with these political elements, Harry Simms came to town and had a long acrimonious argument, most of which I didn't personally hear but some of which I did, with Harlan Clark over "When are you going to move to Sanaa?" Have you heard all of this before?

Q: I get it in different aspects.

SUDDARTH: In effect, what happened was, Harlan Clark wasn't relieved, but his two year tour had come up and could have been renewed. Lee Dinsmore, who was running the Sanaa office, was made charge d'affaires. We were an embassy. We used to be a legation, but we had never availed ourselves of having an ambassador because our relations didn't justify it.

So, in the summer of 1966, we started to move our people up. The AID mission was to stay in Taiz where they had built a whole compound and had great infrastructure and whatnot. I need to talk about the AID mission, too. So, we then started renting houses and renting a large building for our embassy and using our old embassy or part of it as well. People who were in Sanaa like David Ransom can be more authoritative about that aspect. But the way we did business was, we flew up there virtually every week from Taiz in the AID plane. So, I made as political officer many trips. Part of these were actually negotiating for housing, which was also a good way to get to know the people in the area, the lay of the land. So, we rented several houses, including one for me, one for the administrative officer. Lee Dinsmore already had his house as charge. It was moving along really quite well. We did move. But we moved at virtually the same time that there was a particularly intense trooping down to Taiz of tribal sheikhs who would talk to us politically, talk to the AID people. The Yemeni government began to get suspicious that something was up. In retrospect, perhaps we should have been more circumspect in what we were doing.

But what happened was, I actually moved and my family moved up in March or April of 1967. Then in late April, the famous bazooka incident occurred. I can spare listeners a lot of detail by referring you to an article I wrote that was published. I won a second prize in the Jack McFall Manuscript Contest. This was put into a volume called "Tales of the Foreign Service" that came out about 1969 or '70. It was called "Diplomacy in a Yemeni Jail." It was a volume that Kissinger actually did a little epigraph for.

To briefly state this, the Yemeni government charged that in late April six AID employees in our compound in Taiz launched with the help of Yemeni tribesmen a bazooka and machinegun attack against certain Yemeni outposts. I can't remember what it was. They were not outposts, but installations close to our AID compound. They then took two of the AID employees and took them into custody. At that point, I was in Sanaa and we were very concerned about this because of the deteriorating political atmosphere. I was dispatched to Taiz to assist Ali Jones, who had come in to run the Taiz office when we moved up as an embassy. It was a really pretty rough scene. It was obvious that it was being orchestrated by the Egyptians with the help of a very notorious Yemeni minister of interior, Ahnumi, who I will get to. I need at this point to mention as a prelude to this - and people should refer to our despatches as we chronicled the downturn in relations and without being paranoid what seemed to be a pattern of systematic harassment of the American mission. The background to this is that in January of 1967, the U.S. government cut off the PL 480 wheat aid to Nasser. My belief is that Nasser then decided that he was going to try to find ways of countering this and of getting back at the Americans and chose Yemen as his first scene. My belief is that Yemen was the first part of his pressuring the United States government and once we solved this affair of the two AID employees, Steve Liapas and Harold Hartman, the next day, the Egyptians closed the Strait of Tiran, which then led to the June war. Again, this systematic pattern of harassment included doing things like stealing cars from our mission, which we would then try to get back. David Ransom can detail that a great deal more, although I wrote a couple of airgrams about it to detail what was happening. But it was obvious to all of us in the mission that there were people in the Yemeni government who were trying deliberately to get back at the United States government. I remember even trying to appeal one of their more egregious things. They had a parade and a national day of sorts in Taiz. I remember going up to Lieutenant General Juzailan, who was about the number three person in the group under Sallal and El-Amri. He spurned my advance because he didn't want to talk about this particular incident. It was obvious to me that he not only knew about it. We were often not given access to important Yemenis and had to deal through low level people in the foreign ministry.

The other thing they were often doing, they would seize our sealed diplomatic pouches and insist on opening them. We'd go through a long song and dance about how this was diplomatic immunity. So, there was just a pattern of this that was going on.

Well, then these two gentlemen were accused of espionage and were put in detention. There was a great parade of propaganda put out about how the U.S. government was trying to subvert Yemen. In addition, the AID mission that was separate from our embassy office in Taiz, was broken into by Egyptian intelligence. The contents of the safe in the director's office were removed. The safe itself was totally removed. The vault of the mission was gotten into and most of its files were taken out. This caused Dean Rusk to assert the rather rare diplomatic right which was is called the Right of Legation, whereby a diplomatic mission has the right to the sanctity of its files overseas; they are inviolate and no one is supposed to go into them. So, this was a major breach of diplomatic rights. Our government very rightly protested this.

The upshot of all this was that a mission was sent down from Cairo under Dick Parker, who was the political counselor, who is a scholar in residence at the Middle East Institute. He was a welcome addition to me. He was a friend, a senior officer that I admired and had known in Beirut. They had also expelled Ali Jones. What I did (This was really my own decision.) was, I decided to go in and to share the cell with the two incarcerated AID employees, Liapas and Hartman. To say it was a cell - it was actually a rather pleasant Yemeni style bedroom in the converted house of the former prime minister, which ironically looked directly over my former house up on the hills of Taiz. So, I was able my moving in with them to assert in corporal terms the fact that the United States government believed these two were innocent and we were going to go to great lengths to protect them. But I was able to go out and cater meals. We had several stories written up in "The New York Times," "The Los Angeles Times." One of them was entitled, "A Little More Beaujolais." Our pilot from the AID was also an amateur cook. We had evacuated all of our AID personnel by then, closed our AID mission. So, he would cook up meals which I would then cater back and forth. We all gained about 15 pounds in this 15 days of confinement. We ate extremely well.

Parker and I would be talking with the Egyptian colonel down in Taiz. Finally through lots of high level intervention with the Egyptian government (The Yemenis were really not very approachable.), we were able to get Liapas and Hartman put on a plane. I remember flying in this Ilyushin with them up to Sanaa, where they were remanded to the custody of Lee Dinsmore. Just before they were due to go to the airport to leave Yemen (I was with them. This is all written up.), there was another group of Yemenis under Ahnumi, this bad minister of interior, that said they couldn't go. So, we had to wait around several hours while the Yemeni government settled this. Finally, they were able to leave. I was sent back to Taiz to be in charge of the Taiz office to supervise the evacuation of our AID mission. The people had left and we had to pack up all of their goods. I was rather pessimistic. I thought, given the fact that the Yemenis had been so hard on us up to that point, they weren't going to be very cooperative. Lee Dinsmore thought otherwise and he turned out to be right. They formed a six man committee with an Egyptian colonel really in charge but a Yemeni nominally in charge. We went through with a crew and packed up the household effects of the entire AID mission over the next two weeks. There was one crisis. What we would do was have an advance party that would go into a house and it would find all the soft drinks and put them in the refrigerator. Then we would try to find all the "Playboy" magazines and we would put them in the living room so that the committee that came in to supervise every little article would quickly get very interested in the "Playboy" magazines and we were able to evacuate three or four of these loose pack arrangements every day. We had one incident illustrated that one should never joke in a foreign language. I remember, we had had some Cokes, I thought, put in the refrigerator. I said in Arabic, "Who stole the Cokes" at which point the head Yemeni said, "You have insulted the dignity of the Yemeni government. We're breaking off this operation." It took another day of apologies on my part for us to get back and do it. But these are amusing sidelights.

But it was a difficult operation. We had to take out the entire embassy files and commo equipment. We started breaking up our code equipment, our communications gear. Then I thought, "Gee, what a crazy idea that is. This stuff is expensive." So, we just shipped it all out in something like 100 pouches. We were able to get that out. But the really ironic end of all of this was that we had completed the operation and I was leaving Taiz to go on to my new assignment... I was out at the airport. My wife and children had already been evacuated, as all dependants were in late April when this incident occurred. I was at the airport debating in Arabic with two Egyptian officers the legality of the closing of the Strait of Tiran. It was June 5, 1967 - the day that was the beginning of the Six Day War.

Q: When the Israeli air force attacked-

SUDDARTH: That's right. So, we were waiting for the Egyptian airplane to arrive that was going to take me on to Ethiopia. Well, it never arrived because the Israeli air force had decimated the air facilities in Cairo where this plane was coming from. After waiting several hours, I went back to the embassy to find that it was besieged by an angry crowd. There were still a few personnel wrapping up final details at the embassy. We had to secure ourselves. We had no communications. At that point, the Big Lie occurred, where Nasser charged that U.S. aircraft were helping the Israelis. So, these so-called Yemeni terrorists, freedom fighters, South Yemenis, that were quartered in Taiz were targeted on our embassy. They were trying to set fire to our drapes from the outside while we... All we had were wastebaskets full of water that we would use to push the things out. At one point, I suddenly realized that in the bags that I had in the back of the car was the final pouch from the embassy which contained a number of 45 bullets, shells, for our hand weapons. The Yemenis had started to set fire to all the cars in the compound. I remember rushing out with Lou Lemieux, who was a great New York kid who was tremendous in a street fight and was a very fine fellow. The two of us went out to the car. I was able to open the trunk. It was molten. It was very hot and burned my hands a bit opening up the back of it. I grabbed this brown vinyl suitcase and ran back into the embassy while the Yemenis were kind of startled that we had come out. We got this thing back in. My concern was, had it gone off, the 45 shells could have killed several Yemenis and then they would have just decimated it. I remember, at that point, the Yemenis had broken out all the windows. We had to sleep on the floor for 48 hours until they could get help to us to get us out.

The other thing that occurred, another funny irony, was that the president, President El-Amri, I guess, had declared all the American embassy PNG and we were to get out within 48 hours. Suddenly, all of our former local employees in the AID mission came rushing to the embassy wanting their back pay. We were actually authorized to pay it, but I said, "No, we're not going to pay anything until we're out of here. We're not going to be held hostage." The Italian ambassador intervened. I remember writing him a diplomatic note saying that the Yemenis said they would release us only on the guarantee of the Italian ambassador. So, I wrote him a note on my own hook. There was no way to communicate. I was like one of those 19th century envoys out of communication. I wrote him an official diplomatic note with a seal on it saying that the U.S. government guaranteed to back up his guarantee that we would pay all just claims from laborers and employees of the American mission. That was the way that we were allowed out of Taiz.

We were driven up to Sanaa at breakneck speed (I'm surprised we didn't run off these three major mountain passes between Taiz and Sanaa.) only to run into another mob that was rampaging in front of our embassy in Sanaa. We had to go a back route and finally sneak in that way.

The upshot was that we were then grouped up... This was three or four days after the war started. We were put on a chartered plane, which they held up. It was a Yemeni Airlines plane. They charged us $40,000 for this little DC-3 to go to Asmara. We had a few dollars... We had some money on hand to pay them. But we had it arranged that as soon as they arrived in Asmara, the Ethiopian, which is a friendly security service, came out and impounded the plane and took the $40,000 back, which we got back. So, there were a lot of high jinks going on on both sides on all of this. Then various of us had a reunion, a kind of bittersweet dinner with Lee Dinsmore and the collective remnants of the American mission about what had gone on. Then I remember Jim Fernald and I had to fly, we had to go all the way to Uganda and fly up over Libya to get to Athens, avoiding both Sudanese and Egyptian airspace, which had denied that to any U.S. friendly carrier. It was also a war zone.

I guess one other detail in this deterioration before this Liapas-Hartman incident was, the Yemenis started staging a series of spy trials. In early 1967 they brought out various espionage trials. It was an open trial and I was the political officer, so I went to it. The notorious Ahnumi was judge, prosecutor, and everything. I remember coming up to him at one point and saying (which was a rather silly thing to do given the fact that I was very junior and I didn't have any instructions) that I hoped that these would be just trials, fair trials. I remember him saying to me something in Arabic that, "Justice will out," something like that. Bob Pelletreau, who was a language student at that time, came on his field trip to Yemen at this stage. I remember, Bob was a very distinguished graduate of Harvard Law School, so I dragged him over to listen to these proceedings and then I made up a story. I said we had a Department of State expert and a very distinguished lawyer who was looking at the legality of these proceedings. So, we were all playing it pretty much by ear at that point in Yemen.

Looking back a bit philosophically, it was very hard in those days to straddle friendship for Saudi Arabia with some kind of an opening to Egypt. The Kennedy administration had tried it earlier on with Nasser. In '62, that was one of the motivating factors for recognizing the revolutionary regime. Bill Macomber, who was head of AID for the Near East and had been ambassador to Jordan, hated Nasser with a passion. He was the person who was pushing to cut off the food aid and eventually had it done with the consequences that I've outlined, which I believe are the case.

I should add that Dick Parker has a different view from mine. I highly respect Dick and he is much more of a scholar on this, but Dick believes that there is a case to be made that there really was a British intelligence attempt to create an incident in Taiz and that the Yemenis blamed that on the United States but that the British intelligence was very aggressive in South Yemen. They were often fomenting problems in Northern Yemen in retaliation for the drive to take them over that was being supported by the North Yemenis. But I still think the evidence is strongly in favor of the fact that it was an Egyptian plot, it was part of a sustained effort to harass our mission, and that they manufactured the tracer incident. They made a rather visible display of firefighting that was visible from the AID compound. I just don't think that was the British intelligence that did it or would have done a thing like that.

So, that is the Yemen story.

Q: Go back a bit. When the various tribal leaders were coming down and talking to AID, were you able to get together... This was a very sensitive thing. You had to figure out which tribe was which that you wouldn't be giving water to the wrong tribe or it would look like you were playing... Were you able to play a role in that or was AID sort of pushing you to one side?

SUDDARTH: Well, I think that we could have done better on this. I have to give AID credit. Jack Binns, who was the AID director, and then Bob Hamer after him, were quite good. Yemeni tribesmen would come and then they would very dutifully hotfoot it up to the embassy and say, "We have this and this and that." I think in retrospect, a stronger political hand from the chargï¿½ would have helped, but I can't gainsay him on this. I think they had a legitimate right to go see AID but they did talk a lot of politics. Yemenis all talk politics. We probably should have and perhaps we did caution them, tell them, "Look, we are not in a position of talking politics. This is a sovereign country. We are not interfering in your affairs." I was the tribal expert of the thing. I remember on an efficiency report saying that I had become the foremost tribal expert in the U.S. government, which is probably true. I was about the only one. But we knew pretty well... There were the two basic tribal units, the Hashid and the Bakeel. Both of them, the Bakeel in particular, were very anti-regime. The Hashid, Abdullah Ahmar, would swing back and forth being paid off... The idea was to get paid off by the Saudis and by the Egyptians and by the British if you could do it as well. But there was a lot of venality. It's still the case. There is no strong central government. The tribes are stronger.

Q: What was in it for us? Wasn't there a point when rather than their kicking us out, why didn't we get the hell out?

SUDDARTH: Well, I think that's a good point. The harassment was fairly petty. There was this espionage charge that weighed heavily in the Yemeni's minds, which I think they believed was true and I'm not saying that it wasn't. So, there were some actions on which perhaps the U.S. government was vulnerable. But as I say, one way of not doing it was to not invest in a major move to Sanaa. But I think you face this in diplomatic situations. Is it better to engage and suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune or to isolate yourself? It took us several years - 1972, I think - to get relations back with Yemen. I am a believer that even Yemenis should be in contact with one another.

Q: That's what diplomacy is about. How about our relations with the Egyptians?

SUDDARTH: Well, the Egyptians were behind the scenes. We had very little contact with the Egyptian mission. We had very little in common. Egyptians were, this was their number one priority. You had Abdel Hassan Al-Khouli, who was a vice president who was traveling back and forth all the time. They were trying desperately to break the back of the royalists. There was also one time when King Saud, who had been divested by the royal family in Saudi Arabia of his throne in 1964 or thereabouts, went to Egypt and was paraded around Yemen in 1967 by Hassan El-Amri, the head of the armed forces. The Americans were invited to the banquet, which we of course refused to go to. So, there was a kind of desperate Egyptian attempt to consolidate this revolutionary government and to bring greater pressure on the British. After all, to the British this was a great anomaly to have a column in 1967.

In the midst of all this, you had a Chinese-Russian rivalry that burst out. This was during the time of the Cultural Revolution and you had Chinese workers in their textile factory that were marching against Soviet imperialism. So, we found we were kind of a little microcosm there in Yemen of world powers who were vying in this really very obscure part of the world. I have to emphasize that the aid programs were very important. We did this amazing road project. Some interesting color here. The way we paid the Yemeni laborers, at least at the beginning of the project, was we brought a big, heavy armed car and paid them in Maria Theresa dollargold coins.

Q: The old Austrian coin, which was sort of the coin of the Arabian Peninsula.

SUDDARTH: That's right. This road was extraordinary. Unfortunately, its specs were for a dirt road compacted by oil.

It was a major project. I think it cost $40 million. It took several years over three mountain passes. But we didn't even get credit for that. The Chinese had paved their road to Hodeida. We hadn't paved ours. So, people driving fast would hit the loose things and go careening off the side of the mountain. So, there was an editorial which talked about the "road of blood, tears, and death," which is what the American road was all about. So, that was yet another negative in what should have been a very positive response to American aid programs. Why we didn't get out... It was the inertia of trying to do business. We were having similar problems in Egypt, in Iraq, and in Syria. This was in the revolutionary stage of Arab nationalism before the '67 War, which clipped their wings. So, this was all very heavy wine and twisting the lion's tale was something that they thought was going to get them some... It would get them more credit from the Chinese and the Soviets that were also major donors. So, the Yemenis were playing that kind of game as well.

Q: Did you see at the time... In today's light when you get into one of these mountain tribal wars, you know you're going to lose practically with a regular army. Did you see it as a losing thing?

SUDDARTH: I think we saw it as a stalemate, which meant in effect the Egyptians were going to lose it. How long were they willing to sustain troops there? We spent a lot of our time trying to get the American mission in Saudi Arabia, the U.S. government, to be a little bit more evenhanded. The U.S. government was never terribly forceful in terms of repudiating the royalist effort. The Saudis were leaning on us from one direction. So, I remember tensions between our mission's viewpoint and the mission's viewpoint in Saudi Arabia, which viewed Yemen as a very dangerous threat to the stability of Saudi Arabia and the more the Saudis could do. The Saudis, of course, ever since time immemorial have thought that Yemen was their satrapy. When the '67 War occurred, in effect, the Egyptian troops pulled back. Yemen became more moderate gradually. The South was given independence. But unfortunately a very leftist government came in there. So you then transplanted a more moderate Yemeni revolutionary government with a much more radical South Yemeni one.

Q: This probably is a good place to stop. Is there anything else we should cover about Yemen?

SUDDARTH: I think that covers it pretty well.

Q: How about your family? I would have thought it would have been rather difficult?

SUDDARTH: It was difficult. Yes, my dear wife and our two wonderful kids that were one and three years old respectively led an idyllic life in Taiz where from our balcony you could in the rainy season see eight mountain peaks with rain going on them all right at the lower slopes of Jebel Sabr, which was 6-8,000 feet high, even higher perhaps. Yemen was an incredibly beautiful country with terraced hillsides and was very green during six months of the year down in the Taiz area. In the midst of all that, I had to move them up to Sanaa. Not that we didn't have the odd scorpion in the bedroom and diseases in Taiz.

There is one amusing story. In those days, they wrote a private efficiency report on you. Our chargï¿½ d'affaires, Mr. Clark, who was a fine man and he was married to a fine lady who was a former British nurse. She wanted all the ladies in the embassy to do charity work at the Yemeni hospital. My wife was a French colonial who had grown up in these conditions all her life and knew exactly what was good sanitation and what wasn't. She wasn't about with two young children to go in and scrub Yemeni toilets. So, she volunteered our houseboy to do it. That wasn't quite in the Florence Nightingale tradition. I remember having an adverse comment on my efficiency report about my wife's lack of enthusiasm for his wife's charities.

I wrestled them away from this idyllic place in Taiz and we moved up to temporary quarters in Sanaa. I remember that our cook and houseboy were helping us and they had put some local water in the refrigerator which my wife by mistake thought had been boiled. She drank it and gave it to our kids. They were sick as dogs with dysentery just a couple of days after moving up there. Then it was only two or three weeks that this incident in Taiz occurred that I was asked to go down to Taiz for the AID prisoners. In the meantime, we evacuated all our personnel. I remember telling my wife coming back, "Honey, you and the kids are going to have to leave." She said, "No we're not." She was new to the United States. I said, "This is an order of the U.S. government." She said, "Well, I don't give a damn. I'm not going to leave." I had to go over and get my friend, Al Mathews, the Defense attachï¿½, to come over and tell Michele, "This is real." So, I left. We weren't able to do any packing, just rudimentary packing. Michele left, moved to the house of the administrative officer to consolidate the families before getting on the flight. Somebody in conversation said, "You know, you can't be too safe in situations like this. What I do is, I take my engagement ring off and put it in my vanity case." So, Michele did that. It was only when she got to Paris that she realized that one of the Yemenis had gotten into her belongings and stolen her engagement ring and some other items, which was a devastating blow. It was a really wrenching experience for my young family although they were able to spend four months in Paris with her parents. So, the toll that these things take on your family are sometimes overlooked.

Q: Yes. When you left Yemen in 1967, where did you go?

SUDDARTH: I went from there back on home leave and then to Libya.

Q: We'll pick it up on home leave.

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Today is February 23, 2000. One of the things I find interesting is, when somebody comes out of a time when they've been in the midst of things and they think the world revolves around them, they go on home leave. I by the way came back in '67 from Yugoslavia. I had a Yugo plate on and a Yugo sign on my car. We went camping across the country. I thought, "Boy, I'm going to get deluged with questions about Yugoslavia." I had a Peugeot and I had what they called low pressure tires in those days. Everyone was talking about the Peugeot.

In '67, we had had the Six Day War and all. What were you getting on your homeleave?

SUDDARTH: I came back. Bill Handley was the deputy assistant secretary of State. He had been my ambassador in Mali. In the Near East Bureau, he did the economic things. But I sat down with him and the first thing he said to me was, "Aren't those Arabs awful?" Of course, it was a devastating defeat for the Arabs. People have often overlooked the fact that the Egyptians had their best divisions in Yemen where I had just come from fighting against the Yemenis, so they were really ill-prepared on the ground to do anything. Of course, the lightning strike of the Israeli air force decided the battle in the first few hours. There was a very anti-Arab feeling in the United States. I would say perhaps even more there was a very strong pro-Israeli thing. Here was tiny Israel that had vanquished the combined Arab armies and had occupied the West Bank. So, Israel was felt to be very much of a victim. So, it was in that atmosphere that I found home leave. This segues a bit into my assignment to Libya. My own leave was cut short. I was going to Libya to be the interpreter (I was in the Political Section.) for Ambassador David Newsom. There had been major riots in Libya at the time of the June war. Libya was host to both the British El-Adam and the U.S. Wheelus Air Force Base, which were all-weather training bases of incredible value to the U.S. and British air forces in Europe, which had bad weather a lot of the time.

So, I was sitting in France on my way to Libya planning a leisurely three week vacation and planning to go down with my family to visit the Loire Valley when I got a call from the Department, "They want you in Libya immediately. The Libyan government has decided to open renegotiations for Wheelus Air Force Base." So, it got more complicated. I curtailed my vacation, flew to Libya, and had to go immediately with the ambassador to see the prime minister to talk about a wide variety of subjects. The prime minister happened to be a Cyrenaican tribesman who had been put in to crack heads. So, he was not the sophisticated-looking prime minister that we were used to dealing with. He had some of the most difficult Arabic I have ever had to encounter. So, it was quite a thing for me. The Libyans were trying to finesse the popular hostility to the air base by pretending to renegotiate, but all they were doing was playing for time until popular unrest curtailed.

Q: You were in Libya from '67 to when?

SUDDARTH: I was in Libya from July or early August 1967 until mid-July 1969.

Q: Could you describe what the situation, not just the problem right after the Six Day War, but the government and how we saw it of Libya at that time when you arrived?

SUDDARTH: Sure. Well, Libya was one of the great oil success stories. It was one of the poorest countries in the world until they discovered oil in the late '50s/early '60s. Their main exports were esparto grass for making quality paper and scrap metal which is from the wreckage of the Axis forces and our own forces in World War II. But with the oil boom, you had a government under King Idriss, who was a popular figure because he had resisted Italian occupation and there were stories about the brutality of the Italians in World War II where they would take Libyans out who were leading opposition and fly them up in planes and then drop them thousands of feet into the Mediterranean. But the government was... At that point, King Idriss had kind of renounced the world and had moved himself to Tobruk, which was on the extreme eastern part of Libya on the sea right next to the El-Adam base, but leaving a government in place that had to report to him from time to time. The government was composed essentially of technocrats and conservative people who were committed to the U.S. and to the British relationship.

In 1965, they hit really big oil. Mobil Oil gave up a concession where they had drilled within one kilometer of the famous Idriss Field, which Occidental got when they had to relinquish the Mobil claim. It was a big, big gusher.

In addition, with the closure of the Suez Canal during the 1967 War, Libya had a real hold on European oil supply. It was before the advent of the supertankers. Libyan oil production was very, very high after the '67 War and absolutely essential for Europe.

Q: Looking at the government, the obvious comparison would be with Saudi Arabia, which you are familiar with. How did they differ? They were both run by a king.

SUDDARTH: Well, the Saudi government is a kind of theocratic, a blend of secular kingship but with a strong commitment to a fundamentalist religious ideology. You didn't have the social restrictions in Libya. Women did not wear veils. Liquor was allowed in the country. Even though King Idriss himself was a very pious person. In effect, his retirement to this place of contemplation was because he felt that the world was going to hell. He didn't want anything to do with it. So, we were dealing there with a situation where you had a monarch who had partially renounced government. He had a government in place but yet he would occasionally assert himself and fire somebody or do something. He was still essential on the major issues.

Q: When you arrived there, what was the view at the embassy of the stability of this government?

SUDDARTH: Well, I think there was concern after these riots both in Tripoli and Benghazi during the 1967 War. They were cracked down on. We spent a good bit of our time in the following two years trying to shore up their security forces, trying to get them equipment doing various things. I think there was some concern, but I'm jumping ahead now. Everybody thought at the end of our tour that King Idriss was going to abdicate in favor of his virtually adopted son who was a colonel in the military. It was Qadhafi and the lieutenants who sensed that and went in under the... This was kind of the big story at the end. It's not yet proven, but the belief is that all of the security services had relaxed because things had built up to the fact that Idriss was out of the country (This was in mid-1969.), he was in Turkey, and they thought that there was going to be a benign coup in favor of a republican government and Idriss was acquiescent in. What happened was, with the relaxed vigilance of the security services, Qadhafi and company came in and when people awoke on September 1, Qadhafi and his junta were in charge and the colonel was in jail.

Q: There is a very distinct parallel to what happened in Greece in April of '67 when the generals were supposed to have a coup and everybody was waiting for it and the colonels took over.

SUDDARTH: Exactly.

Q: Let's talk about early on. David Newsom was not an Arabist at this point.

SUDDARTH: Yes, he was. David was highly experienced. I am a great admirer of his. I've worked for him when he was ambassador to Libya, then when he was head of African Affairs. He brought me back to be the Libya desk officer. Then I ran his office when he was under secretary. I consider him one of the finest minds that we've ever had in the Foreign Service. Newsom had served in Baghdad. He had been on Robert Anderson's mission in the peace process. He had been in charge of North African Affairs for about four years before coming. Then he was the Near East man in London for about three years. So, he was totally steeped in the Near East.

Q: Did you in working with Newsom find that Libya and the Libyans were a different breed than what you had been used to in the Yemen?

SUDDARTH: Well, the Libyans tended to be pretty xenophobic. They had been kicked around by everybody from the Greeks, the Romans, and Spartacus was doing his work in the quarries of Libya. Then they had had a particularly harsh Italian occupation. So, the Libyans were naturally pretty xenophobic. It was difficult to get close to the Libyans in a way that it wasn't with Lebanese or Jordanians, for instance. So, you had this contradiction between a government that was very friendly, particularly with the British, who were the liberators, and the King. King Idriss had a very close relationship with Queen Elizabeth and prior to her with King George and so forth, and a population that number one, didn't like foreigners; number two, was alienated in its more radical elements by the Israeli victory in 1967.

Q: There were two influences that were inserted into the xenophobic country. One was the American and British military and the other was oil. Can you talk about the relations beginning and up to the coup of the military, both the British and the American? It would strike me as a recipe for disaster to have new people flying in all the time to do their thing and when they get out at night they want to whoop it up. How did that work?

SUDDARTH: I think it worked pretty well. In the Political Section, we ran for the ambassador the Wheelus Air Force base relations thing, not only negotiations with the government, but also making certain that Wheelus took good heed of public relations. So, I recall very, very few incidents of airmen getting into trouble and so forth. They had an officers' club. People stayed there. When I say that Libya was not Saudi Arabia in terms of social restrictions, as I recall, there were still relatively hard to... There weren't any real nightspots around. It was not this sort of thing.

But for amusing stories, I had a bright idea that turned out to be a dumb idea, which was we had a whole strategy for having Wheelus accepted or acquiesced for the Libyan population. For instance, we used the excellent medical facilities. We would admit influential Libyans there on a selective basis. But one time, I thought, "Hey, they have a good basketball team. The Libyans like basketball. Let's have a Wheelus-Libyan national basketball team match." It turned out that the Libyans played international rules that are much more rough and permissive in terms of body contact than the American rules, so within the first five minutes we had fistfights. The Wheelus Air Force Base guys thought they were not only being roughed up but that the referees weren't catching it. So, we stopped that after a while.

Our major problems, there was a thing called the El-Watiya Gunnery Range, which was out in a forsaken part. These gunners would come in and they would use their cannons, bombs, and whatnot. There would be the occasional nomad who would wander in and get killed. This became very tribal. We had to do a lot of shuffling and paying a lot of money for things that happened like that which were really nobody's fault.

Q: Did you find yourself going out making contact with the tribal leaders and all that?

SUDDARTH: Yes, we did it to a limited extent. But as I look back on it, we had relatively little contact outside of the official community. Newsom and I and several others went on a three-week trip through the desert near the Chad border, a fascinating trip, to look for some artifacts down there with the University of Pennsylvania and we met a few tribal leaders. But they were pretty well integrated into the government. You had some tribes that were ministers. We would get our tribal thing that way. It was pretty much a government to government deal. We weren't doing very much outside of that. Again, the Libyans were not particularly hospitable. It was only somebody who was in search of a contract for F-5s or something who would invite you to his house. So, there was not the social interchange that one would have liked. You invited people and the husband would show up and the wife wouldn't. I recall virtually no entertaining that you would normally do in a diplomatic post.

Q: What about the oil relationship? Particularly in our developing field, as it was in Libya at that time, the roustabouts, the American oil workers... You don't just turn the spigot on and off. You've still got to drill the oil. These were a pretty rough crew. Did you have any problems there?

SUDDARTH: They may have had a few in Benghazi, which was closer to the fields. As I recall, most of the oil companies would fly these folks into the site and fly them back out and they would then do their R&R in either Rome or Malta.

Q: Which could take it.

SUDDARTH: Yes. So they would in effect be in the field for a couple of weeks and then they would spend a week off in Malta or something like that. You didn't have too many families. You had headquarters elements who were professionals who were very well conducted.

Q: Some of the people who were dealing with the Libyan oil fields came out of the ARAMCO experience. I remember knowing some of those who were early on beginning to move over. They had quite a sophisticated relationship with the Saudis to curtail too many demands, were making sure that they were giving Saudis significant jobs within the oil thing... Was the same sophistication being used in Libya?

SUDDARTH: I think so. ARAMCO is unique because they started an entire culture. It's still very much self-contained and that's partly because of the Saudi cultural division between men and women. You didn't have that in Libya. I would say the oil company executives always had some very experienced people, Arabists on the staff, people who were very sensitive to these issues, and they made sure that they employed a good healthy quotient of Libyans as opposed to foreigners. But it was nothing like the Saudi ARAMCO experience. In Libya, Mobil, Exxon, and Occidental were the two big companies at the time. But you had Continental, Marathon, Bunker Hunt... You had a tremendous number of oil companies in there because Libyan oil is excellent oil. You can practically put it in your gas tank. It has a high sulfur content and tends to choke up in cold weather but it's a beautiful crude, so it was highly demanded on the market.

I don't recall the oil companies getting black marks at all in Libya. I think they were quite sensitive.

Q: I assume there was a pretty close liaison between you and the Arabists on the oil company staff.

SUDDARTH: Yes. There was Don Medford and Don Marquard and several other guys. The ambassador met with their heads and we kept them abreast of the way U.S. policy was heading. Everybody was worried after the 1967 War whether they'd have sabotage in the oil fields and whatnot. But since they were out in the desert, they were well protected.

Q: Were you getting in whatever social occasion you had the litany about "Why did you recognize Israel so soon" and that sort of thing?

SUDDARTH: The people we tended to deal with in government were quite moderate. Yes, there was resentment. One prime minister resigned, Hussein Maaziq, after the 1967 War. So, there was turmoil there. But as a commentary, unlike in Jordan or in Lebanon, in the Levant closer to Israel, people were not quite so vocal on the issue. You'd get the incendiary editorials in papers from time to time. But I don't mean to minimize it. It was a big issue.

Q: How about Nasser when you got there? Obviously, Nasser even had that resignation-redemption... Was Nasser a presence in Libya when you were there?

SUDDARTH: He was definitely a presence. He was considered the greatest Arab- Even after the debacle of the '67 War, he was still a revered figure among particularly the younger and the Arab nationalist forces.

Q: What about Libyans who were... Was there an important segment of the Libyan population that was going abroad using its newfound wealth, particularly the young people getting educated and coming back?

SUDDARTH: Yes. The older generation was not educated. They didn't have college educations. But the people who were under 40 were pretty well educated. They had gone to England or some of them had gone to the United States.

When I left Libya as a young officer, I thought I knew the promising young Libyans who were going to be the leaders of the next generation. I belonged to a thing called "The Fiqr Society," [The Thought Society], which was a kind of think tank, which was unusual for Libya. I had met a number of these young guys who were young technocrats. So, when I left in July of '69, one of the embassy officers gave a party and I invited the Libyan leaders of the next generation, none of whom was ever picked by Qadhafi.

Q: Did we have much of an exchange program, sending leaders or people whom we felt would be leaders to the United States?

SUDDARTH: We sent a number of leaders. There was one embarrassing story. Abdul Hamid al-Bakkoush was the young hard-charging prime minister, a well educated lawyer who after the '67 War was brought in to sort of put a better image on the government, more in tune with the younger generation. He announced that he was going to visit the United States and he was asked to resign the next week or the next day by King Idriss. Idriss didn't want anybody rising too prominently. But we had a very strong military assistance relationship. We sent a lot of Libyan officers and noncoms to the United States. While I was there, we negotiated an F-5 deal. The minister of defense was a Cyrenaican tribesman. His opening thing on the F-5 sale was, "We have rings and we want to buy." That is a bedouin expression meaning "We have some money and we want to buy." We were the sole supplier for the Libyan air force with F-5s, C-130s, and so forth. So, there was a tremendous military relationship. The idea was in exchange for our use of military facilities, we wanted to be very forthcoming with the Libyans as much as we could be because they were not considered a threat to Israel.

Q: Did you feel the pro-Israeli lobby in our relations with Libya or were you off their radar?

SUDDARTH: No, we were really off the radar because Idriss was considered to be a good friend of the United States and a moderating force.

There is an interesting side story that you may recall. There was a Khartoum conference that occurred after the '67 War where they had the three "Nos," no recognition, no end of war, no negotiation. They pledged money to the so-called confrontation states (Egypt, Jordan, and Syria) for the extra expenses that they needed to rearm. Libya was given its subscription, the amount of money it had to pay without ever being asked. They were there, present, and an announcement was made and so Libya was not even asked about this. This kind of shows the remoteness or almost disdain with which close allies of the United States were held by both the Syrians and the Egyptians that were calling the tune at that point.

Q: Were we concerned that the Nasser government might in frustration turn on Libya, either a military move or put its own people in?

SUDDARTH: No. I think that they realized number one, the U.S... And particularly the British, who had a defense treaty with Libya which if anybody invaded, the British were obligated to come to their defense militarily. But there was worry about the Egyptian intelligence service and there was a big trial that I covered where I think something like 140 Libyans and several Egyptians were indicted for being agent provocateur during these riots that took place after the 1967 War. So, there was some concern about Egyptian subversion.

Q: Looking at Libya, the rather small and unsophisticated population, I would imagine a considerable number of Egyptian workers would have come in to work in the oil fields.

SUDDARTH: Yes, I think so. I don't recall how many, but I would assume so. But they were again kept in remote locations and so forth. But there was enough of an Egyptian population that they probably had some Egyptian intelligence agents mixed in.

Q: How about in our embassy? Did our military attaches have much of a connection with the Libyan military?

SUDDARTH: As I said, we had a big military assistance program. So, the answer is, yes.

Q: But it wasn't getting down to the lieutenant level?

SUDDARTH: If you want to hop ahead to Qadhafi, we can do that.

Q: How did the unrest, the riots and all, after the debacle of the '67 War, did that calm down?

SUDDARTH: Oh, yes. There were riots at the time, the first week after the war. Then they stopped. So, to that extent, yes. Libyans are a pretty quiescent population. This was very unusual. There were no other instances of that during my two years there.

Q: How about relations with Tunisia and Algeria?

SUDDARTH: Tunisia was a moderate country, and a republic. By King Idriss, I think he considered them too secular. Algeria was a revolutionary republic and they were considered to be dangerous, but they had a desert border and there were a couple of oil fields close to that. But I don't recall any particular disputes.

Morocco was a monarchy and was not particularly close to Idriss. Idriss was an ascetic, saintly kind of figure, otherworldly who really didn't mix with and didn't try to cut a figure in Arab politics.

Q: Unlike Hussein or Hassan.

SUDDARTH: That's right.

Q: Until the Qadhafi thing took place, it was a fairly normal state of relations?

SUDDARTH: Well, there were some serious things that led up to the Qadhafi takeover. One was corruption. It was widely believed that some of the oil company giants had contracts had been the result of corrupt influences in figures - not King Idriss himself; he was pure as the driven snow. It was widely believed that a lot of the oil company concessions, the big concessions, were the result of corruption and in effect to a figure close to Kind Idriss, Omar Shalfi. King Idriss had no children. He and his wife, Queen Fatima, had no children. I've forgotten exactly the reason, but the two Shalfi boys - Abdel Aziz, who was a colonel in the military, and Omar, who was a shadowy figure who dealt in deals, in effect... Omar Shalfi used influence according to these allegations to get oil concessions and got handsomely rewarded for it.

Then there was a big rather smelly British defense contract that was for both aircraft and Rapier missiles. Both seemed to be in excess of Libya's needs and it was widely believed that there was a lot of money being passed under the table.

So, this was another souring element. You had first the riots, the fact that the air bases were there. Let's not forget that there were false allegations made that U.S. planes from Wheelus Air Force Base had helped the Israelis. And this British aircraft and missile deal was costing hundreds of millions of dollars and it seemed to be far in excess. They were going to put in a whole package of maintenance, supply, and whatnot. So, that didn't sit well with the Libyan population and particularly with some of the young radicals and some of the people in the army, who didn't see the need to be spending that.

One of our major concerns at the embassy was corruption. The fact that Idriss and removed himself from the fray - there was nobody minding the store.

Q: Were we concerned at that time with American firms giving payoffs and all that?

SUDDARTH: I'm not going to go into names, but there were a few of international oil companies that were believed to be making payoffs. I think this was before the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

Q: Yes, I'm quite sure. That came in the '70s.

SUDDARTH: Yes, that's right.

Q: Was the embassy getting complaints from American entrepreneurs who were coming there and saying, "Should I pay? I'm being asked to do that."

SUDDARTH: I was in the Political Section, so I had my hands full with dealing with that. I can't really comment on that. It's unusual for companies to come to an embassy and get advice on whether they're going to need to pay somebody off because the answer would be, "No, you shouldn't do it."

Q: You were saying corruption was one problem and there was another one.

SUDDARTH: The other was the fact that they were host to two foreign bases and that rankled Arab nationalism. Nasser had made his reputation in keeping the British out of Egypt. He was frequently calling for the withdrawal of our bases in Libya.

Q: Am I right, there was no Soviet mission in Libya at the time?

SUDDARTH: No, there was a Soviet mission. There was no Chinese mission. I think they had relations with the Soviets, although I'm not sure.

Q: But they weren't much of a factor?

SUDDARTH: No.

Q: How about the Italians?

SUDDARTH: Well, they were playing catch-up. They had a bad reputation from the war. Now, Italy is the largest consumer of Libyan oil. But there was a bit of a cultural tie. Some of the Libyans had learned Italian. Italy was close. Rome was a favorite place for Libyans to go.

Q: Moving up towards the end of your tour, can you talk about the development of the Qadhafi coup?

SUDDARTH: I should point people who are interested to a wrap-up airgram (We did airgrams in those days.) on the prospects for the Libyan regime. It's one of those embarrassing things. I went through the corruption. I went through the British arms deal. I went through the Arab nationalism. I wrote this one myself. I was rather proud of it. At the end, the DCM, Jim Blake, a good friend who was always a great supporter of mine, wrote in that "Nevertheless, we don't see any clouds on the horizon for the next five years." This was all under my name.

Q: Had Newsom left?

SUDDARTH: He and I both left about the same time, which was mid-July. He took over immediately - I think probably the first of August - as assistant secretary. I came back on September 1 to be the Libyan desk officer and was greeted at the airport by a message to call the State Department. I was told that there had been a coup in Libya and please report immediately. We talked about the toll on families. Here I have my lovely French wife who had been on two or three home leaves to the States but had never lived there. I had bought a house, fortunately, beforehand. Our two young children... In effect, I said goodbye to her for two years because I was living at the State Department. That's a bit of an exaggeration, but all Saturdays and many Sundays and getting home at eight or nine at night during particularly the early days of the revolution and the Wheelus Air Force Base negotiations and then the Tripoli oil negotiations. So, it was a very brazen time. I'm still reproached for my absences during that period.

Q: You arrived at the desk with the sand still in your shoes. How was the Department reacting to this coup?

SUDDARTH: Well, everyone was totally stunned. This was early in the Nixon administration. It was very embarrassing for Newsom, who was coming back as an extremely wise appointment of a brilliant diplomat and bureaucrat. The Nixon administration from the White House was asking, "How did this happen? You've been ambassador." So, it was a particularly poignant moment and a difficult moment for Newsom, I'm sure. I double teamed this issue for about two weeks with Hume Horan, who I was succeeding and who was going off to another assignment. But I recall, no one knew who was even in charge because it was a faceless junta. Joe Palmer, who had been the assistant secretary, wanted to end his career as an Africanist in North Africa and chose our most important post in North Africa. Well, you could argue that Morocco was less important because it had declining air bases (I think they were out by the time of '67.) and no oil. So, Libya was it. Libya had 10,000 Americans and major oil production and so forth. The first week was sorting out who was in charge. We sent out Joe Palmer with two sets of letters of credence, one to the president of the Libyan Arab Republic, and the other one was to the Revolutionary Command Council so that he could use the credentials under whatever circumstances.

I remember another embarrassing incident...

This is an example. Here I had been in the field the whole time. Here I come back and am placed in the middle of a Washington bureaucracy and I'll never forget that Newsom gave me something and said, "Rocky, take this up to SS and LDX it to ISA." I said, "What?" We had a situation where it was obvious that this faceless, revolutionary group was in power.

We got together with the UK to figure out whether we should forcibly intervene. I'll never forget the elegance of the British copout, which was that "Our treaty does not confer upon us the right to intervene in an internal dispute." I also remember, Hal Saunders came over from the White House. He was the NEA senior advisor there. He told us, "We are not in the business of subversion, of using clandestine means to subvert this." So, we were reduced to contemplating meaningless gestures of fleet movements off the coast and we thought that would be counterproductive.

I think what was important in everybody's view was that we wanted to be able to preserve our oil interests. We only had a year and a half to run on our treaty, on our base agreement. It was felt, although the Defense Department under the form of Warren Nutter didn't agree... We had major fights with Defense. We felt it was better to try to establish a relationship with the new regime rather than to confront them over Wheelus Air Force Base. So, over the first three months that I was desk officer, it was fighting tooth and nail with the Defense Department. Finally, in December, we came to an agreement with them that we would get out by the end of June 1970.

Q: This is a classic case where the Defense Department, the military people, feel, "These State Department guys will sell us out every time in order to preserve whatever they call their relationship."

SUDDARTH: Fortunately, we had a huge oil stake that was more than just diplomatic glamour. Anybody with his head screwed on right realized that the oil had to be preserved - these major oil company interests there. Also, geostrategic interests. Libya with the Suez Canal closure. The other thing I'll never forget was Jim Akins came in right soon after the coup. Jim was head of the Office of Fuels and Energy. He said, "Look, guys, you've got very little maneuverability. With the Suez Canal closed, Libyan oil is essential for our European allies." So, we didn't have many cards to play. We tried to play them.

We tried to play first of all our sole supporter relationship with the Libyan air force as a way of maintaining some credibility with the military regime, although all of the leaders of the Revolutionary Command Council were ground force officers. They were from the army and not from the air force. But we were trying initially to maintain some kind of rights to Wheelus Air Force Base. When that was no longer possible, we tried to maintain at least cordial enough relationships to nurture the oil industry that was remaining.

So, we went to great effort to get out amicably and that is leaving intact an entire air base other than the equipment that we flew out. But we faced a very vindictive Air Force personnel compliment at Wheelus Air Force Base. We had an excellent exchange officer named Jack something or other who later became head of Political-Military Affairs. He came down one day (He was an Air Force officer.) and said, "Despite State Department instructions, they have programmed the computers so that they're stripping even the light bulbs out of the fixtures at Wheelus Air Force Base." So, after the fact... It hadn't gone very far. We were able to stop that. We left them an intact air force base that they named Uqba ibn Nafi, who was the great Arab conqueror of Spain and of North Africa.

I do need to digress a moment. There were some important incidents that occurred right at the beginning of the revolution at Wheelus Air Force base. This is a weird story, but bear with me. The principal of the school, the Wheelus Air Force Base School, was an American named Dan DeCarlo, who was married to a French woman. Right after the coup, a Libyan of Jewish ethnic origin (There were several prominent Jewish businessmen in Libya prior to the '67 War and after the '67 War.)... He came to him and said that his life was being threatened, this prominent Jewish businessman, and prevailed upon him to hide him in a piano crate listed as a piano and to put in onboard a Wheelus Air Force Base C-130 that flew to Malta. As he was being offloaded and DeCarlo, I think, went with him and then was taking him out of his piano crate when the Maltese authorities saw something rather strange and apprehended him. I think he was eventually released, but the problem was that DeCarlo had left his wife and children at Wheelus Air Force Base. So, the Maltese, who wanted to ingratiate themselves with the Libyans, immediately notified the Libyans and the Libyans told us that Mrs. DeCarlo was not to leave until this Libyan citizen who had been illegally exfiltrated from Libya without going through any of their customs or anything was returned. We spent a good bit of our first three months dealing with that issue. I remember going down to brief Senator Howard Baker. A colonel named Mullen who was the brother-in-law of DeCarlo and was from Tennessee, had appealed to Senator Baker. I remember going down to see Baker. Baker, who was so astute, said, "Hey, DeCarlo got it all wrong" because DeCarlo said, "I will go back, but I wont tell them anything." Baker said, "He's got it all wrong. He'll say, 'I'll tell you everything, but I'll stay here.'" He also was furious that he had been so hapless in leaving his wife in harm's way. It was only when we agreed and signed that we would turn over Wheelus Air Force base three months later that she was allowed by the Libyan authorities to leave.

There was another even more egregious thing. That is that Colonel Groom, who was the commander of Wheelus Air Force Base, was prevailed upon by a fellow named Omar Yafiya, who was very close to Omar Shalfi, who was one of the adopted sons - not officially - of King Idriss, to exfiltrate him because he had been in the middle of various arms deals and so forth and so on. So, that was then found out. So, Colonel Groom had to account for that.

So, we had several real incidents that the Libyans used against the United States as we went into these negotiations. Those were the two that I remember. When you get involved in messy matters like that, it ends up taking a lot of your time. It's back and forth and that sort of thing.

Q: Now, you arrived back in Washington. I imagine there was all this going around - "Who are these people?" Did you find that CIA were as much up in the air?

SUDDARTH: Yes. They were caught flat footed and it was a tremendous blow to the Agency and careers were lost as a result of that. But they had the same situation. There were various prominent Libyans of the old regime who had come forward and offered to lead a revolt, but none of that was taken very seriously. There was a famous incident written up by Patrick Seal in a book where some mercenaries, some retired SAS British, took a boat from Brindisi and were going to try to stir up a mutiny in Libya, but it got nowhere. None of those plots got anywhere.

I do need to mention one important issue that came up. That is that we had some F-5s and C-130s that we had agreed to sell the Libyans and the issue was, do we go through with the deliveries, which were imminent. There was a big battle between David Newsom and Joe Sisco, the head of Near Eastern Affairs. The Israelis were bound and determined that no combat aircraft were going to go to a revolutionary regime.

Q: The F-5 is a combat aircraft and the C-130 is a transport aircraft.

SUDDARTH: Secretary Rogers gave this over to John Irwin, who was his deputy. The decision was eventually made to withhold the F-5s, which became another bone of contention with the Libyans, who used that as partial justification for the fact that they went to the Soviets the following summer and got a complete arms package from them. I think we ended up maybe delivering one or two of the C-130s, but none of the rest of them.

I should go back also... There were lots of circumstances the first week of the Libyan coup. We had just agreed to supply F-4 aircraft to Israel after the embargo of two years after the 1967 War. We were terribly concerned that this announcement about three days after the Libyan coup would further exacerbate that. We had the other issue, which was did we recognize the new regime? We tried to reassert a time honored but often in the breach diplomatic practice, which is, we don't recognize regimes. We recognize countries. If the regime changes from one to the other, that's the natural course we maintain and so that is what we tried to do. But we decided we had no choice but to do business with these people given the stakes in the oil industry. We called a special briefing of the press corps on a Saturday, about the seventh of September or something like that. Charlie Bray, who was the acting head of North African Affairs and a brilliant officer and wonderful friend, was new to North Africa. I think he was parked in North African Affairs because he was head of AFSA _____ as deputy to Jim Blake, who was coming back to be the head of the office. They thought Charlie would have an easy time of it. Well, he had the Libyan coup on his hands. John Root was the office director. John left after a month or so. But Charlie went down... He was a skilled briefer and later became the Department's press spokesman. He was very much liked by Rogers. Charlie went down and was ready to... It wasn't Charlie this time. It was John King, who was the deputy press spokesman, all armed with lots of talking points. One of the cynical members of the Washington Department Press Corps because the British had just recognized the regime, said as John was getting ready to deliver these pontifical remarks, "Okay, John, what is it, stumbling along after the British?" So, that captured the whole thing.

But we had a problem because Joe Palmer was all for Hands Across the Sea. We had another problem. We had a Peace Corps group that was just going in, so we had to pull all of them out. But Palmer wanted to do Hands Across the Sea to Qadhafi. Jim Blake, his deputy, was rampantly against the Qadhafi regime, so Jim came back in December. He was very, very close to Newsom. He had been his deputy in North African Affairs before. Jim started pushing rather subtly at first and then more brutally against the F-5 deal. Newsom was sort of caught in the middle. Eventually, he acquiesced when Joe Sisco basically said, "We can't give these planes." Of course, we had a huge mail campaign by pro-Israeli elements in the U.S. public. I think we got 40,000 letters. Rosemary O'Neill, who was Tip O'Neill's daughter, was in Public Affairs. I gave her the models of what we should say. Poor thing, she had to answer 40-50,000 letters. So, that being the situation, we finally had to give way on the F-5s.

Q: As I recall, I think the C-130s, the whole group is sitting down in Marietta, Georgia to this day 30 years later. It comes up from time to time because the Libyans paid for them and we never delivered them.

SUDDARTH: Well, that's right. So, I think that's one of those issues that has to be sorted out. There was a million dollar yearly payment for the Wheelus Air Force Base. It was deposited by the Defense Department at a given day every year in a bank account at Riggs National Bank. After the 1967 War, the Libyan government didn't cash these checks. They were just sitting in a checking account and Riggs was making the money on the interest for several years of this. Newsom came up with a brilliant scheme, whereby we would get the Libyans to agree to augment their security force by buying things like anti-riot gear and those sort of semi-armored cars that move around and can withstand light bullets and so forth and to get them to use the money from their Wheelus account to fund this. But we were about ready to have sealed that when the revolution occurred. I call it a "revolution." It was really a coup.

I have to say that the coup was about a one in a million chance. Qadhafi and the officers who did this were mainly in the signals corps and they had mastered coordinated signals between 1,500 miles and three major population centers in Libya. They were able over the night to disarm the barracks in three separate cities.

Q: Remarkable.

SUDDARTH: With just a skeleton of officers. They took the reins and they had virtually nobody behind them. I would say it was almost a million and one chance. Because Idriss was in Turkey and everybody thought, well, he had once threatened to abdicate before. So, everybody just let this thing occur. It's a political phenomenon of great rarity.

Q: Were we looking initially at Nasser behind this?

SUDDARTH: I think yes, but we got no evidence and from everything that we have seen since, Nasser was as surprised as anybody else. This is a kind of amusing story, although Qadhafi idolized Nasser. They were going to do the coup on about March 30th, but there was a Um Kulthum concern. She was a very famous Egyptian singer, sort of the Frank Sinatra of her day, or the Ella Fitzgerald in Arab terms. So, they postponed the coup so they could do see the Um Kulthum concert. That is how serious they were. These things come up.

I had a good friend, a neighbor, who was a teacher at the Army English language facility for the Libyan army, an American. He invited me one night to go out (He had a boat.) with him and a bunch of Libyan army officers. This was in June of '69 with the coup occurring September 1. I had another engagement. I couldn't do it. I've always regretted that. I've often thought, "Well, maybe somebody would have told me about the brewing coup and I could have gone back and saved that from happening." That is pure fantasy, of course.

Q: Yes. How was our embassy dealing with making contacts, finding out, and all that, particularly in the early times?

SUDDARTH: As I mentioned, Libya was so quiescent, there were so few... They had a pretty vigilant, I suspect, pretty brutal security force. Oun Souf was a kind of formidable and feared minister of interior who controlled the security service itself. They ran a pretty tight ship. Dissidents of an Arab national character were thrown right out of the country.

There was another thing that came up and that was, the PLO was just getting started after the '67 War. They were establishing a PLO office in Libya. The Department was very concerned about this, that this could not only be destabilizing for Libya but that it was a growth yet of another movement that was not at all desirable. They hadn't started their terrorism, but we feared that they were going to be doing things like that. So, we got an instruction to go to King Idriss and to ask him if he would remove the PLO. Newsom, being the skilled diplomat that he is, sent something back and said, "I can do this and will do it, but it would go over much better if I told the King what we were doing in the peace process." At that point, Gunnar Jarring of the UN was being sent out. So, we gave the king a very complete rundown on what was being done through the UN to negotiate a withdrawal of Israeli forces in return for full peace as Resolution 242 calls for. We got Libya to remove the PLO. So, that was yet another nail in the coffin of the old regime because the Palestinians were very popular. I remember going to an exhibit before they got removed which showed Israeli atrocities and all that sort of thing. So, that's just another interesting side episode.

Q: You were in the Africa Bureau. Did you feel that with Sisco as the head of NEA, everything was by that time subordinate to our relations with Israel?

SUDDARTH: That's a bit of an overstatement. But we were very sensitive to Israeli security concerns. Sisco was trying desperately and valiantly to get a peace process going, a valid process. You may recall that the Rogers Plan was issued in December of 1969, which called for Israeli withdrawal and insubstantial border modification. So, that made Israel furious. In effect, we were telling them they should go back from virtually all the occupied territory. So, this occurred right after the Libyan coup. It turned out that Nixon wasn't willing to put political muscle behind it so that the Rogers initiative died on the vine. Kissinger was really lukewarm about it. Sisco's concerns were in reviving the peace process, but we didn't want to do anything since Israel was required to consent to this to gratuitously offend them. So, the F-5s to a bunch of rinky-dink lieutenants did not seem to be a very wise move.

Q: How were the oil companies and how were our negotiations on oil, keeping the oil companies there? Was there the feeling that these were really in jeopardy, that they might nationalize the whole thing and try to take it over or was this not considered a real option on the part of the Libyans at the time?

SUDDARTH: I think it was considered a definite option if we didn't get out of Wheelus Air Force Base. That was one of the big things. Even though they had agreed to abide by all international agreements as a price of our recognition, I think it was recognized the oil industry was vulnerable, but it took the form of price negotiations. During the spring of 1970, the Libyans came forward with a modest proposal for a five or 10 cent increase in the posted price of oil. The reply of the major oil companies was that they couldn't do it, they had these agreements, and it would affect their worldwide interests.

So, then the next step was, the Libyans in the summer of 1970 announced the Tripoli Oil Negotiations. This was really major because, to make along story short, Jim Akins performed brilliantly as the head of the Office of Fuels and Energy. We got the Justice Department to rescind the anti-trust requirements, not allowing the oil companies to talk together. So, they formed a common front against these Libyan demands, but in the end, Occidental broke from the pact and agreed to a $1.50 or a $1.00 increase, which was huge at the time. In those days, oil was selling for $2.00 a barrel.

Then what happened was, having agreed to this $1.00 increase in the price of oil, the Shah of Iran got the idea that that wasn't enough, so they then had the Teheran Round, where John Irwin was in the middle of all this and Jim Akins was orchestrating it. He got another dollar or two. So, the net effect was the beginning of OPEC and the rest is history. But that was all started by the Libyans and they took enormous credit for it.

Q: Were they able to feel the sophisticated oil negotiators... You think of in Saudi Arabia Tereki, Yamani, and all. Did they have the equivalent or was this done sort of by the seat of their pants?

SUDDARTH: I think it was the seat of their pants. It's a pretty simple issue. You're taking too much of the profits on the oil and we want more. Implicit in that is, if you don't do it, we might nationalize you. But the majors were... They were going to risk nationalization and it was when Occidental broke that they had to revise their position.

Q: Occidental was run by Armand Hammer at that time.

SUDDARTH: Right.

Q: Was he sort of a maverick?

SUDDARTH: He was the maverick. He's the man who had negotiated the major oil concession and this put Occidental on the map. Up to that time, it was kind of a ne'er-do-well or middle range or lower range chemical company. This gave them a huge pool of oil that they were able to sell to Europe. Then they stayed on. Eventually after I left the desk, the Libyans did eventually nationalize some of the companies, but some of the companies still have concessions that were held in abidance. A lot of them have been paid off. The Libyans paid not top dollar for a lot of the concessions. One of the issues that we were instructing our embassy on... I remember missing part of a July 4th weekend to instruct our embassy to say that in any nationalization we needed to have prompt and adequate compensation under international law.

Q: What about Libyan representation in Washington?

SUDDARTH: That was fun, a good amusing joke on myself and my unfamiliarity with the bureaucratic ways of Washington. The Libyan ambassador at the time of the coup was an old regime loyalist. I remember his coming in the first day I arrived in the Department calling on Deputy Secretary Elliott Richardson. I was told, "Rocky, get up there and join the meeting." So, I went up there and went through the meeting. Elliott Richardson made his points. The Libyan ambassador made his points, which were "We don't know what's going on" and so forth and so on, rather disjointed. I came back down to the desk. It was quite interesting.

I got a call from John Stempel, who was Elliott Richardson's staff assistant in the meeting. He said, "My god, you must have quite a memory. You've got to do a MemCon on this thing verbatim." I said, "Oh, yes, overseas (and this is true), with King Idriss, you never took a note because you might interrupt his rather reticent discourse." So, I immediately got out my pen and started writing down the notes for the conversation, which didn't turn out to be all that important.

But then the Libyans left and we went over to call on the new regime guy. Some young guys in the embassy kind of took it over. But we had no representation in Washington for a long, long time from the Libyans. Joe Palmer... We did all our business through Joe Palmer in Tripoli.

Q: On the base negotiations, were we doing it in harness with the British or was each one doing its own?

SUDDARTH: We were each doing our own, but I'm not clear on this point. Newsom is much more authoritative. Both come to the same conclusion and perhaps the British before us... I think Al Adam, they decided they would give up on that before we did on Wheelus Air Force Base. So that was another reason to give up on it even through they had a much longer tenure than we did. The point was, with 18 months remaining, it's a certainty you wont be renewed, so why not get out anyway?

Q: Yes.

SUDDARTH: I should add that one of my chores before the coup was, I was going to be involved with working out the U.S. position for the renewal of Wheelus Air Force Base with the Idriss regime. So, we had to shelve all that and basically throw it out the window.

Q: After about the first six months or so when things began to shake out, what sort of reading were you getting on who was Qadhafi? Was he the leader at that time?

SUDDARTH: Yes. I thought the French summed it up the best. They called him "un illuminï¿½," meaning a guy with inner voices. Once the coup occurred, we dredged through various things and a very good Foreign Service officer before he joined the Foreign Service, Dan Simpson, had written an appraisal of him and Dan called me. He had been a teacher of Qadhafi back in 1965 or '63. He called me from Iceland and referred me to this. He said, "This guy was a troublemaker and he was charismatic. He shown in his..." He was obviously a leader in this English language class of his peers. So, we dredged through things. We found out from the British that he had attended a short course at Sandhurst. To show his disdain, it was the habit during the noonday break to walk the parade ground with friends and chat. Qadhafi made a point here at Sandhurst of facing toward Mecca and praying in a very secular time when nobody else did that. So, we trace things back and Qadhafi should never have been admitted in the army. He was a troublemaker from the fifth grade. He was an intelligent, charismatic troublemaker and somehow he got into the Libyan army, was put in a signal corps unit, and managed to organize the Free Officers Movement.

Q: After the initial period, how did things... You were there two years.

SUDDARTH: What happened was, there was a fellow named Mugraby, who was the titular head for the first few weeks. Then Qadhafi's name finally emerged. There is another amusing story. The British chargï¿½, Peter Wakefield, lived right next to one of the radio stations. When the coup occurred, Peter Wakefield came out and there was Qadhafi who had secured for the rebel forces the radio station. Wakefield said, "What's going on here?" He said, "What is your name, officer?" Qadhafi said, "My name is Qadhafi." It turned out that the former prime minister was named Wanis El-Qadhafi. It's a tribal area. I think this may be apocryphal. Peter Wakefield said, "Oh, are you related to the former prime minister?" Qadhafi said, "Yes, I am." Wakefield said, "Well, carry on." Btu the point is that these guys surface and then we began to get some reports of their inner dealings. One day, it was, oh, we're going to have a land reform. But they had no notion what a land reform was. So, they backed away from that. They had a kind of weird version of socialism for the people. Qadhafi later evolved into an even weirder position where he abolished the title of Supreme Leader.

Q: You've talked about your first six months after the Qadhafi coup on the desk.

SUDDARTH: We've talked about more than that. The oil negotiations were a year later.

Q: You left in '71?

SUDDARTH: Yes. There was the Soviet arms deal. I think there was the Munich slaughter by the PLO at the Munich Olympics. We were all trying to judge whether the Libyan regime would be a refuge for hijackers. At that point, the embassy thought there was some hope that they would take a harder line against it.

But, yes, most of the drama was in the first year. There are very few things to capture.

Q: We'll pick up then on the Olympic side and your feeling about whither Libya.

SUDDARTH: And also the fact that they were beginning social transformations, blocking liquor and renaming things.

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Q: Today is May 22, 2000. You mentioned before we leave Libya in '71 the embassy's concern about the shootings at the Olympics, where Palestinian terrorists killed the wrestling team from Israel. What were those concerns?

SUDDARTH: I think our sequencing may be off here. I left Libya in '69. I was a desk officer in '71. I think the Olympic shootings were in '72. What's interesting is that when I was the desk officer and traveling back, we were all concerned about terrorism and about in that particular time giving refuge to terrorists. You have to check the facts on this. Our embassy was of the opinion that the Libyans were going to be responsible, that they didn't like terrorism in the early days of the Qadhafi administration. But when the Palestinians killed these Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in '72, I believe, I think they may have gone to Libya. In any case, our embassy turned out to be wrong in its assessment, although it was a kind of casual assessment that was not based on anything other than kind of innocent guesses. It turned out that Libya indeed was becoming more and more identified with various groups even in 1972. That was the great spate of PLO activism.

Q: Yes. Where did you go in '71?

SUDDARTH: I was the desk officer from September of '69 to July of '71. Then I went off for a year at MIT.

Q: In '71, you mentioned before that you were watching social changes come about. What were we seeing in Libya at that time?

SUDDARTH: I remember, you had a group of idealistic officers who had taken over who revered Nasser. So, you had sort of unfettered capitalism under King Idriss' government and these people were much more interested in social justice. There was a growing disparity of income. One of my predecessors said it used to be in the traditional Arab society that there would be differences in income but it didn't become qualitative, e.g., the very rich had a Boeing 727 at their disposal. Before, they were all riding on camels, in effect. But one might have a better camel than the other. In Libya at the end of Idriss' regime, a few people got pretty rich through corruption in many cases, but also legitimately because of the oil boom and getting oil contracts, service companies, and things of that sort. Increasingly, the arms deals began to make corruption much more an issue. So, I recall one of the early deliberations of the Free Officers, which were these Revolutionary Command around Qadhafi, was that they should have a land reform. It was obvious that they had no notion whatsoever about how to do it. Qadhafi as long as I was officially connected had not yet moved to the more idiosyncratic forms of government that he has now. He has no official function. He has a Jamahiriya, which means "the people rule." They have an informal committee and so on. But sure enough if there's a budget that he doesn't like, he stops it. So, there is a certain amount of hypocrisy there.

The only thing that showed that Qadhafi was willing to go outside the box during my time was just as I was leaving in '71, he imposed an Arabic passport on everybody who was going to enter Libya. So, we had this immense bureaucratic problem. You were supposed to have both your national passport and it translated into Arabic if you were to gain admittance into his country. We did a test case, Charles Martinson, the head of the Political Section - the DCM, I guess, by that time - and one other embassy officer were picked to be the guinea pigs, to come in on regular passports, and they were stopped. So, I left Libya as Qadhafi was moving to the more idiosyncratic form of rule.

Q: When you talk about land reform, actually, the United States has been a great proponent of land reform and we have expertise... Was the Free Officer Movement so beyond the pale that we wouldn't say, "Hey, if you want land reform, we can do land reform for you?"

SUDDARTH: Well, we didn't have that kind of political relationship. We had tried to maintain ourselves as the primary air force supplier. We had a Peace Corps program there that was evacuated at the time of the revolution for security reasons. We made a very genuine effort and one that was highly criticized in the United States to extend a hand to the Free Officers Movement. David Newsom, the assistant secretary, and Joe Palmer both felt it was good to make a try. But once we, in effect, had negotiated our end... One of the reasons mainly that we decided to give up on Wheelus Air Force Base a year and a half before our contract ran out was, we had 10,000 Americans in Libya. We had a large stake in their oil industry. We wanted to preserve those interests. So, even after we were thrown out of Wheelus, we were hopeful we could have a relationship with them. For Palmer, the big thing was transfer of technology. We wanted to find ways that the U.S. government probably being on a paying basis by the Libyans would be able to transfer technology and that would be a basis on which we could continue our relationship. Then they had the Tripoli Round of negotiations, where they increased the oil price, but the U.S. companies still very much wanted to stay in Libya. Then after I left, so I'm hazy on the timing here, they began to nationalize American oil companies. Then they had the Soviet arms deal where they brought in large amounts of Soviet equipment. Then they started being hospitable to terrorists as a point of refuge rather than actively organizing. So, there was a really rather... It wasn't a precipitous decline in relations, but as we moved into the mid-'70s, it was getting on a steeper and steeper course.

But we maintained our relationship with Libya until '79 when they stormed our embassy. Our charge and his staff had to flee for their lives.

Q: You were at MIT for a year. That would be '71-'72.

SUDDARTH: Yes.

Q: What were you doing there?

SUDDARTH: I was doing a course in systems analysis. I got a degree, an MS, and political science. In effect, I was learning systems analysis. It had a lot of math, a lot of interesting and challenging stuff. Then I took courses in economics and defense policy as well.

Q: What prompted this particular... Normally, you'd take courses in Middle East studies or something like that.

SUDDARTH: You know, I've always been interested in things beyond the Middle East. I spent most of my career in the Middle East, but I had an assignment in Political-Military Affairs. This was supposed to link up with that. We did security assistance around the world. When I worked for Dave Newsom when he was under secretary, we did the world. I had four years in the IG, where we were the world. So, my geographic area overseas was the Middle East, but I did a lot of other things.

Q: Did you find that systems analysis and all was useful for you?

SUDDARTH: It was very useful in terms of discipline of thinking. I think that was the most I got out of it. It was kind of amusing... I came back and Turkey was going to buy some F-4 aircraft. So, I was very proud of these skills I had learned. So, I did a sensitivity analysis with a computer on the ability of the Turks to repay during the life of the loan at a given interest rate. So, I did four different scenarios. We did a memo to the under secretary for Security Assistance. Then it all got decided politically, so, after all that sweat and strain, I said, "That's the last time I'm going to go through that for something that isn't useful." But it was a very good year. I took courses on economics, economic development, Eastern Hemisphere oil, and several courses on defense policy that were particularly useful in the end.

Q: This was sort of towards the end of our commitment to Vietnam. MIT doesn't sound like a very fertile ground for discontent.

SUDDARTH: Oh, yes. Well, we were there during the Haiphong bombing. There were large demonstrations at MIT and at Harvard. I took several courses at Harvard. Harvard Hall was occupied because of Gulf Oil stock in Angola. So, it was a time of real turbulence on the campus.

MIT had a very slick way of doing things. They had two professors who had lucrative contracts with the United States government on counterinsurgency in Vietnam. They made a point of forcing a young radical professor who was greatly loved by the college radicals to move into their suite of rooms, their office suite complex, so that they wouldn't be trashed. They were pretty clever about it all.

Q: Well, they probably ran a systems analysis on the computer.

This would be a good place to stop. In '72, you left MIT. Whither?

SUDDARTH: From MIT, I went back and was in our Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. It was a great bureau. Ron Spiers was the assistant secretary and Tom Pickering was his deputy. Those two guys recruited me for this new bureau. Then there was an under secretary for Security Assistance who had just been named and we did all of the staff work for him. So, I would go from things like calculating the ammunition usage rates in Cambodia, where they were expending horrendous rates, basically shooting up into the air pretending to fight the Viet Cong, to things in Turkey. I set up a number of military assistance offices in the Gulf that were just starting. I was involved in the negotiations for the sale of A-4 aircraft and Hawk missiles to Kuwait. After having been country specific for the first eight years of my Foreign Service career, it was wonderful to be in a bureau that had a worldwide kind of perch. In other words, I remember Operation Enhance Plus, where we got a lot of our Asian and other allies to give F-5s to South Vietnam in their effort to try to augment their military effort.

Q: Next time, we'll start in '72. You were in Political-Military until when?

SUDDARTH: Until December of '73.

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Q: Today is June 2, 2000. We've been talking about your time in Political-Military. You gave us an overview. Can we talk about some specific cases in this, particularly getting aircraft and all that? Were there any ones that particularly stick out in your mind that particularly engaged you?

SUDDARTH: Well, this one wasn't direct, but I remember, the Bureau itself spent a good deal of time under Alex Johnson, who was the under secretary, with Enhance Plus, which was the transfer of F-5 aircraft to Vietnam in 1972 to augment their air effort against the North. We borrowed planes from Korea, from various other countries, to do that. The only specific aircraft... There were two things that I was involved in was my first job there in August of 1972 was an aircraft sale to Turkey of F-4s. I should emphasize, we had a new under secretary just as I came on board, Curtis Tarr, Under Secretary for Security Assistance. So, my office was involved in helping to get him up and running. The idea was that the State Department should have a high-ranking figure that could be the czar of security assistance rather than leaving it to the Pentagon because of the feeling that they had a conflict of interest because the more planes you can sell, the lower the unit cost would be and therefore you would save money from your military services. So, I think the Nixon administration didn't want to be arms merchants to the world in order to make the cost of your military lower. So, we sold planes to Turkey, F-4s. My first project was to do the memo up to the under secretary on this. This was really a technical issue. We had been selling them planes, but the question was, how many, how much credit? We got involved in such arcane things as trying to judge the propensity of Turkish workers to stay in Europe (We were selling them on credit.) to be able to repay the loan.

Q: That aside, there is the politics. To sell F-4s, which at that time were relatively advanced aircraft, to Turkey, you had to be doing something to Greece, didn't you?

SUDDARTH: Yes. They were both NATO members. I don't recall that there was a Greek sale at that point, but we had a 3:5 ratio (three for Greece; five for Turkey) in terms of the amount of assistance we gave them, which was something that we had worked out with Congress. That didn't seem to be a major factor. At this point, the factor was, as a NATO member, they needed the aircraft, but we wanted them, since their economy was doing reasonably well and there was more and more of a squeeze by the Congress on security assistance, to have them be able to pay it. As an aside, I'd learned all these fancy systems analysis and economic techniques up at MIT. The first memo I did, I got together with Tezi Schaffer, who had just come out of the economics course, and we did a computer program which did a sensitivity analysis showing at what levels of foreign exchange from Europe and others, how that would affect it and how much credit we could give. Then in the end, nobody read by appendix on the sensitivity analysis. They just checked the box on 5% credit or something like that. So, that is the last time I ever did... So much for my MIT training.

The other issue was more significant in a way. The East of Suez policy was a nascent around 1968 to pull out all their troops from the Gulf and to leave that security commitment to us and we were in the midst of forming a Nixon doctrine. There were two forms to it. One was that host countries should be producing troops rather than just the United States. In that respect, we relied on the two pillars of the Gulf, Iran under the Shah and the Saudis to help to replace the British with a somewhat but very small augmented presence by the United States.

So, one of the things that I had to do was to go out to Kuwait. Kuwaitis used to play off the U.S. and the Brits against the Soviets. We wanted to keep the Soviets out of Kuwait. They were always afraid of Iran. We sold them a package of A-4 Skyhawk aircraft and Hawk missiles. I was peripherally involved in the sales negotiations and then went out and set up a plan for the first Defense attachï¿½ security assistance office in Kuwait. But again, it's an example of the increasing U.S. role in the Gulf. I've also since I was still at heart a Near East Bureau fellow, I was given the task informally of going out to all of the countries in the Gulf who had just started missions of their own. That was the time when Oman was becoming more independent of British influence. It had always been an independent state, but much more so after Sheikh Sultan Qaboos took over. I went to the Emirates, Bahrain, and we were setting up these missions. It was obvious that they were under resourced. That's always the case in the State Department. So, I came back and wrote a memo to the Near East Bureau saying, "You've got to increase the support for those areas."

The other thing I did was kind of interesting. There were a few other things that were important. One was that I went out on a Coast Guard mission to Bahrain. That was an interesting time because the Iraqis were visibly subverting Bahrain. They were infiltrating people by the sea. Bahrain was an island. It didn't have the causeway into Saudi Arabia at the time. So, our job was to... I went out with the Coast Guard captain and somebody from the Customs Service and somebody from Immigration. Our job was to give them a coastal regime that would protect the island. It was also obvious at the time that they wanted to be protected against infiltration in, but they didn't want to be prevented from smuggling out into Iran. The result was, we recommended some things. We also recommended some equipment. Then of course the Bahrainis came back and said, "Would you please pay for the frigate" and various other Coast Guard type boats and so forth, helicopter pads, platforms, and that sort of thing.

The final thing, which was more significant, which got me started in Jordan, was after the 1970 Black September civil war in Jordan, there was an emergency package of military assistance sent to Jordan in 1971, the Mellon Report, I think. It got start, according to the myth, and I think it's true... I think I asked the Jordanian prime minister at the time... He wrote it out on a cocktail napkin while having drinks with Henry Kissinger, who was the national security advisor, how many tanks, how many APCs, how many artillery pieces. He had been a student of Kissinger at Harvard and so forth. But we did a follow-on report, the Granger Report, in 1973, and went out on a two-week survey mission, quite interesting. We went all over the Jordan military forces. We were trying very hard to strengthen the regime by strengthening its military arm, which is the primary prop of the regime, a very good army which had, in effect, danced circles around the Syrians in 1970 when they tried to intervene. But that was a pretty cut and dry thing. We assessed their military situation and it turned out to be fortuitous because right after our report, the 1973 War started. I was on the task force during that time. Then the Jordanians needed an even greater package of assistance. Our package includes various segments and it turned out that our assistance to Jordan after the 1973 War greatly increased. It was partly a reward for their staying out of the war. All they did was send a minimal task force up to the Golan Heights, where they had a couple of encounters and spilled a little Jordanian blood, which was necessary to appease their public opinion. But also the war demonstrated that Jordan had no air cover. They had no air defense, which is a whole other interesting chapter that we'll get into later. So, I think that's about the totality of what I did in my year and a half in Political-Military Affairs.

Q: What was your estimate of the Jordanian military at that time?

SUDDARTH: The Jordanian military were, I think, the best Arab army man per man. But they were a small army. Jordan was a small country. I think they have around 70,000 troops. They had a recurrent budget problem. I should mention that when I was in Political-Military Affairs. After the 1970 shootout with the PLO, we instituted a joint security assistance meeting every year. The Jordanians would come and we would look at their needs. As I recall, in 1972, King Hussein met with Nixon. At that point, Jordan's economy was on its knees because of the disruption during the 1970 War. They weren't generating very much revenue and he desperately needed security assistance, not only security assistance, but direct budgetary aid. We were having terrible problems getting enough security assistance out of the Congress. They were switching us to credit rather than grant A. So, King Hussein hung around the United States for about two weeks, went down to Florida and was calling back virtually every day to see how we were doing on getting the package. We finally scraped together $40 million, which was enough to meet the military payroll for the next quarter or something like that, maybe for the rest of the year. But that's illustrative of the kind of straightened circumstances the King was in. We had a running dispute with them. It's so obscure now I can hardly remember it, but it raised a lot of hackles. It was O and M (Operations and Maintenance). For all of the hours I've put on that problem, I can hardly remember what it was about. It had something to do with the fact that they should be performing their own operations and maintenance and not factoring it into their security assistance. To King Hussein, who had been fighting for his life, who saw the United States as his important anchor windward, this was such a nitpicking thing that it tended to exacerbate relations rather than to help them. I think we quietly dropped it after a while, but there was a point where we were looking very carefully into the military budget of Jordan, which they didn't like at all, partly because the military budget, as I later learned, actually funds the expenses of the palace and of the General Intelligence Directory. So, we were analytically correct, but there was a lot more being spent in that budget than we could find being applied to the military. It turned out, yes, indeed, we were funding a major operation in intelligence and the upkeep of a rather austere but still expensive palace operation.

Q: You were drafted into the task force dealing with the October '73 Arab-Israeli war. What was your perspective of that?

SUDDARTH: That was a fascinating period. One did get to see a lot of things come out. We did at the Middle East Institute a conference and we're putting a book out that Dick Parker is editing on what the various viewpoints were. We brought together the various participants. I had two or three rather poignant incidents. One was being in Political-Military Affairs, there was the issue of the airlift. We delayed on the airlift for several days essentially because Kissinger saw a brilliant opportunity that if we could make ourselves the arbiter between the Egyptians and the Israelis we might be able to parlay that into peace talks. In my judgement (and this is disputable), Kissinger dragged his feet for several days. The Israeli ambassador was tearing his hair out. Kissinger was pointing to Schlesinger, who was Secretary of Defense, as being the one who was dragging his feet, whereas I think Nixon was the one orchestrating the whole thing. Kissinger, I'm told, said that he was going to be the one that would have to be doing the negotiations with the Israelis, so he had to be the white hat, so Schlesinger had to be the black hat. It was also complicated by the fact that we were trying desperately for days to get a commercial airlift, but the carriers had probably quite correctly pointed out they were going into a war zone and that the civilian carriers would be at risk and therefore they couldn't do it. So, in effect, Schlesinger was blamed by the Israelis for dragging his feet and Kissinger kind of got off scot-free. But eventually the thing all came through. For historians who are writing about this, I recommend you to our book on this 1973 War that will be out in a year or two. James Schlesinger was a participant. He's on our board at the Institute. He gave a speech where he outlined as much as we'd gotten on the public record his views on this. He later did a conference at Dover Air Force Base which there is a transcript of. So, this is an important episode and historians should be looking at all of these sources.

Q: My understanding is that we give a certain subsidy to airplane companies and manufacturers and all in order to have them capable of giving just a sort of airlift and then they won't do it when the chips are down. Do we ask for our money back?

SUDDARTH: It's the craft program. I wasn't directly involved in the details of that. That was all done by the Pentagon. So, you may be right. There may have been other factors involved. Schlesinger tried desperately to put this thing together and he wasn't able to do so. So, that accounted for several of the days of the delay. It was about five or six days' delay. But the Israelis urgently needed TOW missiles to knock out the tanks on the Golan Heights and then the Sinai. They had depleted their stocks. In effect, we depleted almost the stocks of our NATO forces in order to resupply them. There are comical aspects to all of this. We were supposed to send in these unmarked planes. We had painted over the U.S. Air Force insignia and they were supposed to go in under cover of night. They got delayed in the Azores. Schlesinger talks all about this. So, instead of getting there in the dead of night, they were there right in the early morning hours and there were thousands of Israelis out cheering it on. So much for our clandestine airlift.

Of course, the question of whether we were cobelligerent came up and so forth. But another thing that I vividly recall from being on the task force... You worked on the task force at night and did your regular job during the day. In came a NODIS from our embassy in Tel Aviv with a complete, exhaustive list of what the Israelis needed in terms of resupply, Tel missiles, tanks, all kinds of exotic things, spare parts and so forth, ammunition (lot of ammunition)... After I read this and was getting ready to initiate some action on it, it was pulled back to Kissinger's office. It wasn't supposed to have been sent out to our bureau, so that's the last we ever saw of the list. That preceded, of course, the delays on the airlift. So, I personally think Kissinger was really quite wisely and cunningly using this as a way of exerting some pressure on the Israelis to get the negotiations started. Then they did get started on Kilometer 101. I think that was the major thing I remember during the war.

We were all trying to find ways of getting the resupply in place and so forth. I also remember sending cables very tough talk, to Genscher, the German foreign minister, in Germany getting them to allow us total use of our facilities in Germany for resupply, which we were able to do, and also clearances in the Azores. We had a lot of aircraft clearances that required political clearances to get that thing going. Then, of course, there was the red alert, the Defcon Two or whatever it was, that seemed to be unnecessary. Again, this was all taking place in the background of the Watergate White House where Nixon himself was incommunicado. Even Kissinger was having to work through Alexander Haig to get support and clearance on things from Nixon at that particular time. The Night of the Long Knives occurred. There was a lot of cynicism about Defcon Two that diverted attention from Watergate in order - you know, "You created the foreign policy crisis" and so forth. But that is an interesting theory.

I left the job in December and the Jordanians came to town while Kissinger was out on his mission to Moscow trying to get the Soviets to agree to convene the Geneva Conference, which we were successful in doing and which produced Resolution 338, which was very important. They extended 242 to the territory that was involved in the 1967 and 1973 War. The Jordanians came to Washington. We were given instructions. Once again, not having any security assistance to speak of, we were given instructions that we were to appear to be as forthcoming as possible. But we had no money. So, try to orchestrate that. I was forced to resort to third order ruses and gimmicks. For instance, the "Washington Post" published a front page picture of Kissinger in Jordan. King Hussein didn't come on this mission. It was Zayd Shader. Hussein was back dealing with Kissinger on a very important early stage of the shuttle diplomacy. There was a picture of Kissinger on the front page of the "Washington Post" reviewing this very impressive Jordanian honor guard. They had Scottish bagpipes and spitpolish type guys on alert. So, Dean Brown was our new under secretary for management. He had just been ambassador to Jordan. I went to Dean and said, "I need your help to get the original photograph from the 'Washington Post,'" which we got and then we mounted it and gave it to the Zayd Shader, who was probably the closest person in Jordan to King Hussein. He was not amused in lieu of the security issues to have a picture of Henry Kissinger reviewing the Jordanian honor guard. In any case, we eventually scraped together $40-50 million and gave it to the Jordanians.

It was interesting because my assignment in PM dovetailed exactly with my assignment to Jordan. I went to Jordan. The political counselor moved out in December. I took his place right after one shuttle. I did go to Jordan. But during the 1973 War, it became painfully apparent that the Jordanians didn't have an air defense. So, I remember helping write a memo to Kissinger telling him that and telling him that we anticipated there would be pressures from Jordan to get an air defense system. Sure enough, as soon as I got to Jordan, then Tom Pickering was named ambassador. He had been my boss in PM, he and Ron Spiers. I felt very, very fortunate to have Tom coming out. The way that this happened, Tom was executive secretary and he came out on all of the shuttle missions with Kissinger. Kissinger met with King Hussein in early January of 1974 in Aqaba. He turned to the King and said, "We have our new ambassador designate here. We'd like your agreement, your Agrï¿½ment. It's Tom Pickering, the cream of the crop. He's the cream of the Foreign Service."

So, Dean Brown had left maybe before the October 1973 War. In any case, Tom Pickering finally arrived in March when Pierre Graham was our charge during that interim period. The Jordanians were desperately interested in getting involved in the peace process even though they had not engaged on their front with the Israeli forces. The first couple of missions... Whereas the Syrians and the Egyptians had forces locked into positions that had to be disentangled from Israeli positions and hence the disengagement agreements - first the Syrian one.

There was Third army that was trapped there.

Q: That seemed to have the priority, I would imagine.

SUDDARTH: Right. I don't remember the sequence. I do remember that it was in May of 1974 that they had the disengagement agreement with the Syrians, which was closer and more important to Jordan at that point. But what was interesting... I do remember the visit of Kissinger in March of 1974 when the Jordanians said, "We want a disengagement agreement as well" and Kissinger rather politely (I wasn't present at the meeting.) said, "Well, let me sleep on that." He could have legitimately said, "Well, since you haven't engaged militarily, how can you expect us to disengage you?" As it turned out, we had also supplied to the Jordanians some of our new M-16 rifles to a platoon whose role was potentially to go down and be the force that would move across the Jordan River as the first disengagement unit. This is still a big dispute. There is a rapid concatenation of events.

Kissinger slept on it and came back the next day and said, "We can't support this." He may have said, "Look, let me try it out on the Israelis," but he was skeptical. A lot of this is now rehashed, so historians will want to check more primary records on this. This is all part of our book as well, and Kissinger's memoirs. I just saw Kissinger a week ago and asked him about this thing. But Kissinger says (I think Roy Atherton told me the same thing at the time.) that Golda Meir had just resigned and Rabin had just taken over. The feeling was that he was not sufficiently powerful yet to do the audacious thing of doing a West Bank and disengagement with the Jordanians to allow any of the West Bank to go back into Jordanian hands.

The result of this was that the PLO filled the vacuum. In the summer of 1974, there was the Rabat Summit and before that an Alexandria and foreign ministers meeting where the Arabs designated the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians. Before that time, King Hussein had the torch. This was a tremendous blow to Hussein. I'm told that Hussein had reason to believe that the Allon Plan, which was the basic Israeli plan for giving up some territory on the West Bank and it involved what they called "balloons and sausages." In some ways, it's close to what Arafat has now - and the Palestinian Authority. It was a salient that went from Jericho to Ramallah to Nablus. In other words, through the three most important populated areas outside of Jerusalem on the West Bank. And another one that went from Tulkarem to Jenin. In other words, it gave the Arabs the populated areas, left the Jordan Valley to Israel, and all of the area around the Israeli settlements, which in 1974 were quite small. They were just little things right along the Green Line on the Israeli border with the Jordanian West Bank. Since that time, you've got 300,000 Israelis who have settled, so that's no longer the case. The story at the time - and I haven't been able to verify this - was that the Israelis were willing to give up that area (and nothing in Jerusalem) in return for a final peace agreement with King Hussein. Hussein took this offer to the Rabat Summit. In a closed session, he briefed them on it and said, "There's no way that I would accept this." Also, the Saudis and the Egyptians pulled the rug out from under Hussein in favor of the PLO and the rest is history.

The Saudis, who until that time had been supporting the United Arab Kingdom, which had Jordan in control of the West Bank, joined forces with the Egyptians and King Hussein was extremely bitter and came back and dismissed Palestinians from his government, made dramatic gestures in effect of almost retribution against the Palestinians for having in effect dismissed that what he thought was his rightful role. So, that was an extremely important episode. Kissinger says, "A mistake was made." Zaid al-Rifai, the Jordanian prime minister, says, "Kissinger made a great mistake." I think Kissinger in his mellowing current years does dwell on the fact that there was a mistake. I guess it's irrelevant whose mistake it was. I think it was essentially Kissinger's assessment that the Israeli leadership couldn't take on something. The only thing that they could do was to make an offer which even in those days was audacious to have a final peace treaty in which they kept Jerusalem, the refugee question wasn't settled, and all the populated areas of the West Bank went to Jordan, but nothing else. It would have been again a Bantustan type of arrangement. Btu a lot of effort was put into that. So, that was the sort of thing that dominated the first year that I was in Jordan.

Q: In the aftermath of the '73 War, in the talk in the corridors of NEA, had the Egyptians and Sadat gained stature at this point, thought they were much more serious players than they had been before?

SUDDARTH: Yes, because we had seriously underestimated Sadat. He was considered to be sort of a clown. He was put in as number two by Nasser just because he wasn't a serious contender. Mike Sterner had taken him on a Leader Grant tour to the United States during that time and got to know him quite well and had a great deal of respect for him. If you haven't talked to Mike, you should.

Q: I have. It was a long time ago.

SUDDARTH: Going back, when I was in Political-Military Affairs, we had these big separate meetings where a lot of the security assistance for the world. Sadat had just kicked the Russian (Soviet) military advisers and their families out of Egypt. This severed the connection in '72. The Pentagon was saying, "Why aren't we making any political reaction to this?" Tom Pickering was quite embarrassed. He had gotten some instruction from on high "We're not going to play that game. That's great, but we're not going to make any gestures because there's no peace process going." We still had a residue of bad blood with the Egyptians. This was right after Sadat took over. He was an unknown quantity. People thought Mukhiadeen and various others were probably going to overthrow him, so he wasn't considered to be much of a guy to be putting your bets on. He was underestimated in '73. He sent his national security advisor to Washington to tell Kissinger and Nixon that they were very serious about getting some progress on the peace thing. The Saudis orchestrated a joint demarche of all the American oil producers in Saudi Arabia. EXXON, Mobil, Chevron, Texaco, you name them, came to the State Department and said in the fall or the summer of '73 and said, "You've got to get something going on the peace process." They were spot on. Lo and behold, Sadat put together a war in the 1973 War after having made repeated entreaties to the United States. It turned out to be a militarily unsuccessful war, but was politically extremely successful. It galvanized the United States. We must remember that the Saudis cut off the oil, embargoed the United States, Holland, and the UK from oil because of our arms supplies. So, one of the things that was pushing this process desperately... If you'll recall, there were lines at the pumps and oil prices had quadrupled because the Shah took advantage of all this and they got together and quadrupled the oil price, which stuck at $10 a barrel. It had been $2 before that. So, in effect, what happened was, there was tremendous pressure on Kissinger to get these disengagement agreements because the Saudis weren't going to relax the embargo until we were seriously engaged in the process. So, Sadat's stature went up immeasurably. We finally got a mission. We went Hermann Eilts out with 48 hours notice as the head of an interests section which was then elevated to an embassy. That was the time that Sadat really emerged.

I was just with Kissinger two weeks ago when he gave the Sadat lecture at the University of Maryland and said publicly that "Sadat is the greatest public figure that he had the honor to know" in his entire public life. That is how Sadat's stature came up.

Q: Were you all thinking in these terms?

SUDDARTH: No, we weren't. Kissinger tended to be pretty secretive and he compartmentalized things an awful lot. We all recognized in Jordan that Egypt had the urgency because they had the biggest army and they had the most perilous situation. But King Hussein was very disappointed when they got the second disengagement agreement, where the Israelis disengaged from a good bit of the area around the Suez Canal and we put an AID package together that was billions and billions of dollars, including paying for air bases and some of the oil production in the Sinai. So, the point was that for a substantial disengagement that didn't bring a final peace, this was a hell of a price to pay. So, that is rather controversial everywhere except in the U.S. Congress. But Sadat was already beginning to reap the benefits. The Egyptians got something, too, out of it. But the Israelis in particular.

So, those are the major elements. I do remember, Nixon came in May of 1974. This was what they called the "Watergate visit." This was May. Nixon left office in August. It was pretty obvious from the way this thing was being orchestrated that it was designed to save his presidency. It turned out... I was the control officer and went through some scrapes with his advance team. A number of things happened, but in brief, Nixon was wanting to get maximum publicity. This being the first visit of an American president in the Middle East with an extremely unpopular U.S.-Middle East policy in the Arab world, the Jordanians were afraid he was going to get killed. One of the ways that this came together was in who was going to be in the flatbed truck following the Nixon car and motorcade. The Nixon advance team wanted to put all photographers and the Jordanians wanted to put all soldiers with submachine guns. One of my jobs, which made me unpopular with the White House, was to try to mediate between the two parties in the composition. This sounds trivial, but it is illustrative. Nixon was made up and looked like a waxen Madame Tussaud effigy.

Q: People remark again and again about this.

SUDDARTH: He had a yellow coloring and yellow flecks in his hair which somehow made him more photogenic. He was always made up for television coverage. The visit was kind of amusing, more by insight into what was going on with the White House than anything else. We had a very good administrative officer, Perry Linder, who had been through a lot of the Kissinger shuttles and knew the drill. Nixon's advance team sent out an advance man whose primary role, the reason he got the job was that he had been in charge of the balloon drop at the Miami convention. He was a small businessman from Buffalo who had never been abroad. It was a nightmare dealing with him. I finally found that the best thing to do was, I would take him up to the palace to deal with the very charming Yanal Hikmat, chief of protocol, while our Perry Linder did all the things administratively without this guy knowing about it, had them all in place while we were just wasting time up at the palace. This guy was so nitpicking about details and about the President's schedule that Yanal Hikmat gave him a watch at the end of the visit and he said to him, "You will appreciate this because your watch is demarcated in five minute segments," which meant that he had been arguing over five minutes of the President's time during these periods. There were silly things. Nixon had a rule that he would have lunch alone with Pam. He didn't want to have any events in the middle of the day. The Jordanians were just falling all over themselves to give him hospitality. They did a virtually unknown thing, which was to open the Queen Mother's palace, which is a modest but elegant palace, for him for lunch. The problem came on how to describe this. Tom Pickering, with his characteristic brilliance, came up with it would be "light refreshments." So, the Jordanians had their lunch and Nixon had his light refreshments and then went off with his wife. He just wanted to be alone and worry about Watergate, I think.

I was struck by the disproportion between the United States and its demands and a small country. For instance, they had two advance visits, each one in a 747. There would be 100 people that would get out. Then they would go to the other... Then they came back a second time. I think there were five 747s that came with Nixon. But Kissinger didn't come. That was a giveaway. He had a NATO meeting, which he could have finessed. He dropped off in Jordan but was at both the Syrian and the Egyptian parts of the trip, which was a way of telling the Jordanians that "We're not playing ball on this. There's nothing we can really do for you."

The one thing that - and I'm not sure whether it was a Nixon visit that started it or not - we made a commitment (I think it was after the Nixon visit.) to provide an air defense system to Jordan. That gets into another whole episode which I want to talk about later. During his visit, the disproportion was that, for instance, they took over Sharif Zayd bin Shaker, the King's cousin's house, a very nice house, but not palatial by any means, for Nixon to stay in. The demands of the electrical devices that were installed in the house were such that it shorted out the house immediately and caused a small fire and they had to bring the army to fix things and whatnot. So, the Nixon visit seemed to be nothing but photo ops from the Nixon point of view. Nixon left and the King was quite disappointed.

Two things came out of that. I think a lot of U.S. foreign policy toward Jordan has been to give King Hussein sufficient consolation prizes that he wouldn't be totally disaffected from the peace process and that we could retain his friendship and cooperation. The two things that we offered during my tour were, number one, an air defense system; and number two, serious movement toward a Maqarin dam, which gets into another interesting aspect of the whole question of Jordan waters and the Israeli-Arab disputes over those.

But on air defense, it turned out that the problem was that the Israelis didn't want Jordan to have an air defense system. They didn't want either Jordanians or others coming and using Jordanian airfields to be able to defend them. So, they mounted a huge campaign in Congress. They got it engineered so that the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave a briefing in which they recommended a far smaller system than Jordan really needed. Then that was taken as the benchmark. Then the unkindest cut of all was the Congress insisted that the Hawk missiles and the others be permanently implanted in non-moveable concrete structures, which made them sitting ducks for any halfway decent air attack. So, in effect, you had semi-functional air defense system. If things got really serious, their Hawks would have been knocked out fairly early. That was a huge dispute that raged for months and months. The Jordanians went to the Soviets and got the Soviets to propose a system of their own. So, we went through many cliff-hanging months. It even got down to the question of statements. The Jordanians finally reluctantly accepted. But then it was a question of having a joint statement. We had separate statements. The Jordanians were saying that these arrangements were an infringement on Jordanian sovereignty and we were saying that they weren't. If you read the two statements, you wouldn't think we were talking about the same problem. When things get to be so ironic and ridiculous... Art Buchwald wrote a humorous column about our two positions on the Jordanian thing. Tom Pickering will have better detailed knowledge of this. It's a little vague in my mind.

But then the other problem on that was, we needed money. We weren't going to pay anything. We went to the Saudis and got the Saudis with the Soviet threat to finance a $100-150 million program, which was a lot of money in those days for air defense. They paid for it to the United States. So, we were finally able to get the system in place even though they were in hardened sites.

There were also some financial misunderstandings. The Saudis were supposed to send the checks directly to the United States. They sent one by mistake directly to Jordan which disappeared. The Jordanians never sent it back. The Jordanians had been making so many aid requests that they told the Saudis, "Well, gee, we thought that was for one of our other aid..." So, they had a certain amount of chutzpah to pocket a check. No one pocketed it personally. It was used to build some grain silos so that Jordan would have a secure grain supply. But it does illustrate the kind of difficult things you get into when you try to do foreign policy on the cheap. It was the Saudis who were flush in the middle of all of their post-1974 oil increase that were able to do this. But this is a very brief encounter of a very long and painful episode.

I recall when the Jordanians said they were going to the Soviets, Kissinger instructed us to terminate all of our military visitors to Jordan. The Jordanians tried to lobby the AID administrator, Dan Parker, who came out on a visit to - Jordanian's five-year plan... So, it was about a two-year saga. Eventually, we got them in. I went around to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Iran to see how those programs were run so we could set our program up in a good way. But it was up and running. I don't recall whether it's ever been unhardened or not.

Q: What was the estimate that you were getting in when you got to Jordan of King Hussein and his stay-ability, his survival?

SUDDARTH: There was no doubt about his survivability. It was only if he got assassinated and he had very good security trained by the United States. His moment of truth was in 1970 when Arafat with Syrian and Iraqi support tried to take over Jordan. When he had a civil war and expelled Arafat and all of the PLO forces from Jordan, that's when he became quite secure. That was the point where the United States rallied with unusual aid to make sure that the army was taken care of and that the economy at least had a minimal amount of support. So, his survivability was never a question during the five and a half years I was in Jordan.

There was a Zarqa mutiny over pay early on in 1974 while King Hussein was on a visit to the United States. King Hussein went out and placated them. It was essentially over bread and butter issues - pay, housing, and that sort of thing. It could have been orchestrated by the Jordanians themselves. I think there was some discontent but there was a basic loyalty to the King in the armed forces. They were very careful to screen out the Palestinians from service, certainly in the officer corps and everything but the technical corps, where Palestinians were needed in the military services.

We did a lot of symbolic things, more than symbolic. For instance, I remember going out as charge d'affaires to meet the first C-5A that came in with 12 F-5 aircraft. We provided the Jordanians with a bunch of F-5 aircraft, a lot of artillery, a lot of armor stuff, after the 1973 War to make the military feel that they were more capable. Plus an air defense system.

Q: You were there 1974-1979.

SUDDARTH: Yes, that's right.

Q: How did we see the threat from Syria and Iraq at that time?

SUDDARTH: Syria was off and on. At one point, and it seems incredible (We didn't believe it at the time.), Tom Pickering would come back from talks with the prime minister and the King in early '75 saying, "The Jordanians are seriously considering a confederation with Syria." This is a Syria they had been at war with only five years earlier. It never went anywhere. King Hussein and Assad never got along and visits were few and far between. The prime minister had much better relations and has always been used with the Syrian connection. At that point also, ironically, the Jordanians were trying to sell us on an up and coming young man in Iraq named Saddam Hussein. We recognized that the Iraqis were trying very hard to get a relationship with the United States... Well, that's putting it a bit too mildly. The Jordanians were trying to promote one. But the Iraqis were trying to mend fences with the Jordanians and we knew that they were serious when they dusted off and spruced up the Hashemite tombs in Baghdad. They had assassinated one in 1958. But one of King Hussein's constant leitmotifs with us during this period was, Saddam Hussein is young, he's influenceable, he is possibly moderateable. They were trying very, very hard to get us to do business with them. We had relations that had been broken back in the '67 War. I done recall exactly when our first mission came back in, probably in 1974 or something like that. So, we were just reestablishing relations with Sadat and the Jordanians were pushing, pushing, pushing with Iraq for us to get to know Saddam, who at that point was number two. So, Jordanian-Iraqi relations were improving radically and they were becoming a major trading partner.

Q: Did you all consider the opening to the Soviet Union for missiles and air defense a serious one?

SUDDARTH: Yes and no. We thought Hussein was bargaining. We weren't sure that he would actually go for a system like that that would bring people in that were basically inimical to his regime. But I thought he used it pretty cleverly to get the attention of the United States. Whether he would have gone through with it or not I'm not certain.

Q: How about relations, if you can call it that, with the Israeli government? Was there an undercurrent that they were talking to each other and things were happening there or was it pretty much a cold freeze?

SUDDARTH: Yes. Well, we had indirect information that there were some contacts between Jordan and Israel. King Hussein before he died publicly admitting that he had spent many hours with Rabin and others, the top leadership in Israel, over many, many years. We had very close relations with King Hussein, but he didn't tell us everything by any means. He never lied and I've never known him to tell a falsehood or even to try to mislead. But he didn't tell you a lot of things. I've got to give a lecture (I'm looking forward to it.) at Oxford in the fall about U.S.-Jordanian relations. I'm starting to formulate some things in it. He was extremely guarded in discussions. I certainly never discussed with him his Israeli contacts, but it was known to us at least that they were occurring. It's now come out publicly on the BBC that King Hussein was mislead in the 1973 War by Sadat and by Assad. They didn't tell him that they were going to war until Assad mentioned something to him. King Hussein then admitted that he went over and talked with Golda Meir and told here that there was something brewing. Golda Meir dismissed it. This was one of the great scandals of the '73 War. The Israelis and the United States had sufficient feeling - and this is part of this book that we're putting out - that something might be going on, but they missed the fact that there was going to be a fully coordinated two-front war. King Hussein wasn't brought in until the very end and then he did tell the Israelis. Why they didn't act on it, I don't know.

There are two things we need to talk about on Jordan before we finish, probably some things about the King and Crown Prince. I got to know them both quite well. I admired both of them. But there is the Maqarin Dam episode and then there is the whole Camp David business. Then there are the revelations that he had a relationship with the CIA.

Q: We'll work on that.

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Today is August 14, 2000. Jordan, 1974-1979. Could you talk about what you observed and the evaluation of the King and the Crown Prince during that time?

SUDDARTH: The King was central. He was ruling under martial law ever since 1967 without parliament. So, in effect, there was very little political life as one normally knows it outside of the King and his immediate entourage. King Hussein is one of the great personalities I've met in public life. I think his public image is close to what he was like privately. He was a person of immense courtesy. I never knew him to tell a lie. He often didn't tell you the whole truth, but that's part of diplomacy. He was far less as he was characterized by his enemies an American puppet. He wasn't an American puppet. If I were to think about the relationship, I would say that culturally he was very much a man of the West and England, where he was schooled, but increasingly and particularly after his marriage to Queen Noor, but even before that, culturally he was moving toward the United States. He was a great movie watcher. He used to see a lot of American movies. He loved to visit the United States. I always think Britain was Greece to America's Rome. When he was upset with the United States, he would go cry on the shoulder of British prime minister, hoping that they would help. He was usually upset about two things. One was, we weren't doing enough in the peace process. Secondly, we weren't giving him enough aid. But personally, culturally, he was very much a man of the West. I think he spent most of his time speaking English even though his Arabic was superb, both colloquial and classical Arabic. But he was also very Arab. I think he managed to keep the two spheres pretty much apart. I'm giving a lecture on this at Oxford, so I've been thinking about it. I'm writing it now. I don't know of any instance where the United States ever interfered politically in Jordanian internal affairs. When I say the King managed to keep the two spheres apart, most of his discussions with me and with all of the other ambassadors that I've talked with were on foreign policy or on Jordan's domestic economic problems. But he really didn't share very much about Jordan's political problems, the problems with his parliament later on or how he was dealing. He had the chief of intelligence, who was sort of his chief operator along with the prime minister. But he very rarely talked, if ever, about Jordanian inner politics, how the Muslim Brothers were going to be used against the Baathis or the communists. We just didn't get into that. Nor did we ever get into questions of appointments. I don't know the United States ever suggesting that he should appoint so and so as prime minister or as foreign minister. I think he would have bitterly resented it if that had been the case. I think it's worthwhile clearing the air on that. So many of his detractors, particularly Nasser and the others, accused him of basically marching to the American drum.

Where our interests did coincide, we were both intensely interested in keeping the peace process alive. He was concerned that we weren't doing enough. On the other hand, the only time when he would balk was when there would be U.S. initiatives to get Jordan involved in public direct negotiations with Israel. Even though he knew that we knew that he was having clandestine, non-public, conversations starting back in the early '60s... It's public knowledge. He had a meeting in London with later President Herzog and his brother. After the '67 War, thousands of hours probably with the Israelis. Most of this, or all of it, is public knowledge. He met with Golda Meir and then he met with Rabin and Abba Eban. Those were the main interlocutors. Usually, he would fly in by helicopter somewhere. They were having these conversations. So, we had this curious situation of the King... The King would sometimes talk to us some about it, but often it was the Israelis telling us rather than King Hussein himself. But it was courageous. Had it become public knowledge, the King would have been under a lot of criticism and perhaps assassination attempts and so forth even though it was well-known within political circles from '67 on that he was having these conversations. When you would go up to the palace, I always said, it was like you were visiting a very successful dentist. He had several different dentist chairs that he was running to. You would be in an anteroom and there might be the chief of station of the British embassy in another anteroom and then some hardened Palestinians in another one who hated the U.S. His part of the job as chief of protocol was to keep all these people from seeing one another.

I'm talking about a broad swath of time, maybe even going beyond this '74-'79, which we can get to later. His conversations with other Arab leaders when it was emphasized that it should be confidential, it was confidential. For instance, we didn't know a lot about his relationship with Saddam in this period.

Q: Saddam by that time was in charge, had taken over, in Iraq?

SUDDARTH: Yes. As early as 1976, he was emerging. He was the number two under Aref. But the Jordanians, the King would come to us and say, "Hey, you should pay attention to this fellow, Saddam Hussein. He is on the up and coming. He is capable of moderating his views." That was a Jordanian view. We began to realize there was a rapprochement when this hardened Baathi socialist republican regime began to refurbish the Hashemite tombs in Baghdad, whom they had overthrown at an earlier age. King Hussein was very much trying to promote a relationship with him. That was a time when they started to buy a lot of American commercial products, a lot of cars, a lot of wheat and things of that sort. So, our commercial relationship started basically in that period. But he tended to be an advocate for Saddam without talking about the darker side of him.

On Syria, he actually went through a brief love affair with Assad in 1975. Ambassador Pickering would come back with these stories from Zaid Rifai, the prime minister, who some said was very pro-Syrian, that they were contemplating a confederation with Syria, which was hard to imagine, a Baathi regime and a monarchy. Nothing ever came of it, but the King under Rifai's influence worked very hard on developing a Syrian relationship. Talking about the man personally, I think we have to talk about his foreign policy. He had a poisonous relationship with Sadat, who used to call him the "dwarf king."

Q: Do you have any idea of the genesis of this?

SUDDARTH: I don't. Nasser didn't think very highly of King Hussein. Hussein was closer to the West. He didn't break off relations with the U.S. after the 1967 War. Sadat seemed to inherit this. But there was, I think, a feeling in Sadat after the '73 war that Egypt should be the primary interlocutor with the United States. I think what colored the whole Hussein relationship with the U.S. during that period was the feeling that Kissinger was trying to hold Hussein at bay while cementing a very strong relationship with Egypt, which eventuated in the Camp David Accord and the Egyptian-Israeli Treaty. The way he did this was, he was very good about keeping King Hussein briefed and so forth. But I think I went over the fact that the refusal to try to get Jordan involved in a disengagement agreement the way we did with Syria, Iraq, and Egypt during the 1974... There were a lot of things that we did in our policy that were surrogates for getting Jordan involved in the peace process. I think I mentioned earlier that the assessment of Kissinger and his staff was that when Rabin took over in 1974, he was too weak domestically, being a new prime minister... After Golda Meir nearly lost the 1973 War, the Israelis were very cautious. Therefore, they saw an opening with Egypt. Holding Jordan at bay, one way of doing that was, we agreed (Tom Pickering actually pushed it.) the idea of getting the Maqarin Dam going. This was a Dam on the Yarmuk River. There is a great flow down from the mountains in the winter which was lost into the Dead Sea. This dam would have allowed Jordan to use that water. The problem was that under international law, it required an agreement with the downstream riparian, mainly Israel. That was a condition. So, we spent a good bit of the time in the period with Cy Taubenblatt of AID actually going back and forth on a technical level between Jordan and Israel to try to work out Israeli agreement. In effect, the Israelis then did a fait accompli by building a series of siphons that siphoned off a lot of the water without asking Jordanian permission. Then the Syrians on their part had an agreement that during this honeymoon period of a possible confederation whereby they would allow Jordan to take the off take from some of the Golan Heights for this and then the Syrians began to build a series of little earth dams where at the end there wasn't too much water left for the Maqarin Dam, even though they had gotten a World Bank commitment to do that.

Our assessment, of course, is being proven today and that is that the Maqarin Dam was urgently needed because by the year 2000 Jordan would need virtually all of its water for municipal uses and here was this wonderful Jordan Valley project that we'd put in with orange groves and bananas and everything that was going to be in rough shape. What has happened is that the orange groves are still growing because they're owned by the power elite of the Kingdom. The Jordanians in the municipal area are having water rationing. It happens in agriculture and dominant areas. It's happening in Israel as well.

The other key relationship was with Saudi Arabia. The King would come to us when he really needed our help. He needed Saudi money. It was right after '74 that money was gushing into the oil rich countries faster than they could spend it. We were effective in getting the Saudis to finance a $500 million air defense scheme. The Hawk missiles... In effect, it was a humiliating thing. The Israelis objected even though the Jordanians had been completely nude of air cover in the 1973 War and desperately needed this. The Israelis opposed it and they got the U.S. Congress to insist that before they would allow the system to go out, it had to be rooted in concrete. The whole point of an air defense system is for it to be mobile, as Saddam showed in the Gulf War. But here they were sitting ducks to the Syrians or to the Israelis who would have taken them out in the first sign of any confrontation.

Q: These are Hawk anti-aircraft missiles.

SUDDARTH: Yes. But nevertheless, one of the major episodes in that five year period that I was in Jordan was the Hawk missile saga. The Jordanians went to the Soviets, who were ready to supply on very concessional terms a Soviet missile thing. I think that was one of the key things that brought us and the Congress around to providing the Hawk missiles. The Israelis didn't want anything over in Jordan. We went to Saudi Arabia and got the Saudis to finance a trust fund that would come directly to the United States and which would finance this thing. That worked quite well.

There was one amusing kind of footnote that plagued us for years. That is, the Saudis were supposed to send these checks of $100 million increments to the United States, but they sent one by mistake to Jordan that got gobbled up in the Jordanian treasury. I found out later that it was some lower level functionary in the Saudi government who just sent it there by mistake. The Jordanian prime minister, Badran, told me years later that he had checked and didn't find any discrepancy there. So, he put it in the Jordanian budget and they built a whole series of grain silos and imported a lot of grain so that they would have a strategic reserve of grain in case of war, deprivation, or something like that.

But then when I was in Saudi Arabia in the early '80s, the Saudis were coming to us saying, "Where is our $100 million?" We were going to the Jordanians and saying, "Where is the $100 million?" "Oops, nobody told us. We put that in our budget. We had these requests to Saudi Arabia that were outstanding. We thought it was a wonderful example of their munificence." That gave Tom Pickering and me a very hard couple of months when we were trying to deal with that.

But the Saudis were very helpful. They were giving Jordan a lot of money. The UAE started giving them money. This was in addition to the Khartoum payments after the 1967 War and the Khartoum Conference, where all of the oil rich countries were supposed to give the confrontation states money. They fulfilled that for a number of years, which helped Jordan quite a bit. They were always short of money to do their army.

Jordan developed over this period an oil rich mentality without having the oil reserves. So, later in the mid-'80s when the oil revenues began to fail, Jordan was really hit hard. King Hussein then put enormous pressure on us to try to make up the difference, which we were not able to do.

Just other amusing anecdotes. Sheikh Zayed in the newly independent UAE and Abu Dhabi had a very active ambassador named Mahdi Tajir in London. He was really the second most powerful guy. He was working out all of these big deals. One of them was to buy a whole bunch of Boeing 747s at the time. It turned out that he bought a whole assembly line, a whole series of 747s, and in a wonderful Arab gesture he gave numbers six and seven to King Hussein, he gave numbers eight and nine to Hafez al-Assad. So, that's the way the Jordanians got their 747s initially for the Royal Jordanian Airline. There are a lot of kind of amusing stories like that.

Kuwait had a poisonous relationship with them. At the time of Kissinger's shuttles, Kissinger was considering going to Kuwait and the Jordanians, I don't think they manufactured it, but they certainly amplified with a megaphone the fact that he wouldn't be safe in Kuwait because Kuwait was infested with PLO operatives. So, Kissinger ended up not going there.

Q: How about Iran and the Shah? Anything there?

SUDDARTH: Oh, yes, there is good stuff there, too. The King thought he had a great relationship with the Shah and he and Queen Aliyah used to go to Gstaad and go skiing with the Shah and the Shahbanou. But it soured and well before the Shah got in trouble. I remember the King telling us (He told Tom Pickering, the ambassador.) that he was never going to go anywhere with the Shah again. The Shah was getting delusions of grandeur. These stories would circulate around the palace. One of them was that the King, King Hussein, is a proletarian monarch, as contrasted to that peacock. The chief of protocol told me a story about how the major general who was his military aide would bring in the intelligence report for the Shah to read every day and would be required to stand at attention saluting for up to 40 minutes or an hour sometimes.

I was present when the Shah came in on a state visit in '74/'75. Jordan opened up... Once they recognized that the PLO was speaking for the Palestinians and not Jordan, they patched up relations with Syria, with all kinds of countries. But Iran had a relationship with them and helped them. Jordan sent a special forces unit to Oman, which participated along with combat units from Iran to quell the Dhofari rebellion against the Sultan back in the 1970s. So, they did a few things together.

I don't think the Shah ever gave King Hussein any significant aid. At the end, the King was disillusioned with him. But just to jump forward a bit, when the Shah came to the States for medical treatment after he had been forced to leave Iran and the Islamic Republic, King Hussein came to Washington. They were going up to New York to see the Shah. I was with David Newsom when we told the King - or maybe it was Bin Shaker, his chief of the army - that we preferred that he not call on the Shah in New York because we were emphasizing that this was not a political visit of the Shah; it was purely a humanitarian one, which the Jordanians were a little bit miffed about.

But talking about the King, he was immensely courteous. I wouldn't call him tightly strung. He didn't vent his anxiety on others, but you could see that he was under strain. He developed a heart fibrillation at this point. He spent a lot of time worrying about medical problems even when he was 38, little medical problems. He had a bad sinus problem, a skin rash, part of which caused him to grow a beard, part of which when you turn 40 as a good Muslim, you're supposed to grow a beard. He did that. But this fibrillation caused a lot of worry. But he always kept in very good shape.

He had banker's hours. You would get called at around noon. I don't see how people in the palace ever did it. They went without lunch. He would go from noon until about four seeing people. I would often, when Tom Pickering wasn't there, have to go up to see him. Kissinger kept him very much informed, so it would often be just a very brief message. I got to know the King as charge and as DCM, partly because all of these Kissinger visits (There were 6-12 over the 18 months that this was going on, the shuttle diplomacy.)... I wasn't in on the meetings with Kissinger, although I was later with Vance, but I would be present for dinner. I don't know whether I told the story that I later found out from Tom Pickering that Kissinger had commented, "Tom, there are too many embassy people at these social functions." He said, "But it's just me and my DCM." He said, "Exactly." So, Tom never told me, but I think he alluded to it. I continued to go, but every time Kissinger would look around, I would pick up my walkie talkie and pretend that I was a Secret Service agent. So, I was still able to get to know... I felt in a very privileged position. I was the same age as the King. Pickering was four years older, but we were both youthful. The King's best buddy, the prime minister, Sharif Zaid Bin Shaker, who I had gotten to know when I was in Political-Military Affairs... When the U.S. didn't meddle in his internal affairs, the one time on the economy, where we weighed in, was that we thought the Jordanians weren't giving us a good enough accounting for our military assistance. We were always harping on their budget. The King just got furious that we were getting involved in the Jordanian military budget. I think part of the reason is that the budget was obviously going also to fund the palace expenses and the general intelligence agency. So, they were obviously patting their budget a little bit. They didn't want a jeweler's eye looking at it. When he got upset, we pulled off. But during '72 and '73, there was a lot of bad blood because basically bureaucrats in the State Department were nickeling and diming him.

Q: What about the relationship with the King with his army?

SUDDARTH: The King is best understood as the commander in chief. I brought military briefers out a couple of times later. The national intelligence officer for military intelligence told me once that he took a briefing like an American general. The king thought of himself as a military leader and a strategist. But also, he had a deep personal relationship with his army. I've been out on exercises with him where he flew his own helicopter. The relationship between him and his army... Virtually anybody in that army, one had the impression, would lay down their life for the King. He worked at it. He would go out on exercises on an average once a month and was very much the soldier. There was a time when Abu Nidal staged a terrorist incident in the Intercontinental Hotel. As soon as the thing was quelled, King Hussein was there on the spot. It was the worst thing he could possibly do from a security viewpoint because often somebody could booby-trap something. He never talked to us about appointments in the army or anything like that. You may note that his falling out with the Crown Prince, which was public, we learned more from that public document two weeks before the King's death than he ever told us. We all suspected it inferentially, but when the Crown Prince decided to make a few changes in the military while King Hussein was back in Mayo, that was one of the things that tore the relationship. This was his thing. It was so delicate. There was an outstanding military officer who seemed politically ambitious that I got to know. King Hussein made very certain that this guy was sent out to be chief of staff for the fledgling UAE army and then he was given a series of ambassadorships. So, anybody who seemed to have coup potential was immediately shipped out. He realized that. That was his source of ultimate power. There was also very heavy screening. Palestinians weren't allowed into the combat arm. That was later relaxed because they were needed in the technical arm. That relationship with the army, with the air force, he had a similar relationship. But combat arms are different. He was very much the chief pilot also of the air force.

Q: I heard somebody saying that just before the Black September when the Palestinians seemed to be ruling the roost, they were flying a pair of women's panties from the antenna of a tank. In a way, it was sort of "put up or shut up" to the King, wasn't it?

SUDDARTH: Another characteristic of the King is that he tried never to make permanent enemies. He recognized that this would be a traumatic event for Jordan with half the population Palestinian. So, he held off until the very end. Sharif Zaid Bin Shaker, who was the chief of operations - at the time 34 years old - at least his wife claims credit that Bin Shocker pushed the King to move against them; it was not his instinct to do it. But it wasn't out of any lack of bravery. It was just that the King knew that he was in a weak position. As it proved, once he moved against them, you had Syria and Iraq that had units that were ready to engage on their behalf. The Israelis were enlisted to basically come to their aid with air power. But it wasn't any lack of personal courage. But the King had great difficulties. He remembered being rushed into the '67 War and what a disaster that was. Then in '73, they stayed out of the war except for a token unit simply because realized what can go wrong when you go into a war.

More on the King. We had a wonderful relationship at the American community school because his twin daughters attended. It took a certain amount of courage to send your kids to that. I remember his flying out and dropping in a helicopter one day when we were having a kind of "kids day." It was on a weekend. I took him around to show him things. You could get him out on the occasional U.S. Navy ship coming into Aqaba. The King was a very active guy. Kissinger came around. He flew him around in his helicopter to Jerash, to Petra...

On Kissinger's initial visit to Aqaba, the King flew up to welcome him in his own helicopter and did a dipsy doodle with the helicopter to welcome this 747 bringing Kissinger into Aqaba Airport.

He was a great water-skier, did a lot of judo, jiu-jitsu. He liked to race cars around. After the '70 shootout, his security got a lot tighter, so he didn't participate in rallies anymore. But he was still very active, very vigorous, right up until, I think, the end of his days.

Q: I would think there would be a tendency on Kissinger's part to take this guy who was younger than he was and try to overwhelm him. How did that work out?

SUDDARTH: I wasn't in the Kissinger meetings. I think that Kissinger treated him with great respect and great courtesy and would often to the dismay of staff and embassy take him aside at the beginning into a one on one and then they would come into the meetings together. Hussein treated Nixon as his equal. He was courteous to Kissinger, but when Nixon came to town, they really rolled out the red carpet for Nixon. After all, this was the first U.S. President ever to visit. He was always aiming his remarks at Nixon. Ford he met but he treated Kissinger with great courtesy, never any denigration of his role, but it was obvious that as a chief of state he was relating to the chief of state. We were good to him. Gerald Ford when we had the extra quarter in the fiscal year when we moved it from July to September sat down with the speaker of the House (McCormick) and gave an enormous wad of cash to Jordan. They had this extra quarter and this money to do something with. I figure that during Tom Pickering's tenure, we spent $1 billion of U.S. coin in Jordan partly as a surrogate for their not being involved in the peace process and largely to provide this air defense system. But we had major aid programs that were going. We were real nation builders in that country.

Q: How about the Crown Prince at the time, who did not become the king? I would think with King Hussein... The only time I met him was in 1958. He was a young kid. I was a young kid, too, a vice consul in Dhahran. But I remember thinking, "Gee, it's good to meet this guy. He's not going to be around long. He's going to be assassinated."

SUDDARTH: Oh, yes.

Q: Because of this being a very difficult and dangerous neighborhood, the Middle East at that time, and the King having all sorts of death threats, that you'd be looking at the Crown Prince and figuring out... Here was the guy who was going to take over.

SUDDARTH: I don't think the King ever thought he was going to die. He never conducted himself like that. But he was made the Crown Prince precisely because of the threat, because it should have gone to his oldest son. So, this was an exception from the constitution. The older brother, Mohammad, had clinical emotional problems that were well known. So, Crown Prince Hassan, even at age 18 or so, was made Crown Prince. He is, I think, 10 years younger than the King and myself, which meant when I was 38, he was 28 and beginning to feel his oats. There was a division. The King handled political-military things and the Crown Prince handled aid matters to the immense chagrin of the prime minister. Actually, Zaid Rifai was often plagued... All prime ministers were plagued by the interference of the Crown Prince on what they thought was their responsibility. But the Crown Prince was very good at getting money from donors. He was better educated than the King. The King was not an intellectual, had no intellectual aspirations, and the Crown Prince did. The King had gone to a military college, Sandhurst. The Crown Prince, although they both went to Harrow, went on to Oxford, and was a self-styled intellectual who used lots of big words. He was a wonderful fellow, very warm, in many ways warmer than the King. The King maintained his reserve with the foreigners so far as I know. The station chiefs had a good relationship with him, but it was much more subordinate. I think their role was portrayed as helping to assure his security. We trained the Jordanian security service and provided a lot of security equipment that helped to sustain his thing. It was said that his throne was saved (I think that's an exaggeration.) by somebody in the CIA station who alerted him to the Zarqa mutiny back in 1958 that he quelled and then a coup d'etat was stopped. But the Crown Prince you would see when you had something to do with the UNRWA aid program or some of our aid things, he did the Five Year Plan and that sort of thing. But they had an intimate brother to brother relationship that no one ever saw. The King was very, very private and very compartmentalized. I want to emphasize that. The Crown Prince was often not in the big meetings with the people coming through. He was in his sphere and the King was in his other. The Crown Prince was probably the only person in the Kingdom who could and did talk to the King frankly.

Q: Did the Americans go to the Crown Prince in order to get a message across?

SUDDARTH: No, we always went directly to the King. He was always accessible. Only when he didn't want to be accessible and that happened to me just once or twice.

We should talk about Camp David. This was a terrible thing. I should start on the CIA episode. You may recall that "The Washington Post" one day out of the clear blue sky issued an article which outlined all the money and aid that the CIA had given to King Hussein over the years. It was totally out of the blue and still no one quite understands the motivation. It was a new Jimmy Carter White House. There was a certain lilywhite purity that was involved. There was the Church (Senator Church) Committee that was talking about the inequities of the CIA and all of the things that they had done. But it was grossly unfair-

Q: It sounds like in the Washington context, this would be an Israeli supporters of Israel sort of liberal Jewish groups or something like that.

SUDDARTH: No, I wouldn't see that as behind it at all. We'd have to check the timing. Maybe Begin had taken over by that time, in which case there was a very different Israeli mentality. I wouldn't rule that out as a hypothesis. It occurred to me that it was more in the Church Committee mode than "let's shed a little light on some of these things that the CIA is doing." Somebody in the White House... I can't believe Jimmy Carter did it, but who knows?

Q: Yes. A new administration.

SUDDARTH: It's a new administration, but some of the grossly unfair part of it was that it listed $800,000 or something of subsidy a year, most of which was going (and the figures are probably wrong) for security. There was a permanent security guy attached to each of his two sons at boarding school in the US. But the diplomatic fallout of all of this was that Cyrus Vance arrived the very day or the day after this thing appeared in "The Washington Post" on his initial visit to King Hussein. We advised Vance to take the King aside and go over this with him and make an apology. Things went reasonably well. But that was the first thorny episode.

The next one was the Glassboro remarks of Jimmy Carter where he talked about how the Palestinians ought to have self-determination.

Q: Glassboro being a meeting in Glassboro, New Jersey.

SUDDARTH: It was someplace up in New England where he said this. Of course, King Hussein still hoped against hope that there could be a confederation of Jordan.

But to fast forward to Camp David, Jordan was written into the Camp David treaty by name several times without ever having been consulted by the U.S. or Sadat, so he was really browned off. Then I was charge during the period leading up to Camp David. Right after Camp David, Nick Veliotes was ambassador and we presented his credentials about the same day that Camp David was going to end. We predicted it was going to be a failure and then it was a success. The Jordanians were just furious because the West Bank had all this stuff that was supposed to be going on in autonomy negotiations. Then we tried to get Hussein to endorse Camp David. I remember taking a message to the King and he knew it was going to be a tough message. It was one of those messages where you've got the standard text and then the Secretary wrote a personal message saying, "You have got to impress on the King that if he doesn't join Camp David, there will be a severe effect on our bilateral relations." Somehow, the King got word that it was going to be a tough message, so I went to the prime minister's office to see him and I was received by the chief of the royal diwan, who said that the King was indisposed and that I should give him the message. So, it was such a tough message, I said, "Just to make certain that you get this thing, I'm going to read it word for word." I read it to him and left a copy of it with him. I said, "I also want to make this directly to the King." He said, "Well, I'm afraid that won't be possible." But that was one time and the other was during Jordanian disengagement in 1988. Those are the only two times. They were crucial times. I got around it on the second time. I had learned a few tricks by that time where the King knew a tough message was coming or that he was going to deliver a tough message and he didn't want to do it directly. But it was a very tough period after Camp David. There was a chill in relations, although Carter did receive the King later. After I came back, I went to the White House and they were kind enough to invite me, although I wasn't involved with Jordan anymore. Things got patched up a little bit. But it was also obvious - and this is important - that Hal Saunders, the assistant secretary for NEA, came through, still trying to sell Camp David after King Hussein had rejected it after Vance had come out. One of the things that blew the thing apart was, Vance made a very impassioned plea (and I was with him when he made it) to the King to join Camp David. He was fresh from three or four days out at Camp David. He said, "We have a letter from the Israelis there will be a moratorium on settlements during at least a three month period. We don't have the letter yet, but we're getting it." Of course, the letter never came. Begin could not agree to any moratorium on settlements. So, that really knocked the bottom out of our credibility in terms of what we could do on the West Bank. We had a legal agreement for getting out of Sinai. But it was only best efforts on the West Bank and it was a terrible flaw from the Arab point of view. It's what caused them to break relations with Sadat. He should never have signed, by their likes, an agreement without having a similar agreement for the West Bank. We're living with that still today. I've gotten off the point of the Crown Prince. I think that's about all I have to say.

But I would like to say on Maqarin Dam that the King never really followed the details. It was his prime minister that was doing it and very carefully. The King's point was, "We just want our legal rights." Legally, the Jordanians should have been able to build the dam. The Israelis were preventing them from doing that. We had to allocate the funds when I was working for the Under Secretary for the Maqarin Dam project because it was going nowhere to some emergency that came up back in 1980.

Q: Did Hussein follow relations? Was he watching the West Bank? Were we talking to him about what was happening on the West Bank during this time?

SUDDARTH: Oh, yes, that was a constant part of our dialogue. He up until 1988 maintained administrative authority over the West Bank. He appointed people who were handling the bureaucracy. Part of the Jordanian budget went for health, education, various other things on the West Bank. So, in a sense, it was a curious thing. The Israelis were occupying it. The bridges were open. This was Moshe Dayan's thing. So, under the legitimate reason - and this was the genius of Moshe Dayan so as not to have an explosion of family reunification, people were able to make visits from Jordan, people working in the Gulf (There were hundreds of thousands there.) could go back to the West Bank and visit relatives during the summer particularly. So, there was a huge flow back and forth. We were often involved with the Israelis trying to get them to keep the bridges open more on the Jordanian's behest. But that was a time when the PLO was making inroads. There was a lot of Saudi money going to build universities and things like that. But Jordan was keeping its hand in. That's about all I can say.

Q: With Camp David, there was a pretty close embargo on news out of Camp David. Were we having to say to the embassy, "We don't know what's happening now?"

SUDDARTH: Yes. That's why the King was furious. Sadat, according to the record now, assured Carter that he would be bringing Jordan on. They never had a call from Sadat. There was a complete news blackout to the point where when Nick Veliotes was up presenting his credentials and he and I were having discussions, I was introducing him to his new hosts and we were both saying, "It looks like it's going to fail." Then it didn't. We were totally out in the dark.

All this stuff came out on the wireless file before it came out in telegrams. We got a short telegram saying "Steep yourself in the wireless file and get up and start delivering it to your interlocutors." It wasn't quite a betrayal, but it came close to that. But as I was mentioning, Hal Saunders when he came around, King Hussein really told him the thing. He said, "If you can get the Saudis to agree, I will be happy to enter Camp David, to enter the process." Of course, Hal went to the Saudis and they said they couldn't agree, the PLO was the sole legitimate representative. I left Jordan in mid-1979 where our aid program was being cut back because of the downturn in bilateral relations. Camp David and the Egyptian track was going on. Jordan was basically out on a limb.

Q: In '79, where did you go?

SUDDARTH: I went and had a very fascinating two years - maybe the most fascinating of my whole time - it was a year and a half really - working for Under Secretary David Newsom. I was his executive assistant in charge of his office of about six officers.

Q: That was '79 to '81ish?

SUDDARTH: Yes, until '81.

Q: What was David Newsom and what were you doing for him?

SUDDARTH: He was the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. I had worked for him as his interpreter in Libya and then as the Libyan desk officer when he came back to be assistant secretary for African Affairs. So, I knew him very well. We got along well together. When he had the first opportunity after taking over, he asked me if I would come to work for him. There was a little footnote there. When the Shah fell and my very close friend and classmate (a dear friend; I'm the godfather of his oldest daughter, oldest child.), Warren Zimmerman, was asked to be charge d'affaires in Iran and turned it down... He had been the liaison with Yazdi in Paris with Khomeini. He would have done a wonderful job. He turned it down and said, "Look, I am a Europeanist. You need a Middle East expert and I have just the guy, my good buddy, Rocky." So, Dave Newsom called me after having selected me to be his assistant in his job as under secretary. He said, "Would you like to go to Iran as charge d'affaires?" Without hesitation, I said, "No, I wouldn't, on personal grounds. I have two children in high school. We're coming back and I am really needed back there." Fortunately, I turned it down before it got really into the personnel system. So, I never went to Teheran. Bruce Laingen went and the rest is history.

I started out in June of 1979. It was a roller coaster. It involved the Soviet brigade in Cuba, SALT II, and then the hostage crisis. Iran was big, big on the scope. I was doing most of his work to help him on Iran. Then the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, then the Solidarity movement in Poland, Tito's death, one thing after another. David was the under secretary. There was a long three-part series in "The New Yorker" which will detail this period far better than I could.

Q: It was focused on David Newsom.

SUDDARTH: Yes. It was called The Eye of the Storm by Robert Shaplen in late 1979/early 1980. Among my first duties were, I was briefed... I was running the office. I handled the intelligence brief where he was the point man on covert action and intelligence operations, which I can't really talk about but which were fascinating and which give a very clear view of the cutting edge of foreign policy. Where you're doing covert action, it requires a presidential finding... There was the Hughes-Ryan Act that Newsom was involved in where Congress had to be informed and voted during this period. But it showed where the President had a real interest and where the U.S. government had sufficient interest that it was willing to do clandestine, covert action. So, that was a real insight for me. But I also did the Middle East and I did the Political-Military thing. Then I would fill in... I did European Affairs when people would go on leave and whatnot. We had an outstanding staff of highly motivated, very, very able officers handpicked by Newsom. It was a really great experience to be on the seventh floor watching all of this.

Q: What was your impression of Newsom getting along with Cyrus Vance and then with Edward Muskie?

SUDDARTH: Even though I tried to sit in on staff meetings, Peter Tarnoff was a very zealous executive secretary. He made sure nobody got in close except him and his two deputies. So, my relationship was essentially to Newsom and to Tarnoff and the staff. I only saw Vance two or three times in meetings. Christopher I saw a few times.

Q: He was the deputy secretary.

SUDDARTH: Yes. He had a very close and admiring relationship with David Newsom. They both had very clear, precise, highly focused minds. David used to characterize himself as the utility infielder of the seventh floor, with his vast experience. He would often be thrown into a problem, a White House meeting, with the barest of guidance and to try to field some rather important interagency foreign policy questions where increasingly these decisions were being made. But his relationship with Vance was respectful. Vance respected Newsom's views, but I don't think it was close. Newsom came after Phil Habib, who had had a heart attack, who had worked with Vance very closely in Paris and Vietnam Talks. Phil was the big, warm kind of cuddly ethnic that was the exact opposite of Vance.

Q: David Newsom was not a warm personality.

SUDDARTH: He was a much more professional, careful, cautious, quintessential professional and not an emotional type at all. In many ways, he and Vance were very similar. But Vance often needed somebody to lighten up the mood. Holbrooke did that a little bit. Habib had done that before. So, Newsom had a much closer relationship with Christopher. Newsom used to tell me (He had times when he positively disliked the job, when he would get thrown at the last minute something and he'd have to deal with it.), "I know why I'm really having trouble coming to terms with this job. I was never a DCM." He got thrown the messy stuff and he was such a virtuoso and people had such confidence in him - in the interagency way, too; he had always made a point of having good relations with both the CIA and with the Defense Department - but the Iran thing complicated relationships. It complicated things with Brzezinski, who came to go out of his way to slam Newsom. I think that what it was - and this would have to be corroborated by others - was that even though Newsom was very, very careful with his staff... Even considering the very close relationship I had with him, he never told tales out of school and he never told anything that could be amplified by staff.

Another thing that really limited the staff at this point, during the '70s because of a change in ethos... You used to be able to listen on the phone when your principal was talking to somebody. You were encouraged to do that. By that time, it wasn't done. Vance ordered personally that no one should monitor a conversation without... So, we were kind of in the dark. So, we only knew what Newsom could tell us or what we could glean by running around the rest of the seventh floor. He was very careful to keep a disciplined staff. He knew that a staff has a tendency to magnify what the principal said. So, he was very discrete about all this. I firmly believe that he had cautioned against admitting the Shah to the United States on ground that the embassy had already been overrun in early 1979. The Iranians rallied and managed to get these people out. He told me recently that... (I introduced him when he just got this big award from AFSA for lifetime contribution to diplomacy.) He said, "I don't want to detract from Hal Saunders and Henry Precht. Henry Precht was the head of the Iranian Working Group. They were the ones who were also saying, "For God's sake, do not admit the Shah."

Q: I've recently interviewed Henry Precht. He was saying that he was getting stuff from Brzezinski almost saying, "Oh, you're the guy who's lousing up our relations with Iran" and that Brzezinski was pushing hard for taking a stronger, supportive line with the Shah and that Precht was almost considered the enemy.

SUDDARTH: That was an earlier period than when I came in, but all the literature and everybody you talk to, including Vic Tomseth, with whom I spent a year in the Senior Seminar, who was political counselor, said that ever since they had that big riot and when blood was spilled in early 1978, the Shah could not have used military force. That was the view of the ambassador, it was the view of the State Department. Brzezinski thought the military could stage a coup which would allow the Shah to come back in some vague form. That's what was the beginning of the bad blood. Newsom came in in the middle of all that. Brzezinski had already fingered Henry Precht as the bad guy in all of that. But there was great strain between Vance and Brzezinski on this.

In background, I was put in charge of the Shah dossier for Newsom. I was briefed on our attempts to find him refuge in various Caribbean islands. The Shah told us, "I don't like islands." Then Morocco, of course, Dick Parker was kicked out as ambassador when we told King Hassan that we couldn't provide political asylum for the Shah in the United States. He was in Mexico. Then we got word through David Rockefeller, who was very close to the Shah, and Joe Reed, who was working for Rockefeller, that the Shah was sick with lymphoma. We found out that he had been treated for six years by French physicians without anyone ever knowing about it. So, the problem was what to do.

Concurrently at this time, Brzezinski had gone to some kind of a summit meeting of world leaders in Algiers and had met with Bazargan, the moderate civilian prime minister, which had began in retrospect to get Khomeini's suspicions up that maybe we were trying to do a civilian coup against the clerical leadership. So that was sort of the background. But I remember one fateful weekend coming in. We worked all Saturday and Sunday to do a memo to the White House for their decision. We had Dr. Dustin, who was the head of Med. (This is all in the public record, so I wont go into it except as background.) get in touch with the physicians who were treating the Shah, who had been sent down by Rockefeller from Sloan Kettering to Cuernavaca. Their diagnosis was that he definitely had a lymphoma condition which required treatment in the United States. Dr. Dustin took this information and wrote a medical memo to Newsom. Newsom didn't want to influence the decision one way or the other because he was already under a cloud and I think he had instructions from Vance, "Let's just do this thing neutrally and pass the buck to the White House." We put just the doctor's report on the covering memorandum. The memorandum also spelled out the problems that could occur, the risks and so forth. We sent it up to the Executive Secretariat. Then Peter Tarnoff was unhappy because it was kind of a medicalese memorandum, which was the key thing. Newsom didn't want to toy with the medical judgement. So, Tarnoff had one of his subordinates rewrite this thing in a memo form as an attachment. So, David Rockefeller, John McCloy, and Henry Kissinger were putting immense pressure on Carter and Brzezinski to bring the Shah in. You could imagine that maybe Rockefeller's physicians might have that kind of tendency, too. So, in effect, it was approved. Then the Shah was admitted. We then sent a message out to our embassy in Teheran. At this point, Newsom got sick. He had a physical collapse from, I think, the strain of working in the job and was in Sibley Hospital. I was having to be David Newsom. Believe me, that was a tough week for me. I had to write several messages.

By this time, we weren't referring to NEA at all except on the sly or when we were writing this memo, I had Henry Precht come up. I told him what we were going to do. I said, "I need to have your help on some of the things that we need done." I worked his thoughts about the risks into the memo. But one of the key things was asking the foreign minister to guarantee the security of the embassy. The irony was that Henry Precht was going out on a consultation at exactly the same time. He got there to deliver the message that he had helped me to prepare to Yazdi and Yazdi had just said, "We will take care of everything," even though they were terribly unhappy about this. I remember writing a couple of message where I got a little bit tough with the Iranians. Newsom in his very understated way when he came back, there were two underlines under these tough things. Newsom had a genius for putting a tough message in a velvet glove. He would have had the art to put this in a way that would have gotten the same point across without all of the bristles that I put in it. So, that's the only criticism I had. But I remember having to go out to Sibley Hospital to brief Newsom and to get some guidance from him and then seeing Vance and going from Vance to Newsom and back. It was a very, very tough couple of weeks for me. But Newsom got back just before the embassy was taken over. I remember coming in on a Sunday morning. We all pulled weekend duty. I came in feeling very virtuous at 8:00 am. I would usually call Newsom and brief him or else go out and see him and brief him on stuff that had come in. It was his one day off and Vance's one day off. I got in to find a David Newsom who had been in all night. The embassy had just been taken over.

Q: When the embassy was taken over, was the feeling that this was going to be a repeat of the spring or late winter of the same year, of '79, when it was taken over and then gradually they got rid of the takeoverers?

SUDDARTH: Yes, of course, that was the thing for the first couple of days, but then when it went on and on and then Khomeini's son got involved and then Khomeini made some statements, we realized we had a really serious crisis on our hands. This got elevated to the White House and to Vance, so Newsom was heavily involved. But up until that point, he had been the point man. But when it became a national disaster, we had Hamilton Jordan who was running out with disguises we later found out to meet with intermediaries in Paris. There were all sorts of things going on.

Q: Did you have a feeling that with Brzezinski pushing very hard for this, Kissinger pushing hard, towards the policy, which led to the disaster, the taking over, there was an attempt by these people who were very political to put the blame on the Foreign Service for this?

SUDDARTH: Kissinger was very artful about it. He wrote a public op-ed piece where he talked about all the reasons why we should be loyal to the allies. Then he said, "Of course, I have no basis for any security assessment of my own." So, my feeling is that the administration did it reluctantly under pressure against their better judgement, knowing that there was a risk. I felt a palpable tingling in my body that I only get when I feel that I'm doing something wrong or that there is a great risk. I wrote this memorandum that Newsom worked over. It was almost a satanic feeling that you're embarked on a course of great peril. It wasn't anxiety. It was more diabolical than that. We're really going to try to put one over on the Iranians, not that we had any ulterior political motive... I'm convinced nobody in authority thought we would use this as a way of rehabilitating the Shah and sending him back. It was purely for humanitarian motives.

Q: By this time, was it pretty well understood the Shah was literally a dying force?

SUDDARTH: I think we had come to accept the Islamic Republic. So, there may have been some elements, but I didn't see them as being prominent at all. Politically, the Shah was dead as far as everybody I knew. It was only a question of loyalty in his critical moments for his health. In retrospect, I think he could have been treated just as well in Mexico.

Q: I remember feeling at the time that our prestige was on the line.

SUDDARTH: Yes, right.

Q: It was sort of the thing that a good American would do.

SUDDARTH: Yes, right. The feeling was, nobody can compete with American medicine and certainly not Mexico. So, yes, that was an element in it. It turned out that the security situation... Khomeini was far less secure than we thought and he seized on this. He still had a provisional government. He seized on this as a way of consolidating his influence.

Q: I think this might be a good time to stop. We'll pick this up the next time.

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Today is September 26, 2000. Before we get going on this, off-mike, we've been talking a bit about John Gunther Dean, with whom I've just finished a rather long series of interviews. Could you give me your impressions that you got through David Newsom, who was dealing with him at the time?

SUDDARTH: I hope he flew you to Paris, by the way.

Q: No, he came here. But I'm going to have dinner with him in Paris next month.

SUDDARTH: I'm a great admirer of John Gunther Dean. He was my first boss. He was the desk officer and had been charge to open up Mali. I have a great respect for him. I recall when he was ambassador to Lebanon nothing much was going on, although there was an assassination attempt at one point against him. David Newsom told me on one consultation by John Dean when he came back that he wished every American ambassador had the same approach that Dean did. Dean had one small but highly focused request and that was, he wanted to see the Secretary of State and he wanted to get an affirmation that the United States truly supported Lebanese political independence and territorial integrity. They were very much afraid at that time that the Syrians were going to be there forever.

Dean was able to see either Vance of Muskie and to get indeed that assurance. I don't believe it was in writing, but he took it back orally and used it with the president and the prime minister.

Similarly, this is more hearsay, but he did the same thing with respect to India when he was ambassador. He had one specific thing, a big thing, and very difficult odds. I think it was in the beginning of the Reagan administration when one of its major goals was to cut off high tech exports to the Soviet Union and its friends and allies, of whom India was counted one. Eventually, he got a supercomputer release for India with all kinds of assurances that it would not be used in any nuclear things and whatnot. I think those are both good examples of the way a really fine ambassador can, recognizing the limitations of his power, but recognizing that there is some power there as well, he can very often achieve something that wouldn't have otherwise been achievable.

Q: Let's move on to Afghanistan. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December of 1979. How did that hit the Department? Do you recall? Obviously, we were very much involved in the aftermath of this, but at the time, was this a surprise?

SUDDARTH: Yes.

Q: I've never really understood...

SUDDARTH: It's one of those things that when you think about it, you wonder how in the world did I, for instance, as a staffer, not question this more. But I do recall that there was a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. I think there was a coup.

Q: It was a coup against really communist leaders.

SUDDARTH: Yes, that's right. I think the unfavored leader emerged. The first sign that we saw was the beginning of the evacuation of dependents. People concluded... I remember getting detailed briefings... Under Secretary Newsom and I was with him by INR based on all our best intelligence and everything which came to the conclusion that this was merely safeguarding the dependents of Russians, Soviets, in Afghanistan. Lo and behold, it was a prelude to a massive invasion. Nobody was prepared for that. As I recall, Jimmy Carter made himself look a little silly by saying that, "Gee, I never thought the Soviets would do a thing like that. This really changed my mind about the Soviets." I would say that in the always rivalry or generally perpetual rivalry between the Secretary of State and the national security advisor, this was the final nail in Vance's coffin. He with Marshall Schulman, who was a very liberal, Columbia professor, Soviet expert, were trying the soft approach to the Soviets - SALT II, all that stuff. Brzezinski being a good middle European who had suffered took an opposite attack and Brzezinski turned out to be vindicated. From that moment on, Vance's stock began to fall. This brought on a number of important things. The invasion occurred. We were powerless to do anything about it. But there was a multipronged response.

Number one, the Carter Doctrine was announced, to my mind with virtually no reference to the State Department. Newsom and I were on our way to London on our way to see Ceausescu, when we heard over the radio that the Carter Doctrine had been announced-

Q: The Carter Doctrine being what?

SUDDARTH: The Carter Doctrine said that any hostile power that attempts to take over the Persian Gulf will be met by, we will consider this a vital interest and we will respond accordingly, including militarily. Of course, there was a double whammy here. There was first the Iranian situation. The policeman in the Gulf was gone with the Shah. Then the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. You had the old dreams of a warm water port idea that the Russians always wanted. Along with that was the major push to get military bases throughout the area. That was the moment when...

What happened in the national security mechanism was... PRG, a policy review group, was chaired by the Secretary of State. But a crisis was chaired by the national security advisor, who was Brzezinski. So, Brzezinski declared everything in crisis, so all the meetings over at the White House took place under him. Therefore either Christopher or Newsom (Newsom went to a lot of them.) would go. So, in effect, he treated the whole business of getting bases around the area as a crisis. There was a special crisis group.

Reg Bartholomew of PM was given the responsibility of finding these bases. He was working closely with Newsom. We tried to get Somalia as a rear basing thing. We tried to get Oman. We tried to get rear basing facilities in Egypt, most of which we were able to do. We worked heavily on Saudi Arabia for contingency planning. We did a lot. We also did an unpublicized thing at the time of establishing seven maritime power, a liaison between the commanders, the CNOs, of these seven western navies who would police the Gulf under our primus inter pares role. Getting these bases took a lot of time and effort over several months and even years.

There was the whole question of sanctions. We cut off wheat sales to the Soviet Union. We tried to get everybody else and were relatively successful, although I can remember one rather poignant cable when the generals were in charge of Argentina. Our ambassador had gone in. This was at the time of the "disappeared people" and of a pretty fascistic government in Argentina. Our ambassador went in to ask them to cut off their sales of wheat. The general said, "When you lift your heavy rhetoric on our human rights, we'll consider that." So, that really went nowhere.

There was the Olympics that were canceled, where Carter came under a lot of fire from U.S. athletics.

Q: Did David Newsom get involved in putting pressure on other countries?

SUDDARTH: Yes, there was a worldwide campaign. Newsom was given the charge of coordinating the economic and political sanctions against the Soviet Union. Dean Hinton was the very active and very able assistant secretary for Economic Affairs. I'm vague on what we did, but there was an orchestration of a whole set of measures. My recollection is that generally the Europeans said, "U.S., you do the heavy lifting on the economic and we're a mercantile tradition and, therefore, don't get too much in our way" dealing with the Soviet Union in our traditional way. People who are experts... I was in and out of this, so I remember less of the details.

Then there was another interesting footnote on this. We decided that we would put the pressure on them about the Soviet presence in Cuba. So, Newsom was in charge of orchestrating a worldwide public information campaign about the extent of Soviet control of Cuba, the extent to which Cubans were meddling in Africa with Soviet backing, in Latin America, and so forth and so on. Kind of an interesting proactive approach that the Policy Planning staff coordinated under Newsom's control.

Solidarity. All I remember is that it was emerging. It was a great fact and it was also helpful to put that tweak in those twist the lion's tale of the Soviet Union.

Q: Had there been an effort before because of Vance and the proclivities of Carter to try to do business with the Soviets at the beginning? These efforts, working with Solidarnosc, basically after the Afghan thing when we no longer were trying to be Mr. Nice Guy.

SUDDARTH: Yes, that's right. I think their instincts were liberal. I don't think they were realpolitikan politicians the way that Kissinger was. I think the emergence of a genuinely important political movement in the labor movement in Poland was something that would have attracted that. Had push come to shove with the Soviets, I don't know what the reaction would have been.

The other event was the death of Tito. George Vest was in charge of European Affairs. Working closely with George, we were very well prepared. We had a canned statement, an obituary, on his death. The only thing I remember was, there was a concern, a contingency planning that the Soviets might invade. They had invaded Afghanistan, after all. Here's in another refractory holdout from the Soviet system. What impressed us all was the incredible competence and strength of the Yugoslav army. They had taken pride in what they did in World War II. Each of the provinces was organized into a kind of self-contained but carefully coordinated force where they could use the mountains, they could really give the Soviets a hell of a fight if they came in, and that could have been a deterrent in addition to having another front that the Soviets were worried about.

Another thing on Afghanistan. We had already started pushing the Muslim button when the embassy takeover occurred. The embassy in Teheran was taken over in early November and the Soviet invasion was in late December. So, Carter is looking very, very bad. There was tremendous... Then you had the Soviet Brigade. That was a little thing. But there was a lot of concern that the elections and all kinds of things... The Republicans were making great strides in saying that Carter was losing the world to the Soviets. So, there was a really big campaign.

We in the Teheran embassy takeover started to work through Muslim intermediaries. So, with that as a background, we made a major campaign of the Conference of the OIC, which is the worldwide Islamic organization at a chief of state level, for them to condemn the Soviet invasion. It was then that we started enlisting mujaheddin outsiders to go and to oppose this. I think our major effort occurred under Reagan, where we spent really big bucks. But we again changed a lot of our policies. Before that, we had been putting pressure on Pakistan because of its incipient nuclear program. That once again tipped the scales, so we started major support and rapprochement with Pakistan to try to find ways of supporting the Afghan rebels.

I have to say, skipping ahead a good bit, that I never thought that the Afghan rebels would be able to unseat the great Soviet Union. It's a tribute to the people that worked very patiently to recognize that the Afghans were very hearty warrior people who could stand a lot of privation. Then with Ron Spiers, who made the suggestion when he was ambassador to Pakistan to equip them with Stinger missiles. I'm jumping ahead a few years. But I think that's about all I can recall in that period.

Q: Was it something that was understood by everybody that really the State Department had lost ground in catching the ear of the President and in power over being a little too nice to the Soviet Union (They turned around and bit us.), and that Brzezinski was sort of on top?

SUDDARTH: Yes. That is what I was trying to get at before. Through this series of something like special crisis meetings (SSCs). I remember Dale Vesser, who was a young brigadier that I knew working on the NSC, coming over and browbeating NEA. I came down from Newsom's office. It was about "Get with the program here. We are going after these bases. We're going after the Soviets. We want everybody to get on board." There was concern that with the power play, the halls were saying, "Oh, my goodness, it's all gone over to the NSC." Reg Bartholomew had been working for Brzezinski and he was brought over to the State Department to be head of Political-Military Affairs. So, Reg would go out to Oman negotiating directly. He would be calling back to Brzezinski often. Under Shultz, that couldn't happen, but it was obvious that things had changed and had moved very much in that direction.

We did a lot of contingency planning about the Soviets. PM did some wonderful work, Arnie Kanter and David Gompert, who both went on to great careers. Arnie became under secretary and David is head of European Affairs at Rand. They did brilliant, brilliant work in devising a strategy for both the Iranian and the Soviet problems. To that extent, a lot of the good planning and staff work still was done in the State Department, unlike later on, where separate papers got written. In that era, the State Department was still pushing the paper, although I can recall somebody calling over once saying, "Hey, when is that memo coming over to the White House so I can put mine on top of it?" One of the staffers...

Q: I understood that - I can't remember who it was - was saying that one of his great contributions when basically had your job or one of those jobs was devising a blank piece of paper which meant that they would have to type up the whole damn thing. They had been taking just the top copy and putting their thing on it. So, you had to either do the whole thing or it showed its origin.

SUDDARTH: Such is the trivia that makes important things happen.

Q: What about the EUR, the SOV section? What were they saying about Soviet intentions? You had a really elderly and - although we didn't know it - essentially a dying Politburo at the time. This move into Afghanistan seemed not to make an awful lot of sense unless they were really on the move. What were you getting from the analysis from the Soviet side, our people?

SUDDARTH: I don't have firm things on that. I think people were startled when they moved into Afghanistan. A lot of backpedaling started to occur. I don't think anybody - I could be wrong - maybe Marshall Shuman thought there was some possibility of getting the Soviets to move out. Again, the White House was calling the shots. I don't recall the State Department being a major player in the movement of the change of policy. Again, I think Vance recognized that circumstances had changed. His approach was no longer valid. It was one of the things that drove him out of government eventually.

Q: Did you get involved in the negotiations that went on with our hostages in Teheran?

SUDDARTH: Newsom was very much involved when we got to the point of real seriousness, of starting to write out documents. Of course, Christopher and Hal Saunders went to Algeria. I remember hearing from the people that were there... I know Hal Saunders said how competent the Algerian lawyers were in terms of setting up these complicated escrow accounts, in terms of dealing with the Iranians. Newsom chaired many, many meetings where we would ring our hands looking at the possibility of intermediaries. There were several shady intermediaries meeting in Paris. We also later learned that Hamilton Jordan had put on a CIA disguise with whiskers and gone to Paris to meet with them. So, without it being known to us, there was a lot of White House interference.

I also remember the failed attempt at the Desert One. Newsom happened to be on a trip. I remember getting a call on our red phone from an Admiral over at the JCS. I told him that Newsom wasn't there and suggested that he talk to Christopher. So, looking back, that was the origin of the failed attempt, which again made Carter look very, very bad. I think that the hostage business really cost him the election.

Q: I do, too.

SUDDARTH: There were many things. You remember your own emotions. In February of 1980 or thereabouts, there was an intermediaries in Paris. I didn't go. Somebody went. Maybe Hal Saunders. We thought there was going to be a chance of breaking through. It didn't work.

I felt there was a real creative effort made to get Islamic intermediaries to intervene. We were dealing with a lot of Iranian clerics in Europe - Beheshti. We may have even been using Khatami, the current president, at that time to try to get back to Khomeini. The civilians weren't at all effective in the Iranian government. We used Sadiq al Mahdi, who was a respected cleric and later president, I believe, of Sudan, and the Islamic Council to try to counsel patients. Then we orchestrated Bob Owens, who had just come on as legal advisor, a great guy, very smart, from Covington and Burling. His first case was to try to work out legal means of justifying our actions on the Iranian thing. I remember Bob being dressed up in tails for the World Court (I still have a picture of him.)... We helped prepare him to argue the case in the international court of the Hague. This is when an under secretary and his job are really exciting. This was such a big thing that Newsom was orchestrating this stuff, being very able and knowing the bureaucracy. This multifaceted campaign. We had a legal campaign, an Islamic campaign, an economic campaign, a political-diplomatic campaign, everything but a military campaign. This was a very exciting period.

I also remember that - and this gives indirect credence to the October surprise theory that Gary Sick has written up - that is that Casey had gone and met with intermediaries of Iran in October and told them "Do not release the hostages until after the election." I don't know whether it's true or not, but all I know is that all of the indications were pointing to the fact that something was going to happen before the elections. I had travel orders to go to Frankfurt - I've still kept a copy of it - on October 25th, something like that, to proceed to Frankfurt to collect the hostages. I was going to be with Newsom to do that. It never happened. I had my bags packed and was ready to go and then suddenly it got turned off by the Iranians. So, what were they doing? What caused that to happen? I don't know. All I can say is that all of the indications up until the end of October were leading to that.

Q: In my interview with John Gunther Dean, who was ambassador to Lebanon during this period, he said that he had talked to Arafat under instructions. Arafat had helped negotiate the release of some of the hostages - women, somebody who was ill, I think some minorities (African-Americans). And then after that was over, Arafat at one point said to him, "Well, aren't you going to ask for more?" Dean said he went back to the Department and got a real silence. Do you have anything to shed light on that at all?

SUDDARTH: No. I don't recall that. I don't have any knowledge of that. I can speculate. I recall that that summer or the summer of 1980 that Andy Young was kicked out as UN ambassador for talking with Terzi, the PLO representative, and lying about it, according to what I heard. I really don't know. I don't have anything further on that.

We were spending a lot of time trying to figure out what was really going on in Iran at the time and what Khomeini was up to and sending a number of messages through the Swiss. I remember carrying a lot of messages... I think I talked about that the last time.

I should talk about Ceausescu. This was interesting. I had never been the Eastern Europe before. It was a wonderful experience for me. Newsom's mission was to go out and to congratulate him for having criticized the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. That was his purpose. We went out there. Rudy Aggrey was our ambassador and was very kind to us. We went in and it was just Newsom, myself, and the ambassador. I was taking the notes. It was Ceausescu perhaps with one person as an interpreter and Newsom did this brilliant tour d'horizon. He had a wonderful ability to talk to sovereigns at the level of generality and of majesty that they like to conduct without seeming majestic himself. But he obviously hit if off very well with Ceausescu. There was a tour d'horizon. I don't recall the substance. I wrote up the cable and we sent it in. But I think Ceausescu appreciated the gesture and we definitely appreciated the fact that there was a little fissure there in the Soviet Bloc. We stopped back through Austria. That was the only mission we had on that particular mission.

But I recall Newsom, who was so perceptive about things, saying, "Did you notice when we came up to the palace there were two imperial guards and nobody else? In an American system, you go into the White House and many people are milling around and there are special interest groups, NGOs, political figures. You can tell a real dictatorship." That certainly showed it to be the case.

Romania I just recall as one big low cost housing apartment building after the other with heavy pollution and people that talked the party line. I made one of the classic social faux pas when they took us to a nice restaurant and we heard this wonderful sort of gypsy music and I said, "Oh, that's wonderful Hungarian music you have there." They said, "We're the ones that invented it. The Hungarians took credit for it. This is Romanian music."

Q: The Reagan administration came in in '81. Is that when you moved on?

SUDDARTH: Yes, but there was an interesting period when Newsom was the Secretary of State Ad Interim. Muskie left right after the election. So, for a couple of months there, Newsom was the Secretary of State and dealing with a transition team which was quite interesting.

Q: Yes. Could you talk about that, please?

SUDDARTH: Bob Neumann was reputed to head the transition team, but it clearly quickly became apparent that a triumvirate of Richard Burke, Paul Wolfowitz, Bud McFarland, and a fellow named Woody Goldberg were there real powers. Dealing with them was interesting. I do recall that on the day of the inauguration, I had to carry a whole bunch of briefing papers over to Richard Allen, who was the NSC advisor, and handed them to him on the steps of Blair House. So, it was wonderful to feel a peaceful transition occurring in the making. Of course, the drama of the inauguration was the fact that the hostages hadn't been released. Precisely at the moment of the handover, the swearing in, of Ronald Reagan, the hostages were released. I remember racing to the Operations Center to get news together to Newsom, who was at the inauguration. Gary Sick was doing the same thing with Carter. Then we were involved in the early days of bringing the hostages back. I remember, somebody had a great idea. I didn't go with Newsom, but he went to Frankfurt to pick them up, but they took them to Thayer Hall at West Point, which was wonderful symbolic way of having them come to a place and rest for a few days. Then I remember how wonderful Bruce Laingen was on the steps of the White House, on the lawn, talking about things.

Another interesting aspect was, the Republicans came in and here the hostages were released. I think more out of posturing than anything else, they convoked a meeting and Fred Hodsoll, who was over at the White House and later became head or number two of OMB, came over. Newsom chaired a meeting where they reviewed the Algiers Agreement with the distinct threat that having been done by those soft Democrats, we may just cancel this whole thing now that we've got our hostages back. Then they looked through the agreement and they saw that it was a pretty fair thing. There were a lot of advantages to the United States in the orderly settlement of these millions of dollars of claims by U.S. companies, most of which have now been settled. There would have been a firestorm in the business community if they had repudiated this agreement. So, that went along.

Then Newsom was leaving. He was trying hard to get me a good new job. Walter Stoessel took over for Newsom and wanted me to stay on as executive assistant. Then suddenly, a complete reversal of course, the new Administration had decided to get rid of the "plum jobs." So, they cleaned out the senior staff of the whole seventh floor. I was told, "You are being replaced." Some of the other staffers stayed on, but anybody who had a visible... I was executive assistant, so I joined the plumb jobs and I figured "What am I going to do?" I was going into the Senior Seminar the next year. So, I had four or five months in February...

I said, "Well, I've always wanted to learn Spanish." I went over and started learning Spanish. Then I got a call from Arnie Raphel, who was Vance's and Muskie's special assistant. He said, "How did you work that out?" He had been sacked. Reg Bartholomew over at PM was sacked. Tom Pickering, who was OES... Tom called and said, "How was this managed?" So, we all ended up over at the FSI. They have gone on to much more distinguished careers than I have, but there were about 12 guys who thought we were pretty hot shots learning new foreign languages.

Q: Were you aware of the blood in the corridors in the ARA Bureau? It's almost as though Latin American Affairs was turned over to the right wing of the Republican Party, some raw meat to make Jesse Helms and company happy while Haig went about the normal business of continuation.

SUDDARTH: Bill Bowdler, who was the assistant secretary, was really unceremoniously kicked out. I think he was told "Clear your desk. You're out immediately." We were held responsible for Nicaragua. I think I mentioned my first week on the job, I saw these cables coming in from Nicaragua that Somoza was out and the Guardia National was taking over. These obscure people were taking over. We sort of thought it would be another banana republic. Little did we know it would be 10 years and become a major issue in the United States in our foreign policy. Carter really sat hard on Latin America and human rights. I should say I recall staffers having Jean Kirkpatrick's article in "Foreign Affairs" or something talking about how Carter had overdone human rights. Staffers would pull this out when the Republican transition team would come and say, "Hey, have you read this?" I think there was a feeling that Carter had gone a little bit overboard in human rights. It was particularly true in Latin America. I think we canceled the UNITAS maneuvers for Latin America because of human rights concerns.

Q: I was in Seoul, Korea at the time and we were quite nervous about Carter talking about pulling out the 2nd Division, which essentially meant that it would be South Korea versus North Korean troops on the border. This struck us as a really very dangerous situation.

SUDDARTH: Well, he pulled back from that.

Q: This was one of those things, but you never knew.

SUDDARTH: In retrospect, the human rights thing was good. I think we evolved to a point where societies are involved. It's had a good effect. Usually, the human rights people lose out in the crunch. I was told by people from AID and Human Rights that we'd go to Christopher and he would usually decide on the less idealistic path. There were examples where we didn't carry through on what were obvious human rights concerns. But Latin America, where we had some clout - and I must say the abuses were just absolutely egregious in places like Guatemala, Panama, Salvador, and Argentina-

Q: One looks back on this and this was a real turning point. It took us a while to adjust, but now it's on the agenda.

SUDDARTH: Yes, that's right. I have to credit Pat Derian. She was fighting a one woman fight and she made certain that she appeared on Vance's schedule every day at 5:45 so she could have some access. She was to Vance as security was to Shultz. Shultz had a security meeting every day. You can see the different emphases of the parties.

Q: Did you go through the normal thing, but particularly with two administrations, one succeeding the other, a real difference in political outlook. Usually when a new administration comes in, you've got people with real ideology who want to go running off all different directions and tell the facts of foreign policy wear them down and either get rid of them or change them.

SUDDARTH: Don't forget, Carter had already started to preempt Reagan. There was a defense buildup before he left office. So, the Republicans built up more. I think it was more on the defense side that you saw it, but very tough attitudes toward the Soviet Union. I do recall being over at Congress and seeing some people before I went out to Saudi Arabia when Haig resigned over this pipeline business - I think the gas pipeline from the Soviet Union to Europe. Yes, there was a definite toughening, but... Wolfowitz struck me as a very relaxed, courteous, thoughtful person. McFarland was also very courteous. Burt was tough. Newsom sent me over to deal with these guys. It was obvious they didn't want to deal with me. They wanted Newsom. So, they pulled rank and so I was an observer rather than a dealer with them. Again, I was out in early February and therefore there is a year's hiatus where I really had nothing to do with what was really going on.

Q: You took your Spanish, which I'm sure you put to great use. Then you went to the Senior Seminar. This would be '81-'82?

SUDDARTH: Yes, right.

Q: How did you find the Senior Seminar?

SUDDARTH: It's a wonderful program. In a sense, I had had such a rich experience in the almost two years that I had worked on the 7th floor that a lot of the stuff on the political side was not new to me. The best thing in the Senior Seminar is, you travel to something like 15 cities in the United States. You really got a feel... We spent a lot of time looking at the new budget, looking at Reaganomics, supply side. I wrote a paper on risk analysis as done by U.S. banks. It was obvious to me that all these petrodollars being pumped out, these banks were trying to find anybody to lend it to, including there was one story that one guy would judge how much money to give to Brazil by going down and measuring the depth of the topsoil. I'm glad the Department has it. It's a good way to cool off after you've been in a high pressure job. We had great speakers. Jack Perry and Bill Shinn were there. Both of them were great Soviet experts. So, we had a tremendous array of people. Everybody you can name on the Soviet Union came and talked to us. Paul Nitze. I think Kennan was there. Malcolm Toon. Jim Leonard. Toon came out as the most credible because he was tough. The others tended to be a little bit too soft for that moment by my likes. But it was a good mixture. We got a lot of exposure to the military services, to what our military were doing. We visited aircraft carriers. We went on several bases. The Marine Corps put a big jet at our disposal and flew us all over the country. I milked cows in Wisconsin, witnessed arrests in a police ridealong in Chicago, did a lot of interesting things.

Q: In the spring of '82, it was time for whither Rocky.

SUDDARTH: These are kind of interesting sidelines. Gary Matthews, who replaced me working for Stoessel, said, "Rocky, we'll get you an ambassadorship to Africa somewhere." I got three offers of ambassadorships when I was on this job. This is not to brag or anything. It kind of shows my own mindset. I had four really interesting opportunities. After the hostage thing, Dave McGifford wanted me to go over and work as deputy assistant secretary in ISA over in the Pentagon to help orchestrate the base. Phil Habib, who was a big booster of mine and used to pop in to see Newsom a lot, tried to get Newsom to release me. He was very reluctant to do so. At that point, everything had failed politically. I was tempted to do it, but since Newsom had brought me on, I said, "No." There is such a thing as loyalty in the Foreign Service. So, they brought Bob Pelletreau back to be over in ISA. So, Hal Saunders offered me to go to Bahrain. I said, "No." Then I was offered to go to Yemen and said, "No." I was having too much fun up on the 7th floor. Then in the Senior Seminar, Nick Veliotes asked if I'd like to go to the Emirates as ambassador. By that time, I had pretty much gotten a commitment and was interested in going as DCM in Saudi Arabia. I preferred to be in a really big relationship. Here was Saudi Arabia in the middle of the AWACs on the forefront of the Iranian front, all of that sort of thing, with the peace process simmering along. So, I chose to go as DCM in Saudi Arabia. I don't regret it. I would have had another ambassadorship after the UAE, but working with Dick Murphy and then I was charge for about eight months and then working with Walt Cutler in what I would call one of the really big relationships... There is Japan, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Great Britain, China, the Soviet Union... There is a tiny handful of really big relationships. Germany perhaps in the Cold War...

Q: Although the ambassador in some of the major places plays a relatively minor role.

SUDDARTH: Yes. But that was not the case in Saudi Arabia, particularly in the days before Bandar became ambassador. We were dealing with Bandar in Saudi Arabia. Prince Bandar, who is the son of Prince Sultan, the defense minister... I arrived in Saudi Arabia the very month of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

Q: You were there from when to when?

SUDDARTH: From August of '82 until August of 1985. We moved our embassy there from Jeddah to Riyadh. I had a fabulous time. It's probably one of the very most interesting overseas assignments of my career.

Q: Could you describe the issues that were concerning us when you arrived before the Israeli invasion of Lebanon? What was important in the relationship at that point?

SUDDARTH: It's hard to separate the Lebanese thing. That was such a trauma. I'd say the major issue was getting the AWACs implanted. We were still working on implementation documents when I arrived. It was paying close attention to the oil situation. Then even perhaps more important was getting Saudi Arabia to support our causes with their money. The real case in point was the Afghanistan issue, where we in effect got the Saudis to divvy up something like half a billion dollars to support the mujaheddin guerrilla effort in Afghanistan. From their viewpoint, our recognition of the PLO was very important, our carrying forward on the peace process. I had been there two weeks when the Reagan Initiative was announced, which was another way of bringing the Arabs and the Israelis together in negotiations, which was rejected out of hand by the Israelis and went nowhere. Dick Murphy, our ambassador who had been summoned, cut his tour short, in the Philippines to go to Saudi Arabia to negotiate the AWACs deal along with Weinberger. Phil Habib was popping in all the time doing the Lebanon business. The Saudis had put out the Fana Plan, which was aimed at getting negotiations between the Arabs and the Israelis going. It was looking towards peace with Israel, which was kind of a breakthrough on the Arab side. The Saudis were very much interested in getting us to talk to the PLO. Bandar would often be sent over by Fahd to our embassy to talk to us mainly about Lebanon. Lebanon was a major issue. Fahd had been minister of education. UNESCO was in Lebanon. In his more playboy days, he used to spend vast amounts of time in Lebanon doing ministry of education business as minister of education, but also having a grand time there. So, he had a real personal emotional attachment to Lebanon that came out. I dare say that I spent more time in my tour there dealing with Lebanon than I did on bilateral issues.

Q: Before we move to Lebanon, let's talk about the AWACS issue. What was the issue? Could you explain what AWACS is?

SUDDARTH: It's Airborne Warning and Control System. Essentially, it tracks aircraft. It's in a C-5 or C-130 with a big radar on it. It's an immense capability to be able to track radar. A lot of the Saudis got worried that it could also track vehicular movement because of all the smuggling, particularly of whiskey, that was going into Saudi Arabia. The concern was that Iran was acting up and the Saudis were very much worried about Iran at the time.

Q: Iran and Iraq were at war at that point, weren't they?

SUDDARTH: They were at war. We spent a lot of time briefing the Saudis on that. In effect, the Saudis cut off their aid to Iraq because here is an immense oil producing country and they realized that they were financing a development program as well as an aid program. So, they and the Kuwaitis and others cut things off.

As an aside, I recall Fahd saying during my tour there in a visit by Gerald Ford that I went with him with in '83 that Saddam Hussein should step down. At that point, the war was going badly against Iran. Iran had stopped an initial thrust. That is another thing that came up on Newsom's watch. There was a general feeling that a plague on both their houses, it was a good thing that the two were fighting each other. That allowed the Gulf Cooperation Council to get started. It could never have done that otherwise because Iraq would have prevented it. So, you had a long cherished U.S. military idea, which was to get the Gulf peninsular states together militarily. We were able to do that. We also established the Central Command. Before that, it had been the Rapid Deployment Force. We had a genuine command started. The Saudis were very ambivalent about it. As DCM, I was given the chore of running over and basically throwing it through the transom of the chief of staff and going back. Sure enough, Prince Sultan called our ambassador about 15 minutes after I made this presentation and said, "What the heck is going on here?" He was very shrewd, very smart, and realized that if you have a major command, Saudi Arabia is going to be the platform. The Saudis were very reticent to ever have U.S. hands showing on this. I'm popping ahead a little bit because this is kind of an interesting story.

We were constantly trying to get the Saudis to do contingency planning against either an Iraqi but in that time an Iranian thrust. We said, "What happens if Iran overruns Iraq? It's 48 hours by motor vehicle to the Dhahran oil fields." We spent a lot of time kind of blue skying what would happen. We could never get the Saudis to really work with us on these things. What came up was, Qadhafi mined the Red Sea. A ship called Qat had dropped these mines throughout the Red Sea. There was panic in Saudi Arabia. Among other things, King Fahd had just ordered a huge $600 million yacht which was sitting on the Red Sea. So, over a weekend, we mobilized, thanks to the JCS, a whole task force to go out with Sea Stallions, these big helicopters that would drag pontoons in front... Fahd wanted to go up to his favorite watering spot in Rabigh from Jeddah. So, we set up an escort. We had one in front and one in back dragging pontoons so that he would be able to go up. We were told that these mines were not a serious threat, that they were way down or something. King Fahd was happy to be able to go out on his new yacht.

But more seriously, I had been chargï¿½ and had brought a group out and we were trying to persuade Sultan, the minister of defense, to let us engage in joint contingency planning. He said, "We don't need that. We have our diplomacy that will protect us and all the good feelings that we've aroused around the world." Then after this mobilization of this task force on de-mining the Red Sea, Prince Sultan said to me one day, "See, who needs contingency planning? You can do it all on your own when we need you?" So, he was very clever at debating. I remember saying, "Well, you know, one boat is a little different from an entire army." But now I assume we do contingency planning ever since the Gulf War with the Saudis.

Q: Back to the AWACS? What was the issue?

SUDDARTH: Once again, Iran. Iran had made several incursions by aircraft across the median line of the Persian Gulf. There was a thing called the Fahd Line. It wasn't King Fahd but it was Fahd Bin Abdullah, who was head of the Air Force, which was a line where the Iranians were told "Thou shalt not go beyond that line." The AWACS was there to monitor Iranian air traffic along that area. Since the Gulf War, there is the Tackan which is now able to also monitor on the ground, but this was restricted to air at that point. It was essentially the Iranian threat to Saudi Arabia. As a background of this, the Iranians were at that point a revolutionary movement. There is a large Shia population in the Eastern Province right where the oil is located. The Iranians were stirring up unrest among the Shia there. So, that was a major concern.

Q: Was this issue political in the United States?

SUDDARTH: Yes. The Israelis opposed it. The Israelis had a catechism which is, any state which is not at peace with Israel they would oppose arms to. They did to Jordan, to very moderate states. So, it became a real battle and it lost Chuck Percy his Senate seat because he was opposed by AIPAC.

This was the first real foreign policy battle I can recall in the Reagan administration. The Israelis opposed it, so a good portion of the Congress did. There was a major mobilization of a task force in public relation firms and all sorts of things to narrowly win this battle under the leadership of Chuck Percy, who later lost his seat and came to Saudi Arabia while I was there telling us the story, the way he had been defeated. So, it was a major victory. I remember being at a party where both Prince Bandar, who came over and was very helpful (He's a very eloquent fighter pilot and so forth.), were celebrating the fact that they were going to get the AWACS. So, that got started before I came, but I helped Dick Murphy to finalize the implementation agreements. It also meant an augmentation of the U.S. military presence to maintain the AWACS, which was an issue of not particular great sensitivity. We already had a big military mission there under USMTM plus the advisor to the Saudi national guard was a U.S. brigadier general. We had thousands of American service people who were in Saudi Arabia when I was there. They were a major element of our mission.

Q: Particularly after the lesson of Iran where the American presence had upset the Islamic society and Saudi Arabia being as strict, if not more so, were we able to sit on them?

SUDDARTH: The Saudis were the ones who did most of the sitting and that was that they would refuse... Once Central Command got going, they had enormous requirements. They really wanted to set up a NATO type infrastructure. I remember taking people around no see the Saudis. They wanted to have a communications node system all across Saudi Arabia, to which the Saudis said, "No way." They wanted to have a command element. They really wanted to have the head of Central Command in Saudi Arabia. They finally had to settle for Tampa, Florida with a forward element in Bahrain, which is the way it is today. The Saudis saw definite limitations. Once again, when I say Prince Sultan would tend to denigrate and dismiss our worst case analysis where we were going to be needed, but they learned in the Gulf War that you cant do this with smoke and mirrors. You need to have some presence there. Now it's become more discrete because there have been some terrorist actions against them. But at that point, there was no significant internal opposition in Saudi Arabia to this buildup. It was mainly the prudence of the leadership. They may have been having their religious authorities saying, "Go slow." Don't forget, there was an attempt in '79 or '80 by a fundamentalist group. They took over the mosque in Mecca for a while. But rather than bring in the United States, they brought in French security advisors. Our Israeli policy was so unpopular - they didn't want to have the United States in a visible role of helping them to quell a civil emergency.

The other thing I should mention on the Iranian threat is that the Iranians were disrupting the Hajj pilgrimage. They consider the pilgrimage a political event. So, the Saudis were always negotiating how many would come. They were sending political cadres who were carrying banners around "Death to America! Death to Saudi Arabia!" At one point, the Saudi national guard came in and cleaned them out and killed several hundred of them back in '86 or so. But that was a constant element of tension.

The Saudis did perceive a real threat and they also saw that perhaps Iraq could lose the war to Iran.

Q: Did the helping with the mujaheddin in Afghanistan... From your perspective, were the Saudis showing any concern about arming these people? Later, you have Bin Laden and others who...

SUDDARTH: No, at that point, they were very much in favor of it. I don't recall too many Saudis going there, but the Saudis provided the muscle and they began to deal directly with the five or six different factions of the mujaheddin. Sayyaf, who was a Saudi-trained Sunni, somewhat fundamentalist, was one of the six groups. He was their favored guy. They later switched to Hekmatyar when he began to get more important.

But the Saudis have an interesting element in their foreign policy. They really do see themselves as the font of Islam. There were problems. They were giving aid to the Moros in the Philippines. It was an Islamic insurgency group. They were arming the Eritreans, who were Muslims in Ethiopia who have now since become independent. They were giving handouts to any Islamic leader who would come to the Hajj. There was a kind of myth going around, probably a rumor, that if a chief of state was willing to go to the Hajj and humiliate himself by sitting around about two weeks, the Saudis would give him $15 million to go home.

But here they were major contributors right up through '83/'84 to the Iraqi effort in the Gulf War. They were giving immense amounts of money to the rest of the Arab world. I think in terms of percentage, I think they at one point were giving 9% of their GNP in foreign aid.

Q: At that point, Iraq was seen as the side to support as far as the Saudis were concerned.

SUDDARTH: Yes, right.

Q: Did we have any concern about this?

SUDDARTH: I think our concern was, yes, the Iraqis, if they lost, then Iran could pose a real threat to the rest of the Arab world. Iraq had the strongest army. If they succumbed, there was nobody else that could really stand up against Iran. At that point, our contingency planning came into play. Our strategy was that we had to plan for meeting a Soviet thrust through the Zagros Mountains. We figured that if we could size our forces to that, we would be capable of handling any regional contingency like an Iraq or an Iran. So, it was a pretty gross set of planning assumptions, which became more and more refined as CENTCOM got more and more into action. The Saudis were genuinely concerned. Once again, in August of '82 when the Iranians had blocked the initial Iraqi thrust and were beginning to move through the marshes into Iraq itself, that is when the Saudis gave a major push.

The Saudis also were helpful to us because during this period, we began to warm in our relations with Iraq. I remember as charge going in and asking the Saudis to get Iraq to kick out the Abu Nidal from Iraq, which they did, which was the major harbinger factor that allowed us to establish an interests section in Iraq itself. David Newton, who had been political counselor, when he left Saudi Arabia went on to be head of an interests section. He was head of an interests section which we then upgraded to an embassy once they kicked out Abu Nidal. I can recall going in to see the under secretary of Foreign Affairs and laying this on him. Then he called me back the next day to discuss it further. As I went out, I saw these two really thuggish looking Iraqi quasi-diplomats sitting there. He really did it to orchestrate the fact that indeed it was the United States. That was pushing them. They didn't want to make it considered that it was Saudi Arabia. They were still handling them with kid gloves. But in effect, that did work. The Saudis had a role in promoting that with the Iraqis.

Q: Going back to the major thing, what had been the status... Saudi Arabia was looking toward coming to a peace with Israel or help promote a peace on the Palestinian question? Then talk about the invasion.

SUDDARTH: We had a number of congressional visits. I recall Fahd telling each one of them that once there was peace with Israel and the conditions of peace had been fulfilled by Israel, which was a withdrawal from the lands they occupied in 1967, Saudi Arabia would look forward to normal relations with Israel. This was very important for congressional groups that came out. That was their view, but the view was that Israel had to get out of the West Bank, Gaza, and eastern Jerusalem, where the holy places were. But that was not a major theme at that point. The Reagan Initiative fell apart. The Israelis invaded Lebanon. So, the focus all came from 1982 until 1985 on Lebanon. The peace process wasn't even in the picture.

Q: What was the Saudi reaction when this happened? Were they concerned... There was a story that Haig had given a wink and a nod to Sharon. Was this an accepted so-called "fact" or something like that within Saudi circles? Did they feel we were involved?

SUDDARTH: The Saudis were immensely discrete. I don't know that they felt that we were responsible, that we had given a nod. Their main concern when I arrived was that Beirut was burning. It looked as though the Israelis were going to trash Beirut. Sabra and Shatila occurred, where these Palestinians were massacred. Arabs don't like to see Arab blood being shed like that. A lot of the effort went into evacuating the PLO by boat from Beirut as a condition for the Israelis. We were constantly trying to get Saudi support for what we were doing. There were some fairly ill-advised things that happened. George Shultz was new as Secretary of State. He bought the line of supporting an Israeli-Lebanese treaty which was negotiated in agreement which everybody who had ever spent a week in the Middle East, knew the Syrians would massively oppose. Of course, the upshot was the assassination of Bashir Gemayel and then trying to execute this agreement which went nowhere. You had civil war that broke out in Lebanon. You had the bombing of our embassy. You had the bombing of the Marine barracks. You had the decision of Reagan, while we were all in the trenches really pushing for this. I think probably quite correctly, Reagan, who had initially called Lebanon a vital U.S. interest, reportedly was persuaded by Jim Baker and others that before the 1984 elections to cut and run, which is what we did.

We got involved in a number of things. I had a wonderful, interesting time dealing with Bandar on a ceasefire in Lebanon. There was a lot of stuff going on. The Druze were fighting the regular Lebanese forces, the Druze being backed by the Syrians. There was major fighting going on. We got the Saudis to intervene with the Syrians and it took about a week. I kept our code room open one whole week, 24 hours a day. We had a big party afterwards. This was largely Fahd working through Bandar. Bandar got the Syrians to pull the Druze back. There was a ceasefire. I recall Bandar called me and said, "Bingo," which meant that they had achieved the agreement. One of those personal things you recall. I sent off a FLASH cable to Washington saying "The Saudis have informed us of the ceasefire." Reagan happened to be at the UNGA. This was in September of '83. Somebody handed him the cable or briefed him on my FLASH cable. I thought, "Oh, my god, I hope Bandar was right!" The President of the United States had announced it on the steps of the UN. It turned out to be correct. But then two weeks later, there was the bombing and the killing of 300 Marines in the Marine barracks. It all fell apart after that.

But Fahd had this deep, deep love of Lebanon. He was being held to account by the Arab world. Here is Israel invading a small Arab state. One scandal after another, one slaughter after another. Here is Saudi Arabia with all of its might unable to persuade the United States to lean on the Israelis to get out. They recall that Faisal in 1974 had cut off the oil because of our support for Israel. So, we were in a very delicate situation there.

Q: From your perspective, did you feel that our embassy (Sam Lewis was ambassador at that time.)-

SUDDARTH: Yes. And Sam was having huge fights with Sharon at the time.

Q: How did you feel that we were acting? We've always had this support Israel side, but this was a real test.

SUDDARTH: Everybody in the field thought that Shultz had made a major error in trying to broker this treaty between Israel and Lebanon. We knew it wouldn't work. We knew it would destine Lebanon to years of bloodshed until the treaty was repudiated. In effect, what it did was consolidate Syrian control over Lebanon. It brought on a major spate of terrorism and hijacking. There was the Beirut hijacking that ended up in Algiers. It raised the stature of the Shia community which was under Iranian control where Iran was able to move in at that point and take advantage of the situation. To my mind, it was a major strategic blunder not only by Israel but by the United States in not being firmer with the Israelis and making them get out.

Q: Did you feel that our policy was being directed by the Jewish community in the United States for political motives or not?

SUDDARTH: No. I think that everybody was caught short in the United States. My sense of the Jewish community is that they were very embarrassed. Begin himself was embarrassed. What he thought was going to be a little policy action on the border Sharon took all the way. So, Begin went into a deep depression and resigned. Sharon was thrown out. But nevertheless, the Israelis persisted in trying to get this treaty.

The feeling was that we should get the Israelis out. The price of doing that was getting the PLO removed, which we did. Eventually, it was terrorism that drove us out of Lebanon. Shultz visited Saudi Arabia several times. The first visit, Nick Veliotes, who was the assistant secretary, pulled me aside and said, "Would you like to go to Syria as ambassador?" I said, "Sure. Love to." What had happened according to Nick was that Bob Paganelli had disgraced himself in front of Shultz by telling him that there was no way that this treaty would ever get in, that it was an act of folly (Bob had a way of not mincing his words.) and that this would be a major disaster for the United States. It turned out that they had a demarche over some missile thing which Bob carried off very well. So, Shultz pulled back.

Q: From all accounts, that encounter sort of resonated down the corridors of NEA.

SUDDARTH: Yes. I think throughout the Foreign Service it was an example of a Foreign Service officer really earning his pay and doing his job. I have to admire Bob for doing it. He was articulating what everybody else felt.

Let me just add, there were a lot of shenanigans that went on. Bud McFarland started coming out to try to push the Saudis to push the Syrians to cool things in Lebanon. We were trying to get the thing cooled down. I later found out that McFarland came in on a secret mission.

Q: He was with the National Security Council?

SUDDARTH: Yes, he was the NSC advisor at the time. He went without Dick Murphy or anybody in the embassy other than the station knowing about it. He went and had meetings with Fahd and others and got back. That was the kind of shenanigan that was going on that eventuated in the Iran-Contra business with Ollie North and so forth. There was a real surgence of the NSC. Poindexter came out after McFarland left and went through a set of talking points that we had been using for years and then got congratulated by a sycophantic bunch of his staff for having really made the point. We just had to laugh up our sleeve. We had been doing this for years. He got no more effect out of it. It was contingency planning and doing all that stuff that we had been trying for for years.

Q: This is one of the themes that runs through this series of oral histories and also in writing, that often you find that there are people who are Washington based and if they feel they can get Congress on their side, media on their side, and the White House on their side, and the Pentagon maybe, that it's a fait accompli. You just go out and whoever happens to be Assad of Syria or whoever it is will immediately fall over because, gee, we put it together here in Washington and it's so well put together by Washington operators, so you have to go along with it. Of course, the answer often is "Hell, no!"

SUDDARTH: That's right. Of course, often the embassy gets blamed for its negative attitude because we're trying to accurately describe what we think the host country... The thing about shooting the messenger - there is also the question of shooting the guy that's right. It happened to Newsom for being right about bringing the Shah into the United States. It happened to Paganelli for being right. It was his last assignment. Some people can do it skillfully. One of the classics is to say, "Well, you know, we may have a mismatch between goals and means," which is another way of saying, "Hey, your plan is crazy as hell." But you can put it two different ways. The more successful diplomats put it in that more neutral way.

Q: To round out this time in Saudi Arabia, you were both charge and DCM. Where does one go in a monarchy? Where do you push buttons? How did you operate within this rather family-run state?

SUDDARTH: Some examples. The Saudi family operates under consensus. So, often, you have to touch several points and it's not always in the organization chart. For instance, Bandar was the pipeline to the King. Bandar had no status. He was known as "the pilot" [El Tayyar]. So, you would often work through him. The King had another fellow named Mohammad Suleiman who Dick Murphy used to describe as like a pane of glass. If you gave a message for the King (The King really wasn't that accessible. You could see him, but you could tell if he thought you were taking up his time unnecessarily.], you do it through Mohammad Suleiman, who was often at home and would call in by the telephone or something. You'd get an answer back. Bandar was far more effective because he could manipulate both sides, usually our side as well. For instance, in the Reagan initiative, we went to see Fahd, Abdullah, and Sultan, and Prince Saud. Prince Saud I often use as the foreign minister, who was Princeton educated. He had a good relationship with everybody. When we were trying to push Sultan, we could use Saud, who tended to be more receptive to our arguments on the need for military contingency planning.

One dealt with ministers, but trying to really get an insight into what was really going on was difficult. Yamani was very special. He was brilliant, one of the most interesting people I've ever met in diplomacy. I used to call him the "Merlin," the magician. He would make perfume. That was one of his hobbies. An absolute, incredible grasp of the world oil situation. When Faisal died, he told his successor to please treat Yamani as a prince. He later fell out of favor with Fahd, but when we were there he was a real force. I remember in '85, the price of oil began to decline. The Saudis were beginning to worry. There were OPEC meetings and we were always trying to find out what was going on. We asked to see Yamani. Dick Murphy and I he invited to lunch. So, we had a beautiful three-hour lunch, 11 courses, in his living room in Riyadh, which had a large swimming pool in it as well. The only thing we were interested in was what he thought the price of oil was going to be after the OPEC meeting. That was the one thing he was not going to tell us. So, we were subjected to a three-hour lecture on the early caliphates in Islam, we were given an 11 course meal. I made one of those social miscalculations. We had a fork and a knife and a plate and it was lunch, about 3:00 pm. We were hungry. They brought out this beautiful rice dish with chicken and stuff in it. I thought, "Why a knife and a fork? How sensible to have one big course." Then they took the plate away and put another knife and another fork. That was the first of 11 courses. Meanwhile, Yamani, who looks a bit like a Cheshire cat, was sitting there with his Metrocal. He was having Metrocal [a diet drink] while we were stuffing ourselves and getting more and more frustrated and not finding out everything.

We had a big relationship with Saudi Arabia. Don Regan came out as secretary of Treasury. I remember his handlers (I was chargï¿½.) saying that he was going to go see the King and the finance minister. They said, "You're not allowed in here. No State Department types are allowed in." I said, "Well, let me talk to Secretary Regan." I went in to see Regan. I said, "Your folks are saying I shouldn't be in these meetings. I think I can be of help to you, Mr. Secretary. In my capacity now as chargï¿½, I work as much for you as I do for the Secretary of State and the President. So, he let me in. But that is the kind of crap we had to put up with. Regan was full of things because they had just invaded Grenada. So, Regan was full of stories, that sort of thing.

My wife, Michele, is much younger, but she was a dead ringer for Nancy Reagan. Both Mrs. Shultz came out and Mrs. Regan looked at her curiously. She said, "Are you related to Nancy Reagan, by any chance." My wife would get stopped in the supermarkets. We never could figure out whether that was going to hurt of help our career.

Q: Were we concerned during the Lebanon invasion and all that went on about Saudi Arabia all of a sudden getting so disgusted, pulling a boycott, shutting out oil, or anything like that?

SUDDARTH: It didn't seem to be a major element, mainly because we showed our bona fides. We had evacuated the PLO. We had condemned the Israelis for Sabra and Shatila. We were really making a massive effort. So, I don't think that ever came up as an issue.

Q: By this time, they had seen you as not being a tool of the Israelis.

SUDDARTH: Yes, right.

Q: I was there in the '50s in Dhahran. I was vice consul. That is my only time in the Middle East. We weren't that sophisticated then. We weren't really concerned about the oil weapon being used against us by this point?

SUDDARTH: No. I think that that just wasn't an issue. They had good high oil prices. After all, they were all jacked up. The more oil... Iran was shut down and didn't build up for several years, so the Saudis were pouring it in. This was the high water mark in Saudi economic prosperity in that era. It lasted from '79 up until probably '85 when it began to taper off.

Q: Were we rather pleased with how Saudi money was being invested? Did we get involved in that?

SUDDARTH: We didn't really get involved. We were happy that the Saudis were investing most of their money in U.S. Treasury bonds. We had somebody from Merrill Lynch who was attached to Saudi Arabia to the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency, David Mulford, who went back to be assistant secretary of Treasury under Regan when Regan was Secretary of the Treasury. He was in Saudi Arabia while I was there and left to take that job. So, we had a lot of influence behind the scenes. We also had JACOR, which was a kind of aid program financed by the Saudis which the Treasury Department administered. We did such things as set up a park service, a bureau of public roads for Saudi Arabia. There was a lot of nation building that went on. The minister of finance had a very finely culled think tank that was paid for by the Saudis and was composed of Americans. So, when he would go on a trip to Malaysia, he would have an elaborate set of briefing papers written up. So, we were doing a lot of that sort of thing for him.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover in Saudi Arabia?

SUDDARTH: There was the shoot-down of a couple of Iranian planes in '84.

Q: This was over the Persian Gulf?

SUDDARTH: Yes.

I think that's about it. I transitioned back to be deputy assistant secretary for Dick Murphy and had a fascinating two years, 1985-1987.

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Q: Today is December 5, 2000. 1985-1987 you were the deputy to...

SUDDARTH: I was one of Dick Murphy's deputies. I was in charge of the area that included all of Israel and the countries around it - Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. The peace process was handled in a separate office, but I got involved in it. It was a turbulent time. My first memories were of several hijackings. I arrived in September with the peace process yet in another phase of crisis going nowhere with a divided government. It was a coalition government, National Unity Government in Israel, where you had terrorists pushing for engagement and Shamir, who was the prime minister, for non-engagement. My first month in the job, we had visits by Mubarak, Hussein, and Peres. We had the Achille Lauro thing.

Let me start with the Achille Lauro, which was an Italian cruise ship on which there were many Americans that was boarded by Abu Abbas, who was a Palestinian terrorist from the PLO or their offshoots. In the process, he killed a few people, including pushing Mr. Klinghoffer, an American Jew in his wheelchair, off the ship and killing him by drowning. We were in a phasedown. Ollie North was in full regalia in the NSC. We were pretty belligerent. George Shultz had sworn a war on terrorism. We were then faced with this situation.

We also found out that Abu Abbas had lighted in Egypt. We found out that Mubarak was aware of his being there and was resisting our representations to take control of him. I think by that time we had voted in extraterritorial legal reach for terrorists.

What happened... I remember going up to Undersecretary Mike Armacost's office. Mort Abramowitz was there from INR. We kind of hashed the scheme of going after this guy. So, in effect, we put pressure on, so Abu Abbas boarded a plane and took off from Egypt and we pursued him with military aircraft and he was forced down at Sigonella Air Base in Italy, in Sicily. General Carl Steiner, who was a kind of gun-toting head of the Special Operations command and had done a lot of very questionable military stuff in Lebanon, hopped into the back of a T32 trainer and pursued him across the Sigonella airfield, going against all of the rules of civil aviation. He went the wrong way on the runway and then chased him over to Athens, where Abu Abbas finally lighted.

Well, I don't think we ever got a hold of Abu Abbas. We had a lot of very unhappy people that we had offended by these high jinks.

Q: If I recall, the plane with the hijackers on board was surrounded by American special forces troops which in turn were surrounded by Italians.

SUDDARTH: That's right. Were you watching this?

Q: I watched it on TV.

SUDDARTH: I got into the White House Situation Room as the State Department representative and we outlined our plan. I don't remember much more because I was asked to go with John Whitehead to "mend fences" with Italy, Egypt and Tunisia. We may have chased him to Tunis and broken a few rules there. But we had to go out on a mission mending fences. We couldn't apologize because counterterrorism was one of our big things. This operation hadn't gone exactly swimmingly, but it was also partly the result of our partners who had been less than helpful in this. The Italians didn't want him on their soil, the Egyptians didn't want him on theirs, and the Tunisians not on theirs. So, only in Athens...

But we went out on this trip. It was quite a hair raiser diplomatically. Whitehead told me as we were leaving (I just barely had met him, just having arrived there.) that he just wanted to warn me that he wouldn't be taking me perhaps on some of his meetings with chiefs of state. So, I said, "Fine, that's your call. Just let me point out that I speak French and Arabic, which could be helpful." We got to Rome and Max Robb, the ambassador, and Whitehead said he didn't want anybody but the ambassador and the interpreter. So, he went to see Bernardo Craxi, the prime minister, and in effect tried to patch things over. The point that he made was, "Please understand that the United States people have watched the Beirut hijacking, this hijacking, that hijacking, these killings, the Beirut bombings, and so forth, and the Marines at the embassy and they're really fed up and we want to get something that will be able to counteract the terrorism. That means catching these flagrant cases like this."

We left and there was no reporting cable. We pointed out to Whitehead that somebody had to write a reporting cable. All they had were the translation notes, very skimpy things by the translator. So, the translator then rendered them into some form, gave them to the DCM, who rendered them in somewhat better form, but in the end, it ended up that Bill Burns, the special assistant for Whitehead, and I, not having been in the meeting, had to reconstruct, consulting him when he was available, and put out a cable that seemed reasonably diplomatic. But he kind of learned from that and said, "Well, Rocky, you come to the meeting," which was with Mubarak.

There, it was a funny episode. I wrote him a press statement that he could use after the Mubarak meeting, in effect saying that we were there to mend fences or something like that, and that we had a good discussion and that we had both reaffirmed our opposition to terrorism and so forth and so on. Whitehead didn't like that. So, he wrote one. To Nick Veliotes, Bill Burns, and myself, it all sounded very apologetic. He said, "Yes, we want good relations, but we also want to keep our counterterrorism policy." Whitehead was still adamant... He said, "This is not an apology." We said, "Well, we think it is. What about if we planted a VOA or somebody else in the audience who will ask you that question, Mr. Whitehead, after the Mubarak meeting and you would say, 'No?'" He thought that was a good idea. So, we got into the meeting, went through the meeting, and we laid it all out. Mubarak was sympathetic. After all, Abu Abbas was out of his territory. It was just mending fences.

We brought that out after the Whitehead meetings in the area. But there was a lot hanging on this visit and hanging on the fact that we were going to be tough. We had a billion dollars for each of their... So, Whitehead at the end of the meeting said, "I've got some press guidance that I would like to give characterizing our meeting, Mr. President." He went through it at which point Osama al-Baz, who is this brilliant advisor to Mubarak, said, "But that sounds like an apology. You don't want to apology on this." So, Whitehead said, "Oh, okay," so he took out the other press business and everything went off alright.

Well, that was strike two on Whitehead. Mind you, here is the man who is in charge of the D Committee being picking ambassadors.

Q: Here might be a little time to give a little... What was Whitehead's position and what was his background?

SUDDARTH: Whitehead was a former cochairman with Bob Rubin of Goldman Sachs and had made millions of dollars, although not billions the way they do now. When you walked into his office, you were struck by a Cezanne and a Degas and various other precious works of art. But he was a thoroughly decent guy who had been offered the deanships at Harvard Business School and Columbia Business School when he left Goldman Sachs. But he didn't have any experience in diplomacy and had a kind of knee-jerk conservative reaction to things that often complicate real diplomacy. I liked him personally. So, he was new to the job, too. He had taken a couple of previous trips and that was about it.

But then we got to Tunis. In Tunis, we had these meetings. The Israelis had bombed PLO headquarters in Tunis at one point earlier in the year. We had press guidance from Whitehead and then Whitehead had his own bright idea. He wrote a press announcement. "We condemn the Achille Lauro and terrorist acts like this just as we condemn the Israeli bombing of the PLO headquarters." This was totally counter to our policy. We had not even abstained when they bombed it earlier. So, I pointed that out very forcefully to him. I said, "You're equating an act of terrorism with an act by the Israelis. Whatever you think of it personally, the United States ought not to condemn or even abstain on it."

Q: When you say "abstain..."

SUDDARTH: At the UN.

Q: In other words, we took the stand that we weren't going to go for a condemnation.

SUDDARTH: And we didn't even abstain on it to take a kind of neutral position. At one point, he said, "No, no, these aren't equivalent at all." I said, "Mr. Whitehead, I learned in school in mathematics that in one of those word problems you put 'like' or 'as,' it makes an equation. You're equating that and this will not be understood in Washington. It's going to cause a firestorm." Bill Burns, who was writing to him little notes through the cable traffic, was saying exactly the same thing. Of course, the embassy was very happy because their Tunisian clients like condemning Israel. So, when the ambassador started weighing in on his side, the result was, Whitehead made a statement. Within 30 minutes, there were 22 calls from the Washington press corps to the press spokesman about what gave with this statement. Whitehead then got a little bit flustered and called George Shultz and George Shultz said he wondered why the hell he was bothering him in the middle of a meeting. He started to apologize. I have to hand it to Whitehead. At the end of the thing on our plane ride back, he turned to Bill Burns and me and said, "I have to admit to you guys that you were right and I was wrong." That was my initiation into high level diplomacy.

Q: It does show... We've had a pretty strong system which uses both political and professional. But particularly when you get to something that is as tricky as anything to do with the Middle East, this is where the gut reaction of political appointees often can lead them astray. It comes so nuanced.

SUDDARTH: That's right. Whitehead tended to react.. To skip ahead, when I was going out to Jordan, I called on him and he said, "Look at these statements. Make sure these people drop these statements." Well, he didn't recognize that they had to appeal to an internal audience that was very unhappy with U.S. policy. So, that has always been a schism between the political appointees and the others, and the professionals.

So, that was the end of that episode. I came back and went into the hospital with gastroenteritis from eating bad food. So, I have distinct memories of that. Then the three visits that were mighty important... The Mubarak visit was kind of pro forma. But what they wanted was relief from their foreign military sales debts, which Nick Veliotes had warned me about. Sure enough, that was the big push. They wanted relief from these debts. After all, we had so-called "rewarded" them for Camp David by giving them a big aid program, much of which was in the form of debts they had to pay back. Quite interestingly, when the Gulf War occurred, the big thing that helped to bring the Egyptians into it was our assurance by Bush that we would relieve all the foreign military sales debts. So, it was an important issue. So, I don't remember too much about that except that Mubarak liked to play squash. I didn't play with him, but Tim Towell from Protocol did.

Q: What was the reading that was prevalenyour reading and maybe the others in NEof Mubarak from 1985-1987?

SUDDARTH: It had changed radically. I had been a part of the period in the late '70s when Sadat made Mubarak his vice president and everybody said, "He wants a cipher in there." Mubarak was considered to be a real lightweight intellect, if even that. He proved people wrong. He was much better as a vice president than he portrayed himself. Of course, the same thing had been said about Sadat. Mubarak has avoided that by not appointing any successor, which could cause problems later on. But in 1985-1987, he was a very cheerful, upbeat, military bearing fellow, quite straightforward, with very little subtlety. Their concerns were basically two, one that the peace process was going nowhere and secondly that they were being constantly pummeled by the Israelis for not normalizing quickly enough. It was evident? I think to some extent the Israelis had a point because some of these things were in the treaty and they just went slow. But it was obvious to all of us in the area that until there was some satisfaction on the West Bank, the Egyptians would be prevented because of public opinion from a full scale normalization campaign with Israel. They dibbled it out in little drops here and there. The Israelis would present you? The Likud government style was to put a long list of grievances to divert from what was the real issue. Shamir as much came out and admitted it when he said after he left office, "I was willing to discuss, but never to agree to peace process issues." They also diverted us on the Taba issue, which I got peripherally involved in.

Taba was a tiny little, half mile square enclave which had a hotel on it at the junction of the Israeli-Egyptian border in the Sinai. It was supposedly engineered by Sharon so that there would always be a pebble under the skin of the peace process. Eventually after negotiations over a year's time and then a trip by the Vice President that Dick Murphy was prominently involved in, it was able to be resolved. But my sense at that time was, we have this huge unresolved Palestinian and Syrian issue and the Likud was, in effect, diverting U.S. attention because of a lot of issues that I've mentioned.

Then Shamir came to town and I recall some unhappiness because the U.S. had leaned on him a little bit to be more forthcoming in the peace process. We had by that time set up Wat Cluverius in the area to be pushing the process between particularly Jordan and Israel. It wasn't getting anywhere. I remember taking Peres over to the Air and Space Museum. Then King Hussein came to town. This was a big issue because the Jordanians had a big combat aircraft package up before the Congress which the Congress rejected. But in the meantime before they rejected it they extracted from Hussein a very forthcoming statement that went almost all the way to saying that he recognized the existence of Israel. So, in place of that, the Jordanians were given a $300-400 million economic assistance package as the surrogate for getting the arms, which is what they really wanted. Then I remember going over to the Vice President's house for a very pleasant session with Hussein. I didn't sit in on the presidential meetings, so I don't really know how those went. But there was a lot of pressure from the AIPAC folks, the pro-Israeli lobby, not to give any combat capability to any country that was still in a state of war, even Jordan, which was known to have through King Hussein various contacts and to some extent cooperation with Israel, and even for Jordan, which the Israelis under Peres particularly wanted to be a Jordanian option, in effect negotiating the Palestinian issue. This was the big tactical issue throughout my whole time there, which was a Peres push with a willing King Hussein and a willing United States but a very unwilling PLO to craft a joint Palestinian delegation. They found two American citizens with ties to the PLO that might join the Jordanian delegation to negotiate some of these West Bank issues. None of that really went anywhere.

Q: Was this before Hussein announced Jordanian citizenry over?

SUDDARTH: No, that was later.

Q: So, Jordan had a nominal title or at least was a protectorate over the West Bank.

SUDDARTH: That's right. They still had administrative control. During my period in NEA, we set up a Jordanian aid program separate from our own for the West Bank just so they could keep their hand in with some resources.

We also set up a system whereby some Jordanian banks could reenter the West Bank, where they had all been excluded after the 1967 War. It was a sort of semi-clandestine way of introducing the Cairo American Bank as a start so that they could start doing business there.

On the micro level, there were a lot of little things going on intended to strengthen the Jordanian hand and an eventual negotiations. At that point, the PLO was anathema. They were engaging in terrorism, doing this and that. You had had a plane hijacked.

The other hijacking was the? I think some Palestinians hijacked an Egypt Air flight in November and flew it to Malta. We were working to try to resolve that when the Egyptians brought over with our U.S. military advisor an anti-terrorism group. It was a total disaster. They went in. They finally stormed the plane to try to get the hijackers. I think 99 civilians were killed. So, terrorism and counterterrorism were going through real turbulence. Then there was also the hijacking of a Pan Am plane to Karachi by Palestinians again and the standoff there where we finally got it resolved. There was a bureaucratic issue here, too, because Shultz had brought in a coordinator for counterterrorism. These task forces were always a tug of war. We cochaired these, the counter-terrorism adviser, with the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Mike Armacost, who was looking on. It never worked out very satisfactorily. I happened to be acting assistant secretary through several of these, so I remember them well. Bob Oakley was there at the time of the Malta one. I had great confidence in him. I said, "Bob, you handle this and we'll handle the diplomatic side of it." Then Jerry Bremer came in at a later timI think at the Karachi. We worked out the same thing, much to the chagrin of Arnie Raphel. I figured, look, we only need one person running these things. If I have a problem, I can always go to the under secretary. So, I said, "Let these guys run it." I don't see that the quality was hurt in any particular way. But Arnie, the senior deputy, was a great bureaucratic infighter. I tended to have a more relaxed attitude, as did Dick Murphy, about these things. Those were pretty much the hijacking things. There are a number of other things that happened.

I spent a lot of time trying to convince the Egyptians to adopt an IMF [International Monetary Fund] program. They had a huge budget deficit. Their economy was not performing. They had huge subsidies. It was a real problem. We happened to have brought back David Dunford, who had been the economic counselor and is a real first-rate economist. So, we finally got together and persuaded the Egyptian ambassador and then finally through him and Osama al-Baz, got the Egyptian government to accept the idea of an IMF program. Then we hand wrestled them for the rest of my two years into accepting that. The Egyptians did it Egyptian style. They managed to parlay political influence into stretching it out. It worked well. By the early 1990s? The IMF usually likes to come in with a draconian program. We'll talk about the bad effects of that in Jordan and shock therapy. The Egyptians said, "We cant handle that." So, they managed to string them out to the early 1990s. As a result, they achieved things that would have gotten them into the European Union: a deficit that was 1% of GDP, low inflation, high foreign reserves, everything. It was ideal. That's allowed them to move forward into an even more robust economic reform program. But that was a major accomplishment.

Shultz was an economist who, quite frankly, I thought was uncomfortable in political discussions. There was a story told from people that went with him to South Asia that when he was talking about booming economies, economic issues, he was happy as a lark and then when he got to the Middle East, his face clouded over and so forth. I'm getting ahead of things.

We had several visits. Well, another trauma that occurred. There were two things. I was acting assistant secretary in November, three months after I had arrived on the job. Murphy was in Geneva with Reagan at the summit with the Soviets. I got a call from Bill McAffee in INR one day. This was after the Egypt Air hijacking. This was after the Israelis shot down two Syrian planes. When Murphy got back, I said, "Is it like this around here every week?" He said, "Pretty much." But two things happened. One, Peter Burley, who was head of Gulf Affairs, said [This was in 1085], "Look, we've been watching the Iranian situation and we see Rafsanjani becoming more pragmatic and we think there might be some possibility to thaw our relations there a little bit. They are strategically important."

Q: Who was Rafsanjani?

SUDDARTH: Rafsanjani was the prime minister, I think, of Iran at the time. So, we had this very good draft for a speech for the Secretary of State or the Assistant Secretary. The way you did these things was cross-hatch it over to the NSC. We got this blast back: "How could you ever contemplate anything like that?" I should have been smarter. I remember the same thing happened? I was close to Charlie Bray in his carpool when he was press spokesman. The same thing happened when Nixon was going to China. We sent something over that was mildly critical of the regime and it was blasted as totally inappropriate by the White House. Well, unbeknownst to us, they were having White House meetings authorizing this mission of McFarland and North to offer TOW missiles to Iran in order to free the hostages in Lebanon? The excuse was that this was a strategic opening for Iran. I believe it was really to get the hostages out. But that was one thing that happened.

The other really horrendous thing that happened was, Bill McAffee of INR came to see me one day. He said, "There is a fellow named Jonathan Pollard who has just been seen outside the Israeli embassy with two large sacks that look like written materials seeking asylum in the embassy." Pollard was picked up. Then while Reagan was in Geneva, he was then investigated and these sacks were full of top secret information. He and his wife were there. So, I remember having to send a FLASH cable to the presidential aircraft laying out everything that we saw. We didn't believe it at first, but then it was inescapable. I remember Shultz got this cable, this FLASH, that we sent to the aircraft and he took it around to Reagan and to Don Regan and whoever else it was and they were all in high dudgeon by the time they got off the aircraft. Then we had a problem with the Justice Department because we were treating this as a highly secret diplomatic affair. The Justice Department loves to basically tell it all when they get a case like this. So, it was all coming into the press. We were getting beaten around the ears by the press for doing that thing. I remember Shultz calling Peres at 2:00 am Peres's time to say, "What the hell gives here?" It's all out in the public arena. I can't add very much to it, except to say that with Weinberger in Defense and Rich Armitage, a former naval officer, with the thought that naval intelligence, which tends to have targeting information, had given away basically all of the most important military targeting intelligence to the Israelis. And then of course the Israelis prevaricated. They said it was a rogue operation. They disavowed the guy, who apparently, to my knowledge, never got really disciplined. So, it was a very, very sour page in a very pro-Israeli administration. Ronald Reagan was one of the most pro-Israeli presidents. He had a kitchen cabinet around him that even accentuated that.

Q: When you're talking about the Israelis getting naval information, from a practical point of view, it doesn't mean much to the Israelis. They're not naval.

SUDDARTH: It was naval intelligence, but they had the whole gamut of U.S. intelligence there, particularly top secret stuff that dealt with targeting information. Let me illustrate this. People have said (I don't think it's been proven) that the Israeli bombing of the PLO headquarters in Tunis was based on that intelligence. There was another allegation that I have no knowledge of one way or the other that the Israelis traded some of it with the Russians. I don't believe that.

Q: Seymour Hersh, who is an investigative reporter, made the allegation that pollard was instructed by his Israeli handlers to get up to date information on a daily basis practically about where our nuclear submarines were located. These are the ones with missiles. The Israelis couldn't care less. I mean, that was not their problem. It would imply that because of the urgency and the specific tasking of pollard to get this the only people who were interested in this would be the Soviets. Therefore, they were using this information in order to parlay maybe the release of Jewish immigrants or something like this.

SUDDARTH: Seymour Hersh has a very mixed track record and many detractors from the accuracy of his stuff. I don't believe it. The Israeli leadership were advancing their own interests, but they were very well aware of the essentiality of the United States. You can then argue, well, why did they have this operation? But that was enhancing their Middle East capability. I just don't believe the thesis that they traded things to the Russians.

Q: This is one of those things that floats around. It's still there.

SUDDARTH: Yes.

Q: Pollard is still in jail. You get some people enraged on both sides-

SUDDARTH: Yes, right.

Q: -to release him and not to release him.

SUDDARTH: Well, everybody, every American was enraged that a close ally would be taking this kind of sensitive intelligence. But nevertheless? The Defense Department (Weinberger and Rich Armitage) was determined and pushed very, very hard on this. Shultz was basically in their view? So, the Pollard affair put a sour taste in the mouth, but it didn't basically change the U.S. policy toward Israel. We were trying to get a peace process started on the West Bank.

Let me just go on now to the Syrian attempt to blow up some El-Al planes in Heathrow. This had a sort of personal resonance for me because I got into the office about 7:30 am and Arnie Raphel, our senior deputy, called me and said that the D Committee that nominates ambassadors for White House approval had just nominated me to be ambassador to Syria, which I was delighted with. I always wanted to go to Syria. A real challenge. Then a half hour later, we got a call down from Charlie Hill saying that "President Reagan has heard about the El-Al thing. He wants to break relations with Syria." Shultz was trying to hold him back because Shultz doesn't like breaking relations. It's hard to reestablish them. So, they came up with the idea of withdrawing our ambassador. So, within a half an hour, my ambassadorship had been offered and then withdrawn. Bill Eagleton, our ambassador, came back for several months. In the meantime, other vacancies occurred so I went back to Jordan, where I had served very happily, which is a lovely country. But Syria would have been a great challenge. Ed Djerejian went to Syria and had a wonderful tour there.

Q: Was this before your time in the NEA office where you had this head to head with Bob Paganelli and George Shultz over Syria?

SUDDARTH: Yes. I was in Saudi Arabia at the time, but I heard about it. Of course, Paganelli was entirely right and Shultz was entirely wrong. But Bob was so forceful in it that? Nick Veliotes, who was the assistant secretary, came out with Shultz right after that to Saudi Arabia and pulled me aside and said, "Rocky, would you be interested in going to Syria as ambassador?" I had just started as DCM. I said, "I'd be delighted." Then Paganelli acquitted himself well on some demarche on missiles and so Shultz pulled him back.

Q: Maybe we should talk about the peace process at that time.

SUDDARTH: Could I finish the El-Al business?

Q: Absolutely.

SUDDARTH: The El-Al business brought on sanctions against Syria, which was kind of new at that point. I don't recall doing it, but Shultz felt we had to do something more than just withdraw our ambassador. So, we got into this whole new realm of sanctions and it was sort of learning because we didn't have very many examples. There was a good lawyer named Dick Small, I think, in L that had a lot of knowledge. But in effect, what we did was invoke the Trading with the Enemy Act, which allows you to put on sanctions without going to Congress. They were finding oil there and we had Marathon, Shell, and Pectin U.S. So, we in effect, said they had to cease their operations. What one of them did was to go offshore and Shell brought another of its affiliates in to do it later. We cut air traffic. The British cut air traffic. There was a ban on imports and exports and various other thingany exchanges. It was a pretty grim set of things.

I just remember some of the glitches. I had called the deputy assistant secretary of Commerce to tell him about this. He had to pass that along to Aldridge, who complained like hell when he read about this in the paper since it was affecting U.S. commerce. We should have written a memo from the Secretary. Then at one point Chuck Redman called and said, "Hey, I've heard about this. Have you guys thought of a public affairs strategy?" We were all scrambling around trying to invent the egg.

Q: Chuck Redman being the spokesman.

SUDDARTH: Yes. So, we cobbled something together there. Then of course, we had the Syrian charge d'affaires, who was furious because we finally got Shultz to agree that we could at least let her know simultaneously with our own announcement. So, we made permanent enemies out of her because April Glaspie was in charge at one point and we forgot to do it. So, she read about it coming over her AP wire feed. I just have to say that April, who I have the highest respect for (She is a real professional and a brilliant policy oriented person), was so unhappy with this that she chose at this point to take home leave for six weeks. We brought in John Hersch to do the sanctions. We formulated a kind of law of Syrian-U.S. relations, and that is that anyone who had served in Syria had a much more forgiving view of Assad and his regime than those who had not. So, we had a kind of permanent battle in NEA between Dick Murphy, who had served in Syria, and April Glaspie, who had served in Syria just quite recently, and Arnie Raphel and myself. I, having been groomed by the Jordanians on how iniquitous the Syrians were (They were doing all kinds of bad things to Jordan)? Then you had the additional factor of Jerry Bremer, who was brought in as a very aggressive counterterrorist guy who didn't know the Middle East nearly as well as Bob Oakley, who had been somewhat more forgiving.

So, the issue then came up of the Abu Nidal, who was the most notorious Palestinian terrorist. He had broken off from the PLO because they were too peaceful by his means. He had just done a lot of terrible things. He had been kicked out of Iraq when I was in Saudi Arabia. They helped us to push the Iraqis to do that. He was in Syria. We really came down to a fight between Murphy and Bremer with Shultz in between about what to do about Abu Nidal. As I recall, we put even further pressure on the Syrians (I am hazy on the details) and they kicked him out. They got rid of Abu Nidal. I think they moved him to the Bekaa Valley, which wasn't exactly a clean kick out. But it was illustrative of the pull and tug that one had between the regional bureau trying to protect interests and the new emphasis on counterterrorism. That happened time and time again. I remember, much of my time was being spent with the counterterrorist people trying to come to some meeting of minds. There were a number of other counterterrorist things that I can think of, but I don't remember them at the time.

Going back to the peace process that you were talking about? You were talking about the one in Lebanon?

Q: At that time, there really wasn't one between the Israelis and Palestinians.

SUDDARTH: No, the PLO still wasn't recognized by us and more obviously by Israel. We were in this period working out what we hoped would be a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation that would be able to negotiate under a UN umbrella with the Israelis, but it really didn't go anywhere. Right at the end of my time? We had a meeting of chiefs of mission in London in April of 1987 before I went out to Jordan. We sent a cable back to Shultz saying, "Look, we've really got to push the peace process harder. People in the area are expecting it. We can't be stopped by a Shamir government." Shultz basically rejected it. At the same time, there was the secret Hussein-Peres meeting in London where they came to an agreement on a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, I think, even with names of the Palestinians. Then it was opposed by Shamir. Tom Pickering just did marvelous work in pushing this with the administration. He was the ambassador to Israel. Shultz concluded that if the prime minister of Israel was against it, there was no way the United States could push it. Hussein was deeply offended by this. It showed we weren't willing to take any risk whatsoever. So, that was the atmosphere that I confronted when I went to Jordan as ambassador in 1987.

Q: On this, how did you all who were dealing with it view the Likud government, Shamir, Sharon and company?

SUDDARTH: Sharon wasn't part of the government then, as I recall. Shamir was the dominant force, Begin having left. There wasn't really anybody else around then. There were a few young princes, but he was just totally intransigent. He and his wife would go to Israel and they'd have just a nice friendly supper with Shamir and his wife and try to let the hair down. He could never budge Shamir. It was the great frustration of Shultz' Middle East foray.

I think I've pretty well exhausted that two years. There was another element. That was the constantly inventive Peres, the protean intellect. I have great admiration for Peres, who was constantly thinking of ingenious ways of promoting a peace process. His thing was the Middle East Regional Economic Project (MEREP). It essentially was an intermeshing of economic interests. It meant building a Med to Dead Sea canal costing billions, intertwining banking systems, all kinds of joint projects. He tried to get us into the middle of all this. I was the guy that had to go to Israel and Egypt to see how feasible these things were. Well, the Egyptians were not going to play that game, nor were the Jordanians at that point. So, these were the two strains, one intransigent and one incredibly creative. Moshe Aron explained this thing to Shultz. He came to try to deal with the Pollard matter. I sat in on the meeting. He said, "George, I've got to tell you something. You may have trouble understanding our government, but it's a national unity government. We have two opposition parties coexisting trying to make policy. That is why things are so difficult. That's why we were constantly frustrated during this period."

Q: To me, the poison in the whole system, which I think is reaching its head as we talked about this in the year 2000, was the settlement process. No matter how you sliced it, the Israelis, particularly in the Likud, were gobbling up territory that belonged to Arabs.

SUDDARTH: That's true.

Q: And putting settlements in there. The whole idea was, everybody can talk and mess around and feel and negotiate, but as long as we keep putting our people in there, eventually, we'll take over the whole place.

SUDDARTH: Well, that's right. There was an accumulation of frustration that really built up into the December 1987 Intifada, which is when I was in Jordan.

Q: Were we trying to do anything about the settlement policy or was this-

SUDDARTH: We kept complaining, but we didn't put any muscle on it.

Q: What about AIPAC while you were there? Were they constantly around you monitoring?

SUDDARTH: AIPAC was? More than AIPAC, the Conference of Presidents [of Major American Jewish Organizations] was the one. They were often in Shultz' office and dealt as a very powerful group with him more so than AIPAC. AIPAC was really aimed essentially at Congress. Ken Bialkin was the president and then Morris Abram. Max Fisher was a very important ingredient in that. They were not anxious to go against any Israeli prime minister. So, they tended to side with whoever was the prime minister. They were suspicious we were trying to work out a deal of some sort.

Q: You were saying that the Council of Presidents was dealing with the White House.

SUDDARTH: With the White House and with Shultz. Shultz had a very good relationship with them. We had maybe three or four visits by Shamir and Peres and we always had a big deal up on the eighth floor of the State Department in addition to a dinner or lunch at the White House. But the peace process was going nowhere and it was becoming more and more apparent. At one point, Peres got the idea (This shows how ingenious he was)? We were going to have a U.S.-Soviet summit. I think I may have already talked about this.

Q: Go ahead.

SUDDARTH: And he wanted to tag? He thought that could be a cover for tagging on an Israeli-Jordanian meeting. It infuriated the King. By the time I got to Jordan, it was a very, very unhappy time. I was told by Jordanian friends that it was said that I was the only American that was acceptable. It was a good idea to send me back to Jordan because I was known as a friend of Jordan and Arab hospitality being what it was, they couldn't be totally hostile to me.

Q: Was there within NEA or maybe with your Israeli contacts any talk of "Eventually, we've got to talk to the PLO?"

SUDDARTH: It wasn't a high thing on the agenda, mainly because they were doing all of this terrorism. That was a couple of years later that that developed, although Shultz had a lot of influence on him. As head of Bechtel, he had had a relationship with Hasib Sabbagh, a prominent Palestinian contractor in the Middle East. Sabbagh kept working on him to talk to the PLO so that they were the ones that really mattered. So, Shultz had these two strands going on in his mind at the time. I think in his heart of hearts, he realized that the PLO was probably the key. But he was very cautious and very anxious not to get out ahead of the Jewish community. I remember being summoned over to the White House when we made some rather jejune statement which was "If the PLO did this and that, we would not object to the UN Secretary General doing something or other." That is how much of a full court press they had on us. Elie Rubenstein of late fame both as peace negotiator and the attorney general wanted a reassertion that we were not talking with the PLO or contemplating it. I was having constantly to reassure the Israelis that there was nothing going on.

Q: You went to Jordan when?

SUDDARTH: In September of 1987.

Q: 1987. You were there until when?

SUDDARTH: Until late July of 1990, just before the invasion by Iraq.

Q: As ambassador going there, did you sort of have to swear the oath to abide by Israeli demands?

SUDDARTH: No, that never came up. But I should say, one of the prime ingredients in my job description was, I was the liaison with the Jewish community, the pro-Israeli community, in Washington. So, I had spent two years dealing with them. I think I had a reasonably good relationship. So, there was no sense that they were going to be opposing my nomination. As a matter of fact, I made a point and believed this very sincerely of wanting to get some of the Jewish leadership out to Jordan. The tendency was to lump all the Arabs together and say they're all terrible. Jordan is just a little gem of a country. It's well administered, neat, has that British spit and polish to its military, they're courteous, kind to foreigners, there is beautiful sunshine, lovely buildings and antiquities. So, I went around and gave my card out to several people asking them if they could? I said, "I'd like to get you to Jordan. I think I can do it." I knew the King well and knew the Crown Prince. They like to play that game a bit. They liked to have a little bit of contact with the Jewish community. So, my big triumph was, I got Malcolm Hoenlein and a fellow named Greene, who was in charge of Jewish Affairs in the White House, to come out on a two day visit to Jordan. The Jordanians were charming, nice chats and so forth. Hoenlein came to me at the end and said, "This was the most wonderful two days of my life." Arthur Herzberg, who was a prominent, very liberal rabbi, and a good friend who taught at Dartmouth and Columbia and writes for the "New York Review," a real heavyweight, came over at a very dramatic time which I can get at later because it was when the King was giving up claim to the West Bank. So, Barbie and Larry Weinberg that run the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (They're angels), Larry showed me the other day, he said, "I still have your card" when you said, "Look, when you're ready to come, Larry, we're ready to receive you." Martin Indyk came out and led a group at that time. So, we had a decent flow of Jewish-Americans.

Q: Were you seeing both in the 1985-1987 period when you were in NEA or later when you were in Jordan any sort of divide between what you might call the fundamentalist Israeli "This is all our territory. We're going to? God has chosen us to do this" and other ones that said, "We've got a political situation. The Palestinians have got a cause, too?"

SUDDARTH: That was always the case. You had Labor that wanted to play ball and you had Likud that didn't.

Q: But in the Jewish community here?

SUDDARTH: In the Jewish community here, it was said that the Council of Presidents was much more conservative, much less willing to entertain liberal ideas than the mass of Jews in the country. I think to some extent that was true. They were very much in touch with Israel. As I recall at that point, a fellow named Bibi Netanyahu was the UN ambassador. He had been or was to late be DCM? He was said to be in charge of orchestrating Israeli government things with the Jewish community here. He had a lot of contact in New York and around the country. I'm not sure on the timing of that. But no, they were a major force. Ronald Reagan and the White House paid a lot of attention to them, but so did George Shultz. George Shultz's style was not to let any daylight get between him and the White House. He would come back and he wouldn'at least he didn't tell us in NEA what had really gone on in the discussions. So, he tried to take the guidance from the President and push it down. There were very few scenes. There was one that broke on the Iran-Contra thing, but that was after the fact. So, that tended to be his style. He tended to muffle any kind of sniping. We had a good relationship with the exception of Ollie North with the NSC. Later on when they cleaned up the NSC and you had Carlucci come in, Bob Oakley, Dennis Ross, who had always been very, very cooperative and excellent to work with, was moved down and became the advisor to Bush, which helped him immensely in later years? At this point, I think we've pretty much exhausted the 1985-1987 period.

Q: In 1987, you were saying relations with Jordan? We had turned down military aid and all. They weren't good.

SUDDARTH: No, they weren't good. We had had a one shot dollop of $300-400 million. I remember the 1985-1987 period. I remember having to go up as DAS and testify on the Hill to the Middle Eastern aid program. At that point, I had to say something about Jordan. I took the guidance and said within the overall funding guidelines that this was all we were able to give for Jordan. It was something like $75-100 million, nothing like the $400 million. So, the Jordanians were very unhappy. Our ambassador, Paul Boeker, said he had to go and do a lot of mending because? King Hussein said, "If our friends are this way (meaning me), how can you imagine the rest of the administration is?" So, I was a bit under a cloud because the main requirement for an ambassador is to be in with the King and to be in there pushing for Jordanian aid. They felt eminently worthy of aid. It wasn't all smooth sailing by any means.

Q: What was the role at that point when you got there in 1987 of the King and how did we see the King in the Jordanian and the broader Middle East context?

SUDDARTH: I think we still had some hopes that he would be able to be the cover for Palestinian entry into the peace process. We were happy that he was posited toward peace. We were a little unhappy that he was so unhappy with us that we weren't doing more. He was very sour. Before I went out, George Shultz had this sort of thing? You had your picture taken with him. He went up to see Charlie Hill before and he batted around some ideas. My ideas with Hill were, I recall, I said, "Look, we're not going to be able to satisfy the King on the peace process. We don't have an aid program that's going to meet his desires. I suggest two things that we do with him. One is to push for the Unity Dam project, which would have given Jordan a lot more water resources. That will make him very happy. And to engage him seriously in a dialogue about the Gulf." We had the reflagging issue when the Iranians were attacking Kuwaiti shipping and taken an American flag. There were a lot of problems. Iraq was winding up its war with Iran. That was an emerging issue. The King is close to Saddam. I said, "Let's get him seriously involved in talking about these things." At that point, Charlie Hill said, "At last, we've got an ambassador who has something in his head. Take Shultz aside after the picture and go over these ideas with him," which I did. Shultz said, "It sounds like a good idea to me." Then he said, "Look, I also want you to tell the King 'I know you're unhappy with me.' Shultz was very delphic and cryptic about these things), "but I'm going to keep pushing."

With that guidance, I went out. I got my letter and all those other things. It said, "Stay close to the King and all his chief advisors." I went out. I went through my hearings, which were very easy. Nat Howell and I were given hearings together. He went to Kuwait. I went to Jordan when I thought he was prisoner in Kuwait. The moving hand writes and fate is what it is. So, I went out.

The other thing was that Reagan was in the middle of this mess over Iran-Contra, had just had a nose operation, and wasn't seeing anybody. So, here I was going out with the King who thought he had a close relationship with Reagan and the United States. So, what was I going to do? I went to Bush, who was Vice President, and I said, "Can you help me out?" I described the situation. He said, "Sure." It was really wonderful. He wrote me a handwritten letter to the King saying that "I'm delighted that Rocky is coming out to see you (showing that I had some kind of relationship with Bush). I'm sure he's going to do a great job. I just want you to please feel free to call on me anytime I can do anything to help." Well, I went out and it was one of those kind of curious diplomatic things. It doesn't mean anything to historians or whatnot, but Bill Webster, the head of the Agency, was out on a visit. I got out there for the visit and even before I had presented my credentials, I worked it out with the palace so that I would be able to participate in those meetings. So, there at those meetingand we had a dinner togethel told Webster I had this thing from Bush. So, I took the King aside and told him how happy I was to be in Jordan and then gave him this letter from Bush, which he lovethe thought of a personal tie and so forth. I was able to get started on the right foot. Then when I presented my credentials, it was all very pro forma.

But we were in such bad fettle that when I got there, Geoffrey Howe, the British foreign secretary, was on a visit. Taher Masri, the foreign minister, had a dinner. Just to show displeasure with the United States, they had the Russian up at the head table with Howe. They had me seated in an obscure seat back in the back. Some people would have walked out, but I thought, it's a British ally, why do that. People came up saying, "Why don't you talk to the PLO?" I borrowed a phrase Herb Okun from the UN had used I thought quite effectively. I said, "They have our phone number. All they have to do is dial 242-338," which is the two Security Council resolutions, which acknowledged the right, in effect, of Israel to exist in return for a peace process and giving up land." So, my early days in Jordan?

There was a big Arab summit in Amman that the King was all involved with which was not really here or there. There weren't many issues of direct interest. Well, there were a couple of things. The major thing was, Shultz had a trip. Without having cleared it with me, he was persuaded by Peres to have Jordan and Israel meet at the tail end of a U.S.-Soviet summit. King Hussein suspected something was going on. He was away during Shultz's initial visit on this trip to Jordan. So, Shultz saw the prime minister and others and then picked me up. I went to Cairo and then we went on to London, where me met the King. We had two very difficult meetings. I told Shultz beforehand, "The King is going to be surprised, disappointed, and frightened by this offer. It ain't going to work, but the best way of doing it is to take him aside before the formal meeting and provide this to him." Sure enough, the King came back nervous as a cat saying, "Well, Secretary Shultz has just come up with a very radical idea" and then told it. The advisors all scowled and Shultz finally got him to say that he would think it over. So, we then went into lunch. I made one of those ambassadorial errors that don't really fit into high policy. The King had been skiing in Switzerland when Shultz had been in Amman, which didn't give a very serious cast to his view of the United States and the peace process role we had. Trying to break the ice in this glacial atmosphere, I said, "Well, how was skiing in Switzerland?" The King glowered at me. He was very unhappy with me. I should have just sat there. But I thought I knew them both. Shultz was impressed that they called me "Rocky," all these guys that knew me before. So, I probably took liberties. But then Shultz went to a NATO meeting. I stayed back with the Jordanians. They were very unhappy. Then the next meeting was out at Ascot at a gorgeous little palace that the king had there. Nothing came of that either, so it was a failed mission. It was so bad that we had had to practice before that when you'd have a meeting abroad, we'd get clearance from the State Department that the ambassador would fly back on the King's plane. So, I called Marwan Qasim, the head of the royal palace and said, "Is there any chance I could hook a ride?" The State Department was so broke that Murphy wanted to save a few bucks from his budget by having me come back. They said, "We're sorry. That would not be convenient." Later on, I flew back with the King in the United States and other things. But that was sort of the nadir.

I spent my time going around paying calls and so forth. I had this curious discontinuity between a very close relationship I had with the King and the Crown Prince, chief of staff, the prime minister, and the icy relationship with the United States. Then they had this summit. I got involved in that because the Lebanese wanted to be indemnified by the Arabs. I had been working with them. Nothing really came of it. But Jordan was very happy to have the summit. That sort of boosted Hussein's prestige and morale.

Then the next thing that happened was the Intifada.

Q: Could you explain what the Intifada was?

SUDDARTH: The Intifada was the uprising of indigenous Palestiniannot led by the PLO, a kind of spontaneous combustion of the frustration accumulated after 20 years of occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and the fact that the Palestinians there were willing to take matters into their own hands, I think, frightened the PLO that the leadership was moving inland, inside. So, the PLO became more willing to get involved in the peace process. One of the major galvanizers of this was, the King, having concluded after what they called the "Shultz mission," which was pretty non-substantive just trying to talk the Jordanians into getting involved in talking with the Israelis, the King then decided (and they alerted us to it several times in advance, although not in any detail) that they were going to disengagnot from the peace process but from the West Bank. So, sure enough, while we had the Foreign Service inspectors, the Jordanians made this dramatic announcement. They had demarches to the British, the French, the Russians, the Japanese, and the Americans. I was meant to wait last to get news of this. I knew about it all before that. My British colleague had gotten first notice of it, although we had been told quite formally by the prime minister several weeks in advance that they were moving in that direction. So, I immediately tried to see the King and he wouldn't see me. The prime minister held me off. The point was, "Don't do anything. We want Dick Murphy, the assistant secretary, to come out before you make the announcement." They said, "No way. We're going to do this." And they did it. In effect, I think it had a generally beneficial effect in the long-run.

There was an interesting little sidelight. The King was holding me off, but Arthur Herzberg came to town. He was our houseguest. The Crown Prince, who had been involved with him in religious things (the Judeo-Islamic-Christian stuff) and knew him a bit? So, I went up with Arthur to talk to the Crown Prince. Arthur had some kind of message from Peres. So, I managed to sneak my way in with Arthur with the King. So, before they made their formal announcement, I was able to get a pretty full readout on it. It illustrates for those at FSI that the practice of diplomacy is sometimes an exercise in luck, sometimes in resourcefulness? You really have to keep your wits about you. If you only follow the formal dictates of diplomacy, you never get anywhere. So, I got a little bit more insight into it, particularly his very strong reassertion of the fact that he was not abandoning the peace process, only his claim to the West Bank so that the Palestinians would be able to take full responsibility of it.

Q: It sounds like giving up. Or was this designed to strengthen the Palestinians or was it "This is too much for me. I'm out?"

SUDDARTH: I think it was a combination of things. I think it was an assessment that the process was going nowhere. It was unhappiness with the Israelis. It was unhappiness with the United States. I think he wanted a dramatic gesture to put blame on the U.S. that things were going nowhere. But I think it was essentially to say "We tried this joint delegation stuff. We tried all this stuff. It's now really up to the Palestinians. The Intifada has shown that there is some resistance on the inside. There is some interest in nationhood there. So, we're throwing it to them." And in a sense, it was a challenge to the PLO: quit all this peripheral terrorism and get involved in what is really the real thing. That is my interpretation.

Q: On your staff at the embassy, you had obviously some junior officers and sometimes they're a problem. Getting too much involved in this? Were you having to run a seminar to understand the Israeli point of view? In other words, make them part of the team rather than?

SUDDARTH: We institutionalized it in 1974 by getting the Israelis and the Jordanians to agree to a diplomatic pouch run whereby we could drive our cars across the Jordan Valley and spend a weekend in Israel. I wanted to be sure that people were aware of the real facts rather than having it filtered through Jordanian propaganda. You could tell the children that went to the American community school came back rabidly anti-Israeli simply because of these influences on them. We made a special effort to make sure we didn't have localitis. I don't recall an instant of any junior officer writing a dissent cable or anything of that sort. On the other hand, they were extremely helpful in getting out in the hustings and finding out what the Jordanian population was thinking about the Jordanian government, which comes up later with the Jordanian political land economic places.

Q: What about the ties to our consulate general in Jerusalem since Jordan had - until they renounced ipresumptive authority over the West Bank and Jerusalem was not attached to Tel Aviv? How did that work?

SUDDARTH: We had a very cordial relationship with all the consulates general. I would say starting with the Carter administration and Mike Newland in 1978, the consulate general became pro-Palestinian and by extension pro-PLO. So, there was a little bit of a policy separation there. We tended to be pro-Jordanian with the feeling that the West Bank was so small, so dubiously viable, that probably an association with Jordan was necessary. This was the flipside of a joint delegation was, I thought, by the Israelis and a lot of Americans thought to be the opening wedge to a Jordanian-Palestinian federation, which Peres and company and Rabin favored. It still could happen someday.

Q: Did water play much of a role?

SUDDARTH: Yes. We had a major effort on the Unity Dam. I talked earlier about the Maqarin Dam. This was the same thing but 10 years later and was pushed by Zaid Rifai. They got a kind of agreement with Syria of dubious sustainability. Then we went through a series of exercises of negotiating with the Israelis and resuscitating the engineering schemes and whatnot. It was essentially water from the Yarmuk that came into the Jordan River system with Lake Tiberius over there. In the winter with the snow and rain on the Golan Heights, there was a lot of runoff which just ran into the Dead Sea and became dead water. So, the idea was to build a dam that would hold that and to work out a rationing scheme between Syria, Jordan, and Israel. One of the issues that came up? And I have to give Dan Kurtzer credit for it, who was in NEA at the time. We were assuming a straight Jordanian-Israeli deal. Dan quite bravely said, "Look, you've got to factor the Palestinians in here. That's Palestinian West Bank land that it's coming down through." In the early days, it was just Jordan and Israel and no Palestinians. So, that was to be worked out. It was never explicitly broached. But that thing went on. It turned out we were finding that the Syrians were building earthen dams up which was bringing less and less water in. The Syrian minister of defense developed a large farm where he was using water. So, there was some question whether by the time the dam was built there would be enough water to justify it. I think that's still a question.

But then we brought in Rich Armitage and his team, who were wonderful. Rich, of course, if Bush is elected, will probably be the deputy secretary of Defense. He loved Jordan and had been the head of ISA. He was not doing anything in the Bush administration, so we signed him on? He had two jobs. He was a negotiator of Philippine bases and then he was the Unity Dam negotiator. So, he came with his team of very bright guys. Among other things, he went through the details, the data, and found that the Jordanian data was way off. Their conclusions were way off, even basing it on Jordanian data. Then he went back and forth between Israel and Jordan. He was in the middle of his mission when the Gulf War broke out. So, that was still forming.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover at this point? Shall we stop now?

SUDDARTH: I think now is a good time to stop. The latter part of all this was the Jordanians got into trouble because of (and it's in my paper there) arms purchases that they wanted to make from Britain. They had a big budget and a run on the dinar because of this huge deficit, which brought in the IMF, which brought in riots, which brought in a totally new political picture.

Q: We'll pick it up then.

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Today is January 22, 2001. Rocky, you heard where we were.

SUDDARTH: Yes. This is, I think, an interesting case study in political economy. When I arrived in Jordan in September of 1987, the Jordanians had been rebuffed earlier for a combat fighter by the United States. The King, never to be totally rebuffed, was threatening that he was going to go to the Russians. When I arrived, we had a kind of instruction to support the British that were trying to sell them a high performance fighter even though the financing on this was very dubious since the Jordanians had run out of help from the Gulf but were always hopeful they could go back for a discrete purchase of this sort.

Just one of the footnotes. Soon after I arrived, it appeared to me that our objective was to thwart the Soviets and if it was feasible economically for the Jordanians to have them get a free world fighter. Well, the French were also contending. In effect, I think they had more influence with particular peoplGeneral Bin Shaker and otherthan the British did. One never knows what under the cover kind of things are on these things. But I wrote back and said that it didn't make any sense for us to be supporting the British and not the French. So, we got a change and I had an instruction in one of my earlier demarches with King Hussein to say that we did support the French and the British. Our interest was not to have the Soviets, provided that financing could be provided for it.

Q: There seems to be this peculiar thing we get in the Middle East. Everything is peculiar there? Here we are, the preeminent producer and desirer of fighter planes and all that and yet you found yourself as a pointman trying to be honest broker between the British and the French. Was this incongruous?

SUDDARTH: In one of our earlier sessions, I mentioned that King Hussein came in October of 1985 and wanted a combat aircraft package and in return he went very far to saying that he recognized the existence of Israel and was interested in peace, but that wasn't enough for the Congress because the Israelis took a verand probably still dtough line that anybody who's in a state of war with Israel should not be getting advanced combat equipment. So, they had fought the Hawk deal and every purchase the Jordanians had ever made, particularly of high performance aircraft. So, he then went to the British, the French, and the Russians and said, "Hey, what have you got?" But what was unbeknownst to me in all of this and was never in any of the official records that I know (and this is to be checked for accuracy), but my understanding is that Margaret Thatcher in one of her repeated informal weekends that she would go out and spend in Aspen with President Reagan had cajoled him into supporting a British offer to the Jordanians. I arrived in Jordan. They had a very high-powered British ambassador who had been private secretary to Margaret Thatcher who thought he had this thing all lined up. When he found out that I was supporting the French as well as the British just as he was leaving to go on as ambassador to Australia (He later became head of the diplomatic service: John Cole, and a very tough customer he was) he came over and very frostily accosted me about supporting the French as well as the British. I gave him my rationale. The British always have a little commercial angle where they want to get some money on these things. I didn't feel that geopolitically that that made any sense. So, he left on a bit of a frosty note.

As it turned out, none of it panned out. The British were also hawking their big multibillion dollar public security package where there would be armored cars and fancy electronic equipment and computers, which I also thought was imprudent given the parlous state of the Jordanian finances. It all came home to roost. The Soviet deal was nixed. As I recall, the Jordanians put off any combat aircraft. That would have to be checked, but I think they eventually got some F-16s from the U.S. But I don't think they got anything because they couldn't finance it.

Q: Military people who were watching this, was there a certain disdain for Soviet aircraft? They all seemed to get shot down by the Israelis with very little trouble.

SUDDARTH: Well, that's true. These were always rather hollow threats. But the Jordanians had tried this with the Hawk missile earlier. The Soviets have a pretty good air defense system, so that was a more credible threat. So, that sort of vanished away. In the meantime, the Jordanian economy was getting into more and more trouble. If you recall, the oil prices peaked in 1979 and then were at a high plateau until 1985 when they started gradually to come down. That meant that the Gulfies were less willing to support the Jordanians. Their aid was drying up. Our one-time package was drying up. The Jordanians were getting in more and more desperate shape. Then these two big security packages really sunk the budget. They were put in the budget. As a result, you had a flight of capital and a decline in the dinar that happened in the summer of 1988. I have to give credit to my predecessor, Paul Boeker, who is a first-class economist. He, working together with our AID PhD. economist, worked out a paper showing the inevitable, that this was going to happen. He presented it in May of 1987 with my arriving in September. But the problem was, it was a totally local initiative. Washington was never advised of it. So, I arrived in Amman and I found that the only thing I really got briefed on was his interest in not having my wife participate in charity bazaars, which was a similar desire of the British ambassador's wife since they were both career women and felt it demeaning.

What I wish I had been briefed on was the very good, very concise memorandum that Ambassador Boeker had presented to the prime minister, which in effect said, "Your government budget is out of whack. You don't have assistance coming in from the outside. There will be an inevitable foreign exchange imbalance and speculators will ruin the excellent reputation of the Jordanian dinar." I found out about this by chance two or three months into my ambassadorship. Then we had a changeover and a new economic officer who was convincing me more and more. I spent a lot of time with the finance minister and talked to the prime minister about it. But one regret I have is, I never talked to King Hussein, who hated economics and hated to talk about it. Once this bubble burst, there was all hell to pay. Among the things that happened was, Ahmed Chalabi, who was now head of the Iraqi Opposition Council in London, was head of a new bank called Petra Bank. He allegedly absconded with half a billion dollars and was sneaked out in the boot of the car of somebody because he had his passport lifted. He is now under indictment in Jordan. But it was a severe blow to the Jordanians. Their dinar went from about three dollars to a dollar and a half in just a very short period of time.

What this brought on was a fire brigade from the IMF, which put in a very tough adjustment program which included heavy cutbacks on subsidies, particularly gasoline subsidies. While the King was in the United States. (I was with him), this was put into effect. They made a technical error, a political error, because at that point, Jordan was supplying much of the transport for Iraq through the Aqaba port and it was Jordanian truckers largely from southern Jordan that were doing this. They found themselves with a huge increase in their gas price, their diesel price, with no corresponding permission to increase their retail prices to the Iraqis. So, there was a big riot in Maan in the south, which is also the East Bank constituency of King Hussein. Prince Hassan went down and tried to quell it. Finally, the King had to do it himself.

There was some amusing asides. We were in the Senate. I was sitting next to Jesse Helms during King Hussein's visit. King Hussein made a kind of amusing remark about, "Here I am trying to get aid and my country is falling apart because we don't have any." It didn't help any. But there was an interesting dynamic that occurred. So, this brought on riots that then spread to other areas of Jordathe sacking of the prime minister, who was considered very unpopular. The King then had to relax a state of emergency or at least the non-convening of Parliament that he hadn't convened since 1967 and held rather hasty parliamentary elections, which resulted in a plurality being given to the heretofore quiescent Islamist grouping in Jordan. They were able to do this because the Jordanians had repressed real political activity for all those years. In the sanctuary of a mosque, the Islamists had been able to organize things very well. They tended also to be very eloquent. They tended also to speak better Arabic than a lot of the Western-educated people. The other thing was, the King refused to get involved in organizing the elections. I felt like Diogenes with his lamp trying to find anybody among the establishment in Jordan that was willing to organize. They had a whole splinter of loyalist parties and then some leftist parties. Then you had this one determined block of Islamists. Then they won a lot more under proportionate representation. I think it was a third of the Parliament. So then the King had to bring in Muslim Brotherhood members of the Parliament who were fairly tame. But he suddenly had on his hands a rather fractious parliament, which he hadn't had for several years. That changed his ruling dynamic. Even though the King got the reputation of being an autocrat, in effect, he paid a lot of attention to Parliament. He had had terrible parliaments in the '50s which caused him to get rid of and try to get a better group. Then he had ruled without other than a rubber stamp parliament ever since 1967.

In addition, he had absolved himself of administrative responsibility for the West Bank, so there were no West Bank representatives, which meant that the Palestinians were underrepresented, which became a real problem in the elections. The PLO people also boycotted it. So, what you had were an underrepresented and underactive East Bank constituency, an abdicating PLO and Palestinian group. Therefore, the Islamists came in. Fortunately, they were preempted and coopted into the government largely and really didn't cause any major problems, although they did ask embarrassing questions of the prime minister.

Q: Speaking of Islam, did King Hussein and his immediate entourage pay particular attention to the observance of Islamic rule?

SUDDARTH: No, the King was personally very observant. He would publicly lead prayers at the major religious occasions. He was often photographed praying at the mosque. He was not a terribly observant Muslim. He wasn't really a drinker. He might have a scotch once every six months or something. But he was modernist and he wanted really very much to move his country along, so he wanted a modern educational system, which the Islamists really didn't want. He didn't buy their cardinal rule, which was that Sharia is the way, which is to say that all legislation should come directly out of the Koran and the interpretations of a theocracy. And there was always the suspicion that the Islamists wanted to take power. The way the King got around this was, he forced any officeholder in Parliament or anywhere else to swear allegiance to the Jordanian constitution, which many of them undoubtedly didn't really believe in. But at least it held them to a promise while they were serving in government. So, that changed the politics.

We then move on to another really important chapter, which was the Gulf War. Here, there are some things in the background that may be of interest that we can talk about. But in general, the relationship with Jordan was getting closer and closer. As the Gulf monarchs' money ran out, the trade and the concessional oil agreements where Jordan got oil at half price from Iraq became more and more important. Also, during the Iran-Iraq War, Saddam had tried to keep both guns and butter, so Jordanians became more and more involved in the Iraqi market. People built huge chicken farms on the Iraqi border just to move chickens into Iraq. The Jordanian beer makers were going full blast to try to supply the enormous thirst of the Iraqi army for beer. The Iraqis would often reward returning officers by taking them to nightclubs to drink scotch and gave beer to their enlisted men. But in effect, the Jordanian economy was being tied to this enormous oil producing country with the second largest oil reserves in the world but was also heavily in debt for its military expenditures.

So, that was where things stood in early 1990. The Jordanian former prime minister, Zaid Rifai, just in May when I was getting ready to leave, we had a chat and he said he was afraid the King was getting far too close to Saddam Hussein. I discounted that a little bit because ____ had always been a very close friend of the Syrians, which was in a rivalry, but he is a very astute observer. I think he was right on. The Iraqi relationship was never fully disclosed to the United States. We would get kind of apologetic views from the King and the King liked to view himself as an interlocutor. We would often brief the King on military developments in Iraq and the Iraq-Iran War, which he undoubtedly passed on to the Iraqis. So, he was in a good position with Saddam. They had a good personal relationship. But then there were all kinds of warning signs that occurred. There was the big gun that was discovered that was being built in London. That was a huge big bertha that could lob a several hundred pound shell several hundred miles.

There was an important visit by Senator McCain and Senator Kassebaum in 1989 where they had complained about Saddam using chemical weapons, not only against the Iranians but also against the Kurds in Halabja, where several hundred or thousands of people were killed. The administration was still on a kind of "let's get close to Iraq" course. Iran was still the bï¿½te noire, so the enemy of our enemy tended to be somewhat our friend. But the war ended and that left Saddam with a huge debt, with a huge army, and with huge unfulfilled ambitions on his hands. Having convinced himself that he had won the war the way he's convinced himself he won the Gulf War? These warning signs began to show. He threw an Iraqi-British citizen, a journalist, in jail. He may have executed him. He had all of these nefarious companies set up around the world to provide him with cutouts for building up some very sophisticated weapons. Then the culmination was really the April or May 1990 Baghdad Conference, where he blustered about and showed himself to be a bully. Right around that time, he talked about "We will burn half of Israel if they don't tow the line." So, we were all getting more and more agitated about the threat that Saddam was beginning to show. Then he picked his bone with the Kuwaitis over the Rumaylah oil fields just in the last month that I was in Jordan. It was obvious that the Jordanians were under the King's lead becoming very, very pro-Iraqi. The business class had great vested interest in doing it. I remember, I had a terrible reaction from Congress and from Washington when the Iraqis started meddling in Lebanese affairs and they shipped a rather large missile through Jordan to Lebanon, where they were supporting some forces that were against the government. I got a demarche from Washington to protest this. The King very forthrightly said, "What do you expect? This is an Iraqi port." When I reported those words verbatim, there was a huge firestorm in Washington that Jordan and Iraq were developing this kind of a close relationship.

But at the conference in Baghdad, Saddam not only tended to treat Hussein and others discourteously but it showed that he showed that he had huge ambitions and huge ignorance. I mean, historians should study that speech carefully because as the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc were crumbling? He didn't say this? He said that all of the oil rich Arab countries should move their money from the United States and the western powers to the Soviet Union and to the Eastern Bloc countries. It just shows how ignorant the guy was. Then he made a populistic play that the have nots of the Arab world should get behind his banner and force the haves to give more money to the poor. This is the height of hypocrisy because his futile war with Iran had squandered virtually a trillion dollars if you took opportunity costs into account during an eight year war. So, Saddam was getting out of control. The Rumaylah thing hit with Kuwait. They had a meeting in Jeddah which was inconclusive.

Before this happened, as I was leaving, we were worried about Saddam. I got a very good instructions the last time I was supposed to see King Hussein about a week before I left proposing that he talk to Saddam and smooth the way for John Kelly, the assistant secretary, to call on Saddam and to try to smooth the way to working out some of the difficulties in our relationship. At that time (I'm hopping back and forth), I think in early 1990, April or something, a big congressional delegation came through. Jordan on their way to Iran led by Majority Leader Dole, Metzenbaum, and one or two others and they were very unclear about really what they were supposed to accomplish. They took me into their confidence and we called the President. They talked to the President about what he wanted. I wasn't in on the conversation, but as I recall, it was "Try to mend fences. Try to find a way out of the difficulties that we have." April Glaspie is writing her own book on this. I do recall, they got to Baghdad and Saddam had been very unhappy about two things, one that the State Department had received Talabani, a Kurd, at desk officer level. He made a big issue out of that, we interfering in his affairs. Then there was a very kind of inoffensive otherwise VOA broadcast where they talked about the human rights violations in Iraq. So, he hit the ceiling. April Glaspie got in the middle of it. She got this congressional delegation to talk about this issue, which I thought was ill-advised.

The result was, I don't think the Dole mission put him on any guard. He hadn't suggested his move to Kuwait at that point. Then we got an instruction from the Department of State when he was beginning to get bellicose after the failed Jeddah Conference. People will have to check the record, but I remember saying to myself? There were these two lines which said the United States doesn't take the position of interarab boundary disputes." I said to myself, "This is going to be trouble" and it is one of those cables that I wish I had written. I called in the DCM and the political counselor. I said, "This is going to be misunderstood by Saddam." As I recall, in presenting it to King Hussein, there had been some press guidance which said, "We don't countenance and would oppose any threat or use of force in this." I used that guidance very heavily with King Hussein. I was afraid King Hussein was going to relay this other thing back to Saddam and that the two of them would misinterpret it. But people will have to check the record on how that was actually reported.

The King said at that point, "This is an Arab family affair." I recall saying to him without instructions that "Well, Your Majesty, back in the '50s and '60s when you were under attack by Nasser and by the Syrians and the Arab nationalists in general, would you have liked that to have been considered an Arab family affair? It was U.S. and British support and the Eisenhower Doctrine that helped you to pull through on that." He did acknowledge that. He said, "Well, you have a point there." But he went right on back to his thing. I think, strategically, he felt that he had been let down by the United States by not carrying through on the peace process. He was afraid that a Begin or a Shamir government, particularly with Sharon, would carry through on their threats that Jordan was Palestine. He was disillusioned with the Saudis and the Gulfies for cutting off their aid to him. He was dependent economically on Iraq.

In addition, the Iraqis had done some rather bold things. They had given 55 Mercedes 500s that cost around $100,000 apiece in Jordan to several legislators and press lords. This sent a chill through the Jordanian security establishment because they realized t he power that they were dealing with Saddam was spreading anti-American and anti-Israeli banners around him. We had to go in and invoke the third country rule. My wife, meanwhile, was trying desperately to get these posters for memorabilia from off of the Iraqi embassy, which was around the corner from our residence. She didn't succeed. But the atmosphere was turning ugly and fearful. I recall just a few days before leaving, the Iraqis then moved a combat brigade down to the Kuwaiti border. I didn't see King Hussein on this, but I saw the chief of the Royal Diwan, Field Marshall Bin Shaker. I said "What's going on here" and he dismissed it as just a bit of blustering. I sent a farewell cable around to my colleagues at various posts. I didn't report it to Washington for a variety of reasons. I said, "I have a feeling the stakes are going up in the area" without citing Iraq. But it was obvious that they were the ones I was talking about. But I was as surprised as everybody. The King has assured me just at the time after I had done this initial demarche that Saddam Hussein was not going to be taking military action against Kuwait. I think he may have been reassured on that by direct conversation by Mubarak rather than directly by Saddam.

Q: Most of the Arab leaders treated this as kind of bluff.

SUDDARTH: Right. I remember sending a cable? I regret the distribution because it was so reassuring, so definitive on the part of King Hussein. The instructions that I had mentioned earlier had gone out to all Arab League posts. So, I did a collective to the Arab League collective posts. There were 15-20 posts. It said, "King Hussein has assured me that they will not be invading Kuwait." Well, then I left one week before Saddam invaded Kuwait. The King had a wedding party for his daughter up at the palace. It was my last day in Jordan. It was very nice to see him and his family that I was so close to, as well as a lot of Jordanian friends. There was no feeling at that point of anything other than reassurance. I think the common wisdom was, even if Saddam went back a bit on the pledge, it would be a limited occupation of only the Rumaylah oil fields and maybe the Bubiyan Islands. So, we were all surprised when Saddam took over Kuwait. Subsequent to my departure, I know that our chargï¿½, Pat Theros, got some tough instructions in saying "What gives here with moving all of these troops toward Kuwait?"

Q: You mentioned you had some disquiet about what was happening, but you didn't send it to Washington. You said that was for a variety of reasons. Was this the sort of thing you don't share with Washington?

SUDDARTH: Well, this was a farewell to my colleagues in the area, telling them what I was doing. It was an informal cable. The other reason, quite frankly, was that I didn't have a good relationship with John Kelley. He had made a move to remove most of the experienced Arabists. Ned Walker was sent off. I was sent out. Nat Howell was going out. He had his own people that he wanted to put in. So, I was going out to an interesting assignment with the Inspector General, but I would have liked to have had another post. So, I had little confidence in Kelley. This was a cordial personal message. So, I had no cordial personal feelings with Kelley. When I considered sending messages back as things heated up, the one I would have sent saying "Be careful about this?" By the way, the other problem on sending something back on this instruction was that they had sent it to the entire Arab League collective, so everybody was going in. So, it was too late really for me to change an instruction, but I should have registered my reservations on it. I would have sent that to Kimmitt, the under secretary, rather than Kelley.

Kelley was totally unprepared for the position. He had spent one tour in Beirut, largely dodging bullets, and he didn't have the depth.

Q: Yes. I think it gives a feel.

SUDDARTH: The story I heard, which was on fairly good authority, although I don't remember who it was now, was that Baker when he came in wanted to make certain that he had a good relationship with Congress. So, he went to Rudy Boschwitz, who was head of the Near East Subcommittee and the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate, and said, "Look, I've got three candidates for assistant secretary: Frank Wisner, Bob Pelletreau, and John Kelley. What is your thought on these?" Boschwitz said, "Well, I prefer Kelley because the other two have had too much experience in the area." I prefer somebody to take a fresh look at this." So, Kelley was over his head. A genius could not have handled that job the way that he was thrust into it.

Q: It's interesting how at certain times there is almost disdain of people who know the area and say, "Well, let's take a fresh look," which often means "Let's bypass the people who know." What's the point of having a cadre of people who know the Arab world?"

SUDDARTH: You know, I have to be fair to John, with whom I have fairly decent personal relations. He replaced area people with other area people by and large. He was big on control. What he wanted were people that he had appointed that were beholden to him and who therefore he could control, whereas senior people who had been around who had had similar jobs were more difficult to control. He told me when he was taking over, "If you have some policy thoughts, please send them to me in a personal letter." He didn't want telegrams that were questioning policy. So, Kelley was a very controversial Secretary. I think he made a big mistake? It's always easy to do these things in hindsight. One of the critical moments was when he went to Congress and was asked, "Do we have any security treaty with Kuwait?" I had been in Saudi Arabia and gone out and given them some assurances. We didn't have anything written that I know of. But the thing to do in a case like that was, since there was some worry about an invasion, to say in the open session, "I prefer to not get into this in open session." That way, you at least left the ambiguity. You could say something to the effect that we had a security dialogue with them over the years over subjects such as threats to them and so forth. But that probably more than April Glaspie may have been one of the things that led? Although, quite frankly, I don't think Saddam would have been deterred even if April... I think she was scapegoated. She was brought there in the middle of the night. I was told that the notetakers were primed to even burst into tears when Saddam talked about his economic difficulty. April told me that she had been assured by Saddam that he wasn't going to be using military means. Their report of the cable was, there was a conditional clause if it all worked out. But that also tends to be Arab rhetoric. Kelley was not the right guy to be dealing with a crisis of this magnitude. He had from what I understand very little impact in the decisions which got taken over to the White House. NEA didn't have too much of a role.

You can imagine my chagrin sitting on the Riviera with my parents-in-law at their house when I had a friend, a Jordanian, call from France who heard over the news on this Sunday morning, August 2, that Saddam had invaded Kuwait. So, that was the end of that period and, in effect, the end of my diplomatic involvement in the Middle East.

Q: You came back to what?

SUDDARTH: I was a senior inspector. I led several inspections, which I found very interesting. A five or six man team would go out. I did inspections in? It was a weird feeling, too, to be in Nicaragua, Panama, and Costa Rica during the fall as things were building up and then in Chile and Peru during the Gulf War itself. Then I was in Brazil and then OES in the summer. Then I was named Deputy Inspector General, which I was pleased to get, but went out and led our inspection in Germany the following year just at the time when the Madrid Conference was on. What to say about use of career people?

As I say, Kelley put career people largely in places and did listen and had a chiefs of mission conference in March, was very flattering to the expertise of the people that he was dealing with from the area. But it's different dealing with an assistant secretary who's been in the area and knows the issues and one that doesn't. The Middle East is a tricky area. There was a big Saudi arms package that came before him which he was very nervous about supporting. That's always tricky. Then of course, the Gulf War he was totally unprepared for. He had been to Jordan and had done a credible job in briefing the King on what was going on in the peace process. We had had a meeting with the prime minister as well. But my own thing, Kelley indicated to me that he had some people he needed to place. John McCarthy had been risking his life in Beirut.

The other thing that would be interesting? Ivan Selin, who was a classmate of mine in college and a good friend? I thought I was going to go to Tunisia to replace Bob Pelletreau in the dialogue with the PLO, but that didn't work out, because Kelley was not favorable, even though I had support on the 7th floor. I was asked by Undersecretary Kimmitt my recommendations on somebody to replace me. The Arabists will probably revile me for this, but I told him I didn't think that was an essential condition that, in effect, other than Harry Symmes, I was the only Arabisthat is to say, someone who has learned Arabic and has spent their career in the Arab world? I thought the main thing was a person who would have a deep rapport with King Hussein. He picked a person of quality with broad experience who could relate to a man of very broad experience and would bring more to it than just a narrow understanding. There is no problem of having an Arabist, but the person was more important than the experience in that case. The case in point was Roger Harrison, who was political counselor for a couple years in Tel Aviv but otherwise was a Europeanist. Roger had a very tough time. My friends in Jordan said I was very lucky to get out. Even though I wish I had been there for that fatal week... I might have had some influence on King Hussein, but his closest advisors didn't. I'm told that other than Adnan Abu Odeh, nobody supported King Hussein's tilt toward Iraq during the war.

Q: It went over very, very poorly in the United States. All of a sudden, King Hussein was not the brave little king, but rather a dirty little turncoat.

SUDDARTH: Right. No one has a satisfactory explanation. I mentioned several disillusionments he had with Israel, the U.S., and the Saudis, and his strategic reliance on Saddam. I think that was a lot of it. I think a lot of it was ego. A lot of it was fear of what Saddam could do against him. An element was public opinion, but I take the argument, as Assad has, that he could have led public opinion. It was fluid. After all, you had 300,000 Palestinians who had been kicked out of Kuwait because of Saddam's actions. It turns out that they disliked the Kuwaitis as much as the Iraqis because they had been treated as second class citizens. But I think that the King could have led things in a different direction. There is some classified stuff that will come out at some point that will put a little better light on some of the actions that he took right before or right after Saddam's invasion, although I will leave that in a tantalizing note.

But force of circumstanceand then he realized he was wildly popular. Then he also had tried in this last minute 11th hour diplomacy to get Saddam to mediate between Saddam, Mubarak, the Kuwaitis, and others. He had been spurned on that. He then came to Washington. It turned out he had no assurances from Saddam, so he was spurned there. But he seems to be convinced in his heart of hearts that he was undercut by Mubarak and by Bush even though I think that's an exaggeration. He set great store by the Arab League condemnation of Saddam and Saddam had told the same, "Look, I'll do anything but just don't condemn me." I think that was an utter rationalization. I don't think Saddam, once having invaded Kuwait, totally invested the country, was about to move out. If he moved into the oil fields, then he could have negotiated, but I think King Hussein was vainglorious to think that he could move him out of a totally occupied Kuwait. I think he got his ego involved in it. I think he realized that he was very popular with the street. I think he realized also that the U.S. needed him in the peace process and could never totally abandon him. The United States in effect got the Japanese to pick up a good bit of our lapsed aid to Jordan that the Congress was blocking. So, I think it was a dumb move strategically but tactically I think the King handled it reasonably well.

Q: To touch on the time you were in the Inspection Corps, this was from when to when?

SUDDARTH: September 1990 to June 1994. Then I was inspector general from September 1991 to June 1994. I was acting inspector general? Sherman Funk, the inspector general who I greatly admire, left in something like February of 1994, so I was the acting inspector general for about six months.

There was very little involving diplomacy in that, so I really think it would be a waste of-

Q: When you came out of it? You had been in the apparatus. Where did you see within our foreign affairs establishment the strengths and the weaknesses?

SUDDARTH: The strengths, of course, were the quality of people in the Foreign Service and the Civil Service. The weaknesses were the absolute fiscal desperation of the Department of State, just little things like why was the Department of State always behind on information technology, still running with Wang machines in the 1990s? There would always be a big plug of money for information technology and it got rated for whatever contingency came up. So, you were never able to establish a big enough budget to handle the needs of a modernizing corporate entity. That was just one instance.

It is usually the budgetary process that kills the State Department. Ivan Selin was a good friend of mine in college and I kept up with him. He had been a great success and made hundreds of millions of dollars with the American Management Group. He had come out to visit me when I was ambassador in his private capacity on his trip through the Middle East. So, he and I were on very close terms. When he was appointed under secretary, I happened to be back in town on a visit, so I called him and we had breakfast together on a Sunday morning. I remember telling him, "The State Department is not as badly managed as people say it is. Even though the macro side is bad, you have very good executive offices and the bureaus tend to be able to compensate by wise use of resources for what is lacking.

Ivan said, "Rocky, remember what you told me about the State Department not being as badly managed as its reputation? I just want to tell you, you were dead wrong."

Q: Well, it was not a happy time for him.

SUDDARTH: He did a good job. He is a super genius and had managed a very good company, but we were never able to get the resources that we needed even though George Shultz made a pitch and less so for Christopher. Baker did a good thing. He fenced off the foreign affairs and the Defense Department budgets from raids from Capitol Hill. So, we were doing alright, but we were always under-funded for the major projects that we needed.

Then, of course, security was draining huge resources away from the mission of the Foreign Service and the Department of State to build all these big fortresses.

Q: To keep people from blowing us up.

SUDDARTH: Yes. Congress would vote the seed money and then we had to take the rest of the stuff out of our pile.

Q: And that continues. The money situation is much worse now than it was.

SUDDARTH: Yes, that's right.

Q: How effective did you find the Inspection Corps? There had been this change. The Foreign Service is a group that was somewhat dubious when they came in because they thought that the Inspection Corps was more out to get you than to help you.

SUDDARTH: I think that that was partly the intention of the Congress to set up an independent Inspector General who could not be a Foreign Service officer. One of the reasons I moved on and was replaced by another interim was that a Foreign Service officer was barred from being Inspector General and it was generally expected (There may have even been legislation) that you couldn't do it more than three or four months, that they had to have a new inspector general. But I thought that Sherman Funk very successfully bridged the gap. He is a man of enormous intellect and governmental experience and a tremendous amount of courage. He was able to walk a tightrope between keeping Congress happy on one hand, to whom he reported directly, without any interference from the State Department (That was the way it was set up in legislation) and having a good relationship with the 7th floor. He was particularly close to Larry Eagleburger. I think the legislation has him reporting directly to the Secretary. He saw Baker from time to time, but it was Eagleburger that he was very close to. He also had a very good relationship with the under secretary for Management. Sherman was always trying? He saw the larger mission? He had a respect for the Foreign Service. He did not believe that everybody was a thief in the Department of State. And yet he was very tough-minded and could be very tough when he felt somebody was doing something wrong. He was just a giant of a figure that we were very, very lucky to have at the Department of State. So, I only have praise for him.

Q: Then you left that in 1994.

SUDDARTH: I went up to the Naval War College. It was a two year tour, which I loved. I deeply regretted having to leave after only a year to come, but I love my job at the Middle East Institute.

Q: Were you deputy commandant at the Naval War College?

SUDDARTH: No. I was actually called the "international affairs advisor." I didn't have command responsibility, nor does the so-called "deputy commandant" at the National War College. But the good thing at the Naval War College was, I was actually teaching, which you don't do in that slot at the National War College. So, I had a wonderful year teaching national security decision making. The next year, I was going to be teaching a wonderful course called "Strategy and Policy," which I would have loved, being a sort of quasi-historian myself. They take 13 wars, staring with the Peloponnesian War, with Clausewitz as a model and that politics is an extension of war by other means to see whether the war aims and outcomes fitted the political objectives. It's quite an interesting thing. It was set up because Stansfield Turner was there during the end of the Vietnam War and there was such an acrimony over the way that war had been conducted that he said, "Let's take a step back and look at the whole conduct of war across the centuries." So, my regret was not being able to teach that course, which was a killer. It's like taking three college courses in one.

But I had enormous respect for the Navy. I found that there was a helpfulness, there was a teamwork there that I hadn't seen existing in the State Department, and a real camaraderie and taking care of one's own. I thought that Navy was a fine institution, very much reviled unjustly. There are some things that they did wrong, but they are also very good at correcting themselves. Tailhook and all of that was obviously scandalous, but they didn't deserve a rap across the whole service for what they got. This was a time of retrenchment in the budget, of the services moving more toward an expeditionary role with the Navy and the Marines getting much more of a role as we've seen in the Gulf, in Somalia, in the Balkans, and so forth. So, it was a very interesting time to be out there. Good speakers such as Eagleburger came up. Madeline Albright came up to talk.

I had a marvelous residence. The State Department representative used to have the big house at Fort Adams and he had given it up because his wife didn't want to pay the enormous heating bills there. You were given not a nominal rent? It was something comparable to what you'd be paying in Washington while you were renting out your own house. But I managed to get another very nice house on Fort Adams which looks out on Narragansett Bay where they hold the Newport Jazz Festival. I had a sailboat at my beck and call 100 yards from my office for $1 an hour so my wife and I could go out sailing. Just being taken in and the intimacy from Admiral Strasser, being on the sort of board of directors of the Naval War College, was just a wonderful way to kind of lower the pressure.

The IG job had been a very high pressure job, probably the toughest job I had in the Foreign Service. So, it was very nice to leave on a note where you had to work hard but you were learning things and teaching people.

One thing to end on. A wonderful guy named Jim Cloonan was the other State Department fellow up there a couple of grades below me. He was an excellent officer. Jim was a great believer in the ceremony and the fact that when people devote their lives and careers to something like government service it should be adequately commemorated. So, Jim started a thing at the Naval War College which was when my predecessor, Paul Taylor, retired and then when I retired, we really honed it down; there was a very impressive ceremony where most of my teaching colleagues, many of my students, cama couple of hundred people. Admiral Strasser in effect commemorated my service, went over my curriculum vitae in the Foreign Service, and then I was allowed to make some remarks about the highlights of my career and how important government service and the Foreign Service was. It was complete with an honor guard and a Marine cutting the cake with his sword and everybody in their dress blues and a very nice lunch afterwards.

Then I thought of these pathetic ceremonies you get in the Foreign Service. I remember, when I was working on the 7th floor, they would present an ambassador with his flag and the flag of the United States and when he got out the door, they'd say, "Could you please give it back to us" because they didn't have enough money or weren't willing to spend enough money to give him his retiring flag. We got that changed under Newsom. At least I have my ambassadorial flag now.

Q: Just to finish this up, you became president of the Middle East Institute for six years.

SUDDARTH: Yes, almost six years.

Q: Just briefly, what role does the Middle East Institute play in the foreign policy mafia in Washington?

SUDDARTH: I think we're players. There are six organizations that weigh in. I think we get our strength from two or three things. We're on close terms with people in the State Department and the NSC and to some extent DOD. So, we are respected as former colleagues. We are also closer than most groups to what's going on in the region because we have articles in our journal from a lot of overseas scholars, we take advantage of a lot of people coming into this country who have the story not as propagandists but what's really going on. I think we have a policy sense. I'm proudest of two or three things. We were the people that first put Iran on the map here. Because we had contacts through Iranians with the regime that we were able to bring a variety of Iranians over to this country.

Q: You're talking about the post-expulsion of the Shah period.

SUDDARTH: I'm talking about in my time, since 1995, particularly even before Khatami. But after Khatami, I was the first? Jeff Kemp and I were the first ex-U.S. officials to go to Iran after the revolution during what I call "the Prague Spring." So, the Middle East Institute became the place where you could find out what was really going on in Iran. We were also the first to sponsor a sanctions conference, the effect of sanctions, when the oil companies were basically playing it very cool and didn't want to offend the Congress. And we were and still are the center for Iraqi dialogue in this country. That was because first we had a young program officer who had written his Ph.D. on Iraq and knew a lot of the Iraqis. So, we had the first conference with Georgetown, where Madeleine Albright gave her Iraqi speech where she outlined her administration's policy toward Iraq. We also co-hosted a speech where she gave the roadmap talk on Iran along with the Iranian-American Council and the Asian Society. So, those have been two big initiatives.

A lot of our effect is on an individual basis. David Mack is my vice president. Ambassador Mack is in my view the leading policy analyst on Iraq, having served there twice and having been deputy assistant secretary before, during, and after the Gulf War.

We're both on a variety of think tank-type things around. I'm the senior advisor on a blockbuster report called "Getting Beyond Stalemate with Iran" that the Atlantic Council has put together. Jim Schlesinger, Brent Scowcroft, and Lee Hamilton are cochairing that.

I was a member of a Washington Institute presidential study group two times. We're putting out another report this time.

So, a lot of our impact is the conferences we do and the media stuff we do and the policy related things that we do. I think we're having a useful role and it's more fun in a sense to be kibitzing rather than being responsible. I have only the highest, fondest memories of the Middle East Institute. I leave with great regret, but I'm going to be pursuing a career as a musicologist at the University of Maryland starting in the fall.

I must say, I would not have chosen a different area than the Middle East in retrospect.

Q: I've always considered that it's the Foreign Service's real playground or sandbox. Other places, yes, but most political people stand on the outside but they don't get into it because it's just too complicated.

SUDDARTH: Yes. That's changing now because you have the ethnic communities, both the Jewish and the Arab ethnic communities, to some extent the Iranians, but particularly the Arabs and the Jewish community do feel that they're qualified because they follow the issues carefully. But I don't think there's any substitute for people that have lived and continue to go back and forth and live overseas. So, the new administration? If Rich Armitage and Ed Djerejian get jobs? They are both members of the Middle East Institute board), and Tom Pickering has been a very close friend and supporter of the Institute. So, I feel the Institute's in good shape. I worry much more about the Foreign Service and the future of it, but I wouldn't have had a different career.

The Middle East has its share of excitement, of participating in history, and of access to the highest levels in the U.S. government as well as in the governments that you're serving in. I couldn't think of a better career. I'm very happy. I wouldn't have changed one of my assignments. I was very lucky to have been where the action was. I was in Mali as Africa was becoming independent. Yemen with the war going on. I was in Libya when there was a major coup on U.S. interests. I was in Jordan between the October War and through Camp David. I was working for the under secretary during the Iran hostage and the Afghan invasion. I was deputy assistant secretary during this whole spate of terrorism that we had to come to terms with. I saw from inside the big U.S.-Saudi relationship. Then I was ambassador to Jordan at a particularly critical time.

My only regret is missing out on the ambassador to Tunis assignment. I would have appreciated taking up the U.S.-PLO dialogue and also being in a French-speaking post.

Q: Rocky, I want to thank you very much. It's highly appreciated and I'm sure this will be very rewarding for those who read it.

U.S.-Jordanian Relations: 1958-2000: Myths and Realities

(A lecture given at St. Anthony's College, Oxford University, by Roscoe S. Suddarth)October 27, 2000

Introduction

Personal: how Oxford started me on the Middle East.

I should start by stating my credentials and my limitations in giving a lecture on U.S.-Jordanian relations at this venerable institution. My credentials are as an American diplomat who by chance had two tours in Jordan at crucial periods, first as number two at the U.S. embassy-from the October War through Camp David in the 1970s and again as ambassador from 1987-90 during Jordanian disengagement from the West Bank, its economic and later political crisis, and ending with the buildup to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (one week after I finished my assignment).

While I am relatively familiar with the academic literature, I must confess that this is not an academic talk and hope you will forgive me for any lacunae of knowledge or lack of academic rigor. Secondly, I am an admirer of King Hussein and have a favorable view of King Abdullah, despite the fact that he has not yet been challenged. I hope I can be reasonably objective however.

While the talk is about U.S.-Jordanian relations, I cannot help but comment on the UK aspect of all this, since it is of a piece with the whole subject: not only because the U.S. assumed the primary support role for Jordan from the UK in the mid 50s but also because either of our two countries had-if I can state a contradiction- a unique relationship to Jordan and to King Hussein and now with King Abdullah. To have a full picture of Jordan, one needs to study both relationships. Let me say now that Britain's gift to Jordan of an efficient army and government plus a viable constitution laid a strong foundation on which Jordan has built well.

The Common Basis for a Relationship

When we talk about U.S.-Jordanian relations I would break it down into two component parts: cultural and strategic. It was a close relationship on both counts. When I discuss the relationship I am really discussing mainly King Hussein who was Jordan to all intents and purposes after 1958. So the two terms will be almost interchangeable in my talk. I want to talk about both the cultural and the strategic aspect since in Hussein's case, they both color and shape the relationship.

The Cultural Side

While Hussein was careful to compartmentalize his Arab and Western relationships from each other, I believe he was culturally as much a child of the West and specifically of its Anglo-Saxon element as he was of his Arab heritage. His schooling at Victoria College, Harrow and Sandhurst gave him a distinctly British culture, further reinforce by his marriage to Tony Gardner, later Princess Muna. The U.S. never fully displaced England as the core of his culture but it certainly came to rival it in at least a superficial way.

However I tend to think that Hussein's core values were learned in and shared by our two countries. His courtesy and gentlemanly conduct were certainly British products. More fundamentally, his decency and rectitude sprang as much from Anglo-Saxon values as from a deep sense of his Arab and Islamic rootswhere his devotion to his Hashemite historical legacy is often undervalued. In fact, King Hussein came to symbolize the kind of Arab ruler who could successfully combine traditional and Western values in ways that did honor to both cultures. For instance, I never knew anyone to suggest that he had ever lied in his 47 years of statecraft. (He often did not tell all that he knew, but that is part of diplomacy.)

Even the atmosphere of the Palace had a distinctly British air. He liked Bentleys and Daimlers for protocol. His closest advisors all spoke English fluently and often the Palace discussions were as much in English as in Arabic, even though his colloquial and classical Arabic were impeccable. The kind of modernizing society that Hussein spent his lifetime cultivating had English at the center of its being. He filled British and American military schools with his military for training and even managed to garner some regular scholarships to a distinguished Southern military college, the Citadel.

His decency was reflected in a far more benign autocracy than is the norm for the Arab world. While he kept a tight ship under a martial law regime much of his reign, there were relatively few tales of brutality in his intelligence and security services by Middle Eastern standards. He also had a shrewd sense of political forgiveness: a host of former coup plotter (including General Abu Nuwar) were rehabilitated, thereby reducing most of his permanent political enemies to those outside of Jordan.

For Hussein, America was a constant source of often bemused amazement and occasionally of unpleasant surprise. Hussein was less relaxed in but more excited by America than by Britain. John Wayne hosted him in California on a trip to the U.S. in the mid-'60s and he was flattered and somewhat awed by the big, rawboned country that he saw at first hand. Lawrence of Arabia filmed partly in Jordan added to this Anglo-U.S. mystique. He was proud in his reign that he had met with (sometimes many times) every American president from Eisenhower to Clinton with the exception of Kennedy. He had visited most of the interesting places in the United States and enjoyed relaxing for a few days in, variously, Newport, Palm Beach, Charleston, and gave talks in many of its principal cities. He got his annual checkups in the U.S., first at Walter Reed and later at the expensive private hospitals. He bought his motorcycles and his speedboats in the U.S. and he sent his sons to boarding school there. He kept a house in Potomac, Maryland and a small ranch at Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

Princess Muna was eventually succeeded by Lisa Halaby, later Queen Noor, and I would venture that American culture through that daily contact had a growing affect on him in a marriage that grew in strength throughout its course. She also I believe reinforced his inclination to play a greater role internationally while she on her part was a fervent supporter of Jordanian and Arab interests.

In the final analysis, King Hussein became a folk hero in the American popular imagination. As you know, the American republic adores foreign monarchs and Hussein carried the Royal purple superbly. Start with a base of tragedy (his grandfather's martyrdom at the Al Aqsa Mosque before his very eyes, his father' insanity requiring his accession and the radiant queen Alia's unfortunate death in a helicopter accident). Add to that the legends of the assassinations and coup attempts bravely surmounted by the handsome Arab; put in a dash of daring-do with his piloting and karate; mingle this with whispers periodically of discreet romantic escapades and you have the makings of a modern international celebrity. Fortunately, his successor King Abdullah embodies many of King Hussein's appealing qualities and values. His appeal to the West is undeniable as is his image to the new generation of Arab elites. What is still untested is his interaction with his main Arab interlocutors, although he has excellent relations with many of the Gulf leaders.

Some Myths to Dispel

One may ask how, given the profoundly Anglo-Saxon culture of King Hussein, he could escape the reputation in the Arab world of being a Western stooge-which indeed he was called by every Arab revolutionary from Nasser to Arafat. This is however a false view, and one that was perpetuated as much by anti-Hashemite propaganda as by genuine belief. Increasingly it became less strong as Jordan's success at modernization made discerning observers understand better that it was the result of Jordan's openness to Western culture.

For Hussein was anything but a stooge. Let me cite some crucial examples to the contrary. First, he entered the 1967 against the strong urgings of the U.S. for him to stay out. In my view, he would have been overthrown by a popular upheaval if he had heeded U.S. advice.

He did stay out of the 1973 War except for sending a brigade to the Golan Heights for symbolic solidarity with the Arabs but in my judgement he did so to avoid another loss of territory and military defeat by Israel and not because the U.S. was urging him to do so.

In 1978 he refused to endorse the Camp David accords despite U.S. pressure and threats. I remember delivering the message that bilateral relations would suffer significantly if Jordan remained aloof. At one point, to counter our thrust to have him associate Jordan with the forthcoming negotiations on the West Bank, he asked the visiting U.S. assistant secretary to see if Saudi Arabia would back Jordan's endorsement, knowing of course that they would refuse to part company with the PLO.

Again in 1990-1 Hussein refused to join the U.S. led coalition against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait despite heavy U.S. pressure. This was a heavy blow to his strong personal relationship with George Bush but he stood his ground even though he had little support among his Jordanian advisors. I was not in Jordan during this crucial period and am still confounded by his position. To my mind, it was an admixture of disillusionment with the U.S. lethargy on the peace process, Saudi unwillingness to help the distressed Jordanian economy and some fear of the troubles that Saddam Hussein could cause him internally-after some troubling signs of Iraqi involvement in Jordan following the Baghdad Summit in the Spring of 1990. Other major elements included Jordanian economic dependence on Iraq plus King Hussein's wounded ego when others did not recognize the opportunity for him to negotiate an Iraqi withdrawal once Iraq had invaded Kuwait. Fortunately, King Hussein later indicated publicly that he had misjudged Saddam Hussein.

Regarding another false myth, the U.S. did not meddle in Jordanian affairs. Contrary to popular belief, even among some Jordanians, I do not know of a single instance in which the U.S. suggested specific appointments to King Hussein. I do know he would have not only bitterly resented such suggestions but also probably would have defiantly done the contrary if ever asked.

The U.S. did sometimes get restive with the economic policies of the Jordanian government but usually to no avail. When the U.S. increased its budget and military aid to Jordan following its civil war in 1970 with the PLO, some bureaucrats in the State Department began to make regular inquiries concerning how Jordan was spending its military budge which King Hussein deeply resented and eventually quashed when the October War erupted.

One personal confession I have to make. In the mid-1980s Jordan was suddenly cut off from large annual amounts of Saudi aid when the oil price began to slip and there was a sharp drop in U.S. aid after the very generous one-time U.S. economic aid package (given as a surrogate for the combat aircraft the congress refused to authorize in 1985). Jordan had come to expect to live like an oil-sheikhdom without unfortunately possessing the oil. My predecessor-a first-class economist-launched a local initiative (a dangerous practice in diplomacy) warning that Jordan at its current rate of deficit spending was going to cause a run on the dinar-which is exactly what happened. He had pressed his analysis on the government but not King Hussein (whose eyes glazed over at the mention of economics). When I arrived at post the predicted crisis was approaching as government spending continued apace and I pressed the matter again with the government but not with the King directly. By the following Spring the predicted run on the dinar occurred and for the first time in memory Jordan was forced to devalue and to accept an IMP austerity program.

I have always regretted that I did not press this issue directly with the King. I suspect I would have been unsuccessful in any case since the King would have suspected U.S. motives. Much of the expense was to be for the acquisition of UK or French combat aircraft and although we had indicated our support for either sale, the U.S. refusal to offer similar aircraft may have incorrectly colored his view of our motives. Sometimes however I dwell on the aftermath: an austere IMF program which caused widespread riots that led the King to hold the first Jordanian elections in decades, which returned a plurality of Islamist MP. However, it all appears to have worked for the best: Jordan now has a functioning if limited parliamentary government again and the Islamists have not taken over Jordan but have been given a limited voice in the political arena.

The Strategic Relationship

The strong Anglo-American cultural affinity I mentioned earlier is not to say that the U.S. and Jordan did not have a strong rational basis for a strategic relationship. From Jordan's viewpoint, starting in 1956 it needed the support of U.S. strength in its exposed position to Arab nationalist neighbors backed by the Soviets and in its relations with an unpredictable Israeli situation. It needed U.S. aid (and was to receive some $ 4 billion from 1974 to 1999 after a previous billion dollars given from 1958 to 1974, including funds to build the Jordan Valley East Ghor Canal irrigation project). All this was intended to help Hussein build and defend a nation whose origins dated from a stroke of Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill's pen in 1922, creating a Trans-Jordan from a loose congeries of tribes living on essentially barren ground and bereft of mineral wealth besides phosphates and some potash in the Dead Sea.

From the U.S. viewpoint, it needed a strong relationship with Jordan-because Jordan had a long border with Israel and contained the unstable Palestinian problem in its very midst. It also needed another Arab moderate friend in an era featuring Nasserist ascendancy among the Arab people and an opportunistic Soviet Union. Lebanon was too small and Saudi Arabia was too remote from the boiling politics of the Levant and the Fertile Crescent and its oil wealth less prominent at that time to attract as much U.S. strategic attention. I remember hearing a lecture from the director of Northern Arab Affairs from the State Department before going to my first Arab assignment in 1963 in which he described Jordan as "the keystone in the arch" of U.S. strategy in the Middle East.

This strategic assessment was implemented through major and continuous economic assistance that literally was instrumental in Jordanian nation-building and the sustainment and modernization of King Hussein most cherished institution, the Jordanian Armed Forces.

During Jordan's severest crisis, the civil war with the PLO in 1970, the U.S. under President Nixon's energetic personal involvement, stood forcefully behind Jordan in its confrontation not only against the PLO but also Syria and Iraq. I was on the task force formed in the State Department in the crisis and I remember the usual-leisurely Secretary Rogers spending a night on his sofa in the Department at one serious moment during the crisis.

It is well-known that the U.S. encouraged Israel to be ready to use its air force against Syria if the Syrian air force had been used against Jordan. I was later told that King Hussein at one point thought seriously about asking for direct U.S. military engagement-which I believe would have probably been forthcoming-but declined in the end because of the serious risk to his throne in the long run posed by such a U.S. intervention, given the extreme unpopularity of the U.S. Israeli policy.

Arab-Israeli Issues

Arab-Israeli issues were of course at the core of the U.S.-Jordanian relationship. One leitmotiv of King Hussein's reign was his pre-occupation with these issues-a deeply-felt legacy and obligation from his Hashemite forebears and, frankly, an opportunity for Jordan to occupy a larger role in the world than its barren resources would otherwise allow.

The U.S. supported his activism and usually on his terms. We supported Resolution 242 to recover occupied territory after the 1967 War and we upheld Jordanian claims to negotiate for the recovery of its West Bank territory (although never joining Britain and Pakistan in recognizing its de jure right there) and we and King Hussein both bitterly resented the Rabat Summit's selection of the PLO to represent the Palestinians in place of Jordan. We continued to hope for the re-assertion of a Jordanian role there which we hoped (vainly) could occur in implementing the Camp David Accord. In the 1980s we sponsored a Jordanian aid program to the West Bank and a formula whereby Jordan would head a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation in negotiations-aims that we shared with the Israeli Labor party under Rabin and Peres. We were disappointed when Hussein gave up Jordan's administrative role there in 1988 in its "disengagement" decision and "the Jordanian option" was further buried when the PLO came to accept the principle of peace with Israel in the early 1990s.

I predict the U.S. will follow the Israeli Labor Party's lead in the future on the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship. The idea of an eventual Jordanian-Palestinian confederation is still a theoretical possibility which has several attractive features but enormous obstacles in the form of mutual Jordanian and Palestinian suspicions-including Jordanian existential angst over the Israeli "Jordan is Palestine" campaign as enunciated from time to time by various Likud governments.

U.S. and Jordanian Mutual Disappointments

In this four decade relationship it was inevitable that both sides would disappoint the other. Most of Jordan's disappointments with the U.S. stemmed from two sources: 1) our unwillingness to be more forceful on Arab-Israeli matters; and 2) our inability to come up to King Hussein's expectations of American aid.

Much of my memory of King Hussein was of his pressing the U.S. to exert itself on Arab-Israeli matters involving Jordan more than we were willing and sometimes able to do. The best and well-documented example is following the 1973 War. Jordan wanted desperately to have its own disengagement agreement with Israel, like Egypt and Syria, despite the fact that Jordan had not engaged Israel across its own border. Kissinger, after sleeping on the proposition overnight, declined to press the Israelis on this issue on grounds that the new Rabin government could not sell the idea because of their political weakness. The Jordanians undoubtedly suspected (probably correctly) that Kissinger was already favoring the Egyptian track and did not want to complicate it. As a result the Rabat Summit came out in favor of the PLO as the "sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinians" and the rest is history. Kissinger later admitted that a mistake was made in not giving support to the Jordanian disengagement but with hindsight now after Oslo perhaps it was for the best.

Another big Jordanian disappointment was the failure of Secretary Shultz to support the London Agreement between King Hussein and Peres for negotiations with Israel in a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. Since Prime Minister Shamir himself opposed the agreement Shultz did not feel he could press it further, but King Hussein was extremely bitter with the U.S. at the moment I arrived as ambassador in 1987. His bitterness increased when at Israeli bidding Shultz tried to persuade King Hussein to meet directly with Israel under the diaphanous cover of a forthcoming U.S.-Soviet Summit.

Disillusionment with the U.S. and Israel and the stalled peace process plus the outbreak of the Intifada finally led the King to announce Jordanian disengagement from the West Bank which it had never relinquished in terms of its continued-albeit limited and long-distance-administration following the 1967 War. Once again, in hindsight, this had a role in spurring the PLO to engage eventually with the Israelis eventually, through the Oslo process.

The U.S. Congress periodically disappointed King Hussein in his quest for arms. We cut him off briefly after he joined the 1967 War against Israel. We humiliated him in 1976 when Congress reduced the size of the air defense package for Jordan and then insisted that the Hawk batteries be fixed in concrete, making them sitting ducks for any opponent. Even to acquire this limited system King Hussein made a credible threat to acquire an attractive Soviet system and the U.S. had to seek Saudi financing for the half-billion dollar cost of the Hawks. Again in 1985 the Congress refused his request for combat aircraft even after King Hussein made a declaration going far towards recognizing Israel. Instead of aircraft he got a handsome one-time economic aid stipend which King Hussein hoped vainly would be repeated.

Resentments and Misconceptions

Looking at the sweep of U.S.-Jordanian relations, I discern some leitmotivs. From King Hussein's side, while he enjoyed the favored position he had with the U.S., he also nurtured a resentment that the U.S. took him for granted; he was considered "a cheap date" compared with the Israelis and the Egyptians. U.S. aid was rarely sufficient nor were our entreaties to Saudi Arabia to aid Jordan and its problematic economy and it expectations of living like an oil-rich state. I think he grew increasingly to resent the growth of U.S.-Saudi relations after the oil boom when Saudi Arabia eclipsed Jordan as a sought-after partner for the U.S.

The U.S. was somewhat ambivalent about King Hussein's large ambition. On one hand we utilized his prestige in helping to broker Israeli-Palestinian agreements at the Wye Plantation but we resented his attempts to broker a deal with Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait. We often believed Hussein overestimated his clout in Arab circles, as our other Arab friends in other capitals would often tell us.

The Crowning Glory: The Israeli-Jordanian Treaty

The crowning glory of the U.S.-Jordanian relationship was the Israeli-Jordanian Treaty of October 26, 1994. Even though the negotiations were carried on directly and without any call on the U.S. for help, the germ of the direct contacts could be traced back to the Tripartite Declaration in Washington on an earlier trip by then Crown Prince Hassan. I believe I expressed the general U.S. sentiment when I wrote to congratulate King Hussein on the Treaty, saying that he had vindicated the efforts to two generations of American diplomats (and, I did not add, of American policy objectives). U.S. support was overwhelming: not only did President Clinton attend the signing ceremony but large amounts of American aid flowed in (although not in the open-ended fashion that attended the Egyptian-Israeli Treaty). This included however a five-fold increase in aid levels over previous decade (making Jordan's current per capita aid from the U.S. larger than any country's other than Israel) It also includes some $700 million in debt forgiveness, efforts to obtain rescheduling from the G-7 allies, and the provision of a dozen F-16 aircraft.) In the euphoria of the Treaty, the U.S. also supported the MENA Summits and the Peres vision of a new Middle East which promised significant development for Jordan until the Netanyahu government slowed the peace process and Jordan became disillusioned with the lack of economic benefits that materialized from peace.

The British-American Dynamic in Jordan

It is impossible to discuss the American relationship in Jordan without discussing the British (particularly in this setting today). In many ways Jordan was emblematic of the "Britain's Greece to America's Rome" sobriquet. In my experience our relations were of a closeness in Jordan that I have not seen elsewhere. There was no commercial rivalry (because there was no commerce, unlike in Saudi Arabia for instance) and the U.S. was delighted to have Britain provide military equipment including combat aircraft to Jordan, particularly when our congress prevented us from doing so.

As a major military and economic aid donor, the U.S. had a good deal more business to transact with the government and as the primary interlocutor with Israel and Saudi Arabia, we had a lot to talk about with King Hussein. But I still felt that King Hussein was more comfortable in his relationship with the British-because of his basic formation there and because Britain seemed more steady, less pro-Israeli and with longer experience in the area.

Britain sent a consistently outstanding group of diplomats to Jordan at a time when the Arabists were a dominant group at the top ranks of the Foreign Office. Sarrell, Moberly and Urwick were all outstanding ambassadors when I was there first time as were John Cole and Tony Reeve on my tour as ambassador. We consulted closely and generally were both informed at the same time by King Hussein regarding significant developments.

When the U.S. was in put in the doghouse by King Hussein he would sometimes gravitate more towards Britain. This was the case I found on my arrival in Jordan as ambassador in 1987. John Coles, who later went on to become Head of Her Majesty's Diplomatic Service and who came to Jordan fresh from being Prime Minister Thatcher's Private secretary, had the King's ear more than virtually any ambassador I have known. So low was the U.S. reputation after its turndown of the London Accord that I remember being seated by the Jordanian Foreign Minister at an obscure table at the back of the hall at a dinner honoring visiting Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe.

I thought the UK overplayed its admittedly strong hand at that time by trying to sell Jordan an expensive combat aircraft package and a major upgrade of the equipment for the Public Security Service. These placed a heavy burden on the Jordanian budget which helped provoke the economic crisis of 1988. Perhaps a joint demarche to the King by our respective ambassadors could have prevented that, while hopefully holding off a competing Soviet aircraft offer.

Both countries' ambassadors had ready access to the King although their influence differed with ambassadors and with the state of our respective bilateral relations. I suspect the King and the a succession of British Prime Ministers over the years spent much mutual hand-wringing regarding the U.S. position on the peace process which both considered far too pro-Israeli, even though the UK usually came around to backing our major initiatives like Camp David or the Reagan Initiative.

King Abdullah and America

King Hussein's slow and agonizing death from cancer was traumatic for Jordan and distressful to the entire world. Hussein's sense of melodrama was with him to the very end: his dramatic intervention at Wye Plantation, pleading for peace, and then his astounding removal of Prince Hassan as Crown Prince in favor of Prince Abdullah-and the revealing letter justifying his actions.

At the time I wondered if the dying King had not made a mistake but I must say that King Abdullah has allayed many of my misgivings. Among other things, he has projected well in his public image internationally and has established a solid relationship with the U.S. both personally and professionally. While like his father, his diction and carriage seem impeccably British, King Abdullah in my judgement is culturally closer to the U.S. because of the formative school years he spent in America and through his close association with the U.S. military in his military career. He is yet to be tested as is the American relationship. The relationship is off to a good start, with Abdullah re-affirming his father's commitment to a warm peace with Israel and enjoying healthy levels of U.S. aid.

Domestically, I suspect Abdullah's honeymoon will shortly end when he faces, like his father, the difficult economic facts of life for Jordan. The major question is whether Jordan and its semi-viable economy can move into self-sufficiency and escape from economic dependency on the U.S. and the Gulf. As long as the West Bank and Iraqi trade opportunities remain closed, the odds are against a Jordanian take-off. King Abdullah is commendably trying to reform the economy, including jump-starting a private sector take-off by instituting economic reforms designed to attract foreign investment, by courting the new information technology companies in the U.S. and by carefully enlarging the QIZ's (Qualified Industrial Zones) with Israel. He has amazingly managed to convince the U.S. congress to pass a Free Trade Agreement for Jordan, as we have with Israel. One would wish the U.S. would be more successful in persuading Israel and the Palestinian Authority to liberalize their own trade relations with Jordan.

It is an open question whether Jordan and the U.S. will move beyond the traditional dependent relationship that had obtained during the past 42 years. Current trends in U.S. foreign aid are not encouraging for an continuing large amounts of aid for Jordan. If there is a breakthrough in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations that ends that conflict, one wonders how much aid would be left for Jordan, given the huge sums being claimed for Israel, and the large sums for the Palestinian Authority and even Syria, to say nothing of the gigantic claims for Palestinian refugee compensation.

The immense political challenge before King Abdullah in those circumstances is how to come to terms with the new Palestinian state and the significant Palestinian majority in Jordan. Jordan is already making the casewith considerable justification-that it should receive billions for past and future integration of this Palestinian majority into Jordan. If the U.S. stands up to its responsibilities, it will need to continue to help Jordan economically to get over that difficult issue that, mishandled, could threaten its national existence. Jordan continues to occupy a key strategic position for the U.S. because of its proximity to Israel and its intimate and inextricable involvement in the Palestinian problem for the foreseeable future. The civility, sophistication and decency of Jordan-learned from King Hussein and, indirectly, from the British legacy dating back to World War I and passed on intact to his son Abdullah-makes our relationship-even with its periodic strains- both mutually useful and gratifying. So I would conclude by predicting that the U.S. will remain deeply supportive of the Jordan of the Hashemites as long as they prove capable of maintaining the support of the people of Jordan and the internal stability of the Kingdom-not an automatic assurance but a task-despite the fragility of the Jordanian economy and the internal and external challenges-that King Abdullah has embarked upon auspiciously.

End of interview