BAHRAIN

COUNTRY READER
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GEORGE QUINCEY LUMSDEN
Desk Officer for Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates
Washington, DC (1972-1974)

Ambassador George Quincey Lumsden was born in 1930 in Montclair, New Jersey. He graduated from Princeton in 1952 and also attended the Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island, graduating in November 1652. He entered the Navy in 1952 and then went on to join the Foreign Service. He held positions in Turkey, Germany, Jordan, and Kuwait before becoming the US ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on January 11, 2000.

Q: What about in your area - I'm really thinking of the Gulf states, including Oman - what was happening? Were the Iranians sending mullahs or the equivalent thereof to stir the population up? There is a sizeable Iranian population in all those.

LUMSDEN: They didn't have to send mullahs. The mullahs from the area went to Tehran and were energized. Certain key areas in the Gulf have very large Iranian communities. You can go to parts of the souk in places like Bahrain and Dubai and suddenly you don't hear any Arabic. It's all Farsi. They've been there for a long, long time. Bahrain was part of the Persian Empire for many years. It has a population - these are Arabs - over 50% Shia. The Iranian segment of that is much, much less, probably 15%. The Qatif Oasis in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia is a majority Arab Shia, the worst possible place from the point of view of security of a Sunni monarchy trying to invite the Americans in to be a counterweight against the Shia mullah in Iran.

Q: What about the United Arab Emirates at that time? How did we see things going and coalescing?

LUMSDEN: We had hoped that Bahrain and Qatar would join into one country with the Trucial sheikhdoms, but that did not work out because of voting privileges in Bahrain and a feeling of separate identity. Of course, if Bahrain did something, then Qatar, which is competitive with Bahrain, said, "Well, we're going to be a separate country, too," which left the seven other emirates after those two opted out of this solution to form the United Arab Emirates, which is a very loosely confederated group which has a lot of oil and as long as the commercial interests in Dubai, which is a really fast-moving modern city now of over a million people (You wouldn't believe you were in the Arabian Peninsula.) and the more conservative Abu Dhabi with the oil, as long as they stay on good relations as they are now, that place will hold together. They have moved a great deal forward on security arrangements with the United States.

Q: Were there any problems on Bahrain at that time?

LUMSDEN: No. They're lovely. They were so nice and so hospitable at all times. They're tiny. Their problem is that they are totally undemocratic. It's a Sunni minority regime that can't understand why these Shia aren't more satisfied. Look at all we do for them. They want more of a direct say in what's going on. But they have been hosts of MIDEASTFOR.

Q: At this time, there was no particular problem there.

LUMSDEN: None.

Q: Rather than talk in big terms, can you talk about during this early '80s period, before you move on to be ambassador dealing with Arabian Peninsula Affairs, the Israeli lobby in the United States. Did you almost have to clear your toilet paper with them before you could get anything done?

LUMSDEN: You didn't almost have to clear your toilet paper. You had to have your toilet paper cleared by those who were in contact with AIPAC and the Council of presidents of Jewish organizations. You simply could not risk coming out with a policy that surprised, or worse still, surprised and annoyed those groups. The congressional

reaction would overwhelm you, and you as a little bureaucrat would be scrunched flat. There is no question about that. It was effective. It was the way things were turning to work out of classic diplomacy toward the situations which we have greatly expanded now. This is not just an Israel thing, but we're talking about the Israeli connection.

Examples. This would have been in 1980 or 1981 that the country to which I was to become ambassador, long before I knew that that was going to happen, sent a group headed by Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayid, one of the many sons of Sheikh Zayid, who was obviously a fast rising officer in the UAE armed forces, to the United States to feel out the possibility of buying some military aircraft. We could scarcely get him an appointment with anybody to discuss realistically such a request. There were valid arguments about the rudimentary state, the lack of manpower in the country concerned, but there was more than that. There was, "Oh, this is an Arab country. It's in the Arabian Peninsula. It has oil. Those countries with oil have an undue influence potentially on policy in Washington that could compete with the real political clout that the friends of Israel have in Washington." Saudi Arabia, of course, was the number one country possibly capable of turning Washington's attention on doing things in the strategic area that might not be looked upon with favor by friends of Israel. Another example, perhaps humorous, was the Hawk missile sale to Bahrain. Gary Sick and I worked on this one. It's a humorous point, but I think it is valid. When I first encountered this problem, working with Gary Sick way back in the early 1970s (1973/1974), when I was desk officer (This was a previous incarnation.), literally the last day before I was GLOPed to Paris (lucky me), Gary and I finally got the cable off which told Bahrain that we were terribly sorry but that we were not in a position to approve the sale to them of about 12 fundamental Hawk anti-aircraft missiles. These missiles were to be used in the independence day parade, the national day parade, in Manama, Bahrain. That was their purpose. The emir could sit there and these things would bounce by the reviewing stand. But they were military, they were Hawk missiles, who knows what might happen to them? They could get in the hands of somebody who was an Arab who couldn't stand Israel and we weren't about to risk that. That was 1974 or 1975.

Off I went to Paris. I came back as deputy director in 1979 about six years later. Literally the first week during my reincarnation in NEA/ARP, I was able to sign off on a cable that told the emir of Bahrain that, yes, indeed, we would let him have 12 Hawk missiles for the next parade. Over six years of this and the energy crises and all the problems had moved our policy from rejecting the six missiles for the wonderfully benign American friend who hosted the U.S. Navy to, "Yes, you can parade these in front of you in the national day parade." That is the power of oil. I don't even know whether Pol-Mil even would bother to go to AIPAC with something like this. If it were the Saudis, they would. They would just out of hand say, "We're not even taking that on. They won't like this." That is the power. It was to those of us who felt that the best interests of the United States, particularly given the looming and then manifest energy difficulties we were having, would have been toward a more flexible relationship on strategic matters with the friendly countries of the Gulf. They're not democratic, not pluralistic, but they are friends economically and strategically of the United States. It would have been nicer if the power structure in Washington had recognized the need to do this before we got to the point

where we are today where not only does Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayid have 80 F-16s on the order books of Lockheed Martin, but they are 80 F-16s with the latest electronic countermeasure equipment on them. Lockheed has posted a $2 billion performance bond for a sale that will probably surpass $7 billion. This keeps the corporation's assembly line running and will be a turn for the better in what's been a very bad year for them, although I noticed in the paper today that they've gotten themselves messed up with some Chinese Rocket Research Institute. That will roil a lot of people, but fortunately that is not my bailiwick. But things have changed. The reason they have changed is not because of diplomacy and not because of the Foreign Service. It's the grinding of the domestic political machine in this country on policy as an adjunct of domestic affairs, particularly economic affairs. There are many examples of this.

Q: You were there from when to when?

LUMSDEN: I was there from midsummer 1982 through late winter 1986. Actually, by the time I left in '86, almost four years, I was for about the last six months there the longest serving ambassador in any Arab country. That is how rapidly we were changing them around. I looked forward to getting back into the oil fields and really getting with my old love, the producer-consumer relations in energy production levels, refinery margins, OPEC meetings, etc.

It didn't work out that way. Fortunately, I had quite a competent economic officer who could get me the stuff to clear. I had precious little time during those three and a half years to spend actually doing oil stuff. My time was taken up by political-military affairs, strategic discussions, and of course security intelligence work, which grew as the Iraq-Iran war dragged on and we instituted the famous or now infamous Iraq tilt. That was a very natural policy choice given the way things had gone with Iran and the fear that Iran would break through under the Arab side of the Gulf and that they would have a military presence on our territory to match their continuing growth of propaganda with all of the Shiite minorities, particularly around the Qatif Oasis and in Bahrain, which is the center of the largest oil field in the world. Saudi Arabia is a country which is about 94% Sunni Muslim. The remaining six percent are sitting right on top of the Dahar oil field and they're Shia. This is a big internal security problem. For Saudi Arabia, it's of course one of the reasons that the FBI can complain that the Saudi police have not been that cooperative in investigating the Khobar Towers bombing incident because of this perception that we will go and do something that will leave Saudi Arabia to face the internal turmoil that results from the Americans having done this. I don't think there is any question that people know how that thing worked its way out. It's just a question now that you know, what are you going to do about it and who is going to do it? That is going to be a continuing difficulty.

My particular problems, speaking personally, began... We got there in '82. The first year there was really quite wonderful. I even got to spend a little bit of time on oil.

WAT T. CULVERIUS, IV
Ambassador
Bahrain (1976-1978)

Ambassador Wat. T Culverius, IV was born in 1934 near Boston. He graduated from Northwestern University and then went onto serve as a Naval Officer, from 1957 until 1962. He then went on to Indiana University. He joined the Foreign Service and held positions in Saudi Arabia and Israel. He was later appointed US ambassador to Bahrain. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on May 31, 1990

Q: In my time when I was vice-consul in Dhahran, we covered everything--Bahrain, Qatar...

CLUVERIUS: They had decided that they would use these posts to give what was then an FSO-3 which is now an FSO-1, I guess, a chance. I had just been promoted to 3. I said, okay, let's see if the boss will buy that. And Kissinger bought it. I guess by that time lie knew more or less who I was and knew I'd contributed, etc. And so in the fall of '76 I went to Bahrain as Ambassador which was an awfully good shot in the arm for my career. I had been in the foreign service less than 10 years and although I'd started the foreign service late, at 32, I was Ambassador at 41. Which is relatively young. And I had a marvelous time in Bahrain.

Q: What were our interests in Bahrain, American interests?

CLUVERIUS: Well of course Bahrain had been the home base, so to speak, of a small US navy presence in the Gulf since right after WW II. And it had been also one of Britain's major outposts east of Suez which they had given up when they began pulling back their foreign roles east of Suez. I can't really tell you off the top of my head when the British left Bahrain. They had had a senior array of generals there and they had a senior British admiral. At any rate the US interest was very much --Middle East force it's called-- a home port for a mother ship and 2 or 3 destroyers on a rotating basis. And in the heat of emotion in '73, the Bahrainis had publicly said that the Americans would have to leave in '77 when the treaty or the present lease ran out. The navy and US government wanted very much for the navy to stay. I think basically the Bahrainis did, too, because their anger in the '73 war was really very much a repeat of their anger in '67 that the American ally, Israel, was about to roll over the Arabs. But they saw what was happening. There was a test of arms there and the Egyptians did pretty well and so did the Syrians. And in fact the Arab world saw some of that as a victory. The Egyptians and Sadat sold it to the Egyptians and the Arab world as a victory. And the Americans were playing a major role in moving the Israelis back. We'd had 3 disengagement agreements. There was promise of more. So the Bahrainis realized they'd shot their mouths off in the heat of the moment, and would like us to stay but they had the problem of their own PR. To keep the

Americans around was still not a popular thing in the Gulf. The Kuwaitis would have paid a substantial fortune to the Bahrainis just to get the Americans out. The Kuwaitis were very much afraid that our relationship would contaminate them. They were afraid of the Iraqis at that time and doing a clumsy job of balancing their fear of Iraq with a little anti-Americanism. But the Bahrainis themselves wanted us to stay. So that was really my job, to go out there and re-negotiate the agreement so that we could keep our force there. That is what I did from the fall of '76, finally signing an agreement in the summer of '77.

Q: Well how did you go through this, you might say, almost face-saving operation or something; circumstances had changed?

CLUVERIUS: You had to find a way to save the Bahraini face so they could continue to have our presence. Which included a Department of Defense school which the Bahrainis cherished. A very good Department of Defense school which a lot of their kids went to, the establishment's kids went to. The ones who didn't were sent of to Switzerland or somewhere. That was an element. Yes, we had to find a way to save face, keep our presence, but give the Bahrainis something that they could say--this is different. I had a very interesting Admiral there at the time, Bill Crowe.

Q: When I was Consul-General in Naples, he was CINCSOUTH. Probably the most astute, politically astute Admiral we've ever had.

CLUVERIUS: We became very close friends. He was my daughter's commencement speaker at her college last week, at her request. So Bill and I sat down, he was there before me, he said--how do you want to do this? And I said, well I've had my first meetings with the Emir and his Cabinet. I know something about the Arab world. And since we're talking here about "face" and so on, I want to do this one-on-one. I don't want you present. I want to do all the negotiating. We'll meet before I go in, we'll meet after I come out, but I want to do it one-on-one. Bill Crowe kind of rolled his eyes, and said--the navy will be really upset at that approach. This was a time when the Admiral and the head of the oil company, Caltex, had more influence in Bahrain than the Ambassador because oil and Navy had been there a long time and I was just the second US Ambassador. I said, I understand that but I really think I can do it and do it better this way. It'll be totally coordinated and obviously you'll have to tell me what elements of this thing you can change. And he said, ah, that's the right idea. And I said, what do you mean? He said, "Well, your predecessor (I had seen this reading into the job) and mine both believed we either keep it all or lost it all. And I said, that's right, Joe did report that way. And I said, I don't believe that, do you? And he said, "No." So we very quickly established a relationship. He said--I'll keep the navy off your back the best I can. And I said, okay. It was his idea to sit down and break down what Middle East Force did, what it had in Bahrain, what it needed in Bahrain, in kind of a functional way. And then I could then work through all of this with the foreign minister. Explaining what we had,

what we needed to have in the future, what we wanted to keep, what we could let go, and it just took a while to understand each other. There was money involved but not much and I refused to mention it because I knew the Arab radicals would pay 10 times whatever it was we would pay for dock space, so to speak, to get us out of there. So I left money alone and Bill Crowe protected my flanks. We became so close that we did what the military and the diplomat in the field can do if they're working together. Which is get their own way and do it their way and do it right. Because I would get these little cables that would say--this may be of interest to you but you might not wish to share this with Commander Middle East Force at this time. Or he would get a cable that said--We really think you ought to take a hand in these negotiations and maybe you should go call on Sheik so-and-so and probably not tell the Ambassador that you have this task. And every time he got one and every time I got one we'd just call each other up and say-hey, Bill, could you come over, I've got another one of these cables. And he would do the same thing.

And so about half way through this operation with Bill Crowe, he was replaced and came back to Washington for a job I don't recall. But it was a wonderful relationship. We stayed good friends ever since. And that was really my assignment. Then of course, Jimmy Carter got elected in '76.

CHARLES L. DARIS
Deputy Chief of Mission
Manama (1987-1988)

Charles L. Daris was born in 1938 in Massachusetts. He served in the US Navy before graduating from the San Francisco State College in 1963. He entered the Foreign Service in 1964. His overseas posts include Afghanistan, Vietnam, Western Africa, Morocco, South Africa, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia. Mr. Daris was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in 1998.

Q: In 1987 you went where?

DARIS: In 1987 I went as deputy chief of mission to Bahrain, having actively sought the assignment. It was a very disappointing moment in my career. I found considerable reason to question the probity of the political appointee ambassador. Almost from the beginning we were at loggerheads on both my role, the running of the mission, the substantive work of the mission, the policy and just about everything, so it ended badly. I left the post after seven months. It is not one of the more shining examples of our political patronage system but every administration has had its bad choices and it certainly does not lead me to argue for termination of political appointees. I've worked with some of the finest public servants I've ever known in Ellsworth Bunker and David

Bruce and some good ones subsequent to that as well. Unfortunately, Reagan's person in Bahrain was not one of them and I don't wish to dwell here on that misfortune except to say that it was an important time for us in the region and I was sorry not to have been able to do more for our interests.

Bahrain has been a very staunch friend of the U.S. The U.S. Navy has been staging in and out of there since the Second World War. This very tiny nation has resisted the inclinations of large elements of its population who would rather not see a U.S. military presence on the island. At the time I was there in '87 and '88 the Iran Iraq War was in a very active and bloody stage and we were trying to do a number of things, one of which was to ensure that Kuwait was able to continue to supply oil to the world. Our Bahrain-dependent Navy was involved in reflagging and escorting Kuwaiti tankers. We had a large naval presence in the area. In one incident that occurred just before I arrived, Iraqi forces shot and almost sank one of our destroyers, the USS Stark, with great loss of life. While I was there the U.S. Navy also conducted some actions against Iranian units and installations.

The political-military element of that job was crucial. Bahraini sensitivities were severely tested and the embassy was heavily involved in trying to facilitate the continued used and increasing needs of our military in and out of Bahrain. It was a time for persuasive, quiet, and prudent diplomacy. One of the substantive issues that resulted in the difficulties between myself and the chief of mission centered on political military issues. The Bahrainis really have had to put up with the various excesses and inconsistency of U.S. policy over the years and they are still with us, thank goodness. As we speak, Bahrain is still one of our staunchest friends in the on-going tension in the area stemming from both Iraq and Iran. Yet the Bahrainis are still willing to house us and to put up with the problems this creates for them in the region and at home. They are true friends.

Q: In this period 1987-88 we were building up our presence in Bahrain for all these reasons you've just mentioned. You've mentioned that it does among other things cause them problems not only in the region but at home and I know later on there have been some demonstrations, some unrest, in Bahrain. I don't know whether that was present when you were there or still to come?

DARIS: It is a very small island and it has a tiny population. The ruling family must contend with a population that is majority Shiite and which has to a considerable degree felt alienated from the political process. Sheik Isa is I think a still loved father figure but the absence of any political participation by a large part of the population has led to understandable tension. Dissident groups, both at home and abroad, have made the presence of American military in Bahrain a central element in their bill of complaints.

Q: I guess just for the record we should probably say the name other ambassador to Bahrain at the time, if you would.

DARIS: The ambassador was Sam Zakhem.

Q: So you left in 1988. Was there anything else we should say about that assignment to Bahrain of only seven months?

DARIS: We were very sad to leave. We loved the Bahrainis that we knew. It was an exciting job. What we were doing in the region was important. Leaving precipitously also created a difficult moment for our family.

Again I would go back to my earlier experience in Southeast Asia to point out that the Department is weak in political-military work at the country directorate level. The Pentagon decided early on what its regional goals were going to be, and quite rightly so because maintaining stability in the gulf region reflected our own high political and commercial priorities. The Pentagon has been by and large much more focused than the State Department in achieving its goals in the Gulf. State has not had our best people at the working level -- and I stress the working level -- or on the ground in political-military roles, so the Pentagon generally has driven policy. And, as in the case of Bahrain, I believe it doesn't always drive it in a way that is helpful to our political objectives with the small and fragile political entities we are dealing with in the region. I have often regretted that things were done as they were and that our decision making process did not reflect a larger input from the organization for which I worked. But desk officers are more than often overworked, understaffed, and inexperienced in political-military matters and we end up being driven by others, rather than leading.

Q: Was there a large U.S. military presence on the island, on the ground in Bahrain, in addition to all these ships in the Gulf and in the area at the time you were there?

DARIS: There has always been the support unit, the sort of non-base presence which has expanded I guess since I left. It effectively housed a command structure and some support structures on the ground. I know that has since grown. At the time I was there we were building for the Bahraini Air Force a very modern air base on the southern end of the island and that has since served us well. We've been able to use it and are currently using it for some of our monitoring missions over Iraq.

KENNETH A. STAMMERMAN
Consul General
Dhahran, Saudi Arabia (1989-1992)

Kenneth A. Stammerman was born in Kentucky in 1943. He graduated from Bellermine College in 1965 and entered the Foreign Service in 1966. He has served in post in Israel, the Philippines, France, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Mr. Stammerman was interviewed in 2000 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: How about the neighborhood when you arrived there... the Gulf States, Iran, Iraq, Bahrain. How did you view the neighborhood when you got there?

STAMMERMAN: The concern at the time was Iran. It was a big problem. Iraq much less so. The feeling was that the Iraqis were indebted in more ways than one to the Kuwaitis and Saudis. Saddam Hussein was a problem, but he had to borrow more money from the Saudis and the Kuwaitis, so he wasn't particularly a threat, was the general feeling. But Iran continued to be partly because they saw themselves as protectors of the Shia, and there were OPEC problems. The Saudis were producing a lot of oil, and the Iranians, and the Iraqis, but particularly the Iranians wanted the Saudis to produce less to keep the price up. The Saudis couldn't produce any less because they were already down to five millions barrels a day. They didn't want to be the swing producer. So there was concern about an Iranian threat, not an immediate threat, but what a lot of us worried about was Bahrain, actually. Bahrain has a government which is Sunni, though the Shia are the majority of the population. They don't do census very well, but the ruling Sunnis are a minority. But should there be a Shia rebellion or takeover in Bahrain, the Saudis would intervene, almost certainly. They could likely bring in the Iranians. So you could have a Saudi – Iranian fight break out over Bahrain. There might be other reasons, but that was one of the immediate reasons. So the concern was Iran, we were worried about Iran, we watched Iran, people were watching Iran very closely. But when I got there, it didn't seem to be too hot of a problem.

Q: Was there any American military presence in there?

STAMMERMAN: Yes there was. We had trainers. It's called a liaison group. They lived on the Saudi air force air base. In fact, a lot of our consular people would drive over there for lunch, they had the equivalent of an Officers club. And they had a PX, which was convenient. So we would visit them occasionally. We had joint outings sometimes. I once organized an outing with the governor of Khafji, who invited of us up, to show the Americans the desert. So I worked with the military commander and we all brought up families up to Khafji which is on the Kuwait/Saudi border. He had a camp 20 miles out in the middle of the desert, which we would all go out to and spent several days, the kids having a great time riding camels. It was sort of a cultural thing. A lot of these Americans never really got off that air base and never saw Saudi Arabia at all. We got along reasonably well. The air base is where my wife and I first met General Schwarzkopf. When he took over Central Command (CENTCOM), he toured the region and stopped at this liaison group. He was checking out the region. Central Command had been sort of a major player when we were escorting the Kuwaiti ships during the Iran-Iraq war, but CENTCOM thereafter got to be a very quiet command, 1989, early 1990. Our relationship with CENTCOM was reasonably good. I met the American General in

charge at the liaison group early on, it was usually run by one-star or two-star air force man. I went to see him and we worked out arrangements. Our chain of command went to Riyadh separately because they are the liaison group working with the Saudi military. There is no clear line of authority between State Department and Defense in a situation like that. We simply said, if we have any problems any issues, we would try to solve them on a local level, rather than bouncing them up to Riyadh to have the country team try to fight it out. And that generally worked. I would not assert anything and he would not. We would always just try to solve any issues informally. And we didn't have that many issues. We dealt with them on matters like PX and such.

NANCY E. JOHNSON
Temporary Duty
Manama (1990)

Ms. Johnson was born in Washington, DC and was raised in Germany and the Washington, DC area. She was educated at Oberlin College and attended several colleges and Universities in the United Kingdom. After returning to the U.S. Ms. Johnson joined the State Department as a contract employee and later joined the Foreign Service, serving as Political Officer in Colombo, London, Algiers and Baghdad. Her Washington assignments were primarily in the Near East, South Asia bureau. Ms. Johnson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: Okay. Let's talk about your . . .

JOHNSON: It would have been September '90 to December '90.

Q: What was the situation in Bahrain when you were there, because this is . . I mean by the time you got there was the 82nd Airborne, had we put Airborne into Saudi Arabia at that point?

JOHNSON: Yes, we were moving into Saudi Arabia and there were a lot of military people from the Coalition. I can remember I was there to help out with a Naval Conference, called to de-conflict things. When you have 16 navies from all over the world operating in a small place like the Gulf, you have to work out how to talk to each other, who will do what and so on. I helped set the Conference up. I had never seen as much brass in my life as all these admirals hats. I think the ambassador didn't have an awful lot of confidence in his political officer, who was excellent, a really sharp guy.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

JOHNSON: I have forgotten his name and also the name of the young political officer. The latter's nose was a little out of joint when I came, as I realized it was going to be. So I said, 'You are the boss here. I am just here to help you out.' We established that

relationship and then worked very well together. He was a very bright young fellow, but the ambassador for some reason just didn't have a lot of confidence in him.

It was a busy Embassy and there were more and more things happening. Everybody was stretched and pushed, as usual in a crisis.

Q: I went a little back . . . What was your impression of the media when it arrived? Ted Koppel, Dan Rather, but others? Because this was a war that ended up being reported from both sides of the . . When the war was on you had CNN sitting and watching the bombing. At your time, talking to the people, were they getting the story right?

JOHNSON: They were. They came in without a lot of knowledge but they were very good about asking questions and getting background information fast. They were quick studies. They would come and often ask questions about what they had been told because they didn't want to make mistakes on the air. I think the story about Dan Rather was he is hard of hearing. Ted Koppel didn't stay around too long, but Bob Simon came and spent quite a lot of time while I was still there. There were meetings with these press guys as well with the businessmen. There was a lot of pooling of information.

Q: Bob Simon, if I recall, became sort of infamous within the military because he ended up, he was from what I gather, coming out of the Vietnam generation. You know, sort of disparaging the military and all that. But then he got captured . . . Was he the one that got captured?

JOHNSON: No, it was Dan Rather. It might have been the two of them. But this was after my time. They went on an expedition on their own. They were told not to. This was when the war was just about to begin. They went to Kuwait from Saudi Arabia and got captured. I think they were released in fairly short order.

Q: I think it was Bob Simon. If I recall, I think it was some of our people in Saudi Arabia were gritting their teeth because they felt, "Let the guy rot." But they went and made . .

JOHNSON: Whatever, we have to do our jobs. A lot of people came after I left, so I missed any hard feelings.

Q: Did you get any feel for the Bahrain government or the state in Bahrain or were you pretty much up to your neck in military?

JOHNSON: No, we were constantly working with them and they were really helpful. It's a lovely island and it was a really nice TDY. The Foreign Minister is a sweetheart. It's funny, in reviewing the volume of the Foreign Relations of the United States for the Arabian peninsula from 1973-1976, the Foreign Minister, Sheik Mohammed, was a pain in the patoosh in those days. But by 1991 he was really helpful. It was just a really nice place to be, a very laid back place. I left because I was only there on a TDY. The Bahrain-Qatar Desk Officer got an assignment to Egypt, via six months of refresher

Arabic training. They asked me if I would come and be the Desk Officer for six months, and that is what I did.

LAWRENCE H. HYDLE
Political/Military Officer
Manama (1991)

Lawrence H. Hydle was born in Indiana in 1940. He graduated from Occidental College in 1960 and also attended Columbia University. Mr. Hydle entered the Foreign Service in 1965. In addition to serving in Ghana, he held positions in Vietnam, Ireland, Trinidad and Tobago, and Kuwait. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on July 21, 1994.

Q: Then you left there and you got caught up in the Kuwait task force, what was that all about?

HYDLE: The Kuwait task force was formed after the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. It was just an operations center, 24 hours a day monitoring messages and writing situation reports, one day situation reports, and working a lot of odd hours like the operations center people themselves do. I did that from about October 90 to July 91, encompassing the period of the war, Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Nothing in particular sticks to my mind. I followed events like everybody else did.

Then in January, when the air war started, we had pulled a lot of people back from our posts overseas, especially the Near East post. They were given jobs on the task force so all of a sudden I was out of an assignment. So I went back to say, "Now what?"

They said that they wanted somebody to go to Bahrain to be a political/military officer. This was kind of a strange deal but one that gave me the opportunity to go to Bahrain and watch the war from a ring side seat. They had asked for a political/military officer because there were a lot of agreements that had to be reached with the Bahrainis to support our efforts in Desert Shield. But by the time they had a way of responding to that, all the agreements had been reached.

So it turned out that what Ambassador Hosler wanted me to do was to write a sort of history of US-Bahrain cooperation which would support stronger relationships after the war. Bahrain, as you know, is a very small country in the Persian Gulf. There's a causeway that links it to Saudi Arabia. It's always been more pro-American than the other sheikdoms in the area but it can't get too far out in front of them. So there's always a lot of sensitivity. They want a strong relationship with the US to protect their independence against the Saudis, the Iranians who at one time claimed Bahrain as part of Iran, and other sheikdoms. But they can't overdo it.

So basically what I did was write; miscellaneous things--I did some congressional delegations, people that were coming through. I did this history of relations, bringing it up through Desert Shield and Desert Storm. As I recall, the ambassador and the DCM were rewriting my stuff, it was a matter of tone mostly, they were going for a much more boosterish tone which I think really undercut them. You know how these things are when people write back saying that the Bahrainis are simply wonderful. You think that the guy is taking leave of his senses and it undercuts what you're really trying to accomplish.

I also had some reservations about relations that would be all that close afterwards. I thought, and I may be wrong, that if the US had extremely close relations with any country people would start looking more closely at that country's human rights practices, at various things. They would say, "Why are we supporting these guys and why don't we pressure them." So it could backfire to some extent.
I think eventually the problem has been managed. The fact that it's not in the news means we're getting, more or less, what we need from them.

Q: How did you find the Bahrain's were, the Al Khalifa family? How were they treating the Iranian minority there?

HYDLE: They were lording it over them; there were differences. Of course the Sheik himself was a benevolent figure, widely liked. The prime minister, his brother, was a more narrow guy. The Bahrainis, most of them are Sunnis, there are some Sunnis, and there are some Shiite Arabs, and then there are some Shiite Iranians. So there's a mixture and that's just the Bahrainis, which is about half a million as I recall. Then they have a bunch of Pakistanis and Indians there to do the actual work, who have no political rights.

Q: Did you sort of get out and mix and mingle?

HYDLE: I got out a lot but it was not so much with the Bahrainis as it was with other US military institutions and so on. We had an air base, two air bases--a navy air and an air force air. A lot of military medical installations there, which would have been used if there had been significant numbers of casualties.

Q: What was the impression of the Bahrain military? was it too small, really?

HYDLE: It was small./ Nobody expected it to be able to defeat anybody except maybe the Qatari military which were next door neighbors. The Qatari were much richer than the Bahrainis. There was a dispute over an island, whose name I forget, but it's an island that's really in, looking at a map you would think it would be in Qatar but it had historical connections to Bahrain.

Q: Not Daasa island?

HYDLE: No. But anyway, the Bahrainis were always trying to get us to support their position on that island. We were usually trying to stay out of it, to get somebody else to mediate it. One time there was talk about a Voice of America transmitter in Bahrain. They took a VOA guy over to that island and said, "This is where we think the transmitter should be." He was new to the area so he really didn't know about it, that this was a disputed island. Amar? Could that be the name of the island?

Q: Yes, I think so. How about relations with the Saudis? Were the Saudis trying to extend themselves into that area?

HYDLE: The Saudi and the Bahraini ruling families had good relations. The Bahrainis certainly relied on the Saudis for help in case they came under pressure, from the Qataris for example. The Saudis were sort of the senior guys in the region but they accepted Bahraini independence. They were not a threat to the Bahrain's independence.

Q: BECKOL Element Oil Company or was that pretty well dead by that time?

HYDLE: The Bahrainis did have some oil but less so than, let's say Kuwait and Qatar which are big oil countries. They were sort of on the same level as Oman, sort of middle income powers. I think that the US refinery was no longer involved.

Q: How long were you there?

HYDLE: Just 6 weeks then I came back but that was during the actual ground invasion.

ARTHUR H. HUGHES
Deputy Assistant Secretary in Near Eastern Affairs
Washington, DC (1994-1997)

Ambassador Hughes was born in Nebraska and attended the University of Nebraska in 1961. He entered the Foreign Service in1965 and served in Germany, Venezuela, Denmark, The Netherlands, Israel, and Yemen. In addition, he held several posts within the State Department.

Q: How about Bahrain? Do you have anything to say about Bahrain in the period you were in NEA?

HUGHES: Well, Bahrain has been one of the closest partners of the United States in the region going back to World War II, and we've had a Navy facility there, a cooperative facility with the Bahrainis since that time. It's an administrative support operation, and

the admiral in command is with the 5th Fleet which operates in the Gulf and the Arabian Sea is located in Manama. They've been good hosts. They've been good partners. They've had some domestic difficulties with Shia in the majority of the population because of demands for the implementation of certain political rights and also better economic opportunities in that there has been a considerable amount of unrest including violence and loss of life, and what some people charge as repression by the government on these groups. This has been an item of some very important discussion between- (end of tape)

Q: Let's finish up on Bahrain.

HUGHES: As I was saying, the Bahraini government is trying to negotiate and to accommodate the more moderate elements and demands of the Shia majority in Bahrain while retaining authority and assuring the present ruling and government arrangements remain essentially intact. One of the problems, of course, too has been a certain amount of disinvestment in Bahrain, which adds pressure on the economic side of things. But it's clear that they also have a corruption problem in the government, and many of the demands this year are quite legitimate, although one element in the background always is Iranian interests. Iran had long considered, well before the present government in Iran, Bahrain a part of Iran. Bahrain [had] clearly chose[n] not to be a part of Iran. Iranian Shia trained, are educated, schooled in Iran, so there's always this fifth-column element which does have some basis in fact.

DAVID M. RANSOM
Ambassador
Bahrain (1994-1997)

Ambassador David M. Ransom was born in Missouri in 1938. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Princeton University in 1960, he served in the US Marine Corps from 1962-1965. His career has included positions in Taiz, Teheran, Beirut, Jeddah, Sana'a, Abu Dhabi, Damascus, and an ambassadorship to Bahrain. Ambassador Ransom was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in November, 1999.

Q: Let's move on. You were assigned to Bahrain. You were in Bahrain from when to when?

RANSOM: 1994 to 1997--a wonderful tour of duty.

Q: What was the situation on Bahrain when you arrived? What did you feel were the issues that you had to deal with?

RANSOM: When I went to Bahrain, it was a peaceful place with no disturbances of any sort. Over the course of my three years there, disturbances not only emerged, they spread and became the worst in the history of the island with the Shia, in effect, in revolt, conducting street demonstrations. That was not clear at the time I went. I thought my

major task would be dealing with the U.S. Navy - to defeat it, if necessary, if it wished to expand inordinately. That had traditionally been the view of the State Department.

We had half a billion dollars worth of trade with tiny Bahrain. That hardly seems possible, but there it was--lots of money. So, I thought we were primarily a commercial mission. Bahrain sat in a lot of councils, the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council), the Arab League, etc. I thought there might be a small role to be played as an interlocutor on some of the broader Arab issues. Maybe we could find out something about Iran from Bahrain because a lot of people went back and forth. Those were very modest goals. Our embassy had about 70 Americans in it and another 70-80 locals, in a large, handsome building. It had a reputation of being a place that was very nice. Bahrainis are very, very agreeable people.

It turned out to be a much more complicated set of tasks. Bahrain wasn't a peaceful country by the end of my tour. We had to make some hard choices about how to support friends involved in putting down the rebellion. Our navy--and our military in general, the air force in particular-- had good reasons to expand their presence in Bahrain. I had to negotiate that. We did so. I went from commercial work to issues of economic reform that would make Bahrain a better place for private investment in a post-communist world. I found that Bahrainis were just as agreeable and pleasant as everybody had always described them.

Q: Could you talk a little about the government of Bahrain?

RANSOM: The government of Bahrain was led by a man I came to love very much, Sheikh Isa bin Sulman al-Khalifa, a canny, humorous, generous, charming man who had been on the throne for many years. He died in March of this year. He liked people to think that he didn't do much. In fact, his tactic was to wait until there was agreement among his brothers, uncles, and others in the government and then confirm it. But I saw that when there was no agreement, he would decide. But he would wait. He would decide very carefully. It is fair to say that during the time he had to make some of the most difficult decisions involving the rebellion, I developed a very close, personal friendship with him; we could talk about these things. He did not exactly ask me for my advice. I never lectured him. But we were able in weekly meetings over a cup of tea on Friday afternoon in his beach place to have a very good talk about what was to be decided and how it was to be decided. This was interspersed with jokes, accounts of our families, etc. It just had to be one of the best relationships I've ever had in my career. I similarly had very close and good relationships with the ministers of Defense, Interior, Justice, Economy, and particularly Foreign Affairs. These were relationships that reached the point where I could pick up the telephone and do some business over the telephone very quickly. I could always see them if I asked. I found that as time went on and we developed a closer relationship, I had the kind of access that other ambassadors in the Gulf would have died to have. It was partly a matter of the fact that Bahrain was a small place.

Q: They all are.

RANSOM: They all are. Frankly, I always thought it was a matter of building good personal relationships. That is the one thing which ambassadors have to do. They have to be in with the guys at the top. They have to be able to get to them to deliver messages. They have to wield influence. That is the one thing ambassador can do that no one else in the mission can and the one thing that people in Washington count on you doing. Bahrain is not at the center of attention of the NEA people. They tended to let the Gulf and Iraqi affairs be run by DOD. That was perfectly fine with me because my contacts there were still superb -- The Navy, the JCS, the ISA, and CINCOM. But I always felt that State's preoccupation with the Arab-Israeli peace process blinded it to the importance of the Gulf, where there were vital national security interests that had to be protected. It is one of the two areas, along with Korea, which rate that type of description in the post-communist era. We fought a war because of it. We spend hundreds of millions, indeed billions, of dollars every year to maintain it. Bahrain was in a part of the world where there are no alliances among the various parties which live there and no alliances between any of the parties and us. Everything was done on a bilateral basis. Bahrain was unusually important. It was the headquarters of the Fifth Fleet. It was a Navy base.

Unlike other parts of the Gulf, where eventually we will be asked to leave (Saudi Arabia will ask us to leave, for instance, when Saddam goes.), we will be in Bahrain forever. So, we had a unique relationship with and an interest in Bahrain. It is unique, special, big, and important as long as the Gulf is big and important and it supplies petroleum to the world. But it's fair to say, I think, that we got a desultory amount of time and attention from NEA. They were really only interested in the peace process.

Q: Talk about the rebellion. How did this come about? What caused it?

RANSOM: The population of Bahrain is about 65% Shia. That group is divided into many parts. The largest part, probably a majority of the population, consists of Arab Shia who had been in Bahrain for a long time. The other Shia came from elsewhere in the Gulf, including Iran. They're also divided in many ways not by education so much, but by class. Wealthier Shia tended to side with the government and wanted to make their peace with the government, but the poorer Shia, who were much larger in number had economic grievances. The grievances were partly that Bahrain had so many foreign laborers in the country. They were partly there because of the "glass ceilings" imposed on the jobs Shia could occupy in the Defense Ministry, Interior Ministry, and lots of others. There were ministries that were heavily Shia, such as Education, Health, and Public Works, but they did not have their fair share of political power.

There was a whole nest of issues. There was no way for these to be expressed in the normal course of political life because there was no normal course of political life. The brother of the emir wanted nothing more than for Shia to kowtow to him and say "Thanks" for all he had given them and done for them. The idea of allowing them greater participation in public life was simply anathema to him. The only place that Shia could visit freely was to an unusual Shia institution called the "mahtin." This is a house of mourning. It is not a mosque. They are set up in every community, usually by wealthy

donors. They are places that are built with kitchens and classrooms. There the membership read and celebrated Shia history. There are Shia holidays that other Sunni Muslims don't observe and they all get observed in the mahtin. They read and studied the classic works of Shia jurisprudence, history, poetry, and thinking.

Sunnis have no idea that these things exist. It became very clear to me very quickly that what was happening amounted to a community mobilization. The people who got control of the disaffection of the Shia on the island were young Shia clerics educated in Goh, in Iran. They were no friends of ours, although they never made foreign policy issues prominent in their campaign, never threatened Americans, and never threatened our naval base.

Their goal was to move toward an Islamic republic somewhat akin to what had been set up in Iran. That didn't mean they were Iranian agents. It didn't mean they wanted to do in Bahrain exactly what they had seen in Iran. The Bahraini Sunni's approach was totally different. Their simple idea was, "We need to be able to elect a new parliament." They thought all political power was to be transferred to that parliament. They would maintain a monarchy of some sort, but in a very weakened form. I never had any real reason to believe that these Shia clerics would end up pushing the envelope much too far so that Bahrain might become the type of Islamic republic that they simply didn't want. Nevertheless, they had community roots, community ties, community institutions, a place to go, a network for communication, established meetings and such, and they were able to turn out the whole island in a way that nobody had ever seen before.

There had been trade union agitation in the past during the Arab nationalist period and some of that got to be pretty violent at times in Bahrain. But it was never anything like what happened in Bahrain during the mid-1990's. The whole younger generation was involved. One of the things that was striking was that the older generation, men over the age of 40, had grown up in this period when oil wealth was incalculable. Bahraini income was being spent at a staggering rate, through a major building program–houses, offices, roads and hospitals, health clinics, etc. All Bahraini got jobs and services; it was a good time and the population wasn't going to object. That mid-age group, by and large, did not take part in the rebellion of 1994 and 1997. It was the younger generation, the under-27 group, which in fact now was 67% of the population - and all educated, that took the leadership role There is 83% percent literacy rate in Bahrain, high by anybody's standards and off the charts by Arab standards. Not only did they not have jobs like their fathers did, but they didn't even have any prospect for such jobs. They had no desire to take the type of menial jobs their fathers had taken when they first came out of the rural communities and were ready to work at very simple tasks. So, the majority of the younger generation was educated and unemployable.

Q: Oil wealth had...

RANSOM: Oil production in Bahrain is down to under 40,000 barrels a day. It's a pittance. The Bahrainis share the production of an oil field which is in the waters between themselves and Saudi Arabia. One of the things I did early on in establishing myself in

Bahrain was to help them get not only their half of the production of that field, but the Saudi half as well. I did that by working through our ambassador in Saudi Arabia, a wonderful man named Ray Mabus, who took on the job himself by working with Fahd, Sultan, Myeemi, Abdullah, and other Saudi officials. He proceeded without instructions from the Department. We couldn't have gotten instructions from the Department, so we just didn't bother to ask for them. He did it and produced a very impressive change. It meant a lot more money for the Bahrainis at a time when they desperately were being pressed by daily widespread disturbances on the island-- every night, every day. Gas cylinders were exploding with a big roar. Fires being set in the street. Cars were being stoned. It's a wonder that in this entire period no American was hurt. I lived with security concerns. That was the one thing that kept me awake at night in Bahrain simply because I was worried that something might happen to an American citizen. I was in the difficult position because I had to fight people in Washington-- in Consular Affairs in particular-- but also in intelligence community and in NEA who were predicting the end of the world and talking about withdrawing dependants and closing down and on and on and on. They were covering their back sides in Washington and that didn't make my job easier. Every week, I had to come in with predictions of what would happen the following week. I thank God that every single one of our predictions was right and every single one of the predictions from Washington were wrong.

Q: Was Washington seeing the heavy hand of Iran there?

RANSOM: No. They didn't see the heavy hand of Iran. They just thought there were local disturbances that did not require our involvement-- we should just get out of the way. It's the old business of travel advisories. At the least possible disturbance, the Department issues a travel warning and a travel advisory and then a complete ban. For people sitting in Washington, there is nothing to be gained by a judicious decision to carry on as normal in the field.

Q: Because of lawyers in Congress, the Department had to be defensive.

RANSOM: And the press. We are very defensive. But I thought we had things to do in Bahrain--businesses to run, Navy activities to carry on, influence to wield with the government, etc. If we cut and ran, all of that would be negatively affected. We won the evacuation battle, incidentally, but it was a battle that had to be fought every goddam week.

Q: How was the government in Bahrain responding to this? What was our role? Were we just staying out of the crossfire?

RANSOM: The government in Bahrain responded with relative restraint. Unlike Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran, they didn't fire into crowds and kill people wantonly. They tried to respond with arrests. They tried to set up informant networks. But the prime minister was intent on not negotiating with these people lest they assumed to be a separate political force. He said, "That would make us appear weak. We can't do that, David." So our call for dialogue among responsible parties fell on deaf ears; there never was any

dialogue. But we continued to maintain that view and continued to call for a dialogue.

I was very concerned to make sure that we supported the government of Bahrain. We had interests there. I thought they had a right to maintain law and order. When people wanted to go into the street and burn buildings and such, they had a right to arrest people. Every visitor who came to the island - and they tended to be all military people - was put on stage with a press conference at the airport when he left. I would set this up and I would hand each talking points that they would read into the record. In that way we maintained very clearly our support of the Bahraini government. That gave me some leverage in discussing a wide range of issues. By and large, the prime minister's view was that he simply had to stamp this uprising out. There were other voices in the government which eventually succeeded in securing the release of one of the Bahraini clerics who was the leader of the Shia -- a man named Abdul Amir Al-Jamri. A deal was made. If he were released, he would not call for immediate election of a parliament. He didn't have to give that up as a goal, but he had to accept a process of small steps. He would have to denounce violence. He would be free to see people. He would have access to the government. The government for its part was going to release not only him but the other people they had taken into the custody.

The government lived up to its side of the bargain. This was forced down the throat of the prime minister, I think, by other members of his family. The government went about doing what it was supposed to do very scrupulously. Abdul Amir Al-Jamri did not. He began to what amounted a huge program of political mobilization that ended in a giant rally at his villa. There must have been 50,000 people present. It was a very Shia place, with young men dressed in black pumping their chest, calling for sacrifice and blood. I saw a videotape of it and it was, frankly, like downtown Tehran more than Bahrain. After that, there was a bomb set off at a major hotel in town. Then the government and the prime minister reversed itself. They rearrested the leaders of the demonstrations. They began arresting other people. They went to a policy of vigorous repression. I could not say they hadn't tried. They had. It was clear to me that the failure in this deal came from the Shia side. Bad leadership and bad judgment is what it came down to. Fanaticism drove that side in the end to go too far.

So, after that, it was a matter of just supporting the government. I didn't feel bad about this. I went on saying what I had to say and wanted to say. But they insisted that the only way out of the problem was to eliminate the opposition. They did that.

In my returns to the island since I have been retired, I have been reminded more than once by the minister of interior, for instance, that he thought his judgment was better than mine, i.e., he had a better comprehension of the opposition. I think he probably he is right to feel that way.

Q: I think there is a predilection on our part always to try to see if we can't get all the parties together to work problems out.

RANSOM: That's right.

Q: But when you're up against real fundamentalists, often it doesn't work that way.

RANSOM: I'm afraid that's true. When you're dealing with a religious movement led by religious men, you wonder if compromise isn't something of a sin in their eyes. I had no hopes of being in a place which would have "one man, one vote" eventually. But we had broader geo-political interests in the region with the Saudis and the Kuwaitis, (both Sunni regimes,) with our Navy base in Bahrain, and with a large American business community. We took a hard look at the situation and made up our mind as to where our interests lay and went on from there. We now have extraordinarily good relationships in Bahrain. That includes relationships with very large parts of the Shia community. Not with clerics. They remain a group with which there is very little communication and, frankly, we don't like. They are, for American diplomats, generally beyond reach. Wherever we are in the Middle East, it's hard to communicate with the clerics because they don't want to talk to us and because governments don't want us to talk to them. Furthermore, if you have come out of a liberal arts education in the United States and you sit down with a Muslim fundamentalist, it's very hard to make idle chatter. It's very hard to find much to talk about, much less agree on.

Q: You had been, obviously, in the Arab world for a long time. Did you feel a new spirit in the Gulf States after the Gulf War? Were they still concerned about being small, vulnerable states with Iran and Iraq glowering over them or was there a new sense of confidence? What was your impression?

RANSOM: The atmosphere changed completely. In the past when I had served in the Gulf, there was a strong ambivalence towards American military presence. Part of this was Arab nationalism, but part of it was the feeling on the part of our friends that if they depended too heavily on us, they would be disappointed -- that when they needed us, we wouldn't come. So, we were a short term liability without being a long term asset. Therefore, they restricted what we could do. Bahrain was a good example of this. They allowed the Navy to function from its territory, but the admiral had to maintain his headquarters on ship-board. He could have an office on land, but he couldn't have families there. The Navy was really just a support organization. We got a lot out political mileage out of it, but it was hardly a base or a headquarters.

When the war started, we had to overcome the attitude that we would prove unreliable, as we had been viewed as having been in Vietnam. There was concern by our local friends that we would leave them and the area worse off than it was before and that we wouldn't stand up to the Iraqis. When we did, it changed everything.

Now there is no credible criticism of American military presence in the area. We are able to conduct military operations in the Middle East against Iraq without a murmur of protest from any of the governments. On Bahrain, for instance, we not only have an onshore headquarters for the Navy, but we're putting $250 million into the new construction of additional facilities. Our presence, while it's not larger in terms of numbers of men, has a much higher profile and is clearly going to be there for a very long

time. So, everything changed.

I think one of the nice symbols I got was a gift from the minister of defense which I still have on the shelves of my office here. I had paid an initial call on him. At the end of the meeting, he walked across the room and picked up a small Plexiglas display box. In it was a shard of twisted metal. He said, "This is from a scud missile that was downed by a Patriot missile. We picked it up on our soil and we'll never forget that you defended us." That illustrated the change right there, that twisted piece of metal. I think it will go on for a very long time.

Q: During the time you were in Bahrain, were the Bahrainis reaching an accommodation with Iran?

RANSOM: No. The Sunni government of Bahrain is deeply suspicious of Iran. At first, they believed that Iran was behind the local disturbances, but there was not a shred of evidence of that. Eventually, some evidence was produced. They penetrated and arrested a gang of people who had been trained in the Bekaa Valley possibly by Iranians and who had some weapons. They clearly had Iranian backing. But they weren't doing anything. The irony is that they were inserted into Bahrain as "sleepers" and were inactive. They weren't doing anything to foment the disturbances, but they were in the country. It was credible intelligence. We were able to corroborate it.

The Bahrainis, with a rare display of courage, took the Iranians on frontally with this evidence. In the GCC, the Arab League, the UN, they secured condemnations and criticisms of the Iranians. They cut off ferry service, aircraft service and traffic to Iran. They ended issuing visas. They didn't close their embassy in Tehran, but they denounced the Iranians. One of the early and extraordinary results of this policy of confrontation was that the Iranians decided under pressure to end all criticism of Bahrain and its government on Iranian radio and television. That was done instantly. I went to the foreign minister and commended him for this policy of extraordinary courage and toughness. I said, "I just want you to know that one of the reasons you can do this and get away with it is that the U.S. Navy is sitting in the harbor and patrolling the Gulf. The Iranians have to take that into consideration. They cannot use their own muscle against you. So, your diplomacy can succeed." He was perfectly aware of that. That is the way you build relationships. All of that was like duck soup to me. I loved doing it.

JOHNNY YOUNG
Ambassador
Bahrain (1997-2001)

Ambassador Young was born in Georgia and raised in Georgia, Pennsylvania and Delaware. He was educated at Temple University and entered the Foreign Service in 1967. Before being named Ambassador,

Mr. Young served in a number of embassies in the administrative field, including Madagascar, Guinea, Kenya, Qatar, Barbados, Jordan and the Netherlands. In 1989 he was named US Ambassador to Sierra Leone, where he served until 1992. He subsequently served as US Ambassador to Togo (1994-1997), Bahrain (1997-2001) and Slovenia (2001-2004). Ambassador Young was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: All right, well, then '97 whither?

YOUNG: '97. I had gotten promoted to my great shock and surprise to career minister. This I think put the Department in a dilemma. In other words, what do they do with me? Here I am one of the few black career ministers in the Foreign Service and they wanted to give me another assignment. Several proposals had come up and I had spoken to a number of people. I made my case to the Department and I said, now, if you're serious about wanting to try and encourage some black officers about advancement in the Foreign Service or even entering the Foreign Service and being able to advance to the top and being able to serve in places other than Africa, I said, I'm your man. You know, you can use me as an experiment to see if this works. I definitely would like an assignment overseas. I'm not interested in anything in Washington whatsoever. I said, but I do not want to go to Africa. I have spent my time in Africa. I've loved every minute of it. I've learned a tremendous amount from it, but enough is enough and it is time to do something else. At the time the director general was Tony Quainton and I put my case to him. He said, you're pretty persuasive. He says, we're going to work with you to see what we can do. I put in various bids of different types. Frankly I didn't think any of them would work. I was not a European hand per se. I was not a Near Eastern hand or a Caribbean hand or an East Asian hand. I wasn't any of them. I said if this is going to work it's going to work because the central system is going to be my advocate in making this work. I will not be the candidate of any of the geographic bureaus for this. I had this series of e-mails going back and forth and back and forth. Oh, God, I'm trying to think of the woman who was my career counselor at the time. Margaret Dean, a wonderful officer, just a wonderful officer. She worked very closely with me and we looked at various possibilities. We came down to a couple of possibilities, but they said, well, you might be a prospect for Bahrain. I couldn't believe it. The last time I was in Bahrain or had anything to do with Bahrain was when I was in Qatar from '74 to '77. We used to go over there from time to time because it was like heaven. I said, well, I certainly would be interested but I realize I'm not the bureau's candidate and I know it's going to be very competitive. We'll see what happens.

Months went by and we kept the correspondence going back and forth between myself and Margaret Dean, the PDAS in personnel at the time and Quainton. I remember getting a note that the D committee would be meeting on X date and then they'd let me know what was what. The date kept being postponed and postponed, which is often the case with these committee meetings. Then I got an e-mail saying that the committee had met and that I was going to be the candidate for Manama in Bahrain. Well I was absolutely thrilled. If this all worked out, this meant that I was going to be the only black ambassador in the Near Eastern bureau and one of the few outside of Africa. There were

none in Europe at the time and I think there was one in Latin America and the rest were all in Africa. This was going to be a bit of history. I remember announcing to my staff in Togo that this prospect was looking good. Then I left for the States and prepared myself for confirmation. I went on a direct transfer with deferred home leave and stopped in time to prepare myself and to have hearings and meetings and those kinds of things.

On December 19, 1997 we arrived in Bahrain. Bahrain's national day is on the 15th. The town was festooned with red and white lights, which are the national colors of Bahrain. I remember my wife saying, oh, Johnny, look at all of these lights. Isn't it wonderful they have decorated for Christmas? I had to say, honey; this is not for Christmas. These are the national colors of Bahrain. All of the buildings, red and white lights trimmed in the buildings and they were decked out in the streets and what have you. Now, that said, there were places that had Christmas lights as well for the expatriate community there.

We arrived, were met by the chief of protocol and then we were whisked to our new residence. We were the first people to occupy this new residence. Before we arrived we heard that the former residence was being returned to the owner who wanted it and the embassy was looking desperately for a new appropriate residence. Before we left the States we got word from the man who was to be my DCM, George Staples. George said, we think we have found something for you. He made a videotape of the potential new residence. He sent it to us. It looked good to us by videotape. We said go for it. That was the house they rented. When we arrived they had transferred the furniture from the former residence which was occupied by Ambassador David Ransom and into the new residence. It really did look nice. It was a mini palace, a lovely place. We could hold a reception for 200 people in the foyer. The living room was in three sections and 75 feet long.

Q: I'm just thinking, that's not a very big island.

YOUNG: Oh, but some fabulous houses on that little island, and a lot of wealth on that little island. Six bedrooms, all with on-suite baths. Lovely. Beautiful family room. A big, huge kitchen plus an outside kitchen where you could prepare foods outside, meals outside without having all the smells come in the kitchen for big functions. An indoor swimming pool with sauna and steam bath, exercise room, I mean it was just unbelievable. No garden, just a sandpit, so we saw our work cut out for us in terms of trying to make a garden, finishing up the touches in terms of the residence and things like that. The Emir of Bahrain agreed to receive my credentials within days of my arrival so that was very nice. I remember asking if I could take my wife and they said, no, I could not. I understood that because these functions are just for the principal and I couldn't take her. We went to the palace. I had never been in a palace before. I mean I had been in official government offices and other buildings, but these were actually called palaces and were indeed palaces. I mean they were unbelievable and the emir had so many of them it was unbelievable. He had one downtown and this was at the palace in Manama downtown.

The deputy chief of mission accompanied me and we went to the palace. Prior to that

meeting at the palace the chief of protocol had instructed me on how I was to proceed in presenting the letters of credence. How I would walk so many steps, stand at a certain line that would be on the floor, then proceed so many steps after that, present the letters and I was to back up at that point and then stand and wait for the emir to make any comments and then I was to make comments. I had written out some comments and had submitted them to the chief of protocol beforehand. After that I was to go with the emir to a little side area where we would sit and talk. After the whole thing was over then I was to leave. Now, I did all of that. It all worked out very nicely. I was told you can tell when it's over because a server would come with a perfume bottle of rose water. He would sprinkle rose water on your hands and then he would come with burning incense like a chalice. You were supposed to take this incense and bring the fumes of it into your clothing. Then you would take the rose water and rinse your hands. That marked the end of the function. During our talk we didn't discuss anything of any substance, just little tidbits of our families and things like that; where the emir had traveled and how he likes the United States and he's so fond of us and we'd been so good to the island. I said, well, you've been good to us, which they were. They were just a fantastic ally. So, the fellow came with the incense and I sort of fanned it into my clothes. We had lived in Qatar and we learned a little something there. He brought the rose water and I rubbed it in my hands and then thanked the emir. Before we left, he said, "You know I'm impressed. You knew exactly what to do." I said, "Well, thank you, your highness." He said, "You're not like one of the ambassadors we've had here. He took the rose water and he tried to put out the fire in the incense holder." I said, "Oh, no, I wouldn't try that, I learned how to do this in Qatar." He said, "Well, that's very nice." I asked him, "Who was that?" He was reluctant to tell me. He said, "Well, he was the fellow who was one of the former Japanese ambassadors who had tried that." Anyhow we were off to a good start with the emir.

That was quite an assignment for me. Bahrain had never had a black ambassador from the U.S. It had never had a black in any senior position frankly in the mission. I learned later they were all curious as to what I was going to be like and how many heads I had and that sort of thing.

Q: Did you carry a spear?

YOUNG: Exactly. There was a lot of watching and observing and seeing what was I going to be like and what was I going to say and how supportive I was going to be. They learned very quickly that they had in me a very good friend impressing on the U.S. what a good friend we had in Bahrain as well. It worked both ways. We had the fifth fleet there. At the time the fifth fleet was managed by Admiral Thomas Fargo and he was doing a magnificent job. We were very busy enforcing the no fly zone in Iraq. We were policing the Gulf, interdicting illegal smuggling of petroleum and other products through the Gulf and also keeping an eye on the Iranians who were making mischief in the Gulf. We wanted them to know they couldn't do any harm there. The fifth fleet was really very important, very key, very strategic to our interests in the Gulf.

Q: The sixth fleet.

YOUNG: Fifth fleet.

Q: The fifth fleet.

YOUNG: Yes.

Q: That was its headquarters then.

YOUNG: Yes.

Q: It used to be something called COMIDEAST Four.

YOUNG: It was COMIDEAST Four. They had a big white ship, the COMIDEAST Four. The USS La Salle. At one point we told the government of Bahrain that we were having a change in policy, that we were closing down that operation and that this symbolic ship was going to leave and was going to be decommissioned. I think we told them it was going to be decommissioned. Well, as it turned out later, the ship was removed and that's when we changed the name to the fifth fleet because the Bahrainis were originally not particularly keen on having the fifth fleet. They preferred the COMIDEAST Four arrangement. So, anyhow in the end it all worked out, but they never forgave us. They always remembered that that was a bit of deception on our part because the La Salle did go to another place and it remained I think in Italy or someplace. I can't recall where. It was a country that was extremely important to our interests there.

At the time we didn't have anything comparable to Bahrain. We did have a base in Kuwait following the first Iraqi war. The Kuwaitis were very open, but you know, being in Kuwait is not the same as being in Bahrain by any means. We didn't have much in Abu Dhabi. We did have free access. We could go in and out and the fellows could have some shore leave and that sort of thing. We also had some permanent, but not acknowledged operations in Saudi. The Saudis would say, no, no we don't have anything permanent. We only have temporary duty people here. That was a fiction at the time. We had a little something in Saudi as well. Then we had a little bit of something in Oman and that was it. All of those operations in the Gulf, big or small, were all controlled by the commander of the fifth fleet in Bahrain.

Now, my relationship with the commander of the fifth fleet was good. I attempted to be as inclusive as I could in terms of including him on any meetings that had anything to do with the military. If I were going to talk about something economic or what have you, there would be no need to include him. That worked out very nicely with Admiral Fargo. With his replacement I think there was some resentment that he couldn't move more freely in terms of his relationship with the host government, but I had to make it very clear that I was the one who spoke for the U.S. government and not the commander of the fifth fleet, although the commander of the fifth fleet had all of the assets. That's the way it was. I just tried to be as inclusive as I possibly could. It worked out. We had a good working relationship. We saw, I think, eye to eye on most things until we had the incident of the Cole which I'll talk about later. That changed how I would look at things or how

my mission looked at things versus how they were looked at from the fifth fleet.

Q: Had there been any of that move towards making Qatar sort of a central command center?

YOUNG: No, there was talk and that was it at that point, but nothing. We had nothing in Qatar at that point. In fact, the Bahrainis and the Qataris were in dispute at that time over territorial issues and had a big case before the international court in The Hague. A case that had been around for 60 some years.

Q: Is that the Hawar Island or something?

YOUNG: On Hawar Island. In fact it was resolved while I was there. It worked out. It was resolved basically in favor of Bahrain. We'll get to that a little bit later.

That was my introduction. I began to make calls, which is standard procedure for an arriving ambassador, on all the different ministers. The foreign minister was an incredible fellow and turned out to be really one of my best colleagues, one of the best foreign ministers I think I have ever worked with. He was just a consummate professional, well trained Ph.D. from England, perfect speaker of English, so knowledgeable, had been foreign minister from the time of independence in 1971. He had already been foreign minister for 30 years by the time I got there or pretty close to it anyhow. He was wonderful. Sheik Mohammad bin Mubarak Al Khalifa. Until recently he was foreign minister. He is now the deputy prime minister. This Al Khalifa family, it's basically a family business. The prime minister was the brother of the fellow who was emir when I first went to Bahrain, Sheik Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa. His brother, Sheik Al Khalifa, was the prime minister and was reportedly the most corrupt of all of the Al Khalifas. He would demand 10% of any government project. One major project that was carried out before I arrived was the hydroelectric plant that was valued at $500 million and allegedly his man went from contract to contract to say, okay, now when can we expect your 10%. I mean he was one of the wealthiest men there. It was a fascinating family. Sheik Isa had the brother who was the prime minister. He had another brother who was just a renegade and a little bit off the deep end, but he was a businessman and the prime minister and his renegade brother used to even have fist fights. It's still a legend in Bahrain that these two had a fist fight at one time and the renegade brother beat up the prime minister. It was all over some land dispute or what have you, but this renegade brother refused to put license plates on his many cars and had always traveled with a shotgun displayed in the back window of his car. Nobody would fool with him because they were afraid to. He didn't hurt anyone although, according to legend; he did shoot up one fellow or scared him anyhow by sort of shooting at him, a top businessman in town. People treated him very delicately. Because he was a member of the royal family I paid a call on him and he took a liking to my wife and me. He invited us to his home and I'll have to tell you some of the tales of visiting with him on his island. That's one of the highlights of our stay in Bahrain.

Many interesting things went on when we were in Bahrain. Before I arrived, Bahrain was

interested in purchasing some additional F16s, but we had not agreed that they could have them. They wanted to get the F16s with a certain type of missile. We said no, we haven't released this technology to any Arab country. We were thinking what would the Israelis think. We didn't come out and say that, but that was a fact. I remember talking to the DAS (Deputy Assistant Secretary) in PM (Bureau of Political Military Affairs) at that time, Mike Lennon. Mike would bring me into work in the morning because I was basically on TDY (temporary duty) as I was preparing to go out to Bahrain. I told him this is one of the things they want. He says, over my dead body Johnny. It's just not going to happen. They're not going to get those missiles. I said, okay. I wouldn't give up though. I didn't give up on the sale of the F16s or on the missiles. This country had been our good ally. They said they wanted them so that if they had a similar situation as in the first Gulf War, they wanted to be prepared so they could be fully integrated and contribute to a joint effort. These missiles weren't going to do any good because they were five minutes by F16s from Iran, but if they needed them to be a part of a larger effort then it would help. This was the argument we tried to make, but we weren't getting anywhere. We'd get turned back every time, but we just kept hammering away and hammering away. As VIP visitors would come over, the Secretary of Defense and so on, the Bahrainis would make their case over and over. We told them frankly.

The emir was invited for a visit in May of '98. I accompanied him on that visit. We met with President Clinton. They had a lunch for him. It was very nice I must say. That visit was in May of '98. Before he came Secretary Albright came and they were all very grateful for the role that Bahrain was playing in the no fly zone and also in hosting the UN team searching in Iraq for weapons of mass destruction. They were all supported out of Bahrain. Logistically this is where they would fly in, would fly out. When they came out I would meet with the head of the team for a debrief. He would meet with me, with the Brits, and the French and the Russians. We would get a debrief then of course we'd fire that right back to our governments and if they needed any special help on some things. I mean there were certain things that we would do that we didn't tell the Russians about or we didn't tell the French about and that sort of thing because this was such an important mission. That's when I met at the time the Swede who was the head of the UN inspection team, Hans Blix.

We were very appreciative of the role that Bahrain was playing in support of this activity. Whenever our VIPs would come out they would give them a big pat on the back for the role they were playing. They would play up how important it was because we would launch some of our retaliatory attacks also on Iraq from Bahrain.

Now, I mention, I'm going back to the time prior to the emir's visit because of something that happened that I want to get on the record.

Q: Okay.

YOUNG: It was in March of 1998. Madeleine Albright was coming out to visit. She was basically visiting the region and also wanted a blank check in terms of the launch of attacks on Iraq from Bahrain. Before she arrived I got a call from the royal chief of

protocol and he said, “Johnny, I want to talk to you.” I said, “Okay.” I went over to his office. He said, “Johnny, I called you in because I don’t want a repeat of what happened the last time Madeleine Albright visited Bahrain.” I said, “What happened?” He said, “She arrived and the minister of the interior was the acting minister of foreign affairs. He met her and he got ready to get in the car with her and was pushed aside and told you can’t ride with her.” He was outraged that this had happened and he said, “Okay, if you don’t want me to ride with her, I won’t ride with her.” Now, this man was representing the emir of Bahrain as the acting minister of foreign affairs because the minister of foreign affairs was out of the country at the time. It was not appreciated at all. He says, “I don’t want a repeat of that. I don’t want it.” I said, “Okay, I’ll make sure that this is made clear to the Secretary and her party.” The advance person for her visit was David Hale. I explained what the situation was and I said would you please send a cable to her party advising what we should do, that the foreign minister plans to meet her plane side and expects to ride with her. If that is not possible we need to tell them up front. The royal chief of protocol wants to know. He said, okay. He sent a message and I was amazed that we had quite a bit of going back and forth including messages from Tom Pickering on this issue of the minister of foreign affairs riding from the airport to the initial meeting with the emir and the prime minister. We finally got an okay, after much going back and forth, that it was okay.

Now, mind you this is a government of Bahrain that agreed to give us something like 50 hotel rooms and 30 Mercedes, all free. I remember specifically asking Dick Shinnick, whom I know, if we could accept this and he agreed that we could, that the government had given us this to carry out our mission. Here we got all of this free and we’re quibbling over the foreign minister riding for just a few minutes literally to a meeting with the prime minister and the emir. I would then ride with the Secretary from that meeting to the embassy where she was going to meet with the embassy staff and take a few photos. Well, in the end it worked out very well. The Secretary came and the foreign minister rode with her and then I rode with her to the embassy and that all turned out very well. It was a one-day visit and they all spent the night in the hotel and the next morning when it was time to leave we were supposed to reverse the procedure. The foreign minister was to meet her at the hotel. He would wait downstairs for her. When she was ready she would come downstairs. She would join him. They would get in the car together and go to the airport, which was all of 15 minutes away.

Well, that morning, I’m sitting in the little room with the foreign minister when the phone rang and I was told oh, it’s for you Mr. Young. I went over. It was the Secretary’s chief of staff. I’ve forgotten the name of this woman, but she was a horrible woman and she said, “The foreign minister can’t ride with the Secretary.” I said, “You must be kidding. I’m sitting right there.” He wasn’t right next to me, but I said, “The foreign minister is in the room here downstairs waiting. I cannot go over to him now and tell him, Mr. Minister, you cannot ride with the Secretary to the airport, which is 15 minutes away. If you want to turn what has been a very successful visit into a disaster, then I’ll go over and tell him.” They thought about that for a while and then she got off the phone and then she put David Hale on the phone. He said, “Johnny, this is terrible. We can’t have this. We never have people ride with the Secretary. Now the foreign minister rode with her

once. He shouldn't be expected to ride with her a second time. This is going to look bad on your record." I said, "I really don't care. I've had a wonderful career and I have to watch this relationship, that's what's important to me. If you want to ruin this relationship or really put a blemish on it at this point, you proceed with what you've just told me." I was just livid. I could not believe the insensitivity of people who are working so closely with the Secretary that they would do something like this. I said, "This is just awful." After some hemming and hawing and some threats to me and what have you, they said, okay, he can do it this time, but if we come here again, this can't happen. I didn't have to go and carry out that dreadful message to the foreign minister. The plans proceeded as they were laid out. The Secretary came out downstairs. The foreign minister met her. They got in the car together and less than 15 minutes later they were at the airport. I asked someone, why is this? They said, well, you know, she likes to sleep in the car. She likes to doze in the car. I said, she's going from here to Egypt, that's about four hours on the plane, she can certainly sleep plenty on the plane to Egypt. Anyhow, I got in the car with Martin Indyk who was the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern affairs at the time. I said, "Martin, this is just what unfolded while I was waiting there at the hotel. They threatened me that this is not going to look good on my record and on and on. Martin, I don't give a damn. I don't care. I've had a wonderful career. I could care less. My job is to protect this relationship. It is of maximum benefit to the U.S. government." He said, "I understand Johnny. Don't worry about it." Well, I accepted his word for it, don't worry about it. Would you believe two months later I get a call from the deputy assistant secretary of State for Near Eastern affairs, Ron Neumann, who eventually replaced me in Bahrain. He said, "Oh, Johnny, I'm just checking in to see how things are going." He tried to do it in a very casual kind of way. He said, "Well, I just want you to know that if the Secretary comes out there again we can't have a repeat of what we had with the foreign minister riding in the car with her." I said, "That's not a problem, but we've got to let them know ahead of time that this is her preference. Otherwise they'll make other arrangements and they won't have the foreign minister. They'll have some clerk meet her.

Q: Politically they were people of such little consequence after she departed the scene they were never heard again since.

YOUNG: Well, I'm not so sure.

Q: Baker had a court and they're still around because they were good.

YOUNG: Yes, well, I'm not so sure about that though, about them not being heard from again. The woman I was thinking of her name was Elaine Schouse. I know it was Elaine. I think it was Elaine Schouse or something like that. As I said David Hale was a Foreign Service Officer just trying to please the Secretary of State and he was basically taking orders from Elaine and others around her. For example, when I rode in the car with the Secretary from the prime minister's office to the embassy where she was going to take pictures with children I asked her about that and she said oh, I love to do that sort of thing. Her staff had told me just the reverse. They told me, oh, she really doesn't like that and she doesn't want to be bothered with it. She said I love that sort of thing. I think that

in certainly in that particular case they did her a disservice. But, that said, I saw another side of her. For example on the day that we had the official state visit of the emir in May of 1998, I was invited to her office to brief her before the emir paid a visit to her. I walked in her office and there she was with a few other people and she said, "The last thing I want to hear about today is Bahrain" I mean in a nasty arrogant tone like that. Now, here I am the American representative there. I went to her office to brief her on what the issues would be that he would likely raise and that was the greeting that I got as I walked into her office. I was not impressed.

Q: One has to say I think there's a lot of expectation of Madeleine Albright because she made Secretary of State and I haven't heard much very positive. I mean she has not turned out to be a very impressive Secretary of State.

YOUNG: I would add that for a woman of her standing and stature, I expected a little bit more in terms of how she made her presentations. I'll never forget that meeting with the emir when she sat there with her legs crossed and with a relatively short skirt shall we say and so her legs crossed which was not appropriate for that kind of setting in the Arab world. I mean she was dressed very nicely, but that kind of position was just not the right one for that kind of setting. She had these 5 x 8 cards and she would basically read her presentation from the cards. On that visit Tom Pickering was with her and a few other big shots. Pickering had visited Bahrain before and they just adored him. On another occasion when Pickering was coming out on a possible visit by himself I remember the prime minister saying to me, "Oh I love that man so much. He's so bright. He doesn't use those cards." That told the story right there -- he doesn't use those cards. Well, that's how she made her presentations. That's how she made them to the emir. That's how she made them to the prime minister. That's how she made them to the foreign minister. You know, thanking them for their help and support and blah, blah and asking for basically a blanket approval to launch attacks from Bahrain on Iraq and the emir would not agree. He said, launch them from one of your ships in the sea. He said, we're going to have to live with this guy after you've gone. The other thing he said was we don't think you're serious. You talk about getting rid of Saddam, he said, but what you're doing is you're strengthening him. You hit him a little bit here and you hit him a little bit there. It doesn't get rid of him. It weakens him a little bit, he gets stronger. He wins sympathy from others in the Arab world and, he says, if you're serious, we're with you. But other than that he says, no, we have to think more in terms of living with this guy. That was the emir's take on it.

Now, unlike Madeleine Albright who came out there just once, the other top visitors were the Secretary of Defense William Cohen who came nine times during my assignment there. He came regularly. The head of the Central Command, General Zinni, also came many, many times. The Central Command really had control over the fifth fleet and all of the entire region. It was all that theater. These guys were great visitors. They knew the importance of how you massage a relationship in the Arab world and how you keep it going and how you keep that friendship going just on a friendly level so that when you need him one day you can go in and say, hey, can you help me out here and they'll come through. They always did come through for us.

Well, anyhow, when the emir came to the States, he put his case before President Clinton and he put his case before the Secretary of Defense and in the end we were successful in getting them the planes. They bought a dozen F16s. They got the missiles to go with the F16s as well. The missiles that they wanted to go with them. That was a major achievement. That worked out very well. I was very pleased with that.

Then things continued to go along very nicely. We continued the policing. We continued these periodic attacks on Iraq as we say to demean and diminish his various sites and equipment. In the end it sort of broke down things a little bit, but really didn't make a significant difference. Then Secretary Cohen came out for a visit in March of 1999. Cohen and I and other members of the team met with the emir. The emir was lively, but not his usual lively self. We met for 45 minutes. We had a couple of moments when we had pregnant pauses where we had to sort of pull things out of him and he did acknowledge that he didn't feel particularly well that morning. We left his office. It was a good, cordial, friendly meeting. The emir said, well, if I hadn't agreed to meet with you I probably wouldn't have come in today, but I agreed. He kept his word. That was the kind of man that he was. The prime minister and the foreign minister were in the meeting as well. The minister of defense was there. I was sitting next to Cohen. We had a couple of other people from the embassy, the notetakers and so on. The plan was we would then proceed from the palace to the ministry of defense where we would have a lunch and from that lunch Cohen would fly out directly.

I think maybe we'll take that up next time. We'll start from there next time?

Q: Okay, fine, so we'll talk about this meeting with the emir. He wasn't feeling well and you had just left.

Okay, today is the 13th of January. Today is Friday the 13th.

YOUNG: Yes.

Q: Johnny, okay, you left the emir's for lunch and what happened?

YOUNG: It was March 6, 1999. We had a meeting with the emir in the morning. We then proceeded to the ministry of defense for lunch. I was at the head table with the Secretary of Defense, together with the minister of defense and the chief of staff of the Bahrainian armed forces. I was sitting next to the chief of staff of the Bahrainian armed forces and the Secretary was seated next to the minister of defense.

Everything was going along nicely, but we were there for a very short time when the minister of defense got up and left the room. Then he came back and then he got up again and he left and he came back and then he got up a third time and he didn't come back. Very shortly after that the chief of staff leaned over to me and said, "Sheik Isa is dead." I said, "I don't believe it." He said, "No, he just died." Well, we were all speechless. We passed the news immediately to others in the room and the Secretary learned of it because

he was at the head table with the rest of us. We were absolutely stunned. I mean we just couldn't believe it because we had left him literally 15 minutes ago, no more than 15 to 20 minutes ago and he died of a massive heart attack we learned later. Well, our Secretary of Defense was going to proceed with his plans, but I told him you can't proceed with your plans. We have to stay. You have to stay and pay your condolences to the family. You have to go to the new emir who assumed power immediately upon the death of Sheik Isa. His son Sheik Hamad became the new emir. So, Cohen discussed it with his party and agreed that that would happen.

Q: Oh, yes.

YOUNG: Of course as you can imagine the telegrams were immediately flying back and forth to Washington over this. After a while we returned to Sheik Isa's palace, to his palace where his son greeted us. The Secretary extended condolences on behalf of the U.S. government and on behalf of himself personally. I did the same and when we left the new emir grabbed us both and hugged us. It was an incredible moment. I don't ever remember and I would guess that Secretary Cohen, former Secretary Cohen probably can't recall a meeting where a head of state embraced him so emotionally as happened on that occasion. It was such a touching moment. Well, those of us in the embassy were deeply saddened by this death. Sheik Isa was a remarkable man. A man of enormous generosity and kindness; great understanding, loved by his people. Here's a man who despite internal turmoil in his country up to the time of his death, in terms of the Shia community which represented the majority of the Bahrainis, they represented about 65% of the population, but the country was run by the Sunni Al Khalifa family. Despite setting off bombs all over town and things like that to get the attention of the government and to try and get the changes that they wanted in the way things were done in Bahrain, Sheik Isa never allowed security to be put in place in his biweekly meetings with the population. At the time we were in Bahrain the local tradition of the population coming once or twice a week to pay deference to the head of state was still the practice.

Q: It wasn't just deference. It was sort of a majlis.

YOUNG: It was a majlis.

Q: They would come and present petitions.

YOUNG: Oh definitely come and present petitions. I mean if anything it was their form of democracy in a sense. It was their way of staying in touch with the people and listening to the will of the people at least in terms of what the people wanted in a material sense in any case. That worked out very nicely because he would meet literally thousands in the course of a week and they would come and say well, you know, I need this and I need this and can you help me with this and that and he would say, well, see Mr. so and so on my staff or here's some money for this, here's some money for that. I mean he was literally the father figure dispensing kindness and largesse to his people and they loved him. They respected him enormously. I think it's a very revealing fact that despite this turmoil that had really been in effect for a couple of years at no time did he allow his

people to put in security where he would screen and frisk people and tighten up measures. People came in freely. They left freely. They embraced him. They shook his hand. I mean it was truly remarkable and that was up until the time of his death. That to me was indicative of the kind of respect that people had for him. No one harmed him or wanted to harm him. In keeping with Muslim tradition, the emir was buried immediately in a traditional Muslim ceremony, cleansed, washed, wrapped in very simple cotton or muslin material and placed in a very simple grave outside of Bahrain. Later on we went to the gravesite and saw it and it was as simple as you would expect. There is a more prominent marker there than the others, but nothing terribly elaborate, nothing in the grand style that you would find in so many cemeteries.

March 11, 1999 marked the day of a major change in governance in Bahrain as well. The new emir certainly was aware that one day he would assume power, but he didn't know when that would be. It was totally unexpected. He was prepared for it. I thought it was interesting that prior to his father's death he had said certain things to us that we found quite interesting and quite surprising. For example, he had indicated that if he were in power he was prepared to open up the system to a much greater degree than what his father was. Now, he did that very carefully. He didn't do it in any open way to criticize his father while his father was living. In our meetings with him immediately following his father's death he was considerably expansive in that regard saying that he wanted to open the system up, that he wanted to give people an opportunity to participate in the government more and he wanted to take the country in a new direction. He began to do that. In the meantime we continued our pressure on Iraq. It was clear to us that we would continue to get good support form the new emir, that he was as cooperative as his father, perhaps a little bit more deliberative than his father. We could go to his father and say oh, Sheik Isa, can we do so and so and he'd say, sure go ahead and do it and that would be that. With this new fellow it would be sounds like a good idea, sounds reasonable, let me think about that. I'll get back to you. It was a different way of doing business.

Q: It sounds like somebody who hasn't been on the job that long, you know.

YOUNG: He wasn't, but he was in close contact of course with his father and in the decisions taken by his father and he was the minister of defense.

Q: Oh, I see, okay.

YOUNG: He was the crown prince and the commander in chief of the armed forces and he took great pride in his military training. He had been trained as a military man. He had spent a time in Brussels. He had spent time at Sandhurst in England and he had spent a year in the United States at Fort Leavenworth at the Army Staff College. In fact, both the emir Sheik Hamad and his wife Sheika Sabika have said separately that their year in the United States was one of the best times in their lives. I remember the emir Sheik Hamad saying that when he left that people cried. That was not true when he left England and it wasn't true when he left Belgium, but when he left the United States, the outpouring of affection and the friendships that he had established was unprecedented. He had not had that kind of experience anywhere else. I remember Sheika Sabika not saying to me, but

saying to my wife that the time for her in the United States was so wonderful and so liberating. She gave the example of being in a room where these ladies were doing something. They were working on some project or something like this and suddenly this lady from the other end of the room said, "Hey, Sabika, can you come over here and help me with so and so?" She said she was absolutely startled when she heard that because she had always heard, your highness this, your highness that, but she was treated as just a regular person and she loved it. She really, really liked that. Again, she spoke of the friendships and the emotional attachments of that period in the United States with great fondness. That had a great impact on them. As a result it helped to make them even better friends of the United States.

We wanted to move as quickly as we could to bring the new emir to the United States to meet with the president. We wanted to seize the opportunity to put a stamp on them so to speak to encourage them to move ahead with the reforms that he had in mind. We began to push for an official visit and we eventually got one. Once again, in May of 2000, I had the privilege of accompanying the emir back on a visit to the United States. He met with President Clinton. It was an opportunity to reaffirm the relationship. It was also an opportunity to put in his plug for some military equipment that they wanted, some missiles that they wanted. It was also an opportunity for the emir to also ask for something that he wanted restored and I'll explain what that was in a minute. It was basically to have the dependents return, the military dependents return to Bahrain. Following the incident of the USS Cole, and some other security threats that were occurring in the region, the commander of the fifth fleet decided to send the dependents home. A good number of the dependents were returned to the U.S. and no new ones could come out. This of course created quite a problem for the school which was a DOD school. It was a most unusual schools in the entire DOD system. Although it was set up primarily to provide for the education of military dependents it had a very large community of Bahrainis and international students. It was basically more of an international school than a DOD school and it had an international baccalaureate program, advanced placement programs, many of which you don't find in the usual DOD school. The new crown prince had his two children in the school. He himself was a graduate of the school, that is the new crown prince, the son of the new emir. That was also a factor in the support that the school received from DOD. Those were the key things that the new emir took up in his visits with the president, the Secretary of State, and with the Secretary of Defense. Those were the three key individual meetings that he had and it was great.

I remember certain things about that visit. For example, we knew that the emir had agreed to stay at the Four Seasons Hotel and that's a very fine hotel. They certainly made it clear that they would accommodate in whatever way they could. I was part of the receiving party at the airport when his plane arrived at Andrews Air Force Base. We met him and we took the long route back, sort of took a little tour and then we arrived at the Four Seasons Hotel. We went in. Mind you, I was back on TDY to stay for the duration of his visit, but of course I couldn't stay at the Four Seasons Hotel. There's no way that per diem would cover me for that, so I stayed at a hotel two blocks away. Anyhow the emir said, "Well, why don't you stay here with me? Don't worry about it, I'll take care of

it." I thanked him very much, but said, no, I couldn't and I stayed at my hotel." He said, "Please come on up to my room, my suite." I went up there and the other person who met him and accompanied him on this trip was the former Saudi ambassador to Washington. He had also been the dean of the diplomatic corps at that time, Sheik Bandar. We went up to that suite and I couldn't believe my eyes. I looked around and I looked around and I could have been in one of the emir's palaces back in Bahrain. The hotel had literally pulled out all the stops imaginable and had made his suite look exactly like one of his palaces in Bahrain. It was a remarkable job. God knows what it cost them, but of course money was not a factor. It was one of those little things that I'll remember.

It was a good visit, lasted a couple of days. The emir met all of the people he wanted to see. In the end he achieved what he wanted also in terms of getting the military equipment or at least a commitment in principle. He got an agreement also to have the dependents returned and that worked out very well. I mean this was important in terms of the image of Bahrain, a country that prided itself on being such a good friend of the United States and being a rock of stability in the Gulf. They were very concerned about that.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about your impression of the meeting with President Clinton and how he engaged in this?

YOUNG: Yes. President Clinton is a master at these kinds of things. I mean he has the ability to make the person he's receiving the center of everything that is going on around him and that's the way he was in this meeting. I mean he was truly remarkable. He had a way of taking that person aside and as he walked with them through the White House pointing out different little things, little historical things. Here, let me tell you a little something about this picture here and there and on and on. He did the same with the emir's father, Sheik Isa as well. That was quite a picture as you could imagine. I mean Sheik Isa was about 5' and Clinton was what about 6' 2" or something like that, so it was a wonderful picture of this little emir from the Gulf with all of his regalia and President Clinton looking as smooth, as easy as possible with this fellow. He's just remarkable and also very supportive in terms of how he addressed issues without making any commitments that wouldn't be cleared by his staff and that sort of thing. He knows how to do it in such a way that the person putting the petition for him leaves feeling that he's been heard and that there's hope and he did it beautifully. He's a master, just one of the best there is. Of course he's so articulate and what more can I say on that score? He made us all very proud.

Q: Then you went back after this reception in the United States and how long were you there, when did you leave Bahrain?

YOUNG: Oh, I just want to add a couple of other things that I have forgotten and I wanted to add. I'd like to go back to February of 1999. In February of 1999 I decided to visit a cardiologist in Bahrain because I was having some chest pains. I had spoken to Sheik Isa and he had said to me, I want you to go to the military hospital. It has the best cardiologist in the country and they'll take care of you. If you need to be flown out I will

fly you out. I will take care of everything and on and on. I went to this cardiologist. He examined me and he said, oh, you have a blockage in one of your arteries. I had an angioplasty there in Bahrain at their army hospital which is as good as you'll find anywhere. The State Department was quite alarmed that I agreed to do it there. While I was in the hospital, the regional medical doctor flew in from Saudi Arabia to check things and to see what was going on. He satisfied himself that it was as good as you were going to get. They even made a DVD, a CD Rom of everything they did to me. It was incredible. Later on I took this CD back to the States for an evaluation of what they had done. They looked at it and said, wow, this is as good as it gets.

Sheik Isa was just incredibly supportive during that time. When I was in the hospital the outpouring of affection for me, or for the position, I don't know if it was for me or for the position, but it was unbelievable. I received 125 bouquets of flowers. I mean there were so many they couldn't keep them in the hospital anymore, they had to take them out because they said this may cause allergic reactions to other patients in the hospital. I felt like I was either dead or something. I'd never seen so many flowers before and I mean these flowers were done in the most elaborate fashion you can imagine. I mean very little is done simply in that part of the world, but with great elaboration. Anyhow it was wonderful. The emir couldn't have been better. I'll never forget after I went home he called me one day. I answered the phone and I said hello, who is this? He said, hello, this is Isa. That's all, not this is Sheik so and so. This is Isa. How are you doing? How are you feeling? Are you getting better? Do you need anything, do you want anything? I mean he was that kind of guy. Then he came out to the house to sit with me and to see how I was doing. It's just another example of what an extraordinary person he was.

In 2000 we had the visit of his son, Sheik Hamad to the States. As I said that was a very successful visit. We returned and continued our work with the Bahrainis in terms of their support of what we were doing in Iraq in policing the no fly zone and occasionally having these hits on Saddam's facilities, either his radar facilities or some bunker or something like that, none of which really did him any great harm. From the new emir we continued to hear what we had heard from the former emir, which was that if we were serious in our efforts to take down Saddam, they would be with us. They would be with us. The emir said, until you do that, what you're doing is not helping the case, but its enhancing Saddam's standing in the region. We've got to live with this guy. If he survives he's going to be the tough guy in the neighborhood and we've got to be able to deal with him. That was how they felt about that at that time.

Now, during this period differences began to develop between the embassy and the fifth fleet in terms of how we saw the security situation there. It was serious. The situation of Palestinians had a very serious impact on sentiments in Bahrain and in other countries in the Gulf. That said, I still saw us as being in a relatively good secure situation. The commander of the fifth fleet was considerably more cautious. I think that basically what was in his mind was that, look, this USS Cole incident occurred on my watch. I can't have anything else happen on my watch. That is an understandable view. If I were in his shoes I would probably be thinking with the same amount of caution and carefulness and would probably make my decisions accordingly as well. He was really frightened and

would not take any chances at all. That's why the dependents were sent home. That was why they weren't letting replacements with dependents come in. That situation continued for quite some time.

Now, July 4th, 2001 was an example of how this came to a head. It was a really glaring example of the difference that the two of us saw. Leading up to July 4th we were seeing a lot of chatter in intelligence channels about the possibility of something happening in the region. No one knew what it was, what it was going to be, when, where, how and what have you. This made us all very nervous and if it made us nervous at the embassy you can only imagine that it made the commander of the fifth fleet even more nervous. We always had a very elaborate and remarkable July 4th party. We held it in one of the top hotels in Bahrain. We had thousands attend it. About 2,500 people attended, if not, more like 5,000, huge, elaborately decorated, the best food you could think of. Each year we had a theme. One year it was Main Street, USA and another year, the last year I was there in 2001 it centered on our diversity. We had foods to fit the different ethnic groups that you would find around the United States. We held it at the Gulf Hotel, which had the largest conference center in Bahrain. The money for this didn't come from the State Department.

Q: I was starting to say, it was all very nice.

YOUNG: This event ran like $40,000 to $50,000 and it all came from contributions from American companies there. Primarily from IBM and Microsoft and particularly the American banks, Citibank and banks of that type. It was just unbelievable. We had agreed with the hotel. We had worked out the menu. I was working on my speech or rather people were working on my speech. We had everything set up. We had agreement with the daughter of a fellow who was an officer with the fifth fleet for her to sing the National Anthem. We were going to have then a Bahraini fellow sing the Bahraini National Anthem. We had the band from the Bahrain police, a top-notch band, so everything was agreed. Then, as I said, this chatter, this intelligence chatter picked up in pitch and it looked like something may go down, that something was going to go down in Bahrain. I'll never forget that July 4th. It was one of the most troublesome days of my life because at the very last minute we had a piece of very credible intelligence that indicated that again there could be something. Of course we shared this, we shared everything with the military. I had gone to the minister of the interior, I had gone to the emir. I told him we're down to the wire now. Either I cancel this whole thing or we proceed and we have to have every security measure in place. I conferred with my country team. I conferred with the security officer and I got support from all of them. There was only one member of the country team who was not sure of going ahead with this thing or not. It came down to a decision that I had to make myself. I thought about it hard. I thought about the assurances I had from the government. I thought about the material we had looked at, the intelligence we had looked at. I thought about the physical arrangements we had made and I decided I would proceed, that I would go ahead with it.

At about the same time the admiral of the fifth fleet issued an immediate order to his people prohibiting them from attending the 4th of July function at the Gulf Hotel. We had

invited hundreds of his people and we were particularly counting on this young girl who was a dependent of one of his officers to sing the National Anthem. At the last minute something happened that I wasn't aware of. The DCM had asked Joe Mussomeli to ask his daughter, Alexis, if she would mind singing the National Anthem. First of all I didn't know that Alexis could sing and I'd never heard her sing. She had certainly never performed to my knowledge in front of any large groups. She had no time to rehearse because this was all decided on the day of the function itself. She didn't have time to practice with the band that was going to be there and that sort of thing.

Anyhow, we proceeded with the function. Thousands came. We got to the point in the program where the national anthems were played. The Bahraini sung his and then Alexis got up and she sang and she did a magnificent job. I mean it was like listening to an angel. We were moved to tears. My wife, Joe Mussomeli, his wife, we just couldn't believe it. Here this young girl, she was no more than about 15 I think at the time or 14, and she just did a truly magnificent job. I mean talking about stepping up to the plate and taking on this kind of challenge. She did it and I mean talk about hitting a home run. It was something I will never, never forget. The function was a great success. We didn't have any security problems at all and I was in the end very relieved that it turned out so well.

Q: I take it the admiral did not show up.

YOUNG: Oh, no, not at all. Normally he would have been in the receiving line with me because he was a key official.

Q: How did this go with the Bahraini authorities?

YOUNG: They were disappointed that he was not in the line because they'd been coming to these things for years and expected to see him there, but they also understood his sensitivity to the security situation in Bahrain at the time. Our work proceeded as usual. We continued to receive all kinds of VIPs. I think I had mentioned earlier that Secretary Cohen came out nine times during my visit there. He was I thought absolutely wonderful in how he would try to keep this relationship well oiled shall we say. He would come out sometimes with no particular request, just because he was in the region. He wanted to say hello to our good friends. This kind of expression of friendship is deeply appreciated in the Arab world. They don't like it when you come just when you want something. They like it when you come and chit chat and say hello, how's the family in that tradition that is theirs. Its part of the thing that you do when you're in the desert, let's say. I may be exaggerating here, but it is related to that tradition that was developed in the desert as people would pass through and sit in tents and visit. This way you know when they needed help they could get it. He was just a wonderful guy and of course we had visitors from the central command and on and on. All kinds of VIPs. It was just an endless number.

I'm going to go back to 2000. One day I got a call from the director general of the Foreign Service because I was supposed to leave Bahrain in 2000 and my mind was made

up that I was going to retire. My days in the Service I thought were finished and I was going to leave. If all had gone well I would have left in December of 2000. That's when I would have had my three years. Anyhow I got a call from the director general, Skip Gnehm, and he said, "Johnny, this is Skip. I'm calling to ask a favor." I said, "What is that?" In fact I said, "Now, what have I done wrong this time?" because that would be the only time that they would call me is if I'd done something wrong. They never called to say, hey you're doing a great job. I said, "What have I done wrong?" He said, "Nothing. I want to call to ask you something." I said, "What is that?" He said, "Would you mind staying another year?" I thought about it literally in a second because although my mind was made up that I was going to complete my three years and leave I said, "I don't mind. What's the problem?" He said, "Well, your replacement" and my replacement had been named, Ron Neumann, "his nomination is in trouble and there's no way he's going to get confirmed by the senate this time around. So, would you stay the extra year?" I said, "I don't mind." I agreed. That's what extended me from 2000 to 2001. Let's advance forward now.

Q: I was wondering could you just give us a little bit of the workings. Do you know what the problem was?

YOUNG: It was a security problem. I mean I learned later on. Skip did not go into the details at that time. He just said it was a security problem. If you recall during Madeleine Albright's tenure as Secretary of State there was a security problem with computers.

Q: Yes, a couple of laptop computers disappeared.

YOUNG: Right. Well, Ron's computer didn't disappear, but I guess one that he had on some of his trips with Martin Indyk was checked and found that it hadn't been secured at all times as it should have been. So, that was the problem. I mean the Secretary had made this bold move that no one would be spared if they were caught violating the rules on security and that sort of thing. That made it impossible for his nomination to then be advanced to the senate. That's what happened.

Q: He's now.

YOUNG: I'm going to get to that. He didn't make it on that round, but there were elections in 2000. A new regime came in. His name was forwarded again, he made it through and he was confirmed and replaced me in 2001. I left at the end of September, 2001. I just would like to mention two things prior to my departure. The first and most important of course was September 11th. I'll never forget I was in my office and someone called and said turn on the TV right away. It seems like a plane has crashed into the World Trade Center, one of the buildings in New York. I put on the TV right away. Several people had come to my office. There was an immediate replay of what had happened with the first plane and we looked at it and all of us said immediately well, maybe it was an accident. Then we began to talk about it and we said, maybe, but how could that be? A plane that size wouldn't make that kind of error. While we're watching the screen plane number two occurs. That hits the second tower. We knew immediately

then this had to have been a terrorist act, no question about it. We were all in a state of shock over this. We got immediate expressions of sympathy and of concern from the government of Bahrain. The calls began to come to the embassy and we began the procedure of setting up a condolence book and things like that and we began to work immediately to have a memorial service which we held in one of the local hotels. In fact we held it in the same hotel where we had the 4th of July reception.

It was a beautiful service that we did. I mean a really respectful and dignified service. It was an interfaith service where we had Muslim prayers and we had Catholic prayers. I don't think we had any Jewish prayers because there wasn't any kind of rabbi available and then the different chaplains. It was nice. We had these huge candles and we had a candle for the 50 states and then we had a candle for each nationality that we knew of.. As we called the names of each state we would light a candle. Then we called the different countries, United Kingdom, France, Germany and a candle was lit until the entire stage in this huge hall was lit with candles. Somber, respectful, beautifully done. The hall was packed with people. It was really a very sad time.

Well, as you can imagine I continued my arrangements to leave. I continued my round of farewell calls. Then some days before I was to leave, maybe a week or so, we got a message we were positioning our assets to go into Afghanistan. I got a request to ask the government of Bahrain for permission to base refueling tankers in Bahrain. At that point that little island was already packed with planes from the fifth fleet because of what we were doing in Iraq and there just wasn't much room. Nevertheless I went to the emir and I relayed the urgency and the importance of the request. I was given 48 hours to get back to the military on this. Prior to this, messages were going back and forth to the mission asking what is your assessment of this, what is your assessment of that. Messages were also going directly to the defense attaché without my inclusion. It was clear that DOD was doing one thing, the State Department was doing something else. I was getting calls at all hours of the morning and night telling me do this, do that. You've got to do this, you've got to do that. I'll never forget a screaming match with Jim Larocco who was managing all of this at that time screaming at me like a mad man.

Q: Where was he located?

YOUNG: Oh, he was back in Washington. He was the principal DAS in the bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. I forgot that particular request, but you've got to do it, you know. I knew what I had to do. I didn't have to have him scream at me. Anyhow, he was screaming at this particular request that had to be done in 48 hours. I went to the government and the emir said, yes in principle, but we need time to work this out with our people before I give you the final okay. That was literally within hours of my receiving the request because I met with him literally right away. That wasn't good enough and I'd get calls. Have you got it yet? Have you got it yet? I said, in your message you said 48 hours. It isn't even 24 hours yet or 30 hours or anything like that. The pressure was on me. I couldn't sleep. I was irritable. It was quite a time. Of course the military, they were just pushing, pushing to move ahead on this. I'd get calls from them as well on this. Have you got the okay yet Johnny? It was about 30 hours, 30 hours

had gone by and let's say on the 31st hour that morning I got a call from Washington saying the planes are on the way. I had not gotten the okay from the government yet so I scrambled like a mad man to get the emir to get everyone I possibly could. It had to come from the emir because no one else could issue that authority, but the emir. I had visions of these tankers arriving and having them turned away. Anyhow, I chased the emir down. I literally tracked him down and said you know, you've got to help us on this one. This is when we really need you and I said the planes are on the way. He said, don't bring them here. I said, there's no alternative, they're on the way. He thought about it and thought about it and he called me back later on and he said it was okay and then I conveyed that and the planes came in. Then it was a question of where are you going to get the fuel to fuel them. That became a logistical issue, but now that they were in place the rest we could work out. We had special tankers to travel many miles over the desert to fuel these things, but in the end it did work out. That was the last big crisis before I left and I left a matter of days after that. The last day of my time in Bahrain the former commander of the fifth fleet, Admiral Fargo, had come into town and he asked for a courtesy call on the crown prince which we agreed to. We had that meeting with the crown prince. It was basically to say that Admiral Fargo was going out to Diego Garcia to take charge of operations in preparation for what was going to go down in Afghanistan. So, that all turned out very nicely. It gave me an opportunity to once again say hello and farewell to Admiral Fargo. I returned home to finish up my packing and when I was in the midst of doing one of the suitcases the doorbell rang. The staff went to the door and they said, oh, here's something from the crown prince. It was a tube about 12 feet long, and about 12 inches in diameter. I said, what is that. They said oh, this is from the crown prince. It's for you. I said, thank you very much. My wife and I opened it up and it was the most magnificent carpet that you could imagine. My guess is that that carpet must have been worth about $25,000 or $30,000. It was just magnificent. I sent a note of thanks and I called the DCM and I said this is yours. I'm leaving it for the embassy. I can't take it and you know that, but I want that documented that I left it here with you. We left it and later on that evening we went out to the airport, took the plane and said our farewell to Bahrain. It was on the 30th of September, 2001.

Q: Well, I've just a couple of questions Johnny. One is when the attack of 9/11 happened, you were all Middle Eastern hands, did the finger point immediately in your mind or almost immediately to Bin Laden or was that the consensus?

YOUNG: Oh, clearly. There was no question as to who might have done it. It looked like it was his footprint or handprint or whatever you call it. That was clear. There was no question because we had sufficient evidence of the kind of activities that were going on in Afghanistan. In fact we were one of the posts that was able to intercept two trainees who had been in camps in Afghanistan and had questioned them and then we'd turn them over to the Saudis. They were Saudi citizens, but we were able to get our hooks into them before they were turned over to the Saudis.

Q: While you were there, I'm talking about the bombs going off and security things. I go back to the time I was in when Bahrain was part of my consular district as the vice consul, back in the late '50s. At the time we were worried about the Shias particularly of

Iranian influence. This was at that time the Shah, how did we see, were the Iranians behind what was going on?

YOUNG: I think that is a lingering concern among the Sunnis in Bahrain that Iran has a hand in these evil acts that people would perpetrate against the government. There was no trust of the Iranians. There was an Iranian ambassador there, but Bahrain after one attempted coup some years earlier had put a curb on Iranian activities. They closed the school down; they closed their club down and things like that and wouldn't allow them to reopen. When the Ayatollah came to power in '79, this emboldened the Shia in Bahrain quite a bit. They felt that their day had come. This was their time to ascend to power in Bahrain and that Iran would back them up and therefore they began to agitate for change. The Bahrainis cracked down and they remained very suspicious

I wanted to discuss the political reforms that occurred in Bahrain during my time there. The emir indicated that he was willing to open up the system and he had in mind at that time two key elements of change. One was to basically have what he called a national charter, a new type of constitution. One of the criticisms of the government up to that point was that the constitution had been suspended by his father and that's what ended the parliament and was never allowed to restart. The new emir, Sheik Hamad, realized that there were flaws in the old constitution and that if it had operated as it had been written it would have been the end of the power of the Al Khalifas in Bahrain. He initiated and actively supported this idea of a new national charter. This charter would be drafted by a wide range of business and civic leaders and scholars and what have you and it would then be put to a vote. The people would agree with this and this charter would then lead to the creation of two legislative bodies. One already existed, the Shura counsel, which was a consultative body. It had no real power to enact legislation. Now, this new arrangement would have meant a two-house chamber. One chamber would be consultative. It would be similar to the Shura counsel, consultative. The other would be legislative. Legislation would require passage in both chambers before the emir could sign it into law, but veto power rested with the emir. He could veto any bill that was passed by these two chambers. After much discussion and all kinds of TV programs and all kinds of involvement in the press and what have you, this charter was put to a vote. I think on Valentine's Day, February 14th, 2001, that this national charter was passed. It was very well received. It was passed with a huge margin. We sent out people to monitor things to see how the elections were going. They were free, fair, transparent, I mean it was very nicely done. We have to keep in mind that Bahrain did have some tradition of voting prior to the suspension of the parliament back in the 1970s.

This was the beginning of major changes in Bahrain. Those changes have not been without problems. The country continues to this day to have these eruptions primarily from the Shia community. Although I'm not there now I do follow events and I must say that, like it or not, what has occurred in Iraq has emboldened the Shia in Bahrain. Keep in mind that there were three countries in the Gulf with majority Shia populations. Iran, Iraq and Bahrain. In Iraq the Sunni were the key leaders. In Bahrain the Sunnis are the key leaders, but the situation has changed in Iraq. It is now the Shia who have come into power and this has given encouragement to the Shia in Bahrain. So, they continue to

press for more and more change. This is something that I think we will have to watch very carefully. We press for change in the Middle East. We congratulate Bahrain on the changes it has made, but let's face it, if we pressed all the way and true democratic change came to Bahrain in terms of one person one vote that would be the end of the Sunni regime. It would bring into power the Shia who would be, there's no question, aligned 100% with Iran. It would be a whole new ball game in that little country and I think we'd have to look at sort of packing up our bags and moving on.

Now, the Saudis don't want to see this. Let's be honest, we don't want to see it either. We want a country that is stable and that is still friendly to us, so it's in our interest. It's in the interest of the Al Khalifas also to try and find some accommodation that pleases the Shia community.

Q: I mean I realize you left shortly after 9/11, but at the time, by the time you left, what was the thinking of you and your staff and maybe those others around, maybe our military, was Iraq involved in this or?

YOUNG: Absolutely not.

Q: I mean were we looking at Afghanistan?

YOUNG: We were looking at Afghanistan. We were dealing with Iraq as a separate issue altogether. Iraq was not the center of terrorism. We were dealing with Iraq in terms of weapons of mass destruction and a rotten leader there, but not in terms of having been the place that harbored the people who did us harm on September 11th. That was the formulation that came about later.

End of reader