

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

AMBASSADOR PATRICIA A. BUTENIS

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
Initial interview date: September 11, 2014
Copyright 2020 ADST*

INTERVIEW

Q: OK. Today is the 11th of September, a date that will live in an infamy. Interview with Patricia A. Butenis. And I am Charles Stuart Kennedy and this is on behalf of the Association of Diplomatic Studies and Training. This is our first interview. And do you go by Pat or Patricia?

BUTENIS: Pat is fine.

Q: Well Pat, let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

BUTENIS: I was born in Philadelphia, October 13th, 1953.

Q: OK. Let's get a feel for your family. What do you know about the Butenis side of the family?

BUTENIS: My father's side emigrated from Lithuania, but we don't know much about them. My father's mother, a tough woman, outlived three husbands and had two children, my father and his half-brother, my Uncle Tony. We didn't know anything about any relatives back in Lithuania and regretfully never thought to ask. My father's mother lived with us and spoke what used to be called "broken English" so we could not communicate well. My mother's side of the family comes from Ukraine. Her maiden name was Michalezka. That was the side of the family that we knew most about, gravitated toward. My mother's mother emigrated with her husband about 1913, probably, leaving behind two children, Ivan who was already in the Tsar's army and not allowed to emigrate and a daughter, Priyanka, who may already have been married. My mother was the only sibling born in the U.S. and since she spoke and wrote Ukrainian was the link to the family in Ukraine.

Q: Now, what was your family, Ukrainian Orthodox, Jewish, what?

BUTENIS: Ukrainian Catholic with allegiance to the Pope. We followed some of the Ukrainian Catholic traditions at Christmas and Easter.

Q: What was the neighborhood like?

BUTENIS: My parents bought property we still own, about 10 acres in South Jersey, which was at that point very, very rural, and moved out of Philadelphia when I was about six months old. My father worked for what was then the Evening and Sunday Bulletin newspaper. He was a paper handler which involved moving huge rolls of newsprint paper off the trains that delivered them and moving them to the printing presses. Dad was also an official in his union and I think that's why I have had a pro-labor bias, especially when serving overseas. Dad used to take us on family days to tour the pressroom and see the printing presses. My mother was a housewife who had finished ninth grade in school and who took care of three daughters and two grandmothers. Dad finished high school but was unable to go to college. I think he was accepted at Penn but didn't have the money for tuition and his mother insisted he get a job. My father's dream was to live in the country and have a garden and so he had his job during the day, but he loved to be home growing vegetables. He presented my mother with all this produce to do something with (*laughs*). And so we enjoyed lots of canned and preserved delicacies from the garden. We also had a variety of animals: chickens, ducks, hamsters, cats, dogs, parakeets, you name it. We were all animal lovers. It was very nice. In fact, I'm building a house there for retirement

I give my parents a lot of credit for their emphasis on the best education possible for their three daughters, at a time when boys were getting much more attention. They really sacrificed to put us through parochial school which at the time was considered a better education than the public schools. I remember Dad always telling me that with an education I could be independent.

Q: OK, well let's talk about this growing up period. Were you living in a rural environment?

BUTENIS: Yes, South Jersey, Camden County which still has lots of farms. My town itself, Atco is pretty much blue collar, and many people remain there to raise their own families. They go to school, high school, maybe some college. It's not a particularly prosperous area. It's halfway between Philadelphia and Atlantic City.

Q: Well, as a girl what were you up to? Let's start with elementary school.

BUTENIS: My sisters and I went to the local Catholic school, Assumption School which was run by nuns, the order of Immaculate Heart of Mary. They were tough women, strict disciplinarians and of course parents sided with the nuns. If Sister Theresa said you were doing X, then you were doing X. No whining, take your punishment.

Q: Today the parents arrive with a lawyer to --

BUTENIS: Exactly. If Mother Augusta said you were talking in line and you got whacked on the butt, then you deserved it.

Q: Were you much of a reader?

BUTENIS: Yes, I was a bookworm. I was introverted as a child and while I can't say I loved school, I did very well. One of my fondest memories is the family going grocery shopping Friday night and I would get to buy a book from the children's book display. My father loved to read too.

Q: OK, let's talk a little bit about reading. Do you recall some of the first books you were reading that stuck in your mind?

BUTENIS: Wizard of Oz, Heidi, Nancy Drew, I loved that series. My father had his own collection, leather-bound classics with his nameplate in each volume. I loved those books. I would dip in as soon as I was old enough to understand. I remember reading Black Beauty, and while I don't remember much about the story, I remember Ginger the horse died and I was *so upset* that I told my father -- and I remember him comforting me about it. So I've been surrounded by books my whole life.

Q: Well, did books about foreign areas --

BUTENIS: No. Not at all. I didn't have any particular wanderlust. I just read mostly literature. But in high school I started studying Spanish. I went to an all girls' Catholic high school. My class had 45 girls. Looking back, I realize it was good that I went to an all girls' school because I was very shy and as a smart kid in a small school, I was thrust into leadership roles. The teacher said "You will represent the school at X" or "you will be president of this group", and I got involved in activities and assumed leadership roles that I don't know I would have sought out in a larger school.

Q: Well, I've never asked this question before, and of course a number of people, myself included, we were, you know, sort of shy and kind of forced to do things. Can you figure out why you were shy? I mean --

BUTENIS: Looking back, my parents were both quiet people although my mother was fairly social. I think it's just a function of personality. We had a pretty normal upbringing for that time, although financially it was a struggle for my parents. As you know, when you join the Foreign Service you take the Meyers-Briggs test and then again at different points in your career. I migrated from being a strong introvert to an average balance between introvert and extrovert. I think it reflects learned behavior, that you cannot be a successful FSO and not learn to reach out to people, to take the social initiative.

Q: I know it. Well, going to a cocktail party, you sort of steel yourself and think, "Oh, here we go."

BUTENIS: And often in another language, sticking out your hand, "Hi! I'm so and so" and you learn to do it. But I can't say I ever enjoyed it.

Q: What about the other kids around you? I mean were there -- I'm using the term in the good sense -- were there sort of gangs of kids and were they ethnic --

BUTENIS: Atco at that time was heavily Italian American and at least half the kids in my class had Italian last names. Their grandparents had emigrated, many from Sicily and many bought farms. There was a small Slavic community, our family and some other Ukrainian and some Polish families. There was also an African American community, West Atco, but I don't know if it was a separate municipality or not. The whole area was mostly blue collar, working class.

Q: Did Russia play a role in some of the family discussions?

BUTENIS: No, and as far as I can recall, the letters we received from my mother's family in Ukraine never mentioned anything political, it was all family news. We just assumed that the Soviet authorities read the letters although I don't think we had any proof or even discussed it. Now I am the one who keeps up the contact but in English. There is someone in our family's village who reads and writes English and they translate for our relatives. When I look back on it now, having been a consular officer, I guess my mother could have sponsored her siblings for immigration but I don't think they would have been allowed to leave the Soviet Union, and the issue never came up.

Q: You mentioned animals. Did you have animals?

BUTENIS: Oh yes, we always had at a minimum a bird, a cat, and a dog, usually several. At different times we also had rabbits, chickens, turkeys, gerbils, and ducks. We had all kinds of things. My father's coworkers lived in the city, so when somebody would foolishly give their kids a little rabbit for Easter and then realize when the rabbit got bigger you couldn't keep it in the city, they'd give it to my father and he would bring it home. So we grew up with animals although my parents were not sentimental. We had chickens and occasionally they were killed for food, but when that happened I remember my sisters and I refusing to eat the chicken because we had known her.

Q: Oh. I take it, from a kid's perspective you didn't go through any really difficult economic times or something. I mean --

BUTENIS: No, we didn't have a lot of money but we were comfortable enough. We didn't always have the latest fashion or toy but one thing about Catholic school, that's why people like uniforms. Everybody had to wear the same uniform so economic differences were less obvious. I didn't feel deprived because the things I liked to do I could do. As I said, my parents were very focused on our education. I remember my mother who, with a ninth grade education, helping me with my homework.

Q: Well, I think it's so easy today to misunderstand the role of education because so many people of your parent's generation, certainly before that, might not have gotten too

far in the school system. A lot of it was probably a better education than they were giving in the schools, because it was self done.

BUTENIS: Absolutely. As I said, my father had his set of books that he read and encouraged me to read and there was something close to a reverence for education. My parents were of that generation that believed that education was a way to a better life.

Q: How about the nuns? Were the nuns training you to be Catholic housewives or were they training you to get out in the world?

BUTENIS: I did not get any sense of being steered into being a housewife at all. I was a smart student and got a lot of attention, a lot of positive feedback for my performance. I don't recall any difference, any feeling that boys do this, girls do that. I know my eventual attitude toward religion disappointed my parents. I stopped going to Mass when I was a sophomore in high school because I just didn't believe anymore. I really was bothered by women's inferior status in the church. I can't say that my parents were particularly religious, but they believed and sacrificed to put us through Catholic school, yet here I was, angry because at that time women were expected to cover their heads with a hat or something when you went to Mass. I suppose I just decided one day that this was absurd and would fight with my father about it. I remember gradually shrinking the size of whatever I put on my head (*laughs*) trying to push the envelope and then one day coming up with a tiny bow for my hair. And then I just stopped going to church. I was volunteering as what we used to call a candy striper at the local hospital on Sunday mornings and that was my out. "Well, I can't go to church because I'm doing this charitable act." I think my father accepted this but it upset my mother. I think that was the only issue that we ever really disagreed on but I felt quite strongly that they could not impose their beliefs on me.

Q: This is of course very personal, you don't have to go into it, but did you question the whole idea of religion, God and all that?

BUTENIS: I did. I remember having discussions with my father about God. One of our discussions ended with my saying that he chose to believe that God created the universe while I was content to say I don't know how it got there. I did not feel that the church really gave me anything.

Q: This is a real problem. I have a problem of looking around and seeing -- I was just thinking about it this morning -- so many people believe in a being and you pray and something happens. And I think, you know, it doesn't make sense so I don't see any particular manifestation. Although I agree that you get a lot of very good things like religion, like the nuns training you, so I've got no problem with it. What about politics? Where did your parents fall?

BUTENIS: My parents were largely uninterested in politics. My father was a union official for many years and I assumed he voted Democratic, but we never discussed

politics. I myself early on identified with liberal Democratic values. I was always especially sympathetic toward labor unions, both in the U.S. and while I was overseas. My mother once explained that she registered with whatever party her girlfriends were joining the day they got old enough to vote. So it really wasn't an issue.

Q: What was the city or town where you went to the movies?

BUTENIS: In those days, Atco had a drive-in and those were fun times when we'd change into our pajamas ahead of time, get in the station wagon and see the movie at the drive-in. We didn't do that too often, with school and the fact that our father worked triple shifts. Sunday usually was his only day off, and so he didn't often have an evening to take us.

Q: OK, move to high school. Was high school also parochial?

BUTENIS: Yes, St. Mary of the Angel's Academy for girls in Haddonfield, which is no longer in existence. It was considered the most select high school for girls in that area at the time. I could have gone to the local public school or to a larger Catholic high school but I guess I told my parents that was where I wanted to go. As I commented earlier, it was very small and that really made me take on leadership roles that I don't think I would have done if I'd gone to a bigger school. I remember it as a time of intellectual growth, full of challenge, a supportive environment. There was the expectation that all of us would go on to college.

Q: Did you have what we would call today female role models that you looked at? I mean either mythical, like movie stars or somebody else?

BUTENIS: No and I don't recall any mentors in the sense we think of them today. I feel sort of guilty about that, since people expect you to name people who inspired you. I suppose I focused on meeting my parents' expectations and that was enough.

Q: Well, did you have any -- who were your favorite movie stars?

BUTENIS: I didn't go to movies that often. I remember big events like the Beatles on the "Ed Sullivan Show" and almost swooning over Paul, and the Monkeys TV show and for some reason, I loved to watch Combat reruns. I saw "The Exorcist" and wished I hadn't. That was a horribly scary film. But movies didn't play a big part in my life. I guess because, again, our town Atco just had the drive-in. So once you were in high school you didn't go.

Q: In high school, did you find you were particularly interested in communism and all that?

BUTENIS: What I remember is liberation theology which was a big thing then. My focus to the extent I had one was on Latin America because I was studying Spanish and the

literature of Latin America and Spain. Liberation theology was largely focused in Latin America, and it also may have come up in our religion class. It came across as the human or humane face of communism or at least left-wing ideology, aligned with the campesinos, peasants, and the poorer classes.

Q: Did liberation theology transmit itself to you at all through the nuns? I mean you think about the Mary Knoll Sisters and all were very much involved in this.

BUTENIS: The order that taught us in high school, the Franciscans, was also fairly liberal, but it certainly wasn't anything like an attempt at indoctrination. We read about the extreme poverty in Latin America, and some missionary orders there working with the poor supporting social and economic justice. I can't say I was particularly politically aware, although it was the Vietnam era. We did organize one day in high school devoted to Vietnam, with seminars, presentations, discussions on the war, all with the support of the school administration. This was likely in conjunction with some national day of protest.

Q: You were only 10 when President Kennedy was assassinated. How did that hit your family?

BUTENIS: Like all of us I remember when we heard. We were shocked just by the act of violence. It was quite shocking to have that kind of violence. I remember a few years later I was in the eighth grade, still in Assumption School, and already people were talking about John F. Kennedy as one of our greatest presidents, which I think was a little premature now but that reflected the vibrancy and youthful energy he brought to office, along with his glamorous family. But it made an impression on the faculty at the school. Our social studies teacher called on me to rebut a critical statement he had made about Kennedy, and I said whatever I said, and he said "I agree with you", so it was an exercise in debate for me, I suppose.

Q: Up through high school, get through college later on, but did you ever get a feeling that Catholics were being discriminated against or anything of that, or?

BUTENIS: No, probably because my world until then was largely Catholic. I don't recall my parents ever saying anything negative about another religion or race or ethnic group.

Q: And I think that those fires have died out. I think about the time Kennedy became president, I mean that no longer was a real issue.

BUTENIS: I agree. Really until I got to Penn I hardly knew people from other religions. When I did begin to have friends of other religions, I didn't notice any real differences, maybe because in college many students were challenging their faiths, or losing interest in them, as I was and the focus of friendships and discussions was other things.

Q: What about up through high school about African Americans?

BUTENIS: In grade school we had a few black students and looking back, I imagine that they felt pretty isolated. I remember one classmate trying to talk to a few of us about Martin Luther King or some other black leader at the time and, you know, we weren't interested but it was clearly important to him to talk about it. This young student asked us, we were all white, he was the only non-white, "Do you know what the NAACP is?" We probably didn't and he was explaining it to us. I don't remember any racial name-calling or anything like that although as you know, kids can be pretty nasty.

Q: Yeah, they can.

BUTENIS: My high school was all white, with maybe 200 girls. The school did have summer programs for students to volunteer in poorer communities and one summer I worked in a library in an African-American community. However, it wasn't until I went to Penn that I began to meet other kinds of people. My high school though was very liberal in its teachings about social issues. When we graduated, my friend Beth, who has remained a good friend all these years, was the valedictorian, I was the salutatorian. We decided to talk not about our futures but about social issues, with Beth talking about civil rights and me women's issues. We thought those were important.

Q: What were some of the issues with women that were uppermost in your mind at the time?

BUTENIS: One issue was married women taking their husbands' last names. When I see now how things have changed, it's hard for me to remember that back then women becoming doctors, or lawyers or engineers was a rarity. The thought of it seemed so daring at the time. I remember working during the summer at a local clothing factory and talking to a young man who was working there as well. He asked what I wanted to be when I finished college and I said I might be a lawyer, and he clarified, "Oh, a lady lawyer."

Q: Well times are changing extremely rapidly. All right, well then, so you were in New Jersey but you decided on the University of Pennsylvania. What brought that about?

BUTENIS: I was a smart kid doing quite well in school. I knew my parents could not pay for my education beyond high school and we just assumed I could get scholarships or whatever. My father encouraged me to apply to colleges and since I knew I could stay at home and commute, I just applied locally. I applied to Penn, because it was the best school in the area.

Q: Rutgers, or?

BUTENIS: No, I was thinking of how I would commute, since I didn't have a car so I think I also applied to St. Joseph's College in Philly. I also made it clear in my applications that I needed a lot of financial aid. I was accepted by both schools but I

know my father was happy about Penn. He had hoped to go there himself after high school. So I commuted from home, took the local train and subway to campus. I worked part-time on campus, took out student loans, had scholarships and grants, and patched it all together to make the tuition.

Q: What was Penn like when you first went there? What was your impression of it?

BUTENIS: I have this very sweet memory of my father. He was still working at The Evening and Sunday Bulletin, which was just down the street from Penn. On my first day at Penn I took the same train to commute as Dad always did, and then changed to the subway, but instead of getting off at his stop, one before mine, he stayed with me and was going to walk me to campus. And I said, "Dad, I'll see you later tonight." It was like I was back in first grade, but I think of it now as a very sweet memory, that he wanted to walk his daughter right to her first class. Penn in general was an eye-opening experience for me because of the diversity of people I was meeting for the first time. I was in the city, West Philadelphia, even though I wasn't living on campus. The sheer range of courses available was almost overwhelming. Penn was a good choice for me as an undergraduate, because I was still fairly sheltered and now I am in a very different environment yet, I still had the support of living at home. I got involved in a women's discussion group and in a couple of other organizations. But mostly I focused on my education. I studied what interested me and ended up with a degree in anthropology which was totally impractical but my parents never said, "You must study this to do that." I don't even think we even talked about it. I just always studied what I loved. And I loved anthropology, cultural anthropology, physical anthropology, archaeology. And of course Penn has this fabulous anthropology museum, where the classes were held and what a privileged environment. I continued studying Spanish there and did summer school in Guadalajara, Mexico to improve my Spanish. There wasn't any pressure from my parents about following any particular career path.

Q: I think today, because of the job market not being the greatest and all -- that kids are often taking courses with strictly a job in mind, which in the long run probably doesn't work out any better than taking anthropology. Because all of this fits into the ability to write, to analyze and all.

BUTENIS: My education gave me an appreciation of the wider world. I was fascinated by cultural anthropology studies. The Yanomamo Indians in Brazil-- I remember these monographs that were classics even then. I also took Russian but only the one required science course. Science and math were not my strong suits.

Q: Well, what was your impression of your fellow students? Did you find -- you know, having come from a rather enclosed environment, it's sometimes pretty much of a shock.

BUTENIS: Well, sometimes I envied kids who didn't have to worry about finances. When I was a sophomore or junior I remember getting upset because my financial aid package looked like it wasn't going to come through, though it eventually did, but having

to worry about money was a reality. I felt that students whose parents could finance their education had the luxury of taking part in student protests – whatever the issues were—whereas I did not feel I could risk my financial aid package. I don't know if anything would have happened to me if I had taken part in a sit-in or whatever, but I would not risk it.

Q: Did you get into arguments of calling some of your fellow students, you know, spoiled twerps?

BUTENIS: No, the friends I had were pretty much as focused as I was. If you were a commuter you came in early and hung out in one particular lounge in Houston Hall and I met some fellow commuters but I was largely focused on my studies. I met a fellow student in a Spanish class who became my closest friend. She died about 12 years ago of breast cancer. She came from a well-off family and every time I thought I might envy her situation, something would happen in her family, and of course all families have problems, and I decided I was fine with being who I was.

Q: Any particular courses that were really, professors that really stand out in your mind?

BUTENIS: Martin Seligman, a world authority in psychology was teaching a basic Psych 101 course then and was already quite popular with students. The late Robert Sharer, an eminent Maya scholar taught an introductory course for anthropology and archaeology students. I really loved my anthropology courses. Learning how other cultures viewed the world was very interesting. I remember the physical anthropology class inspired me to try to make my own stone arrowheads (*laughs*). I mean (*laughs*) not successfully.

Q: You were chipping away?

BUTENIS: I was chipping away! In New Jersey trying to make these arrowheads! And I failed miserably, but those courses – evolution, cultural diversity, archaeology - were so stimulating.

Q: Did foreign policy, Foreign Service God forbid, hit your radar at all?

BUTENIS: Not, not at Penn. That came later at Columbia.

Q: Well, then you graduated in what year?

BUTENIS: December 1974, a semester early. I knew by that time that I wanted a master's but decided I would work for a while before I applied to schools. So I took the first job that came along, working for the information and referral part of a city agency for the elderly in Philadelphia. I still lived at home and commuted to work, and applied to graduate school, to Columbia University's School of International Affairs, as it was called then. I was at Columbia from 1976 to 1978. I focused on Latin America. I still had no idea what I was going to do for a career but I knew by that time if I had wanted to do

anthropology I would have needed a PhD to even get started and I wasn't attracted to teaching. So I thought, "Let me just get my master's," and I moved to New York and began at Columbia.

Q: What was Columbia like? First place, what sort of courses were you taking?

BUTENIS: There was a two-year program, basic economics, political science, history and I continued Spanish and also took some Portuguese. New York itself was an education, a fabulous place for a graduate student. Like New York, Columbia could be tough. Looking back, I am glad I did my undergrad studies at Penn and my grad work at Columbia, where it was more difficult to see teachers, where the pace was faster. But I never sought out mentors or what we call life coaches now. I never asked anybody what I should do. It's just not my style. Columbia did, though, encourage us to take the Foreign Service exam, which in those days was offered once a year. I didn't even know what the Foreign Service was but decided to take the exam and I passed, and two years later I was in A-100.

Q: Well, we'll come to that. But let's talk about some of your courses. What was really grabbing you?

BUTENIS: One elective course was on women in literature, which introduced me to pioneer women writers in Japan and China. The Portuguese class was kind of fun just because the teacher was kind of nutty, a bit of a character. I may have taken a course offered by a well-known professor in political science and Latin American studies, Doug Chalmers; I still remember his name. I worked part-time at the School of Social Work, and another odd job or two. My first year I lived at the International House, which is a big dorm for international students. I had a lovely corner room with a view of the George Washington Bridge but in winter, as I later learned, that meant it was really cold (*laughs*) and I hate to be cold. The second year I found an apartment to share with two other grad students who were more politically conscious than I was. We joined a food coop and boycotted Chilean grapes, that kind of stuff. That co-op experience was interesting because it wasn't just students, it was also neighbors, families who joined it, most with a very liberal point of view.

Q: Were you able to partake much in the fruits of New York City?

BUTENIS: (*laughs*) Yes. I still think of New York as an amazing place where even a poor student had access to incredible museums, the theater, the parks, just all kinds of resources. The apartment we shared was in Morningside Heights, on Riverside Drive, on the edge of Spanish Harlem near Columbia's medical school. We had drug dealers living in our building. There was a shooting in the lobby once, we saw the blood. It was a bit of a rough neighborhood, but nothing bad ever happened to me. I took precautions and maybe I was just lucky. It was all part of this wonderful New York education.

Q: Did you get involved with, or get over to sit in on the United Nations or --

BUTENIS: Yes, once I found myself with a group of five or six others picketing the U.N. about Chile's military dictatorship. I can't even recall who organized this. I did some volunteer work at Amnesty International and perhaps it was part of that. I don't know if Pinochet was coming to the U.N. and nobody paid the least bit of attention to us (*laughs*). But I think that helped sensitize me not only to issues in Latin America, but to U.S. policy in Latin America because in the view of some people clearly we weren't doing the right thing in our foreign policies.

Q: Well, when you took the Foreign Service Exam, was this a week, a Saturday --

BUTENIS: It was a Saturday morning and I remember it clearly, this awful Saturday morning in this ugly federal government building. It was freezing -- I hate to be cold. Halfway through it I had to use the bathroom, but you couldn't go because you were locked in this room for three hours. I remember answering the multiple choice questions and then the last part was an essay. We were running out of time and I did the best I could and I was just glad to get out of there. I hadn't expected to pass and was surprised when I did.

Q: When did you take the oral exams?

BUTENIS: I took them that spring I think and had to come to Washington to do so. I stayed with friends in Maryland. I remember shopping for an outfit because I felt I had to look decent for the interview. I bought a lovely dress at Lord & Taylor in New York. I don't recall trying to prepare for the oral and hadn't spoken with anyone who had taken the exam, so as usual, I went into this without a clue.

Q: I actually was on one of those panels.

BUTENIS: Oh, OK, well you tortured people (*laughs*).

Q: Do you recall any of the questions were asked?

BUTENIS: I just recall one question which I couldn't answer and I said, "I don't know." I didn't try to BS (bullshit) it. I just said, "I can't answer that." I waited outside the interview room and then someone came out and congratulated me. Then we did the rest of it, the inbox test, a group exercise, a whole day of testing and then that was it. I was put on a roster.

Q: Did you find that you were able to disengage your shyness or had New York rubbed off on you?

BUTENIS: One-on-one I wasn't especially shy, I had a good vocabulary from all the reading I did, and so I probably also came across as mature or at least older than I was. It took almost two years from the time I took the written exam to be offered a position.

Q: Did you do any research on the Foreign Service?

BUTENIS: Well, no internet then. I may have gone to the library and I did talk to a few people, friends of mine had Foreign Service colleagues or their fathers did. So I talked to a few people about it. I just thought I would be going to Latin America.

Q: All right, then you got your degree in what year?

BUTENIS: 1978. I stayed in New York for a while working in Columbia's School of Social Work, trying to decide if I wanted to wait out the Foreign Service or do something else. Then I got a Congressional Research Service Fellowship in Latin American affairs, with the Library of Congress. It was a three-month program. I moved to Washington, sublet an apartment in Roslyn, then moved into a group house in Glover Park for a while, all the while waiting for the Foreign Service to come through with an offer.

Q: Research fellowship was what?

BUTENIS: I was assigned to the two analysts who did Latin America. If someone in Congress asked for an analysis of the Chilean economy, for example, the Congressional research Service does the research, drafts a report and sends it to Congress. It was a lot of fun. I was one of I think six young people in the Fellowship program and we hung out together. I am still friends with one of them, all these years later. It was a nice introduction to Washington. When that was over, I decided to stay in Washington and did a secretarial job. I finally got an offer for the A-100 class for January 1980.

Q: Had you had any chance to talk to an honest-to-God Foreign Service officer?

BUTENIS: Yes. A friend introduced me to an Foreign Service Officer and he bought me coffee in the cafeteria and described his career. I still had only the vaguest idea of what I was going to do, it just seemed exciting to be going overseas. And of course most people who join the Foreign Service -- and this probably hasn't changed -- hope to do political work. Plus, one of my housemates in my group house was also coming into the Foreign Service. So slowly I was learning what I was getting into.

Q: Well then, did you have any feelings about government work or not?

BUTENIS: No, no one in my family worked for the government. But when they called with a job offer, it was for the consular cone. So I said, without any understanding of consular work, I wanted to do political work. The young man said, "Well, we don't have openings in political, and you can wait, but we can't guarantee we'll offer you a political job. But if you come in consular we can take you now". I asked if I could change cones later and he said "Yes, you can change easily." Which was not true. So I joined the January 1980 A-100 class as a consular officer.

Q: And who are these people and do I belong or not? How'd you feel about the class?

BUTENIS: To the extent that I even remember A-100, it was an exciting time intellectually. What still stands out now was the assignment process and Flag Day. Havana was on the list and I think I made it my top choice. I spoke decent Spanish, had a degree in Latin American Affairs and thought I was a good fit. I also put Karachi on my list. I don't remember what else I bid on. On Flag Day, as you know, you learn where you are going when you are handed the flag of your onward assignment country. When I got Karachi I think everybody kind of gasped. I may have been the only person to bid on it. Our embassy in Islamabad had just been burned down, the Soviets were in neighboring Afghanistan and our hostages were being held in neighboring Iran, so it was a tough neighborhood. I tell people it was seventh on my list of six bids, but it turned out to be a perfect introduction to the Foreign Service.

Q: Well, what about the course itself? Were you picking up anything or, or was it just sort of a general introduction?

BUTENIS: I think we just had a general overview of policy. Having worked with the A-100 classes when I was Dean of the School of Professional and Area Studies, I don't think the frustration level has changed. There is simply too much information thrown at the class and everyone is desperate to absorb it all and you can't and you don't really need to. And once we had our assignments, the focus shifts to preparations for those.

Q: Did you have any feel about coming into the Foreign Service as a woman? In other words --

BUTENIS: Yes, I did and my story about being assigned to consular plays out later with the Allison Palmer lawsuit. At the time I think the majority of my A-100 class were men but that was no more surprising than with any other group of professionals in those days. Eventually I realized that there was a propensity to place women and minorities into the consular and administrative cones. I figured that out later. I don't know that it struck me in A-100.

Q: I'm a consular officer and I came in in '55 and that was so obvious and the whole idea was that we weren't coned then, but the idea was to get out as quickly as possible. I found I loved consular work and I decided to stay in, and people kept looking at me and saying, kind of what's wrong with you.

BUTENIS: The training I remember most clearly was my six months of Urdu, which is the majority language in Pakistan. When I think back at the resource investment that the Department made at the time when your initial assignment as a junior officer was 18 months, it was astounding and even wasteful. Here they were teaching me Urdu for six months for an 18-month tour with no requirement that I ever serve in Pakistan again. And I was the only student in the class at the time. I had an hour a day of conversation with the sole Hindi student, because it's the same spoken language. What an intensive

experience. I still remember my teacher's name. He was a former TV comedian on Pakistani television. He owned a gas station in Virginia and also taught at FSI. Spending so many hours a day, month after month, I got to know them pretty well. He was unhappy, disappointed I think at how his life had gone. He was worried about the direction his son was taking. He would go off on these long monologues and I would soak it up, trying to learn the language. I even heard about his wedding night, in general terms. It had not gone well. I *loved* studying Urdu. I went overboard. I would do three hours of homework a night. I was entranced that I could write it and would write a story every night.

Q: Well, is it sort of the Persian alphabet?

BUTENIS: It's an Arabic alphabet read from right to left, with lots of Persian and Arabic words. I surpassed whatever the expected level of proficiency was. Studying Urdu drove almost everything out of my life, just this language. In Karachi I used it every day in visa interviews and to communicate with household staff and in shopping. However, I never achieved a sufficient command to conduct anything substantive, because the Pakistani elites and many government officials spoke English far better than I spoke Urdu. But being able to speak some Urdu gave me a sense of freedom and confidence. I drove myself, a Western woman alone out there driving and I was never afraid of getting lost. If you can say even just a few words in somebody's language, people love it and want to help you. I am still sorry though that I was never able to read the beautiful Urdu poetry that was so important in cultural life

Karachi at that time was just a fabulous place for me. If there was Islamic fundamentalism it was in the countryside. In the early 1980's Karachi was still considered a fun place by Westerners and Pakistani elites. Karachi at that time had a pretty big consular community, with lots of Russians, Chinese, Brits, and Australians.

Q: Well, what was the situation? Where was our embassy at that time?

BUTENIS: The embassy in Islamabad had been burned down the year before. At one point the Pakistani government claimed that a mob of Iranian students was responsible, reacting to false charges by the Iranians that the U.S. was behind recent attacks on the holy places in Saudi Arabia. Despite our requests for help, the Pakistanis never responded. We lost a Marine Security Guard. When I was in Karachi there were still people in the Embassy who had been trapped in the vault when it was burning. But again, typically with Pakistan we just went on, as we had too much invested in the relationship, I suppose. In Karachi we went on as if it didn't matter. I don't recall any real security restrictions. I drove in Karachi, had a great time with my little Datsun. I had a two-week overlap with my predecessor John Collinge and he was very generous in introducing me to his friends, some of whom I'm still in touch with. John and I remain good friends. So Karachi was a great tour.

Q: How stood relations with Pakistan just in general at the time?

BUTENIS: We could travel in Pakistan, although we needed permission from the Foreign Ministry, which sometimes was denied. I traveled to the Swat Valley which eventually became off limits as the war in Afghanistan stirred up things in Pakistan. You know, in 1980 I traveled with the wife of a colleague, she was a photographer. We traveled by taxi from Karachi to Peshawar where we stayed with some friends from the consulate there, Sheila Austrian who was in USIA I think at the time. Her husband Michael was the Political officer in Karachi. We drove as close to the Khyber Pass as we could, seeing all the memorial plaques embedded in the rocks from the British military engagements during the British Raj. The Russians were on the other side of the Pass. We continued in our taxi across the Malakand Pass. Two women, alone with the cab driver, stopping to take photos. I still have some of those photos. We just had a fabulous time.

On another occasion, a wealthy landowner, a zamindar, who was always friendly with the Consulate people, invited a few of us to his country estate for a hunting weekend. I didn't and don't hunt but it sounded like an interesting trip. They'd set up in a field, shamianas, which are big tents decorated with different pieces of colored fabric and bits of mirrored glass, and one tent served as the dining hall and living room. We Americans shared another tent for sleeping and an area for washing up. This area was close to a village, also on our host's property and the other women and I went to explore the village. Men were not allowed to enter the village if the village women were outdoors. When the village women saw us, they rushed over, one of them holding this sickly looking baby. We were told later that the women assumed we were doctors just because we were Westerners. When our host, the zamindar, was in his tent some of the men villagers came to him and they stooped and touched his shoes, you know, which is a South Asian practice. I've seen it done since in other countries, as a gesture of respect, but at the time it was quite shocking to me to see another human being make that kind of obeisance to someone else. As for the hunting, we were hunting partridges and I really didn't want to have anything to do with shooting their 12-gauge shotguns. But the host insisted, so OK, fine, I'll do this once. So we're in this big field with knee-high grass and the "beaters", these servants who are literally beating the grass to flush out any birds. I'm aiming the gun and they're telling me, "Fire! Fire!" and I objected, saying I would hit the beaters, to which my host replied, it won't kill them. That was the end of my one and only hunting experience as I handed back the shotgun. Then we had these miserable little birds, little tiny birds for breakfast.

My suspicion was that our host, a Muslim and a wealthy man, had more than one wife. I only knew his Pakistani Airlines attendant city wife but someone said she never went to the country estate. I thought perhaps he had a country wife in residence there.

Q: Well, who was the ambassador at the time?

BUTENIS: Art Hummel. You know his background growing up in China.

Q: He actually fought in the Chinese guerilla movement with the Japanese.

BUTENIS: Yes, an amazing background but not surprisingly I had zero contact with him. In the consular section we mostly dealt with the Deputy Chief of Mission. Herb Hagerty was the political counselor in Islamabad and his wife, Elizabeth Bowen, known as Wigi Bowen, was my supervisor, the consul in Karachi. Dick Post was the principal officer in Karachi, and Michael Austrian was his deputy. He's gone now but one of his daughters is in the Foreign Service.

Q: Dick Post played a lot of polo, didn't he?

BUTENIS: Yes. That was an in to the Karachi elite. His wife Anne was a lovely woman, very generous and gracious. My first Marine Birthday ball was on their tennis courts. We had at the time these lovely homes, British era homes, little mansions. One was the CG's residence, one was the Marine House and Consulate staff lived in the others. In those days we civilians would volunteer to take turns standing guard at Post One so that all the Marines could attend the ball. So you had these clueless civilians at Post One, drink in hand, hoping the phone wouldn't ring or anything that required action. Different times then.

Q: Well then, you were there as the vice consul. Let's talk about some of the consular work you were doing.

BUTENIS: It was when Pakistan hosted a huge Afghan refugee population, fleeing the Soviets and the fighting next door. Pakistan was very generous in hosting I think at some point three million Afghans. There were huge Afghan communities in Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta, all over. And of course many spoke a common language, Pashtun. We were just starting to take Afghans into our refugee program. Before then they were queuing up trying to get tourist visas. Of course we were turning them down because there weren't genuine tourists. We did learn that there was a legitimate business in second hand clothing, in which Afghan traders would go to the U.S., buy huge bundles of used clothing and ship them back to sell in Pakistan and Afghanistan. So those folks would come and go regularly and seemed to be good bets for business visas.

We hired an Afghan refugee, Metabuddin, to help with our Afghan refugee program, which we were standing up. We got along fairly well. I later heard that he hadn't liked working for a woman, although he apparently changed his mind because one day he asked me if I would interview the prospective bridegroom of his oldest daughter. He had a large family and the oldest daughter had to get married first before any of the other girls could marry. This young man was already in the States with a green card and was looking for a bride. He had come to Karachi with his aunt, who represented his parents, to finalize the arrangement. He and the bride would not meet until the day of the wedding. Metabuddin wasn't sure how to assess him. He didn't know about life in America, and for all he knew this could be a poor choice for his daughter. So I agreed to talk to the young man. I went to their flat on a Friday or Saturday. All the women were in one room, so I went in and met the prospective bride, who was rather large, taller than I was. Then I

went into a separate room and met the prospective groom and grilled him like a visa applicant: How much do you earn? What kind of job do you have? Do you have a savings account? What do you spend your money on? Do you drink? When I was finished, he said, "Can I ask you something? I haven't seen her but I understand she's rather large." I didn't know what to say and finally fell back on the old cliché, "She has a lovely personality." I gave Metabuddin a good report. However, the man's aunt had meanwhile been maneuvering for a substitute, the 14 year old sister who was gorgeous. Of course, we would not have given a visa to a 14 year old bride and Metabuddin said, "No, my oldest daughter gets married first". So they did get married. After my Karachi tour ended I visited them at their home in Clinton, Maryland. It was easy to find the house in their development. It was the one with Afghan men lounging on the front lawn, enjoying the sun.

Q: Well now, if you're refusing people who are saying they're going to be non-immigrants and obviously they're not, how did they take it?

BUTENIS: The Afghans and Punjabis would argue and give you a hard time but other people just nodded. As you know, it's a struggle. You try to be polite, you don't want to raise your voice. People quickly find out what our refusal rate is so they expect that chances are they won't get their visa. In those days the visa application fee was pretty low, so people thought "Let's try it". Now it's much higher but I don't know if that's acted as a deterrent.

Q: This is something I found as a supervisor. I was having to deal with young Americans, male and female, for the first time somebody looked them in the eye and lied to them in an official capacity.

BUTENIS: Well, we eventually learn that in some cultures telling someone what you think they want to hear so they will give you what you want is not wrong, or at least understandable. Friendship also has different meanings. People say that Americans are so friendly, and yes, we smile, freely talk to people, we're open. That doesn't mean that we meet a local definition of friendship, which might entail helping someone with whatever they ask or giving them a visa, for example.

Q: What about the local businesspeople? Did you find that you had to be pretty careful about establishing relationships?

BUTENIS: Sure. When you went out people knew who you were. In many ways Karachi was a small society if you were a foreigner. I was very careful not to accept favors. I did make friends, some of whom I still have, but it could be difficult. In those days we had a commissary and there were things in it that people liked, like duty free liquor, things like that. So a Pakistani friend might ask if you could get them something from the commissary, offering to pay for it. I would either decline or give them the item as a gift, which usually put an end to it.

Q: Did you find -- I don't know what the right term is, but it's called women's lib -- was an issue there?

BUTENIS: Yes. Even in 1980 Pakistan I remember this organization WAF, Women's Action Forum. That's how I met my friend Zeenat, through one of these meetings. I went as the vice consul and it was a chance to do a little political reporting. Also, I was just interested in those issues. The women were all pretty well educated, there were obvious class differences. They were advocating for more rights for women, so that movement was developing even then.

Q: I know in India the dowry problem is a major issue. Women being burned to death --

BUTENIS: It certainly was back then with what they called kitchen deaths. What's so tragic is that in a lot of cases it's the mother-in-law doing this, dousing the wife with ghee and setting her sari alight so she dies and the miserable son can remarry and get more dowry. When I was in New Delhi I hired a Hindi teacher just so I could keep up my Urdu/Hindi. I was talking to him about this and he said, "Well, you know, the women do it to the women." I objected to that, asking if that's all that Indian women had been taught to expect, having control only over a daughter-in-law, it had to be tackled in the cultural context, not as just an individual choice or action.

Q: What role did the consular staff, the Pakistani staff, play in this? Because so often they're the ones that can spot a phony?

BUTENIS: I don't recall any fraud ring that was discovered while I was there. I enjoyed the staff. What you find in a lot of places where Christians are a minority is that they tend to be the ones that find jobs in Western embassies because of their English skills. And that was true in Karachi. We had some Christians, some Parsis, very sharp women. We had Muslims of course. Most Pakistani Muslims are Sunni but I don't think back then that I knew much about the difference between Sunni and Shia. They all seemed to get along and they were very good at pointing out fraud in individual cases. They were under a lot of pressure too, from families and neighbors who assumed they could get them visas.

Q: What about Iran where we'd had the hostage crisis, since Iran was just going through a revolution and it bordered on Pakistan?

BUTENIS: Well, I'm remembering this from many years ago, but there were Iranians who had fled their country. There was a high-level Iranian, a former government official I think, maybe a general who was in hiding and might have even been imprisoned in Karachi. For some reason the U.S. government wanted to get him out. I was the one who went to the prison, interviewed him, and facilitated his departure and actually put him on a plane. He may have had some sort of humanitarian or public interest parole, looking back on it now. I just don't recall. He later wrote me from the U.S., thanking me for "saving" him.

However, for me one of the more immediate impacts of the Iranian Revolution was their persecution of the Baha'is. There was a big Baha'i community in Karachi. Iranian Baha'is were applying for non-immigrant visas because we didn't take them as refugees yet. I think we eventually did take them. Then, though, they did not remotely qualify for visas. I had an upsetting incident with somebody in the consulate over this. There was an officer, either USAID or then USIA who with his wife had become Baha'is. They were a natural magnet for Iranian Baha'is trying to get out. One day this officer really yelled at me, telling me I was condemning the Iranian Baha'is to death by not giving them tourist visas. As far as I knew they could safely remain in Pakistan. I was very upset with his accusation. I felt I could not break the law, had no guidance from my supervisor or the Department about facilitating their travel to the U.S., and I thought if this man wanted to make an issue, he should have gone up the Consulate chain of command, not attack me or raise it with the Department. Of course, I hoped that the visa applicants I was turning down wouldn't be killed by Iranian agents, or anything like that and I think every consular officer worries about having the courage to defy Department policy and issue visas to save lives, as far too few did during the Holocaust. But my impression was that the Baha'is were relatively safe in Pakistan at that time.

Q: But the Iranians did see Baha'is as being particularly bad. In fact, they were less technically -- probably not in practice, but technically less condemning of Jews because Jews were children of the book. The Baha'is were apostates.

BUTENIS: Also the Ahmadis who were and still are considered a heretical sect and are persecuted to this day. Another issue of which I was pretty oblivious was the Muhajir community. They were Muslims who had been living in pre-Partition India and fled during Partition. A lot of them settled in Karachi, some with their funds and other resources, and many became wealthy. That Muhajir identity remains today and I guess quickly translated into political differences and different political parties.

Q: Do they have their own separate god? -

BUTENIS: No, it's not religion-based but language and culture. For example, Karachi is in Sindh province and people speak Sindhi. The Muhajirs who came out of India and settled in Karachi spoke Urdu and other languages. Urdu is the national language of Pakistan, but lots of people don't speak it as their first language. So these tensions between the people moving into their territory have flared up over the years. They have a political movement now, MQM (Muttahida Qaumi Movement) and the political differences have resulted in frequent violence.

Q: Did you have any mob outbreaks or something in Karachi when you were there?

BUTENIS: All I recall is Muharam, which is a Shia holy period in which men flagellate themselves in public processions, Consulate guidance was to stay off the street. A group of us were in Lahore, visiting colleagues at our consulate there. One of their local staff took us up to the roof of his building so we could see the procession go by with the men

whipping themselves with knives and chains. Suddenly there was a sound like a gunshot and the crowd just stampeded. Then once it was quiet the crowd just came back, after determining it was something backfiring but it was sobering to see how quickly a crowd could turn into a panicked mob.

When I was in Karachi Pope John Paul II visited and was going to appear in this big stadium, maybe to say Mass. The diplomatic community had tickets, but I did not want to go. I'm Catholic, I would have loved to have seen the Pope, but I just felt it was not going to be a secure venue. In fact, there was a terrorist attack. Someone had gotten into the diplomatic seating section and for some reason attracted the attention of security, and then the bomb he was carrying went off. I don't remember if it was a suicide attack or if anyone even died but I remember learning that our Consulate officers left their families to aid to injured. But you know, at the time as a young vice consul I was blissfully unaware of a lot of things. I was focused on doing consular work, I had Pakistani friends, I had a Pakistani boyfriend, I could go around. It was a great tour. Although, compared to communications today, we were so isolated. I tell the story of how whenever I wanted to speak to my parents in New Jersey I had to book the call 24 hours ahead of time through the consulate switchboard, which would give me a three-hour window the next day to stand by. And then if I was lucky, the call would come through, with the operator saying "Your mother's on the line." And I heard my mother's distant, tinny voice - that was communication. There was just Pakistani TV, shortwave radio, and U.S. magazines and papers that arrived weeks out of date. We did see movies on an outdoor screen in the Commissary parking lot and sometimes people would get TV series on tapes and host showings at their home. That's how I saw Shogun, by visiting a colleague's home for consecutive Saturdays.

Q: How did the Pakistani boyfriend work out?

BUTENIS: It was fine, we were friends for the time. His family was very Westernized and lived down the street and so I would visit there. On those occasions I wished I spoke beautiful Urdu, because they were very politically aware and would have discussion groups, kind of like a salon. I would just listen, as the conversation went back and forth between Urdu and British-accented English. Someone told me once that for educated Pakistanis English was the language of the mind and Urdu of the heart, that they speak Urdu when they're angry or when they're in love or when they're cursing, but even among themselves it was normally English. I don't know if that has changed.

Q: What about consular work, American Citizen Services? What was happening there?

BUTENIS: We had some arrests. We didn't get a lot of tourists in Pakistan, or at least in Karachi. We had two young Americans imprisoned for drug smuggling. I visited them and it was quite an effort because the prison was in the desert, on the outskirts of Karachi. I remember it as this huge medieval looking castle. My local staff arranged my appointment but when I got there, the prison staff said they didn't know I was coming. So no, you can't see the American prisoners. So I just said, "I'm not leaving until I see

them.” and sat down in the outer office of the warden. They didn't know what to do with me and as a woman , they were not going to turf me out so eventually the warden let me see them. I'll never forget these two -- they had leg irons on. They brought them out in leg irons. But they didn't claim to be abused. They didn't deny the drug dealing. I can't remember what their sentence was, but I asked “How are you treated?” They said, “Oh, we're like celebrities, because we're foreigners and people ask us foreign policy questions, about American life.” Of course it was a hard place to do time and none of their family members was sending them money through us, so they were making due, but they were also accorded a little special treatment because they were such a rarity, Westerners in the jail. Other issues were sad, -- American women who'd married Pakistani students in the U.S. and then followed them back, had children and...

Q: And the mothers-in-law are in charge, very much in charge.

BUTENIS: Exactly. The women would want to leave, and the husbands said, “Fine, but not with the kids.” I think we may have actually helped a few get out. I can't remember what the rules were, but certainly we were going to help if we could, but we had no authority to remove the children. I tried to counsel young women who had just gotten married or were thinking of marrying Pakistani men, but they didn't want to hear it. There were several American women married to Pakistanis who had lived in Pakistan a long time and seemed happy. These were wealthier families.

Q: Did you have any visits from the State Department or maybe congressional visits?

BUTENIS: Not in Karachi, probably in Islamabad. We had four posts: Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore and Peshawar. Lahore was always the most fun, the most free spirited place, with beautiful ruins, Shalimar Gardens. I visited another set of ancient ruins, Mohenjodaro --just awe-inspiring ruins in Sindh that dated from the ancient Indus Valley civilization. I think it was designated a UN World Heritage Site but still was desperately in need of preservation and you could just see the potential for cultural tourism.

Q: Was Benazir Bhutto an issue at the time, or not?

BUTENIS: The Bhutto family certainly was very prominent and Benazir's father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had just been executed in 1979 by Gen. Zia ul Haq, who had deposed Bhutto as prime minister in 1977. Bhutto's legacy was carried on by Benazir and through the political party he founded, the People's Party of Pakistan. Word was he was beaten to death and then a staged hanging. Zia is blamed for the Islamization of the Pakistani military which until then was considered very professional and fairly secular.

Q: Today we consider the Pakistani intelligence services basically supporting the Mujahideen.

BUTENIS: The Taliban in Afghanistan and similar groups in Pakistan. The issue in Pakistan has always been the role of the military. It's the strongest institution in that

society and it's never going to be less so as long as Kashmir is still an issue between India and Pakistan. Because that's their justification for existence, the fear that India will seize the rest of Kashmir. Some observers today call Pakistan an army with a country.

Q: Did you have any contact, friendly or professional, with New Delhi?

BUTENIS: Just once. They hosted a regional junior officer conference for Consular Affairs and I went for Karachi. Then Assistant Secretary Diego Ascencio was there with one of his senior advisers, Dick McCoy. This is pre-e-mail so communication with the Department was not easy or quick. The one issue that came up later, and there was I think an OIG (Office of the Inspector General) inquiry because someone thought we were issuing tourist visas to Afghans when they were in fact refugees, and the inquiry was directed at Bowen. I don't recall what the outcome was.

Q: Well, then you left there when?

BUTENIS: I left in March 1982., about 18 months after I arrived. That was the standard then for junior officers going overseas, at least to hardship posts.

Q: How'd you feel about the Foreign Service and the work and all that?

BUTENIS: You know, it's funny. I would have thought I was the happiest person in the world had I not found a memo I wrote at the time to the OIG. I kept a carbon copy of it in connection with their inquiry into Elizabeth Bowen and this accusation. There were some other accusations against her. She and Dick Post, the Consul General, didn't get along. So it was kind of messy and I was just trying to stay out of the way, but I found this memo that I'd written at their request and I sounded miserable! But if I hadn't kept it I wouldn't have had any recollection of feeling miserable. I don't linger over things very long.

Q: Where did you go?

BUTENIS: El Salvador. Latin America! I finally got to Latin America. I got some brush-up Spanish and then landed in El Salvador in the middle of their war with my street dog from Karachi, Philly. This was 1982 in the summer.

Q: I think people sort of forget now, but El Salvador was the center of the universe.

BUTENIS: Yes, it was the Reagan administration and our controversial anti-communist policy in Central America. Somoza had been overthrown in Nicaragua and Nicaraguans opposed to the Sandinistas moved into neighboring Honduras, becoming the Contras fighting to overthrow the Sandinistas. So there was this huge spillover effect throughout Central America. El Salvador had its own leftist insurgency, led by the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front. The El Salvadoran military and security forces, the Policia Nacional, the Guardia Nacional and the Policia de Hacienda, were equally murderous and the campesinos, the poor farmers and villagers in the countryside bore the brunt. By the

time the war was over, the death toll was believed to be close to 80,000 in a tiny country of five million, one million of whom had actually fled to the United States as refugees. The U.S. government supported the military-backed government and we provided them with military trainers up to a self-imposed limit, as a way of reassuring Congress that we were not going to commit large numbers of soldiers. I forget what the exact limit was, but it never went higher than 200 trainers at any given time and I recall the effort that our Military Group made to track the exact number of its personnel in-country at any given time. We also provided weapons and financial aid to help the Salvadoran army fight the guerillas. It was quite a long struggle. And it eventually ended with a negotiated settlement years later, facilitated by the UN, but at the time it was quite, quite bloody. Shortly before I arrived the four American Catholic church women had been raped and killed. Their car had been stopped as they were coming back from an airport run and the women were raped and killed and left in a ditch. This was just one of the atrocities committed during the war.

Q: This was done by Salvadoran soldiers?

BUTENIS: Yes, ultimately they discovered the National Guard had killed them on orders. The guerillas also massacred people. It was quite bloody, quite brutal. Our own troops were also targeted by the guerillas. When I was there we lost a Navy SEAL, Bobby Schaufelberger who was assassinated. He was the security officer for the Military Group. El Salvador was such a seductive place. It's a beautiful country, eternal springtime, beautiful. Schaufelberger had a Salvadoran girlfriend who worked at a local university. He would pick her up the same time every week, establishing a pattern. He was under surveillance. Then one day his air conditioning broke down in his armored vehicle and until he could get it fixed he'd roll down his window. One day he came to pick up his girlfriend and they were waiting for him and just walked up and shot him in the head. Shortly after I left El Salvador, in 1985 we had the Zona Rosa attack, where our Marine Security Guards were sitting in an outdoor café in the upscale entertainment district, which had not been put off-limits, and four Marines and eight other people died when the guerillas shot up the area. We could hear gunfire at night in our neighborhoods sometimes. The eastern part of the country was off limits to Embassy staff, where the guerrillas controlled parts of the country. So there was a lot of violence.

Q: OK, -- when you went out there how were you prepared for this?

BUTENIS: Well, I was going to do a consular tour. I did a consular tour in Karachi and I was still trying to be a political officer but my bids on political jobs were unsuccessful, so I ended up going to Salvador as a consular officer. I was the de facto deputy to the consul general. There was tremendous esprit-de corps in the embassy and people socialized across agency and section bounds. People mingled freely, lots of partying, lots of socializing. I had military officers coming to me trying to get visas for their girlfriends often, but also for Salvadoran friends. Of course, now there are strict limits on this kind of lobbying but much less so then. So I felt fairly plugged in to the embassy. Just to talk about my career there, I was supposed to be there for an 18-month or maybe two-year

tour in consular. But I lobbied and did a year in political in a local rotation, which never appeared in my personnel records. Then, I was tapped to be staff aide to Ambassador Tom Pickering for my last six months. So I was there for two and a half years, just loved it there. As I was getting ready to leave, the public affairs officer asked if I were interested in staying on in his section. Much as I was tempted, I thought I needed to leave Salvador behind or I might never leave.

Q: Well now, were you given any choice of going there? I mean, you know, it's a very dangerous place.

BUTENIS: Well, I really wanted to do political work and I remember talking to my career development officer on the phone from Karachi. All my bids had been political, completely unrealistic because I was consular cone. So, I was feeling frustrated and asked "Well, what's left?" and they said Salvador and I said OK. I didn't even think about it as a war zone. And as it turned out I was able to do political work and then staff aide work. Looking back, Salvador was my favorite tour.

Q: Well, OK. You arrived there. Did you get a briefing?

BUTENIS: I'm sure I received a security briefing and some sort of training before I left Washington but nothing really prepares you for the reality. When I arrived in Salvador, I was met by my sponsor, another JO, a wonderful woman and partner in crime, and we remain friends to this day. She picked me and my dog up at the airport in an armored vehicle with armed guards. The airport was a long way out of the city and the road was not always secure from guerrilla attacks. In Karachi I once drove myself to the airport in the middle of the night to rescue some American citizen who had arrived without a visa. Quite a contrast but I quickly adapted. We settled my dog and then went to a party (*laughs*). Salvador was the only time I ever shot a gun (other than my unsuccessful stab at partridge hunting in Karachi). The Regional Security Office issued handguns to staff who wanted them and set up practice at an army or police range. I kept the gun in my home, locked up during the day, I didn't want anybody like my maid to find it and be worried about it. At night I would put it in the night stand next to my bed. It was a dangerous time. Many of the wealthy Salvadorans had fled to Florida, renting their lovely homes to the embassy or other foreigners. I had to almost fight to get a home without a swimming pool because I was afraid my dog would fall into it. So I finally found a home that had a small pool and I had them board it over. I had a basketball court in the back. Lovely terrace. The place had a Wild West atmosphere. My first ambassador in Salvador was Dean Hinton. A legend in his own time, who would chew you out mercilessly if you did something wrong. I never was the target, I was too low-level. Then Tom Pickering came in, another giant in our field. The ambassadors spent a lot of their time with the flood of congressional delegations. I in fact at one point was permanent control officer because I was the staff aide at that time, I had it down to a science of how to schedule the delegations. We got both Democrats and Republicans and they all were critical of some aspect of USG policy, if not the embassy itself – though that happened too. The Democrats objected to our support for the military-backed government which could not,

or would not stop human rights abuses by the security forces and so-called death squads. The Republicans criticized us for not doing more against the left-wing guerrillas and helping the government more.

Q: When you first came there you did consular work?

BUTENIS: Yes, I became the de facto deputy to Consul General George Lannon and also did a lot of the American Citizen Services work. We had some difficult cases.. One was the murder of Hustler journalist John Sullivan. He had disappeared and eventually his remains were discovered although I don't think anyone ever learned what happened to him. Another American journalist was arrested by the Salvador military who were always distrustful of reporters. There was a fairly large foreign press corps in El Salvador at the time and this case got a lot of attention. I visited him in jail and he finally was released after we put a lot of pressure on the government. We heard a rumor about an American who was ill in a poor village, so I went to check. We thought it might be Sullivan but instead I found an American who was mentally ill and was trying to walk through Central America because God had told him to do so. With the help of the National Police, we brought him to San Salvador and had him stay in a psychiatric hospital until we could repatriate him. I almost got in trouble because I hadn't made it clear to the hospital that the embassy could not pay for his care and I knew he did not have the resources, I thought they would do it for free. When I got the bill I thought I might be stuck with it but the hospital eventually forgave the debt. There was a horrible case of a Salvadoran-American, Patricia Cuellar, a human rights activist. She'd been threatened repeatedly by the security forces and then she disappeared and a few days later so did her father. I don't recall if her father, Mauricio was also a U.S. citizen. We had a witness, a woman who subsequently became a friend of mine, who saw a Salvadoran major enter Cuellar's apartment and take her away. Unfortunately, the witness could not positively identify the major but we thought it was a notorious officer with many allegations of human rights abuses. A few days later we heard that two bodies, a man and a woman, had been found by a roadside, which was quite typical then, and buried right where they were found. On the chance that it was Cuellar and her father, I went with one of the Regional Security Officers to exhume the bodies. We took with us a relative, Mauricio's brother, if I remember correctly. The brother did not want to go, and looking back I can understand his reluctance but this was the only lead we had. I remember the night before we went to exhume the bodies, I had a nightmare that I was at home in New Jersey and found pieces of my family strewn in one of the fields next to my parents' house. So we went and found the local mayor or some authority, and he commandeered a couple of poor villagers who I think just happened to be passing by, and ordered them to dig up the bodies. But the bodies were so bloated that they did not look like human beings, although the stench was terrible. The brother barely looked at them and immediately said that they were not Patricia and Mauricio. So it could have been them, but without the brother's confirmation, that was it and the villagers just refilled the pit and covered the bodies over again.

Democratic delegations always wanted to visit the Catholic Church's human rights office, called Tutela Legal, which was run by a former nun, Maria Julia Hernandez, who was a well known human rights defender, we would call her now. You would enter her office and see these photograph albums on her desk, with pictures of children holding flowers or kittens or something like that, and when you opened the albums you saw terrible photos of people who had been found dead, many of them with obvious signs of torture. People would come looking for their missing family or friends. We didn't have a refugee program because people never bothered, they would just go in from Mexico and then claim asylum. At one point I think one-fifth of the population of El Salvador was in the States. Their remittances were so important to the economy of El Salvador that I believe the Administration later granted delayed deportation in response to the Salvadoran government's request because the remittances were so crucial.

Q: Well, what about your consular work -- non-immigrant visas?

BUTENIS: It was a high refusal rate, given the war and other violence and poverty. Occasionally there was a case with its own moral implications, like the Bahais in Karachi. One time a political officer persuaded me to issue a visa to a contact who he said was being threatened. I shouldn't have done it, because a non-immigrant visa is for tourism or business, not asylum. But the political officer, not stupid, assured me that his contact did not want to stay in the U.S., only remain until things calmed down for him. So I issued the visa and of course the guy was stopped at port of entry and turned around because the Immigration and Naturalization Service decided he wasn't a legitimate tourist. We used to get notifications from INS of these cases and I realized I had made a poor call. But, there was a lot of pressure from colleagues to issue to their contacts and eventually the Consular Affairs Bureau toughened up the visa referral policy, which was a good thing. Until then colleagues would come down to our section and just talk to us about cases.

Q: Now, did the church play a role? I mean did you have priests and nuns coming?

BUTENIS: Yes, at the time liberation theology or some version of it was popular and of course the poor were getting the brunt of the war and deaths quads and missionaries sided with the poor. In addition to the four church women who were killed, there were several American priests who had been in El Salvador a long time. I remember they would come to the consular section sometimes with Salvadoran children or young people going to the States for medical treatment, those kinds of things. I'm sure they were genuine cases but we seldom issued visas because the presumption was that these children would not come back. It was very tough to turn people down.

Q: Well, let's talk about your time as a political officer.

BUTENIS: I still thought I wanted to do political work, so I persisted and finally worked a deal where I would rotate to the Political Section for the remainder of my tour. This was strictly internal to the embassy and I don't think it was ever reflected on my official

personnel record. Of course I got the human rights portfolio, which was one of the worst, most contentious portfolios you could have in a place like El Salvador. I had to update the annual human rights report, and it was bad news. Congress had required the Secretary of State to certify that the Salvadoran Government had made progress in observing human rights before the next tranche of assistance would be released and there was a great deal of attention on this report and the embassy's other human rights reporting. I also became the Codel control officer, I guess because I was good at organizing and coordinating all the work that went into these visits. It was all very exciting too, working in a country which mattered in Washington even though it was difficult in a lot of ways. Oddly enough, after fighting to do political work, I eventually discovered I didn't like it and I wasn't very good at it. There never seemed to be a resolution of anything, just continued agony over the same issues. Then I was tapped to fill a new position, staff aide to the new ambassador, Tom Pickering. It was created to largely handle all the congressmen and other visitors we got and I liked that a lot.

Q: Let's go back to human rights. Were people coming to you, or were you saying, you know, there are some bodies here?

BUTENIS: I was supposed to respond to inquiries, primarily Congressional inquiries, on specific cases of people who supposedly had been arrested, or more likely abducted by a death squad, or were believed to have been killed. If we had current information on the case, I would convey that information. If we had no information or nothing recent, I asked Salvadoran security forces directly by letter. They would invariably come back and say, "We have no information." We knew they weren't going to investigate and even if they were investigating they weren't going to share the information with us and so it was depressing. Of course, how much more so for the families and friends of these desaparecidos, as they were referred to in Spanish, the "disappeared".

Q: I'd like to go into some depth now, if you don't mind. Let's take human rights reports. What does this mean and what were the issues and what can you talk about these?

BUTENIS: The concern with human rights in El Salvador focused largely on abuses committed by the U.S. backed government. Jose Napoleon Duarte was the elected president during the second half of my tour and he was very much supported by the Salvadoran military. And we were arming them, training them.

Q: Had that in Cambodia, by the way.

BUTENIS: Our military trainers were stationed at Salvadoran military bases throughout the country. There were also three security forces, the National Police, the Treasury Police, and the National Guard and they in particular were accused of abuses. My job was to try to get information about individual cases of people whose families claimed had been disappeared.

Q: It came out of Argentina.

BUTENIS: The military and the security forces were believed to be responsible for running death squads, active or off-duty police or soldiers who were given the names of individuals deemed supporters of the guerrillas, or human rights activists, which in the eyes of the military, was the same thing. Individuals were seen being taken away, sometimes by men in uniform, and either never seen again or whose bodies were found, often with signs of torture. There were also abuses alleged to have been committed by the FMLN, the biggest guerilla group. But those didn't get a lot of attention from human rights groups in the U.S. or from Congress. It was a learning experience for me. I'm a liberal Democrat, I always have been. And yet here I am in an embassy, in a country where human rights groups in the U.S., America's Watch, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, felt very strongly that the U.S. shouldn't be supporting a government that permitted, if not carried out those kinds of abuses. What we countered, and this is a common argument I know, was that we didn't think that President Duarte was personally responsible for directing any of this but we questioned how much control he had over the security forces and the military. I think it was an uneasy alliance he had with the military. And so, I spent my time looking for information to respond to inquiries. That was a period of a massive Salvadoran migration to the U.S., almost all of it illegal. Even without legal status, they would write congressmen and the congressmen would be responsive and send us letters. It wasn't a particularly productive exercise. Generally we got responses that said no information.

Q: I've interviewed Tex Harris who didn't get much cooperation in Argentina at his embassy.

BUTENIS: I have no idea what the heads of the security forces whispered to our ambassador or to their U.S. military counterparts. But I think people understood we were required to make the inquiries and sometimes I tried to follow up, sometimes we would get additional information. I already mentioned the Catholic Church's Oficina de Tutela Legal, the human rights office. I will never forget this woman, Maria Julia Hernandez, a quite brave woman who ran this office. We worked with her although she certainly didn't think we should be supporting the Duarte government, but nonetheless if we went to her and if she had information on a case, she would share it. By the time that war was over, which was in the early '90s, I was on the Salvador desk. By that time I think the death count was close to 90,000 Salvadorans. I remember thinking, El Salvador as a country is beautiful, eternal springtime, lovely people, hard working. And yet, the violence that they visited on each other --

Q: I talked to one person who was saying that she had a friend who came from one of the wealthier families. And she'd been complaining about some guy who'd been pestering her, her maid or something, and he wouldn't leave off. When the FSO asked what happened, the woman said, "Oh, I had him killed."

BUTENIS: The consular section had a close working relationship with the National Police, because they tended to be the security force with the most arrested Americans.

The other two security forces had more restricted mandates. They were very helpful to us in getting foolish young Americans out of jail or out of the country. The head of the National Police then was Col. Carlos Reynaldo Lopez Nuila. Of course, it was delicate working with local authorities who have the power, who can help you do your job and yet trying not to feel like we owed them favors. An example was when dual nationals got arrested. If I recall, at the time El Salvador was not required to recognize the arrestee's US citizenship nor give us consular access to them. But they did, which was enormously helpful. One time the nephew of one of our local employees was arrested on a drug charge. He was a dual national, in his late teens, and openly gay, which was very unacceptable in Latin America at that time. His aunt was frantic and afraid of what would happen to her nephew if he remained in jail. So, I contacted the liaison officer and he personally delivered the nephew to the embassy. The nephew eventually moved to the States. But the point is what did the police expect in turn from us, and it was usually visas. So, we always had to be sure we were maintaining the integrity of the process.

Q: Yeah, well this is the thing. You do something for somebody -- I had a terrible time in Korea, I had a car that was constantly breaking down. And the only person, the head of the PX garage could fix it for me, and I paid for it. But he kept coming for visas for his mechanics -- and they're probably quite legitimate, but at the same time it's just --

BUTENIS: That's exactly it. George Lannon was a great boss, a career consular officer who married a Salvadoran. Thank God, George was the court of appeal. We got these visa applications recommended by Salvadoran officials or businessmen or the Church, for example, and when the applicant just wasn't qualified, I or the other vice-consuls would ask George to adjudicate them, or he would adjudicate the second application after we had already turned someone down. I'm not suggesting he issued to questionable applicants but he had more experience and confidence in his judgment. As long as you have a more senior officer, the vice-consuls are often spared hard decisions, for which they should be grateful. Of course, as you become more senior and one day find yourself in charge, it's a different story. I also saw that visa applications may not always be black and white, that there are other factors that can enter into consideration. There is also room for personal judgment and I fear that today we train vice-consuls to be too rigid, too reliant on a checklist of qualifications, rather than asking them "What do you think about this applicant".

Q: Did you have any notable problems with any congressional delegations, you know, the delegation from hell or something?

BUTENIS: We had so many and almost all of them wanted to visit the war zone. El Salvador's a tiny country and the eastern part of it was pretty much off limits then, except to our military trainers. That's where most of the fighting was. I think we used Salvadoran helicopters to transport codels around the country. There was often tension because our regional security office might recommend against travel to an especially hot zone and the codel would insist on going. It's hard, as you know, to tell a member of Congress, "No, you can't do this." It was often me dealing with their staffers. I tried not

to push the problem up to the deputy chief of mission or ambassador but sometimes I had to do that.

Q: I would think that any delegation, any group coming from the States would be particularly susceptible to accepting any information received from church authorities. We're so used to that, I mean --

BUTENIS: It was usually the Democratic delegations or the bipartisan ones that asked to meet with Maria Julia Hernandez. Another thing Democrats often wanted to do was to attend Archbishop Rivera y Damas' Sunday sermon in the Cathedral, if they were in town on a Sunday. Rivera y Damas was the successor to Archbishop Romero, who had been assassinated not so long before.

One incident served as my introduction to the risks that come with American Citizen Services. An American backpacker was murdered while travelling in the conflicted eastern part of El Salvador. As we eventually learned, he had been taken off a bus and killed by soldiers. I don't know that a motive was ever established. The result for me was being included on a list of USG officials that was headed by Secretary of State George Shultz, being sued by the man's family, supported by the American Civil Liberties Union. We were accused of not investigating the circumstances of the death and then with covering up those circumstances. Both charges were of course untrue and eventually a U.S. court found in our favor, I think on the basis that we had done everything possible within our responsibility and we could not be sued in our personal capacity while serving overseas in an official capacity. It was quite sobering to discover I was being sued in what was really a political case based on opposition to U.S. policy in El Salvador.

Q: -- you mentioned that you had a political party to cover --

BUTENIS: Yes, it was Accion Democratica, one of the smaller parties. Every party wanted attention from the embassy and we had a large political section. So I got to know the head of the parties and I went out with them to their rallies and meetings. This was fun. However, I also got another lesson in the realities of Foreign Service work as a woman. Once I invited the two party leaders to my home one evening for drinks and discussion and I did the required reporting cable. A few days later the political counselor called me in and said the wife of one of the politicians I invited over called him to complain that the wives of the two politicians hadn't also been invited, even though this was not a social event and the two wives were not involved in politics. I think this was Latina jealousy and also reflected the overwhelmingly male orientation of the Foreign Service, since I don't think the male political counselor defended me to the wife, just passed on her complaint.

Q: Well, did you find by following a party around and being a woman, did they treat you different or could you sort of put your feet up and smoke a cigar and --

BUTENIS: No, I never did that and this was not Pakistan. My point is that I always found, at least in the consular section, -- you're the American embassy officer, you have stuff they want, whether it's attention, whether it's an invitation to the Fourth of July reception, whether it's a visa, so you can often do your job on your terms. I never felt shut out, I never felt that I wasn't getting the good stuff because I was a female or I couldn't go do this or that. Some of it was just not knowing how to operate because I was still relatively junior. But I never felt being female was ever an obstacle in doing my job overseas.

Q: OK, you'd have a taste of political work as well as consular work. How'd you feel about it?

BUTENIS: I still thought I wanted to do political work, although not necessarily human rights work, but the bloom was off the rose by then. I thought it was exciting to work in a high-profile policy area but I also discovered that what I liked about consular work was at the end of the day, after making lots of decisions, it was largely over. In political work it seemed nothing was ever over. I also saw that I was good at managing people, I was good at directing resources. So, even though I still wanted to do political, I bid on a New Delhi consular position because I always wanted to go to India. Interestingly, our deputy political consular at the time warned me against it, advising "Don't hide your light under a bushel".

Q: You're back in Washington, you have a five-month mid-career course. How did you find that? How did it work?

BUTENIS: I thought it was tedious. Like many FSOs, I like to be in the field, I like to be working. I had discovered I liked having an office or section to run. There were common modules in the course but then they broke us into cones, for specific training, which was OK. One thing I remember that was so funny, they were trying to introduce the latest management techniques and at that time it was a day planner, I guess you would call it. This scheduler that would help you organize your day, a place to take notes, etc. Generally, though, I did not like sitting for long periods in rooms, some without natural light, and that always taxed my attention span.

Q: Well, I had I think about two weeks, sort of the equivalent. It was a mixed group, it wasn't broken down into cones and I found myself realizing there really is a difference between consular officers and say, political-economic officers. Because problems would be proposed and they'd say, "Well, this is what you should do," and maybe including fire somebody and I came back with a strong prejudice. The political and economic people dithered away talking about it, when I just saw this as OK, this is what you've got to do, you've got to get on with the show.

BUTENIS: As I got promoted and eventually became DCM and COM one of the things people would say about me, and usually the military with admiration, was that I'm decisive. I don't think I arrived at decisions in a flippant sort of way, and if I needed more

information and there was time to get it, I would do that but if we're in a crisis or if we have to decide this now, tell me what we know and here's my best decision.

Q: OK, you went to India from when to when --

BUTENIS: I was in India from 1985 to 1988.

Q: All right, and how would you describe when you went out American-India relations?

BUTENIS: Indira Gandhi had just been assassinated the year before, in 1984, by her Sikh bodyguards. It was still a huge issue in India, and I remember as I met my FSN staff in the consular section in New Delhi, several of them, Sikhs had lost relatives and friends in the violent backlash to Gandhi's assassination. Mobs had gone on a rampage killing innocent Sikhs. And of course the Sikhs, especially the men were readily recognizable by their style of turban and their beards. Many taxi drivers in New Delhi were Sikhs and I was told that some of them had been tied to the steering wheels of their cabs and set on fire. So that was my initial impression, not any aspect of U.S. -Indian relations but domestically what was going on. In terms of my work, I quickly found it frustrating to deal with the Indian bureaucracy. I am sure it was much more so for Indian citizens but diplomats were not spared. It was incredibly ponderous. Indian officials were suspicious of informal friendships and it was very difficult to get to know your counterparts in the ministries. A case in point was the famous Christmas gratuities list when each embassy section gives generally inexpensive gifts to their best contacts. When we began updating addresses for the next go-around as Christmas neared, we heard back from some Indian offices that while Official X would love to get a gift, please don't deliver it to the office but to his home. There was this official disapproval of accepting chocolate or whatever from the Americans. Our sense was that the Soviet embassy had a much easier time in their dealings with the Indians than we did.

Q: It's always struck me that during a long period India was close to the Soviets. Here was a real democracy dealing with this monstrous dictatorship of the Soviet Union and sort of spurning us. I mean not that we're perfect or anything like that, but we should have been natural allies.

BUTENIS: I think that the Indians, starting with Jawaharlal Nehru, really saw themselves as non-aligned, as one of the founders of the non-aligned movement whereas we viewed them as pro-Soviet. Nehru's socialism deepened this sympathy with the Soviet Union and their suspicion of our capitalism. Back then, of course, the fundamental and eventually fatal flaws in the Soviet system weren't quite as apparent as they eventually became. On a personal basis the Indians that we came into contact with were the wealthy, the elites, the businessmen, who traveled to the States, sent their kids to be educated there, and we had lots of Indian students going to school in the U.S. By the time I left though, I thought Indian cuisines were the best in the world (and I still do) and India remains one of my favorite travel destinations for tourism. I traveled as much as I could during my tour, both officially and personally. But after three years there I found I had had enough of Indian

arrogance and the way they were quick to criticize our culture. I know this is a typical reaction in a lot of countries and with lots of FSOs. I remember I was at a cocktail party close to the end of my tour and somebody began lecturing me about our old age homes, that how criminal it was that we put our parents into nursing homes, etc. Now, certainly they had a point but it was beyond my capacity by that time to have a reasoned discussion so I just replied “Well, at least we don’t throw ghee on young women and set them on fire in the kitchen and call it a kitchen accident so the husband can marry again and get more dowry.” Every morning you’d read stories of so-called kitchen deaths. Everybody knew what was happening, and at some point I believe the police were required to investigate every claimed “kitchen accident”. But that happens, you’re at the end of your tour, you’re kind of tired. However, when you got out and you traveled, people were very friendly. There was a lot of curiosity. I did a lot of immigrant visa fraud investigations, going out on field trips for a week or so with an embassy car, driver and my local investigator. I don’t know whether it was a vestige of colonialism or just Indian hospitality, but villagers would just let you in their homes. They knew we were snooping around, trying to catch their neighbors in lies so that we could deny a visa, but they would open their doors and invite us in. Once I went to a village, and it was hot, so I was wearing a mid-length cotton skirt and a blouse. As we were walking toward the house we wanted, these kids are gathering around us and talking to each other. My FSN said that the kids were speculating why my legs were so white, that they’d never seen a white person before and perhaps I was sick or wearing stockings or something.

Q: OK, what were you doing?

BUTENIS: I was the de facto deputy for two consuls general, first Jim Blandford and then Leo Wallemberg. I helped out with ACS, I did NIV and IV interviews, whatever was needed on any given day and I was the fraud officer. There was a lot of marriage fraud, often featuring Sikhs who had left their wives and children in the Punjab, usually living with his parents. They either paid an American woman to “marry” them in the States, or sometimes they deceived a woman into marrying them, claiming that they had divorced their Sikh wife. The American “wives” filed immigration petitions for the men, which then-INS would send to us for investigation, because fraud was rampant. We put the cases on hold and went looking for the alleged “ex”. We would often enough find the Sikh wife living in her in-laws’ house and unaware that she had been divorced.

Lots of student visas. Lots of prison visits. At that time we had consulates in what were then Madras, now Chennai, in Calcutta, now Kolkata, and in Bombay, now Mumbai. We often sent an officer on temporary duty to a consulate so someone could take R&R. I covered at least once in Madras, which was very different from New Delhi. I took a weekend trip from Madras to then Pondicherry, the former French possession, and which was at least at that time famous for the Sri Aurobindo ashram. The ashram seemed to have most of the real estate in town and I stayed in one of their hotels, ate in their restaurant, toured their tee shirt factory, and other sites. The ashram was very entrepreneurial but I was told that the local residents resented the fact that much of the

workforce employed at the ashram were foreign devotees, most likely working for nothing, so the locals didn't get the jobs they hoped for.

Q. Was there ever pressure to issue a visa?

BUTENIS: No, I don't recall that kind of pressure. I do remember once getting a call from then Ambassador John Gunther Dean's secretary, summoning me to his office, and the secretary was kind enough to give me a heads-up that it was about a visa case. Ambassador Dean was quite charming and we talked about several things before he asked why we had refused a student returning to Harvard. Well, I wasn't familiar with the case myself but gave the only right answer, which was to promise to review the application myself. Which I did and determined that we should not have refused the case and later I think the Visa Office came out with a policy, or guiding principle, that all things being equal, returning students should be allowed to finish their studies. I also once went with Ambassador Dean to some business event where the Ambassador, the political officer, economic officer, etc. and I were on a panel about US policy. When the panel was over, we were heading to the buffet but I was intercepted by guests with more visa questions and never got to enjoy lunch. Ambassador Dean laughed and said "That's why you're here", because he never wanted to get involved in visa cases and that was fine with me.

Q: You were mentioning the student who was halfway through Harvard. Just putting this in here for people who are reading this. One of the things that those of us who have been in the trade for a long time understand, once a student goes to a university in the United States there's no point in even trying to figure out what they're going to do. Because it's the time of their lives -- I didn't know what I was going to do when I went to university.

Did you observe the caste system in India? As it applied to maybe office work or to visa issues?

BUTENIS: Caste was not something Indians would talk about and most of the people we dealt with were upper class and probably the higher castes as well. In the office, the consul general's secretary, a very cultured, capable woman, was a Brahmin, but in general we thought about our staff in terms of their ethnic or religious identities, for example the Sikhs, or the Christians. Certainly Christians, a very small minority in India, tended to gravitate towards work in western embassies because they felt they had something in common with us, had excellent English, and often were more Westernized.

A year or so after I left, an extensive, long-standing fraud ring was discovered involving almost all the local consular staff except for two Brahmin women (one of them the secretary), one of the Christians and one Sikh. Virtually everyone else had some scam going. Our senior FSN was a Sikh and he was in cahoots with our fraud investigator and an FSN investigator in the security office. They were shaking down relatives in the U.S. who were sponsoring family members for immigration. The senior FSN and the investigators were also demanding money from the beneficiaries themselves, those very

cases we were investigating for marriage fraud. The Punjab was off-limits to diplomatic personnel, because of the political violence, so we could only send our local staff to check on cases and those who paid were cleared, those who didn't were reported to be ineligible. I think the way the embassy learned about this was through relatives in the States who had been contacted for money instead contacted the Department. The letters sent to the embassy from people reporting this fraud were intercepted by the FSN staff who, of course, opened all the mail and would have to translate the letters for the officers so we never saw those letters. We had heard rumors that there was fraud and we asked the RSO to send someone to follow up on the cases our senior investigator had cleared, and the RSO sent the crooked FSN who was part of the fraud ring. It was being prepared for a grand jury in New York. They lured two or three of the crooked FSNs to the States under the pretext of coming for training and then arrested them. It's a hard lesson to learn, that you cannot always trust your staff, your colleagues.

Q: Well, then where did you go -- you left India when?

BUTENIS: I left in 1988 having been recruited to do a tour as the senior El Salvador desk officer. I was still interested in doing political work and when a former colleague in Salvador who was serving in the Central American Affairs office at the time reached out and said, "We'd like you to take this position", I agreed. Little did I know what I was getting into, given the continuing controversy of the Republican administration's policy in Central America. It was still pretty messy, especially with the increasing focus on the Contras. It turned out I came to hate the job, but it cured me of wanting to be a political officer and I learned a lot about how policy is made. I saw the dynamics, the role that the National Security Council played, the role of non-governmental organizations, human rights organizations mobilized to oppose the policy. I went in just thinking of it as an opportunity although it turned out to be a difficult assignment, in part because of the intense Congressional interest, the human rights angle. By that time there was talk of a negotiated end to the fighting and I recall the UN playing, or wanting to play a role and that we didn't really want the UN's involvement. In the end the UN did broker a settlement in 1992.

I didn't like the job in part because it's one thing to put in long hours overseas when you may have domestic staff to take care of your household. I was single, I had just bought a townhouse in Reston, and I could barely take time to move in because in those days the two Salvador desk jobs were among a handful of domestic positions that automatically got a hardship differential (overtime) because of all the hours we routinely put in, including Saturdays. Tenured officers of course could not claim official overtime so this was a way of compensating for the hours. I think it was an 18% differential. It meant I had no life. Another reason was the lack of any resolution to so many of the issues we dealt with. Yes, El Salvador's civil war did finally end, but it took years and you could never count on things going the way we hoped. The issues that I was facing on the desk were the same ones that confronted me when I was in El Salvador. And yes, some of them had inched forward, others had slipped backward. I got very little satisfaction out of anything I did in that job. I did enjoy the people I worked with, who were absolutely top

notch and if you had to suffer for two years, these were the fellow-sufferers you wanted. Joe Sullivan was our Director, Pete Romero was one of two our deputy directors. Kevin Whitaker, now our ambassador to Colombia, was my fellow desk officer. I always repeat one of Kevin's expressions, which perfectly captured what our life was like then: Our hair's on fire and we're putting it out with a hammer. We laughed a lot; it was either that or cry, I guess.

Q: When you got there in '88, what would you say the situation was in Central America, and then we'll move to El Salvador.

BUTENIS: The situation in Washington was contentious, as Democrats in Congress were unraveling the secret support the Reagan administration provided to the Contras and administration officials like Oliver North and Elliot Abrams were prosecuted and convicted for their part in the Iran-Contra scheme. On the ground the El Salvador conflict dragged on, although there was a serious effort for a negotiated end. Everything was very politicized. One of the events during my desk tour and remains with me was the massacre of the Jesuits at the Universidad de Centro America, La UCA as they called it. It was a Jesuit university with some Spanish Jesuits on the faculty and in administration. La UCA was seen as sympathetic to the insurgency, in keeping with the influence that liberation theology still held. The army came in and slaughtered six of the Jesuits, including Ignacio Ellacuria, along with their poor housekeeper and her daughter. As horrible as the event was, it added to the pressure for a negotiated settlement to the war. It was a very violent part of the world and tragically, the politically-motivated conflicts have been replaced, or perhaps morphed into criminal ones, to include drug trafficking, trafficking in persons, gangs, etc.

Q: Let's talk a little about your impression of the chain of command there. Who was your boss and who was his or her boss?

BUTENIS: Cresencio Arcos was our deputy assistant secretary and Bernie Aronson, a political appointee was the assistant secretary. Of course we worked closely with our embassy in San Salvador. Bill Walker was the ambassador.

Q: Had emails become part of the process? I was wondering whether there was more consultation because of phones and everything else.

BUTENIS: I don't think e-mails had come into their own yet. In fact, I will never forget my discovery of e-mailing. I was in Bogota, my assignment after the desk, as American Citizen Services Chief, and someone in the embassy told me about this amazing new way to use the computer – e-mail! And I in turn sent an e-mail to my desk officer in the Consular Affairs Bureau, and that's how he learned about e-mail. It was so typical of the Department then – no announcement, no preparation, it just happened and we had to figure it out on our own. On the desk, it was mostly phone calls, writing cables, mem-coms. I also learned the importance of documenting any instructions or guidance I received, any actions I took, etc. because it was quite possible that later someone would

question an action or a policy, and again in true Department fashion, fingers begin searching for someone to point to. I learned to watch my back.

Q: Well, did you find your Central American mafia or ARA mafia or something?

BUTENIS: I suppose so. At the senior, political level there were a number of Cuban-Americans. As in the other geographical bureaus, there were people who wanted to serve the majority of their careers in Latin America, perhaps having married a Latin American or mastered Spanish and Portuguese. At the time, then ARA, now WHA, had the reputation of not being a good place, a fair place, I suppose, for women officers. I can't say that I felt any discrimination but I also don't think there were many women ambassadors or DCMs in our Latin American embassies either.

While I was on the desk the Allison Palmer lawsuit was settled. This suit was brought years ago by women officers against the Department for discrimination in a range of areas and I was automatically, I think, included in that class action suit. My own example was when they offered me entry into the Foreign Service as a consular cone officer, when I had wanted political. I asked if I could change cones later and HR assured me I could. Well, that was wrong as I later learned, as it was very difficult to change to political. The lawsuit remedy I was offered as part of the settlement was to immediately change to political. I thought about it for a few days and then declined, realizing that I had already spent close to ten years in consular work, had built up my network of contacts, had a good corridor reputation in consular, had honed my skill set, and the kicker was, I had discovered that I really didn't like political work, at least the little I had done in El Salvador and on the desk. Perhaps it was the controversial nature of the policy that turned me off. It even had an impact on my social life. I went to a party hosted by a friend who was a liberal Democrat, like me, as were some of the other guests. I didn't know any of the others and when I was introducing myself, one guy almost spit at me and immediately wanted to debate U.S. Central American policy. I just said that I was there to relax so no debate. I often felt I was not a good desk officer because I was not a passionate advocate of the policy, I was not a true believer.

Q: What about human rights reports?

BUTENIS: The president had to certify to Congress every six months that the Salvadoran government was making progress in observing human rights with U.S. assistance tied to these certifications. I was the human rights person on the desk and was months behind in drafting and then clearing the certification. However, I don't recall a lot of pressure to complete the certification and there was a constant string of crises and developments pulling me into another issue or problem. When the certification was finally sent up the chain to the Secretary Baker's office, it sat there for a long time. The word was Baker did not want to authorize it, so the staff waited until Baker was on travel and had Deputy Secretary Larry Eagleburger sign it.

Q: What did you do after the desk job?

BUTENIS: I was ready to get out of town and since I had already opted to stay in the consular cone I decided to bid on American Citizen Services in Bogotá, Colombia. I really did not enjoy those two years in Washington because I spent so much of my time working and commuting from Reston, Virginia where I had bought a townhouse. I never even had time to fully unpack my household effects and they remained in their packing boxes in the basement. My poor dog Philly, whom I rescued from the street in Karachi during my first tour, was not used to being left alone all day, since I had had a housekeeper in El Salvador and gate guards in Karachi. Philly began howling from loneliness about 2:00PM each workday as my next door neighbor eventually told me. I had had no idea, but immediately hired a dog walker, just to give poor Philly some company.

Q: Is there anything else we should discuss?

BUTENIS: I did learn something from all the human rights issues on the desk – that every organization, including non-governmental ones dedicated to human rights, have their own institutional interests, their own agendas, as did we. This is a life lesson for anyone working in Washington, I suppose. I concluded, probably because I was so tired and frustrated by the time my desk assignment was over, that some human rights groups were more interested in publicity for themselves than any actual progress in El Salvador. I often felt later in my career when I was dealing with human rights groups, wanting to say, “But we’re on the same side.” Of course they certainly had valid criticisms of U.S. policy, and I understand all that but I felt disillusioned in the early days.

Q: -- anything else happening that we should talk about in El Salvador at this time, or should we move on?

BUTENIS: There is one issue that only came up when I was in my last tour, as a dean at the Foreign Service Institute. I saw a notice in the University of Pennsylvania alumni magazine, The Pennsylvania Gazette which talked about another Penn alumna who had done a documentary on children whose parents had been killed in the fighting in El Salvador in the ‘80s, mostly campesinos, poor people. The children had been made available for international adoption, were now adults and some of them in the U.S. were just learning what had happened to their birth parents. I was intrigued, contacted the film maker, and we arranged for her to show her film at FSI, for a small group. It’s a powerful film but what struck me the most was that I had never heard about this, neither when I was in El Salvador in the consular section, where we issued immigrant visas to children being adopted, or when I was on the desk. When I was in El Salvador, we did all the checks then required to ensure that each child met whatever definition of orphan was in the law at that time, both in El Salvador and the U.S. We were not cutting corners. On the other hand, it was a war environment and parts of the country were off-limits to us so we could not have conducted any fraud investigations if there were claims of child abduction or children whose parents had been murdered by the military and taken from other relatives.

Anyway, after my time on the desk and I felt I was a much better officer for having gone through that, as difficult as it was at times. I wanted to go overseas again and so I bid on American Citizen Services (ACS) chief in Bogotá, Colombia, another war torn country, another danger post. I was there 1990-1993.

Q: Here's a question, I don't know if you can answer it. But did you find yourself at all attracted to the war element?

BUTENIS: People have asked me that and some even called me the poster child for danger posts, because it just gets better and better. Wait until I get to my Baghdad tour. I still don't think of myself as an adrenaline junkie. I will say that in retrospect, the hardship and danger tours I did were the most interesting, the most demanding, and I was never bored. And I don't think there were long lines of others bidding on those jobs either.

I liked Latin America, what I'd experienced of it and I didn't want to be bored and the Consular Affairs Bureau was happy to have me go there. I never did a lot of research when bidding, thinking that I'll figure out whatever I need when I get there. I never agonized over assignments. So I went to Bogotá.

It was an excellent tour in terms of management experience. I was ACS chief for three years with a junior officer deputy who rotated every six months. So I supervised several junior officers and remain friends with a few all these years later. I did have two vice consuls whose reputations, coming out of the visa section in Bogota, were not the best and both I think were eventually denied tenure. But I put their reputations aside and worked with them, as my deputy, and devoted time to mentoring, though we didn't use that word then. They both responded to my efforts, including my criticism, and did quite well with me. One of them later said to me "Thank you for treating me like an adult." When it came time to do their EERs, I had a dilemma. I knew what everybody else thought of them, based on their visa section rotations, but my job was to evaluate their work in my section and I could honestly say very good things about them. I also knew that my evaluation would be a factor in whether they were tenured. So I debated this, wondering would a good EER from me just delay the inevitable lack of tenure or later selection out. I also realized that I had invested time and attention to them that other vice consuls did not require, and speaking bluntly, were they worth the continuing effort? I gave them the good evaluations they deserved but when they went back to the NIV or IV sections, they reverted to previous poor performance and eventually were booted out.

Q: -- can you explain a bit about what was the situation in Colombia at the time when you arrived and who was the ambassador?

BUTENIS: Ted McNamara was Ambassador when I arrived and was later followed by Morris Busby. David Hobbs was the DCM. David had earlier been the Consul General in Bogota and was a career consular officer. U.S. policy focused on supporting the

Colombian government in fighting the leftist insurgency, which just now is being ended through negotiations, but it was a very hot war back then. The two biggest guerrilla groups were the Ejército de Liberación Nacional or National Liberation Army and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia or the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, who controlled large portions of territory. Much of the rain forest was off-limits to Colombians and foreigners. Colombia also faced a huge narcotics trafficking problem, with much of the cocaine for the U.S. market. We didn't call them narco-terrorists yet, but these were the narco-traffickers. The Medellin cartel led by Pablo Escobar and the rival Cali cartel. Our bilateral policy also focused on fighting narcotics production and trafficking. We had a huge USAID program, trying to promote development that did not rely on growing coca, and the Drug Enforcement Administration office was enormous. We had a military group training the Colombian armed forces. In terms of threats, kidnapping for ransom was just getting started. Until then the guerrillas had kidnapped people for political purposes, demanding the release of their members captured by the government or to make a propaganda point. U.S. citizens as such were not specifically targeted yet. I know of one American missionary, a Catholic priest resident in Colombia for many years and working with the poor, who had been kidnapped by one of the groups and then released unharmed. We weren't getting many American tourists but there were lots of Colombian-Americans resident in the States visiting or doing business.

I'm thinking again of Salvador where I said that it was such a beautiful place to live that it was hard sometimes to always keep your guard up. Parts of Bogota were lovely, it's about 65 degrees year round, with trees and plants in flower year-round, with the Andes as the backdrop. Restaurants were inexpensive and very good and you could easily make friends with Colombians. Yet, there was this horrible violence, from the narco-traffickers and the conflict. As ACS chief, I saw all kinds of problems. We always had young Americans in jail. They were arrested because they foolishly thought they could earn maybe \$5,000 as a mule carrying cocaine from Bogotá to Florida usually, and sometimes they would get caught.

Q: Would they get caught at the Colombian airport?

BUTENIS: Certainly some did but not all. Most of the ones caught were young people. We had a few older ones who were likely users themselves, washed out and looking for some quick cash.

We had a terrible case where a drug-addicted middle-aged American woman was caught trying to sell her sickly infant for drugs outside of Bogota. Colombian child welfare authorities notified us immediately, another example of the professionalism of many of the Colombian officials we worked with. They said if we would repatriate the woman and the baby, they would let her go. So, they put her on a flight to Bogota where we picked them up.

I still remember that poor baby, so sickly. We put the mother up in a guest house and had child welfare authorities in Bogota keep the baby overnight, since I did not trust the mother not to bolt. We alerted the guest house, of course. Those were the days when you had relationships with social workers or hotels or taxi drivers where they worked with you. The next morning we put mother and child on a flight to the States, where child welfare representatives were awaiting their arrival. I had a lot of misgivings about what would happen to the baby but I felt they were better off in the States than in a prison in Colombia.

We also had American couples try to get passports for newborns they claimed was their child. These were fraud cases in which the couples, always older, were buying a child or perhaps getting a child from a Colombian relative and trying to pass the baby off as theirs. Usually the woman was of Colombian origin. They claimed that she had given birth prematurely, always in a house, never a hospital, and they could not recall the name of the doctor, etc. So transparent and so sad. This was before DNA testing and blood typing would have taken a long time. My FSN would comment "She's not walking like she just gave birth." We would interview the husband and the wife separately and their stories never coincided. Then, what do we do with them? I remember asking Consular affairs what our SOP should be in these cases. Do we notify Colombian authorities of possible baby theft, with possible criminal charges against the American "parents". What would happen to the baby? I don't think CA had anything to offer, and I suppose any procedure would vary from country to country. So we worked out a deal with Colombian Child Welfare in which they agreed they would not bring charges against the Americans, as long as they left the country and Child Welfare would take custody of the baby. The Americans were always so sad, claiming they were desperate for a child, but I had to wonder why they weren't able to qualify for adoption through regular channels and of course they were contributing to the endangerment of a baby. Did they know who the parents were, and if the baby had been kidnapped? So, in the end, I never had much sympathy for them.

Q: Colombia has a reputation for violence. Did you have any murders?

BUTENIS: We did. There was a sizable resident American community as well as Colombian-Americans who all took their chances with kidnapping, drug violence, etc. because Colombia was home or where they were employed or they were minors with Colombian citizen parents.

I remember this one case of an elderly woman, a Colombian-American, who was found murdered, shot in her home. It turned out one of her relatives killed her, I think for money but we didn't know that at the time. It was my job to call her daughter living in the States to tell her that her mother had been killed. I called the number the Colombian relatives had given me and the daughter's husband answered. I think he already knew what had happened because he didn't act surprised that the American Embassy was calling from Bogotá. When I asked if his wife was there, he said yes and just handed the phone to her. He never asked me what this was about. I'll never forget the daughter screaming when I

broke the news. She must have dropped the phone but I could still hear her screaming, then her husband got back on the line and said they would call me back.

There certainly was a lot of violence. A lot of people in the embassy were armed, Drug Enforcement, the military trainers. We had a big Regional Security shop. Many Colombians were also carrying weapons. I remember walking down the street once with one of my junior officers. It was a Saturday, we were going to go shopping, when we heard gunfire, so I pulled her into this open garage, and we waited until it was quiet, then continued on our way.

A big event during my tour was the energy shortage, the power outages. Colombia depended heavily on hydroelectric power. The water levels had been dropping and the government hadn't been keeping the public informed. Literally almost overnight we began to have daily power cuts which went on for months. Eventually the government published a schedule, so each neighborhood knew when the power would be off for the next seven days. My neighborhood often had no electricity from 5PM to 8PM. People would plan around that outage. Most of the embassy staff lived in apartment buildings, and my apartment was on the sixth floor in a building without a generator. A colleague who lived on a higher floor had a bad knee, so he made sure to get home before 5PM each day so he could use the elevator. My housekeeper prepared my supper and put it in the hot oven by 5PM, so it was still warm by the time I got home. It was pretty scary, especially at night, without traffic signals working and there were stories of women being raped by taxi drivers. Those buildings with generators, which were very loud and smelly, caused a lot of resentment. Usually I could wait until the lights came back on before taking my dog Philly outside but sometimes she couldn't wait, so we went down the service stairs, me armed with a flashlight. It wasn't fun.

Q: What was but social life like, or life outside of just work?

BUTENIS: Our embassy was pretty big so there was a large cohort of young people, with a lot of socializing within the embassy. There were other embassies there but we didn't socialize much with other diplomats. I belonged to the Colombo-American Society, by virtue of my position, and that took up some time with monthly meetings, fundraisers, etc. It was a very pleasant group of people. Each Christmas they had a tradition of giving gifts to any jailed Americans.

Colombians were very sociable although you had to be careful that you were not being cultivated by someone with narco connections. We had a very high visa refusal rate, often based on suspicion of narco trafficking or finance and you had to wonder why someone wanted to be your friend.

Q: I think -- as a single woman I think it would be a little bit dicey to be dating Colombian men. You know, if a guy's going to have a gun stuck in his shirtwaist or something. I'm exaggerating, but maybe not too much.

BUTENIS: Well, it was a very violent society. And yet, it was so attractive. They had a nightclub and upscale restaurant area, called the Zona Rosa with chic clothing stores, jewelry stores, leather goods, etc. But at times there would be gun fights or bomb threats in the Zona Rosa because people with money, including the narcos, would go there. It would have been very hard for the RSO to put the Zona Rosa off-limits, but I think that was the case a few times.

Q: Did you have much contact with, with the, the ambassador, Ted McNamara?

BUTENIS: No, not really. Ted Cubbison was my first consul general and then he was replaced by Tim Randall who later ended up disgracing himself for visa fraud when he was assigned in Mexico, through the Colombian woman he was dating and I think subsequently married.

Q: Did you sense that there was pressure on the visa people in our embassy?

BUTENIS: Well, I can't speak from experience since I was the American Citizen Services Chief and didn't work in visas but the fact that narco-trafficking was so pervasive, it was difficult to know who was involved and who had their income from legitimate sources. Your neighbor in your apartment building might approach you and ask for a referral for her visa. Of course, you are not supposed to refer people unless it is in the U.S. national interest, but that's the theory and in practice, it's hard to just say "no" and not to at least promise to send the neighbor the webpage coordinates or ask when her application might be processed. But what if your neighbor is part of an extended family that launders narcotics trafficking money? Maybe her nephew is a trafficker. Our management section tried very hard not to rent apartments from narcos but how do you look into that? If a popular restaurant was believed to be owned by narcos, should you avoid patronizing it? Probably yes, if only because it might be a target for rival traffickers, but you never really knew who owned it.

Q: Did you get to travel much?

BUTENIS: Yes, I did but many places were off-limits because of the guerrilla presence or narcos. I went to Cali a lot, because we had American prisoners there. Cali is an interesting city with a sizable black population. There always seemed to be an American or two in jail and so we would do our prison visits. There was a Cali-American Friendship Society and I got to know an American missionary, a Catholic priest, and would visit his school. Everyone went to Cartagena, a real tourist destination, on the coast. We also had a consulate in Barranquilla, which I visited to review their ACS workload. The embassy had a small apartment there which employees could rent.

My mother, my youngest sister, and my cousin came to visit for about two weeks, which was a lot of fun. And I found places to take them. Colombia is such a beautiful country. On Sundays you would drive up to La Calera, heading into the Andes, where they had trout fish restaurants right on the streams where they caught the fish and prepared it for

you right there. Also nearby was Villa de Leiva which was a preserved colonial town. I also took my family to the thermal baths in Paipa, in Tunja department. The Amazon rainforest was off limits, largely, because of the guerrillas.

Q: Were you concerned about bombing and that sort of thing?

BUTENIS: Sure. We knew the embassy was under surveillance but the narcos were mostly interested in our Drug Enforcement Administration personnel and the guerrillas in our military advisers. Certainly any embassy staffer could have been in the wrong place at the wrong time. I don't recall any terrorism incidents, though.

Q: I'd like to touch on this more later on, but did this change your work habits?

BUTENIS: I've always been very much attuned to security precautions. The most important principle for me was not to set a pattern. We took armored shuttles to and from the embassy and we could not take public transportation. Weekends were the challenge.

I remember Consul General Tim Randall asked me to set up a cascade notification system, a telephone tree for the consular section. I already had the reputation of getting things done and if you really don't want me to take action on something, then don't ask me. So, I asked the vice consuls for their home phone numbers (I don't think we had cell phones then) and wanted to do drills after hours and on weekends, to test the cascade. Some complained to Tim, finding it inconvenient or intrusive, or some such nonsense. And Tim did not back me up, the issue just dropped. That was a key lesson for me, both the need to be prepared and how leadership has to do the right thing. I still retain some of the security habits I learned in Bogotá, like locking my car doors when I get out to pump my gas here.

Q: I quit before life changed drastically in protection and welfare, but in my era in consular work we could pretty well do what we wanted with problem cases. We could get somebody, put them on a plane and give them a shot -- Or we would also pass around quite a bit of information about people or we would pass these files back and forth to the different posts along the way. As I retired in the early '80s we were beginning to have to eliminate these files. You weren't supposed to have a lot of information on people.

BUTENIS: My senior ACS FSN, gone now but an absolutely wonderful woman, Maria Cristina Gomez – she kept those kinds of files on cases and in many ways they were an invaluable source of information about a person's previous problems in Colombia. However, I hate clutter, including old files, so I insisted she shred the oldest files and we had an argument about this. I lost.

We still had some flexibility in how to handle people. I remember one case, of course it's Friday afternoon, the holiday season, it's 4:00PM, we're about to close when in walks an American citizen from New Jersey, my home state. I recognized the accent. He was a bit of a smart ass. He already knew that the embassy can help Americans without funds find

a place to stay until we can repatriate them. He said he needed a hotel, that his family won't help him so he hasn't called them. He was very cocky. I thought he probably had been through this before. So I asked for his family's phone number, told him I would contact them, and he could come back on Monday. "Well, where am I going to stay?" and I said the same place you spent the previous week. When I called his family, I reached a sister, it was a well-off family and this guy was the black sheep. I listened to the long, sorry list of the brother's sins and finally got to ask if the family would send him funds to leave. The parents said no, no money. The sister thought that that would leave him stranded and out of their hair but I had to tell her that we would fund his return as a loan.

We were finally ready to repatriate him. We had put him up in one of those nice little hotels we used. I sent my junior officer deputy, Jim, to take the guy to the airport. Jim called from the hotel to report that the guy wouldn't, what should he do? Jim was a big guy so I told him to pick the guy up and put him into the car. Jim was delighted to be authorized to solve the problem and he did. On the way to the airport, Jim shrewdly mentioned to the idiot that it would not be good if Colombian authorities found any drugs on him. The guy said "Uh, OK, can you stop the car?" So they stopped and the guy threw his drugs out on the road and they continued to the airport. As the guy got on the plane, he said "Tell Ms. Butenis Merry Christmas".

Rightly or wrongly, we felt we had a certain leeway to solve problems. I once had an American woman married to a Colombia who was abusive. The woman wanted to be repatriated to the States with their son but Colombian authorities required the non-traveling parent's written consent for the child's travel and the husband refused that consent. So I told the husband that he unfortunately would not be able to apply for a green card unless his wife and child were in the U.S. That wasn't quite true but whatever it took. He let the kid go. You probably can't get away with that anymore.

Q: Where did you go after Bogota?

BUTENIS: They made me go to the National War College. I didn't want to go, but they made me go because I'd just gotten promoted. I was a new FSO-1. And you know how they do it. Would you like to go to the War College? No. You're going to the War College. OK.

Q: Why didn't you want to go?

BUTENIS: Like most of us, I've always preferred being overseas. My two years on the Salvador desk really cured me of any interest in serving in Washington. But OK, I went. I didn't really know what the War College program would be like, so I didn't make my decision based on any fair assessment of what it offered. They have a certain number of slots for civilians, and then within the State Department allotment they try to have a good mix of cones. I'm glad I did it though there were some less than enjoyable moments. I was a liberal Democrat, I was State Department, and I was a woman, in an environment

not historically welcoming to someone like me. So, there was a certain amount of ribbing. You just had to learn to give it back.

I did enjoy getting to know our military services. I didn't know much about the U.S. Military, other than the Marine Security Guards, the Defense Attaché Office and military trainers at posts. I was very interested to learn the differences among the services, the rivalries, the way people regarded the Reserves. I developed my own sort of stereotypes there. The Marines were tough, for example. One Marine in our committee room (like a home room) never wore a coat, no matter how cold it was. The Air Force members came across as very confident, if not cocky and in theory anyway dismissive of rules. The Navy was the most traditional, and the naval officers were the most academically-oriented, the smartest students. And the Army was just this huge can-do organization. If nobody else could do it, give it to the Army and they would salute, suck it up and go do it.

Q: As a teenager -- this was during the war -- I was in Annapolis, Maryland as my brother graduated from the Naval Academy. He was 10 years older than I and graduated in 1940. I remember sitting around listening to the families of girls that I would date from time-to-time talking about eligible males. "Oh she's going around with George" or something and "he's a lieutenant or something, and invariably the question was, "Well, what class was he?" And if they would say, "Well, he's a Reserve." The Navy had a huge number of members. It was the war and if someone was a Reserve officer, it was as though somebody had said a bad word.

BUTENIS: In each committee room you elected a chair, and ours was in the Army reserve, an older man and some of the other military students commented behind his back about his Reserve status. I thought he was quite capable and unflappable. President Clinton was in office then and there were lots of Hillary jokes. More seriously, the two big current issues with all sorts of implications for our military that we addressed in our studies were Somalia and Bosnia. Not just U.S. foreign policy, but the military's role on the ground.

Q: How to deal with those.

BUTENIS: Yes. If I remember correctly the organizing framework for our military then was to have the capability at any given time to fight two and a half wars, while avoiding the mistakes of the last war fought and facing new threats at the same time. I was overwhelmed at first with the amount of reading that we were supposed to do until one of my military classmates said, "It's only a lot of reading if you do it." I was impressed with classroom discussions because these were real, current issues which involved not only our military but also the State Department, often the law enforcement agencies, USAID, etc. Most of the military students had limited experience working with the civilian agencies and there were misconceptions on both sides.

I was also impressed with the phenomenal speakers the War College brought in. Supreme Court Justice Scalia, Dick Cheney (then out of office), Cokie Roberts – and George Kennan! It was a real privilege to hear him speak, the architect of our Cold War policy of containment. The administrators went to great lengths to bring in respected analysts with different views. I remember two lectures in particular that initially looked like they would require concentration, not entertaining and I decided to pay attention and found both lectures fascinating. One speaker was a faculty member, a priest from Georgetown, who talked about the concept of a “just war” and the other speaker talked about Mexico and its politics and history. Both these topics had tremendous relevance for U.S. foreign policy then and as they still do now.

The highlight of the course was an overseas trip. Every year the students took a two week trip to one of, say 18 areas of the world, to examine politico-military issues. You chose which trip you wanted to take. I chose the Baltics/Scandinavia because I didn't know I'd ever get a chance to go there, and my father's family came from Lithuania. We did research on the issues before we left and there was a report after the trip. Our first stop was Lithuania. This was 1994, not very long after the Baltics declared independence from the Soviet Union. It was just a phenomenal trip. We landed on a cold, gloomy Sunday and the Lithuanians took us immediately to the former KGB headquarters, which had been converted into a museum. It was pretty sobering, the place where people were tortured and executed. They documented KGB atrocities. Pretty awful. We also met with Lithuanian officials, many of whom were very, very young and some of whom had left the countries where their parents had immigrated, to serve an independent Lithuania. We only drove through Riga, Latvia (on our bus) and the next stop was Tallinn, Estonia, which even then seemed very different in atmosphere than Lithuania, much more European, due to the Finnish influence. We next took a three-hour ferry to Finland and what I remember is how many drunk Finns were on board this morning trip. The Finns would come to Estonia for the much cheaper booze. After our program in Helsinki we took an overnight ferry to Sweden, our last stop.

Q: Well, did you come away with a greater appreciation of what the military could and couldn't do?

BUTENIS: Sure. I understood for the first time what a huge organization it is and how difficult it was for them to do anything jointly. “Jointness” was a relatively new concept then and each service had its own proud history and traditions and there was a lot of resistance to changing to greater inter-operability. The War College prepared me to a certain extent for my tour in Iraq, years later, especially the insights I gained into the cultural differences between the Foreign Service and the military. The military devoted a lot of time and effort to planning whereas we didn't do very much of that. We civilians also operated on much longer timelines, for example, fighting poverty, establishing or strengthening democracy, reducing corruption, etc. The military had much shorter-term objectives, what we called a “take that hill” mission. We are supposed to complement and support each other's missions but while we grasped all this in theory in class, to actually try to live it in the field, Iraq, for instance, was another matter.

Q: You mentioned the fact that the military seemed to be much more conservative. Did you find that particularly with Clinton in office?

BUTENIS: I realize I shouldn't generalize but by and large in our discussions people were often critical of President Clinton's policies. I remember thinking at first that their derogatory comments were disloyal. As an FSO both overseas and serving in Washington, I was always careful about publicly supporting the Administration's policies, even when I disagreed with them. That disagreement was for private discussion with friends or in policy discussions in the Department. But I concluded that this was a safe environment for frank discussion, though it still surprised me a little. What I did not like was the personal comments made in committee or informal discussions about the President and First Lady. Democrat though I was, I would never have publicly made snide comments about President or Mrs. Reagan, for example.

After the War College, I served as chief of field ops in the Visa Office for three years. I had decided before I left Bogota that I would spend several years in Washington and I had never served a tour in consular affairs. I supervised a staff of about eight officers and had some interaction with the consular front office, headed then by Assistant Secretary Mary Ryan. I travelled about once a year for consular workshops. I loved having a 9-5 job, no long days and weekends like when I was on the Salvador desk. It was a very enjoyable assignment.

Most of my issues involved closely working with what was then INS, the Immigration and Naturalization Service. These included political asylum issues, trafficking in persons, visa refusal rates, and immigration fraud. There was inherent tension between INS and State on a very basic level. Crudely put, INS could not understand why those idiotic consular officers issued visas to obviously unqualified applicants and we could never understand why those idiotic INS examiners approved those obviously fraud-based immigration and temporary worker petitions. We had a working group with INS which met monthly on operational issues, with input from the field and that was an excellent, well-run mechanism. The INS reps in the group were always professional and collegial, even though we didn't always agree.

Q: Did you find the INS officers sort of tended to resent the State Department or --

BUTENIS: -- Well, not with my INS counterparts but I'm sure it was there. INS was going through a rough patch with Congress over some issue and there was a proposal, I believe a serious one, to have State take over some of the immigration functions in INS. I don't think this even reached the level of debate in Congress but the idea was out there. I remember my boss at the time saying that would be like a small, exclusive boutique absorbing K-Mart.

Our biggest frustration at the working level with INS was their approval of what we believed were immigration petitions based on patently fraudulent marriages with

American citizens (almost all women), or fake job offers. Visa officers in the field would investigate such petitions to the extent possible and send the petitions back but almost invariably INS determined that our proof of fraud did not meet the required standard for revocation. Indian Sikhs from the Punjab were notorious for entering the States, arranging a fraudulent marriage with prostitutes or frankly duping some not very bright women to marry them. These men all had wives and families back in the Punjab, living in their parents' homes. They had never divorced their Indian wives and eventually after getting a green card the men would divorce the American and come back to sponsor the Indian family for immigration. INS understood our frustration, but they were dealing with the American legal system *in America* where the beneficiaries had lawyers. We thought that it was easier for INS to approve the petition and hoped that we would take care of it in the field, that we would stop it there.

Q: I'm trying to get from these interviews some sense of working in offices. Did you get any particular feel for any of the conflicts within?

BUTENIS: One of the valuable things for me from working in the Visa Office was understanding the civil service component of the State Department. I would say about half the staff in the Visa Office, if not more, were civil service. Most of the support staff were African-American. There were some stereotypes, I suppose. I think civil servants saw Foreign Service Officers as always ready, maybe too ready to make changes, since they would be gone in a year or two. Foreign Service Officers would suggest ideas that in some cases had already been tried and hadn't worked, as the longer-term civil servants knew. From a Foreign Service view we found some civil service colleagues unwilling to try something new, not interested in doing something differently, too wedded to the status quo.

Q: There really are two different organizations. The Foreign Service, you go where you're sent and you move from job to job and you can move up and down in rank whereas the civil servant is assured of a job, a single job, and they have to apply to move and they're only promoted if they move into a different job. It's quite different. And yet there's an effort to put them together. For example, State Department used to have what they call Foreign Service Day. And now they call it Foreign Affairs Day. It's sort of an alumni day. It's not a bad idea to combine the two but it's implicit that the Foreign Service feels that it is an elite. And I happen to subscribe to that.

BUTENIS: Working here at FSI has been interesting because I got to know some of my civil service colleagues who've been around for a long time. Some have said to me, "The Foreign Service is different." We tend to bring more energy to a job. That's a way of saying we work harder I guess. One of the things I learned about the civil service system is that while there are some employees who never leave a job and can't be fired or forced to retire, but provide continuity and can become real subject matter experts. There are others who change jobs frequently, moving into higher-ranked positions, almost like FSOs who only stay in a job for a couple of years, but at least in the Foreign Service supervisors know how long they will be there.

I saw an example of a civil servant remaining too long in his job post with Dick Scully, who was head of the legs & regs division in the Visa Office. He had been there for a long time and was well-known in the immigration law community as well as within the State Department. He had entrenched himself in his own little empire and acted independently of anyone else, including then Assistant Secretary Ryan. I don't even recall which policy issues Ryan and Scully clashed on, but he was just an arrogant, verbally abusive man who I thought should have retired long ago. He didn't act accountable to anyone. I am not suggesting that he should have bowed to political or bureaucratic pressure but he seemed to go out of his way to demonstrate that he didn't care about anyone else's opinions or interests. Of course, people criticize FSOs for not being team players, just looking out for glory and credit, always looking ahead to their next assignment. I heard this in an especially egregious way in the War College. The commandant at the time was an Air Force general who once on stage in the auditorium claimed that the typical FSO is smart but not a team player and is only looking to take credit for what other people produce. Perhaps he had worked with some FSOs who fit that bill but to generalize like that from the stage was wrong.

Q: I wonder if you want to talk about both any experiences you had, but also what you observed about the cultures in the Department.

BUTENIS: I was a career consular officer and this was the first time I'd actually served in the Consular Affairs Bureau. I don't know if it's still the case, but back then the sexy part of Consular Affairs was Citizen Services and within that, Children's Issues. But I wasn't particularly interested in those issues so I bid on the Visa Office Field Ops job which I enjoyed. In terms of physical location, being in State Annex -1, in Columbia Plaza meant being out of the loop, to a certain extent, far from even CA's seat of power. But that meant that the Visa Office was located in one place, which greatly facilitated communication.

In terms of a consular culture, even back then CA had a very good reputation for taking care of its own, but that also helped foster a sense of "otherness", setting consular officers, I think, a bit apart from our colleagues in the other cones. Nowadays I think it's become even more an entity or service unto itself, certainly in part because of the income CA operations generate from visa and passport issuance, but also an even stronger esprit de corps. You sometimes hear references to the consular cult rather than cone. Consular officers are extremely dedicated, they like what they do, they do it well but I think sometimes they don't see themselves also as FSOs. CA has been ahead of the Department's curve in encouraging high morale, and I think it was the first bureau to establish leadership tenets, and now it seems every other bureau is scrambling to develop a set. But back then I think people still saw themselves not just as consular officers, but also as FSOs. CA certainly has had some stellar leadership. Donna Hamilton, for example, was the PDAS in CA. She was really good, calm, someone we all liked working with. I also enjoyed working with David Hopper who was the Visa Office Director at one point.

Q: Well then, how did you feel that the Bureau of Consular Affairs treated you?

BUTENIS: Oh, I felt quite at home. The only issue for me was the fact that the public face of Consular Affairs had always been Children's Issues: welfare and whereabouts, custody disputes, adoptions, etc. I really wasn't drawn to those responsibilities. I think sometimes even in CA visas were seen as messy, not terribly popular on the Hill, always the risk of issuing to the wrong person and not any obvious appreciation for issuing to the right people. But personally CA treated me very well. I learned that as you moved up, as you become more senior, they really do tell you where they want you to go, which job to take. I got the sense that the CA Front office would identify so-called problem posts, either with difficult personnel issues or operational issues, and try to place someone there as section chief who they thought could fix things. I don't know that other bureaus did that at the time. I had delayed opening my window for the senior threshold because then that was the conventional wisdom. Don't open your window too soon. So I still had two or three years left before the seven year deadline came and then I began to get what I took to be signals from CA that I should open my window now and I'm thinking, how do they know? But I did open my window and got promoted the next cycle.

There was also a feeling that Personnel in those days thought CA was a dumping ground for officers that weren't doing well or for other reasons had to find a job.

I used to emphasize to my vice consuls, because I believed it and still do, that consular officers are really the face of America to most foreigners, especially nowadays when even with all our great public diplomacy outreach via social media. There are still lots of people whose only contact with America is the visa process. Consular work requires self-discipline and self-control and I still maintain that it is great preparation for all the other work we do.

Q: That's been more or less the pattern of putting people through this and realizing that your decisions really have profound effects on people's lives.

BUTENIS: They do. In New Delhi I had a vice consul who came to me from the interview window, not looking well, and I asked what was wrong. She explained that she had just refused her first student visa. She was sick about it. She believed she made the right call but was almost overwhelmed by the impact on the applicant, who may not have been engaged in fraud but was not qualified for a visa.

After the Visa office George Lannon, my boss in El Salvador, was the visa DAS and asked me what I wanted and I said, consul general in Warsaw. There was another strong bidder and a "shoot-out" over it but I got Warsaw. I went into ten months of Polish study at FSI. I was excited about going to Warsaw, I thought it would be a good fit. It was only about 10 years after the Berlin Wall came down and given the big role the Polish Solidarity movement had played in ending the Soviet Empire, it promised to be an interesting experience.

Q: Well, let's talk about Polish. As an old Slavic hand, I took Serbian, which was very nice, you know, but I'm told Polish is way up at the top of the Slavic languages.

BUTENIS: It is very difficult. My mother spoke, read and wrote Ukrainian, so I grew up hearing a very close Slavic language and I studied Russian for four years as an undergrad. I had also studied Latin in high school and that prepared for the use of cases, with nouns having different endings depending on their position in the sentence. So I think I went in with certain advantages. There were only about five of us who started at the same time and we bonded in our misery. The teachers were distinct personalities and had different backgrounds coming to FSI. Long term language study can be a long, hard slog but we got along with the teachers with one exception for me. This guy had a reputation (which we only learned later) of either inspiring admiration in some students or loathing in others, and I eventually joined the second group. I found that the teachers could pretty much use their own style of instruction and there didn't seem to be any attention paid to different students responding better to different methods.

This one particular teacher may have been a brilliant philologist and linguist but was verbally abusive in class, thinking that ridiculing students would somehow improve our ability to speak Polish. He was also funny, so initially we all laughed at his jokes and antics. But I had had enough when one day, he mocked another student, saying "That's a pretty lame excuse for speaking Polish." The student was stunned by his remark and I just glared at him. He saw my look, giggled and making a joke of it, offered to take off his belt and hang himself to which I replied, fine, you do that and I'll cut you down. So after that the other student (who was also fairly senior) and I went to the language supervisor and said we refused to have him as a teacher anymore. I think I had already complained about him to her before and she said that other students thought he was the best teacher they had ever had. I said, great, then they can have him but for those of us who cannot learn with him, he's the worst teacher. My colleague and I were senior enough to assert ourselves and the supervisor rearranged our classes so we never had to deal with him again.

We all passed the test but I admit that I disregarded the supervisor's advice to use the language every day at post. In reality, my Polish was never good enough to conduct business at the Foreign Ministry and most of my Polish contacts spoke English, so it would have been artificial for me to insist on using my halting Polish. I felt the same way with our Foreign Service Nationals and that was a mistake. I should have asked them to speak only Polish to me, but I didn't. But I had enough Polish to not worry about getting lost while driving, to take taxis, and I was quite proud of being able to communicate verbally and in writing to my Polish housekeeper, who had no English. Every morning I wrote a "Memo to Jola" with instructions and I could also talk to her on the phone. She paid me the supreme compliment of saying that, over the years my Polish had gotten better.

Q: What was the situation in Poland?

BUTENIS: It was a really interesting time to be there. Dan Fried was the newly-arrived ambassador. It was the first country I'd been in to that point where they actually loved America and Americans. In fact it was almost too much. They seemed to have forgiven us Yalta. Everybody wanted to go to America, every Pole had a relative somewhere in Chicago, and there was tremendous demand for visas. They thought they should have qualified for the visa waiver program but their refusal rate didn't come close. They were not then in the European Union. I saw the transition of generations. The oldest generation spoke German as a second language. The parental generation, Russian. But the younger generation wanted English. So you could see the social impact. Poland, to my understanding, never was under a particularly heavy yoke of communism. It hadn't really been collectivized so that a lot of the outward signs of communism that you saw in other countries you didn't see in Poland.

Q: I interviewed one person who said they were convinced there were probably maybe 10 convinced Communists in the country.

BUTENIS: Exactly and you had the legacy of Lech Walesa, Solidarność, Solidarity. Aleksander Kwasniewski was the president. Walesa by then had been sort of discredited. He was seen as a buffoon-like character. He wasn't very sophisticated, not well educated, and I think people were beginning to forget his major contributions to achieving independence and getting Poland back on the road to democracy. One of the most significant events during my time there was Poland joining NATO, in 1999.

One of the legacies of communism was the fact that there was very little street crime. You didn't worry about walking at night. I also admired the way the previous regime constructed public housing--these ugly apartment blocks but with lots of green space which made it prettier than it might have been otherwise. However, homeowners were already beginning to exercise their rights by renting out space on their front lawns to advertisers who put up huge, ugly billboards for various products. No zoning regulations yet, I guess. That was a shame. Socially, it was a little quiet but you began to see more and more restaurants. By this time I was a vegetarian and appreciated Italian restaurants opening up. If I went to a Polish restaurant the fare was pretty carnivore-pleasing. If I were lucky, there'd be one vegetarian dish, a plate of boiled vegetables, maybe with an egg on top, not even pepper. The cuisine was pretty bland for my taste but hearty.

Shopping—there were a few big French grocery stores, like Carrefour and Auchan opening. I enjoyed walking to the local outdoor market near my home to buy fresh bread, produce and dairy products. You could drive anywhere in the country. So it was very family-friendly and a nice place to be.

Q: Let's talk about the job. How did you find morale in the embassy, and talk about your work.

BUTENIS: Morale was pretty good. We had a legal advisor from the Department of Justice who was of Polish extraction. The Defense Attachés office was quite happy to be there. The Polish military embraced them. Younger single people probably found it a little boring until they began to make friends outside the embassy. The local diplomatic community was large, so there were the usual diplomatic functions. So I think morale was pretty good.

The Poles LOVE horses and dogs. There's this saying which I cannot say in Polish: in Poland the cow may be thin but the horse is always fat. They also believed in letting nature take its course, for example not having dogs neutered or spayed. They also had no leash laws and dogs were free to wander off and sometimes when they got into fights which the Poles thought was natural and that the dogs would sort it out. Once my dog Chester, a Chow-Belgian Tervuren mix adopted from a Virginia shelter, escaped from my house, after I had warned my housekeeper, Jola to watch him. She followed him across a very busy road and tracked him to a farm where he was busy slaughtering the farmer's chickens. The toll was five dead and several mortally wounded. Jola paid the man what she thought was fair compensation and then berated him for having a hole in his fence which gave Chester his chance. If we had been in the States, animal control would have been called and I would have been sued.

The Poles are very candid, they will tell you absolutely what they think, which took some getting used to. If I wasn't feeling well, my housekeeper would say "You look terrible today." Well, thank you very much! Or, "You've put on weight." I took Chester to the vet once because he had trouble breathing. After the vet examined him the first thing she said was "Well, if he has a heart condition we can't help him, so he'll die." Now, no American vet would be that blunt, and as it turned out she was wrong, he had an allergy. But I was already planning on how I could drive Chester across the border to Germany for a heart transplant or whatever was needed. The bedside manner could have been a little smoother.

I remember when I was studying Polish and asking for the social phrases I would need as a hostess, such as "I hope you enjoyed yourself" or "How lovely of you to join us", the Polish teachers advised not to say that, because if the Polish guests had not enjoyed the event, they would tell you.

One issue that came up was racism in Poland. Poland is pretty homogenous. The Jewish community was virtually wiped out leaving a non-diverse Catholic Polish population. As Poland became an open society, tourists and other travelers began to arrive, which people welcomed but it also exposed Poles to a diversity new to them. For example, African-American basketball players who had joined European leagues would play in Poland. We got complaints from them that they were sometimes attacked and often heard racial slurs. One African-American tourist also reported this kind of incident. So we made the case to our front office and then Washington that we had to say something in the travel advisory that minority Americans visiting Poland should be aware that they may experience insults or perhaps even violence. I think it was fairly mild and we didn't

propose this lightly, because of course the Polish government objected, but we felt we owed it to our citizens to make that point.

Q: Let's talk about the consular section. How big was it and what were your prime interests?

BUTENIS: We had a large immigrant visa (IV) section and a large non-immigrant visa (NIV) section, and the NIV fraud rate was fairly high. It seemed that every Pole had a relative in the U.S. and the quickest way to immigrate was a tourist visa. It wasn't a visa mill, though. The Poles believed they were entitled to enjoy the Visa Waiver program because of their status as a close U.S. ally and that wasn't going to happen on my watch because the NIC refusal rate was too high.

Another bilateral consular issue was the refusal of the Polish government to issue travel documentation for its citizens who had served prison terms in the U.S. and were now subject to deportation. These were individuals who in some cases had lived in the U.S. almost their entire lives, had green cards but had never become naturalized U.S. citizens. Some didn't even speak Polish. The Immigration and Naturalization Service was now going to exercise the right to deport them. Certainly Poland wasn't the only country expected to accept back its nationals and probably not the only one to decline to accept them. They would not document them. Their argument was "We gave them to you as innocent children, you made them into criminals, you keep them." I would go back and forth with the Foreign Ministry on this and I may have obtained agreement to issue Polish passports in a few cases but maybe not.

Another issue was the remnant of the Jewish community that remained in Poland after the Holocaust. The Poles were very sensitive about their role in the Holocaust. They argued that they were also victimized by the Nazis and objected strenuously to any reference to "Polish death camps", rather than "Nazi death camps in Poland". Be that as it may, there was a tiny remnant of the Jewish community that had survived in Poland. With the U.S. government's encouragement, the Polish government was trying to support that community and to ensure that Jews would feel comfortable living in Poland. I was introduced to an American rabbi, Michael Schudrich, who was instrumental in this effort. Rabbi Schudrich worked with the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation and lived in Poland for several years. He was appointed the Rabbi of Warsaw and later, as the Chief Rabbi of Poland. He was very well-connected in Washington and New York and it was very interesting to see his work in Poland.

Q: Was anti-Semitism apparent?

BUTENIS: Well, it wouldn't have been to me, but I think Rabbi Schudrich and Polish Jews would say yes, that there were still comments, there had been swastikas painted on some synagogues. I don't think Poles objected to a rebuilding of the Jewish community, but they didn't want any blame to be apportioned to them for the Holocaust.

The Jewish community had a long history in Poland. Ambassador Fried spoke Polish and had a very warm relationship with the Polish public, because I think he understood all aspects of their culture and they responded to that. So even though like any ambassador, he had some tough bilateral issues with the Polish government, Fried really reached out to Poles on the issue of their Jewish community and his views were respected. Another part of the Jewish legacy in Poland was the physical evidence of that culture – what was left of synagogues, schools, homes. One Sunday I decided to visit the Jewish cemetery, in Powazki. I took the subway to the end of the line and walked the rest of the way. I liked to walk in Warsaw, it was a very easy city to walk around. It was a dark, gloomy Sunday. When you arrive there was a new gate and several memorials to individuals and families who had perished in the Holocaust. I remember one such memorial which was so heart-breaking, a man listing all his extended family and then saying, “and only I remained”, or something similar. I could not help but cry. Once you got beyond this modern part of the cemetery, with paving stones that people could donate to memorialize, then you walked into the cemetery itself and it was just this very eerie place, neglected for so long, that trees had grown around and through the tombstones. When you go to an American cemetery, it’s very well kept and green and looks like a golf course or park, and this was just something very different. The tombstones had toppled, the trees coming up through them, it was really frightening, tragic in a way. I don’t know what the plans were or what it looks like now, but it was a horribly poignant statement about the Jewish community’s fate in Poland.

Q: How about the role of the Catholic Church, because it was both in resistance and in cooperation with the Soviets?

BUTENIS: The Church was very powerful. Many people saw it as personifying Polish identity. I was there when John Paul II, the Polish Pope visited Poland where he was bigger than a rock star. My impression was that the Church tried to play politics behind the scenes but was very public on social issues. You couldn’t even talk about abortion. Divorce, I believe, was legal in Poland but the Church didn’t want to hear about it. They were very conservative on a lot of social issues and were becoming increasingly out of touch with the younger generation. I wouldn’t say that the younger generations had turned against the Church and everyone was quite proud of “their” Pope, particularly the contribution that John Paul II made to Poland’s political liberation and development. But the people who actually turned out for Mass Sunday morning were not young men, and increasingly fewer young women. They were excited to be part of the West again, and wanted jobs in Europe, wanted to learn English, and didn’t worry that the Church’s position on personal freedoms was different from theirs. That didn’t seem to matter.

Q: What about interviewing? When I was in the Senior Seminar I did my paper on foreign consuls in the United States, and I interviewed the consul General of Poland in Chicago. He said that there were more Poles that were close to the number in Warsaw that were under his jurisdiction. That is a huge Polish community. You must have been getting a lot of pressure from Americans who wanted their Polish cousin to visit.

BUTENIS: Oh, sure! They wanted a young cousin to come as their housekeeper or the nanny. We had a lot of that although of course the U.S. relatives were not that explicit, claiming that they wanted a young relative to come and stay for several months, just to see America, etc. We were also getting more student visa applications and those we tried to look favorably on, unless the finances weren't in order and then you knew something was up.

Nowadays we would frown on this as profiling I suppose, but visa officers often looked at applicants and could often accurately size up who they were in that society - the way they were dressed, how they spoke, and that helped you make your decision, whether the applicant's story made sense. But in Poland at that time our visa applicants pretty much looked the same. You didn't get farmers coming in, you didn't get the babushkas coming in, you got their daughters or sons, and there weren't many class distinctions yet, so you really didn't know. You couldn't even use knowledge of English as an indicator of socio-economic status because people were just beginning to want to study English. So all the 'tells' we might look for were harder to find in Poland. It seemed that everybody had somebody in the States, so that could work for or against them in their visa application.

Q: How about Americans who got in trouble? Either through automobile accidents or criminal activities or what?

BUTENIS: We didn't get a lot of that. There were lots of Polish-Americans visiting family and another big draw was—I have to talk about this—Poland's national shrine, the Black Madonna of Częstochowa, with its miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary. This launches me into the story of my family's visit. When I was in Warsaw, I arranged for my mother—in a wheelchair, my cousin in her 60's, her sister-in-law recovering from breast cancer, my two sisters and my niece to visit me. All of us were Catholic so I arranged a trip to Częstochowa.

I had been to Czestochowa before and so I knew the layout. But my mother was in a wheelchair, so we couldn't just show up, I had to make sure we could manage in the ever-present crowds there. I made the fatal mistake of identifying myself as the U.S. consul general to the shrine administrator. I wasn't asking for any favors, I just wanted to make sure that the church would be open and accessible to wheelchairs. I hired a van and driver and when we arrived, Father So-and-So was waiting for us. We had a brief rest, some tea and then the priest took us to the shrine itself.

So I was pushing my mother in the wheelchair, expecting that we'll go to the end of the line—there was a huge crowd—and get our glimpse of the icon. No. Father forged ahead, pushing through the people waiting and as we struggled to follow, I know I ran over more than one person's foot with the wheelchair. I was feeling embarrassed at this treatment, pushy Americans, etc. and of course, my family loved it! We got to the head of the line, saw the Madonna, mission accomplished, now we could go. But no, we were invited to lunch.

The priest took us into their personal dining hall, seated my family with some of the other priests having their lunch, and as they were served, pulled me aside and I knew what was coming. Could I help him with his visa? I was where you're never supposed to be as a consular officer, getting favors or special treatment, and you think you're fabulous that you have all these connections, as Father handed me a thick sheaf of papers about his visa case history. This was worse than bad. I said, "Well, Father, not now, but I'll be happy to look at this," so I took the file, extricated my family, and we left.

At home I eventually looked at Father's case. What a mess. He'd not only been to the States, he probably had a green card at one point, and then he was kicked out for fraud! Here's this priest who was in the INS database for fraud, he had a record! I'm absolutely astounded. I shouldn't have been. I finally had to write this letter explaining "you're welcome to reapply for an NIV but I don't encourage you to do so at this time."

I must describe the other big event during my family's visit. My mother's family came from Ukraine and my mother was the only sibling born in the United States. Her brothers and sister had all been born in Ukraine, then part of the Russian Empire. My mother had always stayed in touch with her relatives, she could read and write Ukrainian, and at that time I had passable Polish. I arranged a side trip to my mother's ancestral village near Ternopol, in western Ukraine. So this was huge—I felt I gained incredible credit in daughter heaven by doing this—so I really put a lot into this, including calling my cousin Igor on the phone, and arranging the details in my poor Polish and his Ukrainian. Sometimes I still can't believe I pulled it off.

We got on the plane, we landed in Lviv. It was June, so very hot and dry. They didn't pass out any immigration forms on the plane, we grabbed them in the arrival area, we are just jammed in with the crowd, I'm trying to take care of my mother in her wheelchair while herding the rest of the family together. I thought we were ready to get in the immigration line when I saw ahead of us my cousin, walking against the flow, back toward us, saying that immigration won't let us in because we did not have health insurance for Ukraine. At that moment, I became the ugly American diplomat. I went to the head of the line, stated that my Ukrainian visa was issued in Warsaw and my family's in New York and no one said anything about health insurance. I held my black passport in front of the official and said we were just here to see our relatives and stared at him. He said, "Ok, ok, your family can come in but nobody else.", as if I were trying to bring the whole planeload in with me. We got through that, pushed through to the arrivals hall, and mercifully found the young driver with our rental van outside. We gratefully got into the air conditioned van and drove to the Grand Hotel in Lviv, which I had made sure had an elevator since it would have been very hard for my mother to climb stairs. I called my cousin Igor and reported our arrival. The next day we drove to their village, about two hours outside of Lviv, and my cousin was waiting for us at the junction of his village. That first day we spent with one of my mother's grandnieces and the next day with the other one. It was quite an experience. And of course the vodka came out. I apparently was the honorary male because I was always expected to knock 'em back. And it was so

hot. My mother didn't drink, so I did my duty for three toasts and that was it. Within 30 minutes my cousin Igor asked for a green card. I said, "no, sorry, next topic."

They made all their own food - the vodka, cheese, kielbasa, bread. They had electricity but no refrigerator. They had a root cellar instead. They had TV and a car but no indoor plumbing, using instead a wooden outhouse. My mother really enjoyed the visit. This was the village where her parents had been born, and their parents before them. My mother was not a sentimental woman, but she looked happy that day, and I felt happy myself that I had made this possible for her. We walked to the village church where my grandmother had been married in the late nineteenth century and then to the cemetery where we saw the graves of our ancestors. It was really quite something. I tried to ask about the family's life under the Soviet Union but they would not talk about the past, about communism except to comment that at least everyone had a job then.

Q: When did you leave Warsaw?

BUTENIS: My tour was ending in 2001. I was promoted into the Senior Foreign Service while in Poland so I wanted to bid on an onward assignment that was more challenging. I wasn't thinking of DCMships yet and saw that consul general Bogota was open, so I bid. I had heard about the serious management issues in the consular section there, especially an NIV interview waiting list that was 18 months long. So I think I interviewed with Maura Hardy, who was at that time in the consular affairs bureau's front office. I think she was a little surprised that I wanted the job but I did, so that's where I went next. When I was in my first tour in Bogota we were in the old embassy which was in a heavily urban area with restaurants and stores and you could pop out at lunchtime to eat or shop. We had since moved into a new compound, closer to the airport and in a largely residential area, much more secure but less urban, less interesting. One of my fondest memories was leaving at the end of the day, coming out of the building and seeing the Andes in the distance with the sun setting, spectacularly beautiful. Most employees were not allowed to drive to work so we took armored shuttles, with an armed guard, that varied their times and routes daily.

I had a car but hardly ever drove it. It sounds strange, but Bogota was a great city for walking, and I felt safe walking in my residential neighborhood. I of course walked my dogs at least twice a day. Whenever I had an engagement in my neighborhood or wanted to go to a restaurant I would just walk there. I did find two or three taxistas, vetted by RSO and would call one of them if I didn't want to take the shuttle to or from work on some days or if I was going shopping.

Q: Can you explain what the hell was going on there?

BUTENIS: When I left Colombia in 1993, the big drug cartels—the Medellin cartel, the Cali Cartel, and others— were under a lot of pressure from the government with the support of our Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) mission. Pablo Escobar was killed in late 1993 and the big cartels had been broken up but into smaller ones which

continued operating. By the time I returned to Colombia they had joined forces with the guerrillas. The FARC (Frente Armada Revolucionaria Colombiana, Colombian Armed Revolutionary Front) and the ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, National Liberation Army) were the two major ones, and over time the FARC and the ELN pretty much lost their ideological identity and discovered how much money they could make with narcotics and we had a new term, “narco-terrorism.” The threat was still there, our DEA people were still under threat. We also had military trainers per Plan Colombia, which we consider a success today, which guided US efforts to combat both narcotics trafficking and the guerrilla threat. It was still an extremely violent country with a huge area controlled by the guerrillas or the narcos and which were off-limits not only to us but to Colombians too.

Another industry that flourished was kidnapping for ransom. Even during my first tour the guerrillas kidnapped people, initially for political reasons. Now the guerrillas were kidnapping people—foreigners, Colombians—for ransom. Kidnapped Americans were part of the ACS workload. Of course, if Americans, or anybody, was kidnapped, the kidnappers would tell the family not to contact the police. We didn’t usually hear about kidnappings until either they’d paid the ransom and been released or, in some cases, killed. We had a travel warning advising Americans not to come to Colombia. But there was a resident American community in the various cities as well and young, foolish Americans were recruited to act as mules to bring cocaine into the U.S., so we still had a sizable ACS workload.

Whatever the dangers, Colombia was a very lovely country and Bogota a great city to live in and as I had experienced in El Salvador, it could be hard to stay cognizant of the threats while you were enjoying the lovely climate, restaurants and bars, and the beautiful landscape. Day trips outside Bogota, like to Villa de Leiva were popular and there were country clubs as well.

Q: What about the local staff? How did they feel about this whole situation and how did you deal with it?

BUTENIS: As you know from your own experience, most of our local employees were very loyal. We were considered a good employer. Our salaries were competitive. What was a concern was trying not to do business with narcos. Our Management Section vetted potential landlords vigorously, to make sure we would not be renting apartments from narcos who were laundering their drug money through legitimate businesses. Narco-trafficking was a very pervasive activity and it touched every aspect of life in Colombia. Embassy children attending the so-called American school had to be careful not to strike up friendships with the children of narcos. There was also a certain amount of hostility toward Embassy children

Q: What about the problems you mentioned about waiting periods for visas? Were you able to do anything?

BUTENIS: I think that's part of my legend. When I arrived, CA was implementing call centers worldwide, outsourcing scheduling for visa appointments and provision of basic information about visa processing. Up until then consular sections were scheduling their own appointments. By the time I arrived our waiting time was about 18 months. Well, that created a situation where applicants with influence or with genuine emergencies or students facing enrollment deadlines which we could not ignore. So, we had a parallel appointment schedule for people who had alleged emergencies or who could get a referral from an embassy colleague for an early appointment. Managing two different systems consumed an enormous amount of time and staff resources and our public image was not very good, deservedly so.

Q: How many vice consuls did you have?

BUTENIS: Twenty-three.

Q: Good God!

BUTENIS: Everyone worked hard but I pushed them to do more interviews each day. What we learned was when you have an 18 month wait, a certain percentage of the people scheduled to show up on any given day were no-shows, because they had already been interviewed as an early appointment or they just gave up – but these people never cancelled their original appointments. I decided to overbook, to schedule more interviews than we would normally be able to handle if everyone showed up. It wasn't fair, because we filled in slots with people calling for an appointment for the first time, rather than sending all of them to the end of the 18 month waiting list, but we started to cut the waiting time. The vice consuls were really working harder now, with more people showing up for interviews and at one point I think they were plotting to kill me. When the call center came on line we were able to identify people who already had appointments in the 18 month queue and cancel those appointments and fill them with new callers. I think by the time I left we were down to maybe six months. We also sometimes did interviews on Saturdays, like students going to study in the United States or in the IV section, parents of Americans. Everyone pitched in, including the FSN staff, who of course bore the brunt of applicants berating them on the phone for an early appointment.

Q: Boy! What about dealing with Americans in trouble?

BUTENIS: We had regular warden meetings, and I was on the board of the American Society. You know what those are like. There was an American Society in Bogota, one in Cali. They helped out with our American prisoners, because we always had Americans in jail both in Cali and in Bogota, mostly for drug trafficking, most of them kids, not professional criminals. If I couldn't get to Cali to visit our incarcerated Americans, because sometimes it was too dangerous, the American Society guys would do it for us. At Christmastime they would distribute little gift bags for our prisoners. Their support was tremendous.

We had one guy whose first name was Elvis, from a Cuban-American family in Florida. Elvis had just gotten married, his wife was pregnant and he came down and got caught trying to smuggle cocaine into the U.S. I remember visiting him as soon as we were notified, and we had great access, great cooperation with Colombian police and prison authorities. So here's this kid who you can just see used to be full of bravado, and he can't believe he's in jail and he starts bargaining with me, as if I could make this all go away. "I promise I'll never do it again" and "What's my mother going to say?" His mother did come down to see him during the year he was in prison. He was quite enterprising. Once he got over the fact that he was going to do time, he managed to -- I don't know how they did this -- he managed to run a pool table operation, billiards, in the prison. It became his way to earn some money. When his son was born, his mother came down again to show him the baby's photos. I remember thinking he might do OK, if he stays out of trouble, what's one year out of your life when you are so young?

I wanted to talk about Anne Patterson who was ambassador when I arrived. I tell this story as an example of her stellar leadership. We had a car bomb one night in our neighborhood. It was in a social club, and an embassy officer had just left the building shortly before the car bomb exploded. The guerrillas had tricked some stupid club employee into helping them and he parked the car bomb in the garage. Of course it was scheduled to detonate before he thought it would so he died as well.

I was in my apartment Friday night and heard a "boom" and my windows rattled. I immediately activated the consular notification cascade. I made sure that we practiced our telephone tree monthly and would run the drill unannounced on a weekend or workday evening. We reached everybody. I reported in to the RSO who then asked me to help locate other sections' staff. I was proud that our section was the best organized. Everyone was accounted for and safe and the next morning Anne scheduled an Emergency Action Committee meeting.

By then I had decided to have my own consular meeting in my apartment on Sunday so I could tell them what was going on. So after the Saturday meeting, I asked Anne if she would support curtailment for anyone who requested it. Now Bogota was a danger post and we were all getting extra pay for being there, but without hesitating she said, "of course." She didn't check with Washington, she just immediately made that decision. So I could go to my own meeting with my staff—and we invited the spouses - and we talked about how everybody felt--and I was able to say, "If anybody wants to leave, the ambassador will support you." I could see the relief on peoples' faces but no one asked to curtail. I always think of that as an example of Anne's tremendous leadership.

I have another example of how she took care of her people. During my first Bogota tour my head FSN for American Citizen Services was Maria Cristina Gomez. Maria Cristina was famous—she'd been with the embassy many years, a tremendously forceful character, with a lot of integrity. When I arrived for my second tour she was on sick leave because she had cancer. Maria Cristina was only in her 50s, maybe younger, and had many fans among FSOs who had served with her, including Maura Hardy who had been

NIV chief years ago. It was clear Maria Cristina was not going to survive and she was cheerful to the end, consoling her family and friends instead of the other way around. During her last few months the CA front office, and Maura may have been in the FO, wanted to give her an award, the equivalent of a lifetime achievement. I asked Anne if she would present it and she immediately agreed. We went to Maria Cristina's home and with family present gave Maria Cristina the award. It was wonderful to see her beaming with pleasure at this recognition. I still have photos of that event. Anne made the gesture that meant so much to Maria Cristina, her family and to us.

We were always alert to stories of Americans being kidnapped. Once a woman I was in graduate school with called. Her sister had married a wealthy Colombian rancher and their son had been kidnapped. My friend asked what they should do. I gave whatever advice I could while explaining that USG policy was not to pay ransom. Missionaries were sometimes kidnapped too, although generally that was a mistake on the kidnappers' part since missionary organizations did not have the money the kidnappers demanded as ransom and the kidnapped victims were killed or never seen again.

Q: Pat, question. I know we have this policy and it makes sense, we don't pay ransom. But when people call you and they say their son is kidnapped, what do you do? I've heard that you sort of explained the drill without advocating it. How did you deal with that?

BUTENIS: We had gotten to a point where we would be as frank as you just described. Somebody would call and I would say that the U.S. government does not support payment of ransom but we didn't make any effort to stop the families from doing so. We'd notify the legal attaché's office in the Embassy (the FBI) and they would track developments with local authorities but if the family did not want any law enforcement action, then we respected that. I don't recall if the Colombian authorities also respected the families' wishes. After I left Bogotá in 2004, I heard that the kidnapping business evolved to the point where they were snatching people off the street who looked like they might have an ATM card. Kidnapping had gone from the big bucks targets to anybody that might yield a few dollars.

Another issue I want to talk about is the role of missionaries. Colombia had American Catholic missionaries. I became friends with a Basilian missionary who's still in Cali, I think. I would visit his parish that was in a very crime-ridden, poor, largely African-Colombian neighborhood. Really just doing amazing work, operating a school and getting the graduates into high schools. I also got to know American Franciscan nuns and am still in touch with one of them. Their original mission was to found a school for the poor, but politics and social class realities being what they were, they figured out that they couldn't get any Colombians to support this unless they also established a school for the upper classes. So they had this academy, which I think is among the premier schools in Bogota and eventually they got support to open an annex for poor kids in the neighborhood and that was also a huge success. It's still functioning—Santa Francisca Romana School.

There were also Protestant Evangelicals. We had two large groups in Colombia, New Tribes and the Summer Institute of Linguistics. These are global organizations, I believe. They had their settlements, in different parts of the country. I visited at least one of them because they had their own small plane and they flew consular staff to their community so we could take passport applications and perform other consular services. It was more cost-effective for them to fly us out than for them to come into Bogota. Once I went with my senior FSN, and that was quite interesting. We stayed on the campus, which was surrounded by guerrilla activity, but they weren't too bothered. We took the passport applications, spent two nights there. They really lived rough. The first woman we met when we got there was suffering from malaria. She had just arrived to do her missionary work and had quickly contracted malaria.

I had mixed feelings about missionary work. They were certainly offering medical care and education that the government wasn't offering in those remote areas but they were also having an impact on the local culture. People who wanted to preserve the tribal cultures in the different areas objected to the missionary presence. One case presented a very sad dilemma. A missionary couple found a tribal woman who had just given birth to a baby with a very severe defect and the baby would not survive without an operation. The couple persuaded the mother to give the baby to them to have the operation and they would return the child to the mother. The baby stayed with this couple, who arranged for the operation in Bogota, but they then confronted the need for follow up care. The operation was successful but the baby required continued care, which the mother could not give in her village. I don't know how they resolved it, because the missionary family felt that if they returned the baby, the baby would die.

I also wondered about the role that the Summer Institute of Linguistics folks played. Their stated purpose in working with tribes was to learn the local language, which had no written form. The missionaries would then create a Roman letter alphabet for a particular language and then translate the Bible into that tribe's language using the new alphabet. This would also facilitate the tribe's conversion to Christianity which seemed to me the real purpose. I asked once what happened when the missionaries left the area, did people continue the literary tradition and use it for other things, like recording tribal beliefs and myths, and the answer was 'no.' But the government from what I recall welcomed the missionaries' work and renewed their visas without any issues.

Q: When I was doing research for a book about American consuls, I ran across a report that came from our consul in Seoul, Korea where I had been, but this was 1910. In Korea, as in other places, certain objects have sacred meaning, including trees. There was this one old tree in the center of a town which people used to hang prayers from, it was sacred. Well, an American missionary full of piss and vinegar came in and had it chopped down and there was terrible unrest. The consul said after dealing with this, I can well understand the work of Pontius Pilate.

Getting back to visa work, I have to mention the pervasiveness of narcotics trafficking among the upper class, the people that we most often dealt with. There were families that

were involved in trafficking or financing or laundering the proceeds or had individual family members involved. When we got visa applications from well-off Colombians we tried to make sure that they were not ineligible under narcotics trafficking. These were not people who could be found ineligible as intending immigrants, the old 214b. We tried to get as much evidence as possible to sustain a finding of ineligibility for narcotics trafficking: DEA information, newspaper articles, what our FSNs said. When we did have a solid finding, we had to be careful when we informed the applicant of their ineligibility, which they were entitled to know. I think we had a policy of not requiring our Vice Consuls to identify themselves to the applicants, for security reasons.

Q: How did you feel, you and your staff, about kidnapping? Were you targets?

BUTENIS: I was thought to be under surveillance for kidnapping by the FARC, the main guerrilla group. The RSO told me that they had two separate pieces of intelligence that suggested that a senior woman embassy officer who lived in my neighborhood was being surveilled for kidnapping by the FARC. I was the only one in that neighborhood, other than Ambassador Patterson, and they ruled her out as the likely target. I was stunned when I learned this and I wondered later why I didn't say 'I'll call you from Miami when I get there.' Instead, the RSO set up a Colombian police counter-surveillance detail to follow me, to see if anyone else was watching me. I was asked to write down my schedule for the coming week so that the police would know where I would be.

As I began to write out my schedule, I was abashed, really, to see that every morning without fail I followed the same routine when I walked my dogs. I considered myself sophisticated about security, I always worked well with RSOs, I didn't do stupid stuff. Yet when I wrote my schedule I realized I'd set a pattern. I lived in an apartment building without a garden and walked the dogs pretty much at the same time. When I exited the building I could go either right or left, no other choices. Then I imagined what might happen if I was grabbed while with the dogs, what would happen to them, could I take them with me if I was kidnapped, would they be left on the street, etc.? That's what I worried about. Fortunately, nothing happened to me except I learned a lesson about my own security practices.

Q: Where did you go after Bogota?

BUTENIS: I had decided I would try for a DCM and bid on DCM in Guatemala, but that didn't come through. Then Nancy Powell, then our ambassador in Pakistan and whom I have known since language study in FSI in 1980, asked me if I were interested in bidding on DCM there. It was a wonderful opportunity for me and especially exciting to be working with Nancy and back in Pakistan. I was still in touch with several friends in Karachi and had tried to keep current on political developments there.

Q: What year is this?

BUTENIS: That was 2004. So I get to Islamabad and it was the first time that I'd gone into a job without any time to study up. I took the DCM course at FSI and was familiar with South Asian history and politics, but was glad Nancy was a South Asian expert. Still, it was just jumping in and hoping not to drown. Travelling to Islamabad was a nightmare. My two dogs, Chester adopted from a Fairfax, Virginia shelter and Tillie from a shelter in Warsaw, had been travelling in the luggage hold for about 20 hours as we neared Islamabad and all I could think of was getting them out of their crates and onto grass so they could relieve themselves. Then the pilot announced that due to fog, we could not land in Islamabad but would land in Lahore and wait it out. Then we sat on the plane in Lahore for what seemed an eternity and I just kept thinking about my poor dogs. Finally, they decided to cancel the flight and let us deplane in Lahore. Our Consulate Lahore staff was waiting for my arrival and very kindly put me up in the vacationing consul general's home (who fortunately did not have a cat in residence), and the dogs and I spent the night. The next morning the defense attaché's C-12 picked us up and flew us to Islamabad.

My first morning in the embassy, the head of our Office of Defense Cooperation, an admiral, walked into my office, put some overhead satellite imagery on my desk, and no doubt explained the highlights of what he had just given me. I had absolutely no idea what the photos were or what I was supposed to do with them. I assumed it was something he did every morning, so I said "Thank you very much" and he left. I didn't feel this was the moment to ask for a tutorial and I also assumed he was checking out the new kid on the block. I soon learned the ropes and what our various offices and groups were doing, but that incident always typifies for me how the Foreign Service so often operates: jump in and figure it out.

Pakistan remained a very violent country. One evening Nancy was hosting an event at her residence when I was notified by the RSO that there had been a bombing at the Marriott Hotel. We always had people staying at the Marriott as did other diplomatic missions and international organizations, as it was considered relatively secure. By this time lots of guests were getting the word via their cell phones and after I notified Nancy, the party ended and we monitored the situation and kept Washington informed. There was at least one fatality and lots of injuries. I think someone had brought in the explosives in a briefcase and left it there. Several embassy staff were at the hotel that night, in one of several restaurants and an assistant regional security officer assisted the wounded. There was a controversy about his actions later, with some people arguing he deserved an award for helping the victims while others felt he had disobeyed the SOP to leave a terrorist scene immediately in case there were follow-on explosions. In the aftermath, of course the Marriott upgraded their security screening.

Then Nancy decided that it was time for her to move on and I remember feeling a bit bereft. Working for someone you know is a pleasure (and easier) than with a stranger. Ryan Crocker was going to follow Nancy when Nancy returned to Washington to legislative affairs, as PDAS and acting assistant secretary, I think.

I did not know Ryan Crocker, either personally or by reputation. So we were in this frenzy of getting ready for the incoming ambassador while seeing off the outgoing ambassador. It's awkward as a DCM, trying to serve both ambassadors at the same time. At one point I just emailed Ryan, introduced myself and offered to help in any way. I risked a joke, hoping he had a sense of humor (because I do), telling him that our FSNs are quite excited because they think that he is Pakistani, with a last name like Khokhar, which is a Punjabi tribe. Ryan replied that his Pakistani roots were from his mother's side. So, I thought it would be OK.

Ryan arrived already fully versed in terrorism issues and well plugged in to Washington, at the highest levels. We got along fine. His wife Christine came and had a job as a security escort.

The biggest issue that I want to talk about is the October 2005 earthquake. It was a magnitude 7.6, with an estimated 87,000 dead, 138,000 injured, and about 3.5 million displaced. Recovery became a focal point of much of our attention and resources for about a year. It struck on a Saturday, as I was getting ready to go into the office. I was in the shower and all a sudden the house began shaking. I lived in a big, beautiful house owned by the embassy and it shook for about 45 seconds. We all headed into the embassy for an emergency action committee meeting. Islamabad did not suffer too much damage, although one apartment building collapsed, with loss of life. I don't think any USG personnel were injured. One of the first things I discovered was the difficulty of determining the extent of the damage, because all the communications were out where the earthquake had struck, largely in the Pakistani controlled part of Kashmir, called Azad Kashmir. They didn't have great communication there anyway and so for the first 24 hours we thought that there had been minimal damage and it was only later people realized the extent of the fatalities and damage. Tragically, many children were killed, as they were in school when it struck and their buildings collapsed. I had recently been to that area, to a university in Muzaffarabad with which we had a public affairs relationship and that city sustained much damage. I was never able to get back there to see what had happened to our friends at the university.

Ryan immediately formed a multi-agency task force to respond to the earthquake which proved a highly effective way of coordinating not only all elements of USG assistance but also played a crucial coordination role with the UN, with NATO, and with the Pakistani government. That first night I led a small group which included our USAID Mission Director and a senior military representative to call on a senior Pakistani military official to offer help. At that time General Pervez Musharraf led the government, having ousted the last elected civilian Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif in 1999. We couldn't provide assistance, bring in additional staff, supplies, etc, without the Pakistanis agreeing to it. That was a little delicate, as it always is. Even in countries where you have a very strong relationship, every country has a sense of pride and sometimes they delay in asking for assistance or accepting it because they like to think they can handle it. In Pakistan's case, there also has always been an element of suspicion about why we were offering assistance, what exactly we were after.

The size and complexity of our response were significant. In addition to our in-house USAID mission, our defense attache, and our ODC, USAID sent Bill Berger and his Disaster Assistance Response Team from Nepal. Bill is a great guy, with lots of experience in disaster relief. Admiral Mike Lefever headed DOD's disaster response team, which provided a wide range of support, including helicopters to drop relief supplies, extract survivors, medical personnel and a MASH unit, among other help. Eventually NATO sent a contingent of troops (Spaniards who complained about the quality of the food they had to eat) and of course the UN brought in its experts and in theory was supposed to be the overall coordinator of all international assistance. However, the UN had just instituted a change in their framework for disaster response called the cluster system and there were glitches in the new system which reduced the effectiveness of their response so at times we worked around them, frankly. Also, other countries offered assistance, India among them and we strongly urged the Pakistanis to accept Indian help, but it took a while. We had our own awkward moment when an Iranian plane landed with relief supplies at the airport. Our soldiers had been unloading the various planes as they came in and it took a bit of diplomacy so that our soldiers could unload the Iranian flight.

Our task force was a very successful mechanism for coordination with virtually every party providing assistance. It also kept the U.S elements focused on the task. We met twice a day, morning and late afternoon, for almost a year. I think I talked Ryan into not meeting on Christmas morning, which was tough going. Those meetings ensured coordination within the U.S. mission and allowed Ryan to be briefed twice daily on developments which he could feed back to Washington. I have been told that this example of civilian-military cooperation was so successful that DOD still refers to it as a model for that kind of response.

Another interesting element was the Islamist organizations that also provided relief and assistance and of course, hoped to proselytize by example. There was one organization, Jamaat-ud-Dawa which I believe we considered a terrorist organization but it also had a large social services wing which was very active in the devastated areas. Jamaat-ud-Dawa set up a hospital and some of our military medical personnel, who had no knowledge really of Pakistan, were invited to visit it and they accepted, doctors-to-doctors. I don't know if we heard about this soon enough to turn the visit off but it would have been a real propaganda coup for Jamaat.

Q: Well now, did the Pakistanis want us there that way?

BUTENIS: My recollection is more of the huge international effort and less clear on the Pakistani contribution, but of course we could not have done anything without their cooperation. The Pakistani government at one point was calling for more helicopters, more air lift to drop supplies to areas that could not be reached by road and to evacuate survivors. It got to the point that the air space over an especially devastated valley was so saturated with helicopters that it was too dangerous to fly anymore in. I think we may

have ended up taking charge of traffic control. But certainly the Pakistani people and the government appreciated our help, the help of everyone else who came in.

On a personal note, I had Pakistani domestic staff at my residence, all men most of whom had families living back in their villages outside of Islamabad. One of my staffers, Akram, lived in the staff quarters on our compound with his two little boys so the children could attend a better school. Akram's wife lived with his parents in Kashmir. Akram and his sons were visiting their home in the village the day the earthquake struck. We could not contact Akram, who had a cell phone. We eventually heard from people who were trickling back to Islamabad that village houses just collapsed on top of the people inside. There was no way to send anyone to search for Akram. So during the day I'd work on task force issues in the embassy, and then I'd come home at night and start to cry, remembering Akram and especially his two young, beautiful boys with their big Kashmiri eyes, just handsome little kids. This went on for maybe a week. One morning I came down for breakfast into the kitchen and there all my staff were lined up including Akram. They were all waiting to see my reaction. Of course I was in tears and I rushed over to him. But then I remembered where we were. We were in a Muslim country which meant I could not hug Akram out of relief that he was safe. So I kind of just vigorously patted his shoulder (*laughs*) and said, "Oh, Akram," and then he started crying and we all cried together. It turned out, sadly, that his parents died and his wife was injured but he and his two sons were OK. I ended up hiring a truck to bring supplies to his village and also gave him some funds to provide some relief. I tried to get official relief air dropped there, I don't know if this ever succeeded. These villages were tiny, separated by miles from each other.

Then Akram wanted to bring his wife to stay with us but that didn't work out. His wife was used to a very restricted, traditional life where the only men who ever saw her were her relatives. Here she was in Islamabad and even in my compound, where Akram had his own room, there were other men using the staff cooking and bathroom facilities, the other staff and the guards. She went back to their village.

Besides the earthquake I did do other things. Madrassas were a big issue, as you can imagine. These madrassas, extremist madrassas, teaching --

Q: These are the schools.

BUTENIS: These are religious schools for boys, although I think there were some for girls, and the little boys come in and often that's the only education they get. The poorer kids don't pay tuition. In some cases the only thing they are taught is to memorize the Koran. We saw them as potential training grounds for jihadists. There was this one madrassa in Lahore, I think, that held itself out as a different kind of madrassa, and was quite eager that we visit, to see that they were not producing extremists. So I went to visit and as I always have done, asked ahead of time what kind of dress or other cultural observance was expected of me. I always traveled with a head scarf or shawl, anyway just in case, to cover my hair and wore long sleeves and slacks, with a jacket. They had

invited local press and my program started as always with tea in the director's office (Pakistanis are always hospitable). I toured several of the classrooms and they were very proud of their computer lab. They made a point of showing me that their students learned more than the Koran. There was a funny follow-up the next day, when I saw the front page of the largest English-language paper in Pakistan, featuring a story about my visit. The accompanying photo of me was taken at such an angle that it looked like I had a black bag on covering my entire head. No face, no hair, just a black bag. Obviously, they were having fun at my expense, as did my embassy colleagues, referring to me as the "girl from the hood".

I supervised our three consulates (Lahore, Peshawar and Karachi) and visited when I could. In terms of security, they were quite different. I felt that the only reason al-Qaeda and the Taliban didn't get us in Pakistan was because they chose not to. In Islamabad we were self-driving, people lived in off-compound houses, we went out to restaurants, we hiked in the Margalla Hills. Lahore was the most "normal" city at that time, with nightclubs, a range of restaurants, much more of an open feel to it and had a decent tourist industry with the Shalimar Gardens, the Badshahi Mosque, the Lahore Fort and other treasures.

Peshawar was rough and I always thought it was the most dangerous post in Pakistan for us. Our consulate was in the military cantonment, which had its own security, but our compound didn't even have a complete wall around it. I don't recall why the wall had not been finished and I suppose we thought that being in the cantonment was sufficient. Once we got a credible threat that our Peshawar compound would be attacked on a specific date. We decided that no one would go to work that day, but stay home, except for the RSO and the local guard force. However, the principal officer (PO) lived on the compound and he refused to leave. He felt that the captain should not abandon the ship, sort of. There was absolutely no reason for him to stay and I was very close to saying, "You are ordered to get your ass out of there and off the compound." Contrary to my authoritarian nature, I came up with another idea, that he leave the compound and stay in another consulate officer's home which had just been converted into an alternate command post, just for these kinds of occasions, when access to the consulate was cut off. It had just been outfitted with communications equipment, office supplies, etc. So I suggested that this was a perfect opportunity to test it out and he agreed. As it turned out we were not attacked at that time but it was one in a series of threats.

Peshawar had several junior officers (JO) and I also tried to visit there in my role as JO mentor. Morale fluctuated in Peshawar but a key part of their morale was this club the consulate ran, off the compound, in a rather dilapidated building. I don't recall if we owned the building or rented it, but the JOs managed it, hiring a cook, hosting functions there for other diplomats and visitors. There was also a small bar which may have been the only game in town for alcohol. Islamabad was considering shutting it down but I realized it was an outside interest for the JOs, something to do not related to work, and I think the club was still functioning when I left a year later

As for Karachi, which was my first post in 1980, and which had a lot of political violence, I think it had the best morale of our posts. They had a club too, a proper club, with a pool table, well-stocked bar, great food. It was located in one of these six mini-mansions that we owned, right next to the consul general's residence and across the Frere Hall Park from the consulate. It was very well run and the center of expat social life since security had ruled out most restaurants.

Of course, there were problems. Often in intense work environments like Karachi, if some people don't get along, that generates tension and has an impact on the entire post.

Q: Can you elaborate, without the details?

BUTENIS: It involved somebody in the security office and somebody in the management office. The two men did not get along and it got to the point where the management officer believed the RSO was setting him up for security violations and the RSO believed the management officer was deliberately ignoring required security practices. Karachi had more than enough to deal with without these two. I pressed the consul general there to take action but whatever steps he did take were ineffective and I realized later that he just didn't want to do anything that would have either officer bring a grievance against him. Well, no one does. Of course, once when the CG was on leave it landed in my lap. I first had the RSO and the management officer from Islamabad, the direct supervisors of these two go to Karachi but nothing changed. At one point, I remember threatening them on the phone, "Don't make me come down there", as if I were Mom talking to squabbling children. I finally did have to make a trip and I think I threatened both of them and they may have quieted down for a while. I left Islamabad shortly thereafter. Those two aside, people seemed to get along well in Karachi and morale was always pretty good.

One issue that came up involved our Pakistani-American USG employees who of course were subject to the same security restrictions as everyone else. This made it hard for them if they had family living in off-limits areas – like Karachi. USG personnel were not allowed to travel within Pakistan for personal reasons, unless it was to areas deemed safe enough and Karachi was not. When these cases came to my attention, someone appealing the RSO denial of their request to travel, while I felt bureaucratic in upholding the RSO's decision, I reasoned that our Pakistani-American employees could not really "pass" as locals. Their Urdu or other local language may be rusty or no longer colloquial, they would behave as Americans, with our body language and manner. And it would be applying a double standard which was wrong. One particularly unfortunate case involved an older employee, based in Islamabad, who wanted to see his mother in Karachi when he was there on temporary duty. He made the usual arguments but even if he could have blended in, I just could not believe that his mother had not told her neighbors about her successful U.S. citizen son and word may have passed to the wrong people.

Q: Could you get the mother to visit the son?

BUTENIS: He could have arranged that. If he wanted to invite his mother to the consulate or to Islamabad that was his business. I had another case of a Pakistani-American soldier in the U.S. Army stationed somewhere, not in Pakistan, who wanted to visit his mother and I said no. We could not control the travel of private American citizens but USG employees could not visit Pakistan for personal reasons. I am sure some people just entered the country without requesting the required country clearance but those that went through the right channels were almost always turned down.

Q: Did we have any public diplomacy programs that were specifically designed to reach below the elite class?

BUTENIS: We always have programs like promoting English language study, the Fulbright Program, essay contests with middle and high schools. But we were limited in where we could travel. This just reminded me of another issue. The cultural affairs officer in Lahore covered Karachi as well and he was terribly frustrated in not being able to do very much in Karachi, because of the security restrictions. The RSO, for example, would not let him advertise his visit to Karachi ahead of time, to minimize any targeting of the events but that meant no one would be aware of his programs. He appealed to me but it was hard to find a happy or even an OK medium

Q: Was bin Laden at all a subject of concern?

BUTENIS: Sure. President Bush called President, General Musharraf after 9/11 and said, paraphrasing, you are either with us or you are with the terrorists. And so Musharraf decided Pakistan was going to be with us. It was not a popular decision in Pakistan, certainly with their intelligence agency, Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) because they saw al-Qaeda and the Taliban as a way to give them influence in Afghanistan, to counter our influence. They foresaw a time when we would be out of Afghanistan and leave the field to them. So that was always the subject of discussion. We viewed other terrorists groups as threats, like Afghanistan's Haqqani network, which often sheltered in Pakistan and Laskar-e-Taiba, another jihadist group with links to ISI. Here we were, giving millions of dollars to Pakistan over the long term while ISI actively supported jihadist groups which targeted us as well as Pakistanis. But because we needed the Pakistanis in many ways, if only to pursue the war in Afghanistan, we usually did not confront them directly or if we did, to little effect. I think that we had a fairly good relationship with General Musharraf. Crocker could see him whenever he needed to and Musharraf was generally available to meet with our many Congressional delegations (CODELS). I called on him a few times when I was chargé or accompanied CODELS. I thought he was an interesting person. Someone showed me a front page photo of Musharraf, shortly after he ousted Nawaz Sharif in which Musharraf is holding his little white dog in his arms. People thought that Musharraf was trying to reassure the elite that he was no fundamentalist, that he was modern enough to have a pet dog, which more conservative Muslims found abhorrent. By and large, he did work well enough with us or at least gave that impression. Of course, Pakistan was such a high profile relationship all the key players in Washington interacted with the Pakistani leadership and developed their own relationships. The CIA worked

closely with ISI – that was their job, but I don't know that anyone really trusted the Pakistanis and they certainly didn't trust us. Our military had direct relationships, the Joint Chiefs of Staff interacting directly. And yet the Pakistanis surprised us time and again.

Q: Well, how do you feel the Pakistani military, not just ISI, but the whole officer corps felt towards us?

BUTENIS: I think it changed after General Zia-ul-Haq deposed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1977 and made himself president in 1978. While the United States considered ul-Haq a strong ally, he also began a campaign of Islamization of the military which ultimately was against U.S. interests. While the older, more senior military were proud of their British-trained background and viewed themselves as an elite organization, far superior to the corrupt political class, the growing Islamist orientation led to seeing the United States as at a minimum, an untrustworthy ally. They also played us very well. They continued to get a big stream of military assistance, they liked the equipment, the technology, the training. But what they did with it wasn't always transparent to us. There was also the AQ Khan issue. AQ Khan was a Pakistani nuclear scientist viewed as the Father of Pakistan's atomic bomb. In 2004 we gave the Pakistani government evidence that Khan had sold nuclear technology to North Korea, Iran and Libya. The Pakistani government claimed he had done this on his own but by then Khan was an icon in Pakistan. He was put under a sort of house arrest, eventually confessed on television and then I think Gen. Musharraf pardoned him, hoping to quell the controversy.

Q: What about the other embassies, particularly the western ones? But were you all more or less singing from the same hymnbook?

BUTENIS: Yes, the British of course had a very big high commission there. At least for part of my time in Islamabad the UK high commissioner was Mark Lyall Grant, after whose maternal ancestors the Pakistani city of Lyallpur was named. They had served during the British raj. There was still a lot of resentment against the British for their colonial role, yet, as I had mentioned, the older generation of Pakistani military had been well-trained by the British and cherished that professionalism. As in other South Asian countries, the British are often blamed for many of those countries' problems.

I must also comment on the Indian high commissioner at that time, one of India's top diplomats, Shivshankar Menon, who went on to become the Indian foreign secretary, which as you know is the highest career position in their diplomatic service and then later, the national security adviser to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Ryan would consult with Menon occasionally and when I accompanied him once, he talked about the security threat he faced in Pakistan, being philosophical about it. He was a consummate professional. His wife was also very gracious and I recall their pet dog, quite friendly and elderly then, who would greet visitors.

Q: Where did you go after Pakistan?

BUTENIS: I hadn't given much thought to where I would go after Islamabad, although I did think at some point I would be in the consular affairs front office but wasn't lobbying

for anything. One day Maura Harty, then CA's assistant secretary contacted me and asked me to become the visa deputy assistant secretary. I was surprised and obviously pleased and said, well, thanks, yes. However, when I told Ryan, he said "Well, you're not going. Pakistan's too important to let people go." At that point I felt like the mouse who hopes not to get trampled between two elephants, so I told everyone I was happy to stay in Pakistan and I was happy to go to CA, somebody sort this out.

So that was going forward and then one day shortly after Ryan told me that I was going to Dhaka as chief of mission. I wasn't even tracking Bangladesh, completely consumed with my work in Islamabad, but Harry Thomas who was ambassador there had been called back by Secretary Rice to be her executive secretary. I have no idea who the competition was but all of a sudden I was tagged for Dhaka.

Q: Well, as you got back to Washington and went through the process what were you getting about Bangladesh?

BUTENIS: When I got back to Washington I called on Harry Thomas and I remember he said he'd been sorry to leave Bangladesh, that the "U.S. ambassador in Bangladesh is king." I came to understand what he meant. We had quite a lot of influence there, or at least most Bangladeshis seemed to think so. The politicians were always trying to enlist the U.S. on their side of an argument, on their side of a political position. It was a little embarrassing. I was often asked to be the go-between, "Please tell the prime minister this" or please let the opposition know that". I understood the value of having a third party, seen as neutral, facilitating dialogue but I often felt direct conversations would have been best. By the end of my short tour (just 14 months), I was living my own version of Harry's role as King. One newspaper did a story on the "Four Queens of Bangladesh": Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, leader of the opposition Sheikh Hasina, Indian high commissioner Veena Sikri and me, as if we determined everything that happened in that country.

Q: But we do have policies and desires, and if this is the way they're going to play it, --

BUTENIS: Of course, you realize that these are very seasoned politicians, very manipulative. You never knew whether you were getting the straight story or not. Probably not. Nobody kept a confidence. Sometimes people would say "Keep this in confidence" *hoping* you would pass it on. It was quite a baptism for me in the art of being an ambassador.

But I must say that being in Bangladesh was generally enjoyable and I left with a tremendous admiration for the people, though not the political class especially. I also felt, as probably many ambassadors elsewhere have felt, that we didn't really appreciate Bangladesh as much as we should have. At the time there were 150 million Bangladeshis, whom I described as 150 million Muslims who basically liked us, wanted to be an ally, while justifiably proud of their culture and their faith. At the same time we were beginning to see signs of Islamist extremism. The Peace Corps was pulling out of Bangladesh just as I was going in because at least one of their volunteers had been threatened by someone linked to an extremist group. India had long accused Bangladesh of harboring insurgents fighting for independence from India. This was in the

northeastern part of India that surrounds Bangladesh. So extremist activity was present in Bangladesh but not yet prominent during my tour.

Q: How did your hearings go and how well were you briefed about the situation?-

BUTENIS: India of course was the center of attention in South Asia but we also had our interests in Bangladesh. We had a large AID program and Bangladesh was the largest contributor to the UN's peacekeeping force, the Blue Helmets, so we paid attention to Dhaka. Representatives Peter King (R-NY) and Steve Chabot (R-OH) had Bangladeshi-American constituents and followed our bilateral relations, and Rep. Chabot was the only delegation to visit Dhaka during my tour.

My hearings were pretty straightforward. We thought of Bangladesh then as a country which had made tremendous progress in social areas, especially women's health, infant mortality, etc. so there was really nothing controversial.

Q: Well, looking at it from the Washington perspective, were you told all right, we've got this problem, that problem, we want to solve this thing?

BUTENIS: The eternal issue in Bangladesh, which continues to this day, was the fierce rivalry between the two women who headed the two main political parties, Sheikh Hasina of the Awami League and Khaleda Zia of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Hasina assumed her father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's political mantle after his assassination and Zia her husband Ziaur Rahman's, after his assassination. They had alternated as prime minister in succeeding elections, with little to no bipartisan cooperation in either administration. They are referred to as the Battling Begums, begum being a South Asian honorific for Muslim women of high social status. Our growing concern during my time was the increasing violence that accompanied election campaigning and voting. Each party had what they called "muscle men", basically their own thugs, young men who would attack opposition members, intimidate people, extort support, etc. So to the extent I had any marching orders, they were to urge both parties to eschew violence and to have what we called free, fair, credible elections in 2007.

Q: Did Bangladesh traditionally take sides with Pakistan or India? I would think they'd be more pro-Indian.

BUTENIS: Conventional wisdom was that the Awami League was closer to India and the BNP to Pakistan. During my tour the Indian high commissioner had her list of issues with the BNP government and in the run-up to the next election she viewed Sheikh Hasina much more favorably, at least in conversations with me. The Pakistani high commissioner, who was a friend from my Islamabad tour, enjoyed great access to the Zia government. The Pakistani intelligence agency, ISI, was thought to have an influential role in the BNP government. The Awami League was seen as more secular and linked with the West while the BNP's closeness with Pakistan reflected, I suppose, a sectarian link, given the Islamic fundamentalism of much of ISI and Pakistan's military. ISI was believed to be funneling lots of money to the BNP. Of course, the Indian intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing was thought to also be active in Bangladesh.

The other link with Pakistan was the Jamaat Party, the Islamic party, some of whose senior members were executed in Dhaka recently, after being convicted of war crimes. In

1971 Jamaat supported what was then West Pakistan in its attack on then East Pakistan, which led to the independence of Bangladesh. It was a brutal, brutal war and after all these years, some Bangladeshis would say that justice was finally done, although we thought the prosecution and conviction of those condemned was flawed and did not meet international standards.

Q: Well, let's talk about going there. When you got there how did you find the embassy?

BUTENIS: The embassy itself was an attractive red brick building, sort of reminiscent of Mughal architecture. We rented the residence, Habib Villa, which was in an older neighborhood. I fondly recall the night I arrived at post, when a very windy storm caused a tree to fall against the house and overwhelmed the drainage system, so there were large cockroaches and other insect life emerging in the bathrooms. General services to the rescue, quite efficiently too.

One of the most “memorable” aspects of life in Dhaka was the traffic. It has to be among the world’s worst cities in that respect. In addition to the variety of vehicles, bicycles, cycle rickshaws, scooters, etc. mingling with minimal regulation, you had regular demonstrations or hartals (strikes) paralyzing already crippled traffic movement. You always had to factor in additional time, up to an hour, to reach a destination. I had a car and driver so I always made sure to have paperwork or reading along with my Blackberry to occupy my transit time. Two embassies got police escorts for the ambassadors, the United States and the United Kingdom. When traveling to official functions, we had a lead car and a follow car with police, sirens, lights, etc. Ostensibly it was for added security but in reality, the value was in cutting through traffic and it also allowed the government to know where I was going. This was how I learned the term “counter-flow.” We were moving along in traffic, which the cops could see was slowing down, so our convoy just crossed over into the on-coming lanes and kept going. I almost jumped out of the car until my guard explained the maneuver. If I was at a function, some of my diplomatic colleagues would leave when I did and fall in behind my convoy, to take advantage of the police clearing the road.

I want to describe the presentation of credentials, which has to be one of the loveliest in the world. In Bangladesh every ambassador or high commissioner had an individual ceremony. On the day of the ceremony, as your car approached the President’s house you were met by an escort of riders on white horses. Your car followed them to the entry driveway, you got out and were escorted into a garden to review the honor guard. One of my diplomatic colleagues who had already presented credentials warned me about walking on the red carpet (*laughs*) on the lawn because you could trip. So I was mindful not to trip. Then as you entered the President’s residence to present your credentials and make your comments, they blew bugles. It really was regal.

We had rented Habib Villa, the residence, for a long time. It was in one of the few neighborhoods that still had old, large houses, but they were rapidly being torn down and replaced by high rises, because housing was at such a premium. The residence had a very big backyard, walled off, but residents in the surrounding high rises could look right into the grounds and house, so while we didn’t have any security concerns there wasn’t much privacy.

Bangladesh had a pretty large, active diplomatic community. I believe the UK had a bigger mission than we did and the Australians and Canadians were there, as well as the UN. I formed an informal group with the heads of the UK, Canadian and Australian missions. We consulted on policy issues and operational concerns. It eventually was called by others the “tea group” since the custom was to offer tea and light refreshments when people met. We all pretty much promoted human rights, free and fair elections, political activity without violence. Nothing revolutionary or unexpected. Each ambassador of course pursued his or her country’s bilateral issues but we were pretty united on the overall human rights policy. Later on, when things got intense this alliance was very useful. The Brit and I got a lot of press attention and we could not attend an event or not attend an event without someone speculating what it meant – and usually it meant nothing. So, during periods of political turmoil, when diplomats were trying to calm people down and avoid violence, the Canadian and Australian high commissioners could meet with people much more quietly, under the radar than the Brit or I could and deliver our common message. And this alliance was also the basis for our friendship. It was invaluable to me to have a group of friends I could trust and whose countries had the same policy objectives as ours.

Q: When you came in pushing human rights or fair elections or something, how were you received? Whom were you talking to and --

BUTENIS: Begum Khaleda Zia, the head of the BNP, was in the last year of her term. The Bangladeshi constitution recognized how partisan their politicians could be and how the incumbent government could not be trusted to hold fair elections. So the constitution specified that the outgoing government leave office a few months before the election and be replaced by a caretaker government led by the chief advisor whose main job is to hold free and fair elections. The civil servants continue to run the machinery of government; only the top-most layer of officials are removed. As we approached the last months of the BNP government, things were already getting tense. The man the BNP selected to be the chief advisor was unacceptable to the Awami League. Both parties tried to involve the embassies on their behalf, either asking ambassadors to endorse the BNP appointee or to object to him. We did not have a preference but promoted a free, fair, credible election in which the government was not using its own resources to promote the BNP candidate, a neutral caretaker government, and that the election commission was doing its difficult job. Meanwhile Sheikh Hasina of the Awami league was demanding certain conditions for their participation in the election that she knew would or could not be met. For example Sheikh Hasina wanted picture voter IDs issued, to prevent fraud, but I don’t think the voters lists were even computerized at that point. The Awami League’s leverage was their participation in the election, which was something we thought was crucial to a credible election. So we did pressure the government to take certain measures so that the Awami League would contest. We also urged the government to improve its human rights practices, especially regarding what we saw as extra-judicial killings by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), an elite police force. The RAB was thought to stage an ambush or attack with their targets and then claim the alleged terrorist or criminal had been killed in the crossfire. A third concern was labor rights and conditions. Bangladesh had trade concessions under our Generalized System of Preferences and was on the verge of losing

that status because of the sad state of their labor unions. Our concerns focused on their ready-made garment industry which was the biggest employer and earner of foreign exchange. Eighty percent of the workers were women. Working conditions were horrible and even today the workers die in fires in the factories because they are locked in or basic safety measures are ignored. The unions were also politicized and expected to align with one or the other of the parties.

I should talk about what remains a controversial aspect of my tour. As I said, our concern was if the major opposition party didn't participate could we accept the election results. The State Department spokesperson at one point said that if the conditions were not there for the Awami League to participate then the international community would be hard put to recognize the results. So we on the one hand were pushing the BNP government to address some of the Awami League demands and at the same time we were pushing the Awami League not to resort to the violence they were threatening if their demands were not met. The Awami League had threatened to deploy their "shock troops" -- my term, not theirs -- in the streets. Our message along with like-minded countries was consistent to both the BNP and the Awami League.

There was nothing controversial about our position but unfortunately both sides dug in their heels and refused to compromise. As I and my diplomatic colleagues were pressing these views we began to hear rumors from the Bangladeshi military of the emergence of what was called a "third force." This alluded to the possibility that the military would step in and do something. The military along with other segments of society were pretty much fed up with both Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina and their endless hostility toward each other and their parties' unwillingness to work together. Some people would mention this third force option to me, to gauge my reaction, and of course I always said, "Absolutely not, the military has no role in politics and government. Abide by your constitution. My diplomatic colleagues had the same message. This was a very intense period of meetings, conferences, late evening telephone calls with other ambassadors and politicians. I even managed to get a senior representative from each party (not the leaders) in my residence at the same time, in an effort to promote some sort of compromise or at least dialogue, but no dice.

I should say that one of our colleagues was the head of the UN mission in Dhaka, a very accomplished, astute woman. At that time Bangladesh provided the largest number of soldiers to the UN peacekeeping program. This was a matter of pride for the military. The possibility that Bangladesh would be kicked out of the peacekeeping force if the election result was not accepted internationally was becoming a concern.

This all culminated in a moment I will never forget. One afternoon our small group of concerned ambassadors was meeting in the home of the Canadian high commissioner with some of the BNP leaders. Our message was the same: why can't you accommodate some of the Awami League requirements so they can participate in the election? As we were going back and forth with them my cell phone rang. It was my political counselor telling me that the army has just declared a state of emergency. This was not good news and I e-mailed my UK colleague sitting next to me and whispered to him to read my message. By that time all the diplomats were getting phone calls with the news and we were the ones to tell the BNP leaders with us. At that point the meeting broke up but I

think the coincidental fact that the BNP was meeting with us when the army took that step gave rise to the belief that we, the diplomats provoked this state of emergency. Of course we were unhappy with what the military did. They appointed a former World Bank official, a very well respected man to be the chief advisor in a caretaker government. Elections were postponed and in the interim the military did what it could to neutralize both major parties and their leaders. They were ultimately unsuccessful and when elections were held in 2008 the Awami League with its coalition won. I must say that it wasn't only the army that was frustrated with Bangladeshi's political class and culture but their involvement didn't help strengthen democracy.

Q: Where was the military getting trained outside of Bangladesh?

BUTENIS: They got a lot of training in the UK. We also offered training but in the form of military exchanges, the War Colleges, etc.

Q: How was India regarded by various groups within Bangladesh?

BUTENIS: We have to talk about Pakistan and India. It was clear that the intelligence agencies of both countries were quite active in Bangladesh. There were credible rumors that Pakistan's ISI was funneling a lot of cash to the BNP because traditionally the BNP has been closer to Pakistan and the Awami League closer to India. I don't know what India's intelligence agency, RAW, was doing specifically. It was clear in my dealings with the Indian High Commissioner, a respected senior diplomat, that India was very pro-Awami League.

One thing I wanted to talk about, something disturbing, happened during the state of emergency when the military-backed caretaker government was in office. Politicians from both parties began to be arrested, largely on corruption charges. The impression was that the military was trying to clean up the corruption and break the dysfunctional cycle of politics. People began asking me to intervene, so get individuals released. I declined to discuss individual cases with the caretaker government because it wasn't appropriate, if only because I had no idea, no facts about whether an individual was corrupt or not. Also we were making public statements calling on the caretaker government, to respect human rights, to treat people who'd been arrested fairly. So we were quite publically on the record in this respect. One person who came to me was the wife of someone who'd been a major contact of mine for Sheikh Hasina when she was in the opposition. This is someone who'd come to my house many times and was also well known by the other ambassadors. Well, he was arrested. At some point his wife asked to call on me and we had tea a few times. She wanted me to intervene to have her husband released from prison. I don't recall if he had been formally charged or what the status of his legal case was. I explained that we couldn't advocate for individuals but were pressing the caretaker government to treat people fairly and respect their civil and human rights. I know that's

not what she wanted to hear and even to me now it sounds bureaucratic, but that was our policy. Several years later, when there had been the delayed elections and the Awami League was back in power I visited Dhaka, for a conference or something, and I invited this man, since released and his wife to lunch, as I did with other former contacts, just to catch up. We were at a restaurant and talking when the man, in a very quiet voice, very subdued, told me that he was disappointed because he had been tortured while he was in prison and I had not intervened. Now, the fact is I didn't know he was being tortured, no one ever told me or suggested he or anyone was being tortured, and his wife never said that he was being abused. If I had heard that accusation I would have protested to the government. In retrospect, I was naïve not to assume the prisoners were being abused but I had no proof nor any claims. I wanted to explain that to him but I didn't feel I could tell him that his wife never told me, because obviously he thought she had and perhaps that was her recollection as well. I don't know. I remain troubled by that and wonder if I should have done more other than our general representations to the government.

Q: In your dealings, did you have to tread carefully between these two ladies? I would think to them it was personal.

BUTENIS: You are correct and I'll give you an example of how I tried to be evenhanded and sometimes failed. Shortly after I arrived and presented my credentials, I thought it would be appropriate to make some public gesture of respect to the country's political and historical figures. My staff suggested that I lay two wreaths on the same day, one at the house where Sheikh Hasina's family had been slaughtered, which was now a memorial, and another wreath at a memorial to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's husband, who had also been assassinated. So, with wreaths in hand I went to one place and then the other. Well, no good deed goes unpunished. Both parties objected in the press for what I thought were rather petty reasons. The BNP didn't think Sheikh Hasina's family deserved the honor since she was not in government at that time and the Awami League complained because I think I'd gone to the BNP memorial first. That experience typified how difficult it was in Bangladesh to try to treat the rival parties' leadership equally because they didn't see themselves as equal.

I have a couple of additional points about my experience in Bangladesh regarding issues that have come up in other assignments and I imagine other folks you have interviewed bring them up as well. They're almost philosophical points about the art of diplomacy. When I arrived in Dhaka I was immediately sucked into the minutia of politics there, a reflection largely of how influential the United States was thought to be. I was constantly approached by people from across the political spectrum, all seeking my endorsement of their position or some other form of assistance. This doesn't obviously happen in every country, but I think Bangladesh, while quite successful in certain levels of development, was still a developing country politically and very much pro-U.S. at the time. So people really tried to get me involved and I had to be very careful of what I said both privately and publicly. I had to fight off people who wanted to be contacts. This was quite different from other countries and it was something I learned pretty quickly. In India, while we partnered with the government in certain areas, government officials were leery of being

seen as too close to the American embassy. So this was very different in Bangladesh where everybody wanted to be seen with you for their own agenda.

Q: But also the feeling that politics was not just a game but a vicious game there.

BUTENIS: Very much so. The parties had groups of what they called “muscle men” who provided the street action and physical intimidation. Every party seemed to have them. There wasn't much of an ideological difference between the Awami League and the BNP, at least in terms of their day-to-day governance. But they viewed each other as bitter enemies and it was very important that I be seen as neutral. I don't know how successful I was and we routinely were accused of favoring one party or the other. What we promoted, what we wanted was the observation of certain democratic principles.

I was constantly telling people, “We're not supporting any particular candidate or party. You have to understand that, but here's what we stand for and here's what we'd like to see you pay more attention to.” I remember one memorable evening when something was coming to a head. The BNP was still in power and I think they were about to appoint their choice for chief advisor to the upcoming caretaker government. I was at home and my phone began ringing off the hook, all the parties, the press, most trying to get me to call someone else to do this or that. It was just this extraordinary experience. Of course I wasn't the only chief of mission getting those calls and I am sure my British colleague was getting even more. At one point I thought, “This is absurd. This is absolutely absurd, sort your own issues out yourselves.” I don't think that was a healthy way to do politics, to try to drag in the foreigners. We so often are accused of trying to influence other governments excessively yet here people were literally demanding that we promote their proposed course of action.

I had another appeal for assistance. The military, as I had said earlier, saw this period as an opportunity to clean up Bangladesh's politics and one of their primary targets for arrest on corruption charges was Khaleda Zia's son and heir apparent, Tarique Rahman. He was quite powerful when his mother was in office and people feared him. One day I received a request for a meeting from now former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. Since I had continued meeting with Sheikh Hasina and other parties' leaders, I agreed and went to one of the five-star hotels where the BNP had arranged the meeting. It was all very public, nothing I could do about that. She was seated in the room with her daughter-in-law, Tarique's wife, who was a physician and whom I'd met before. Khaleda Zia wanted me to get her son released from prison, as if I had that kind of influence. I didn't and if I had I wouldn't have tried. Again, our position was to urge the caretaker government and its military backers to respect prisoners' human rights and the legal process. If Begum Zia had claimed Tarique was being tortured, I would have raised that claim with the government, but she didn't. I couldn't intervene but I was struck with how humiliating it must have been for that once powerful woman who while in office had been rather disdainful of our positions on issues to now be asking me to get her son out. It was a difficult conversation for all three of us, I imagine.

Q: Was the desk or the bureau an intimate part of your operation on a daily basis?

BUTENIS: Good question. I thought about this a lot, the level of Washington involvement. And of course when we get to my tour in Iraq that's a whole other story where every day, every hour there was (*laughs*) that umbilical cord to Washington. In Bangladesh, in the large scheme of things yes, I knew how Washington would react to certain developments but I didn't talk to the assistant secretary very often. I was much more in touch with the DAS, John Gastright via e-mail and secure phone calls. Developments happened quickly in some cases and we are there to use our best judgment. When I was back in Washington I had the usual consultations. We did not get too many high-level visits from the Department and that was something the Bangladeshis always lobbied for. The then Foreign Minister Morshed Khan had met Secretary Rice at some point, at a conference and he would wistfully tell me Rice had promised to come to Bangladesh and "play the piano for me". All I could say was well, I'm sure she'd like to come if she could.

I'd like to discuss a topic that has come up in several of my tours. I came across this in El Salvador and in Sri Lanka. The issue is dealing with the powerful people in the government who have unsavory reputations, either for corruption or human rights abuses or other alleged criminal activity. Sometimes the embassy needs something or the official in question is a crucial contact. This often happens with officials in the security or law enforcement services or in many countries, the ministry of interior which provided Embassy security.

In Bangladesh one of my main contacts was the Minister of Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar. He was quite young for the position and there were rumors of corruption and one of his agencies was the Rapid Action Battalion which was infamous for what we considered extrajudicial killings. But we had a lot of contact because he was in charge of the security forces that protected our embassy, he ran the prisons, the jails. Many Bangladeshis feared him, I'm sure with reason. I know some people, including other diplomats, thought I should have kept Babar more at arm's length. I don't know that I would have done anything differently, though. The one thing I probably shouldn't have done was to accept Babar's request to host a farewell dinner for me when I was leaving Dhaka to go to Baghdad. Babar cultivated relationships with me and other ambassadors because he believed it enhanced his stature and power. I accepted the invitation but told him I could not accept a gift. Other diplomats attended but would otherwise would not have gone. I should have just declined. When the military-backed caretaker government took office, Babar knew he would be a target. He asked me and the British high commissioner to meet him, which we did and he asked us for visas to our respective countries. He said it was for medical treatment and he did have some sort of respiratory condition. But we knew he was trying to ensure he could flee Bangladesh to a safe haven. We diplomatically turned him down. I think we had figured out ahead of time what he was going to ask and discussed our response. That was a difficult conversation to have

with Babar because of what was likely coming down the pike for him. He was indeed arrested and jailed.

Q: What about other countries there? I would think that Pakistan would be almost an enemy. There'd been such a horrible civil war.

BUTENIS: I had mentioned that the Pakistani high commissioner there was a friend of mine from Islamabad days. He told me that the average Bangladeshis he met were quite friendly. So on the surface there didn't seem to be the animosity you would expect after the horrible atrocities that the West Pakistan Army committed in 1971. It was my impression that India was resented these days, despite the key role that India, under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, had played in Bangladesh's independence. There was still a small Hindu community in Dhaka, and perhaps elsewhere, much reduced in numbers because during the 1971 Independence War and India moving in on East Pakistan's behalf, the Hindus living in East Pakistan were targeted and driven into India. The belief was that West Pakistan saw this as an opportunity to drive the Hindus out, thinking they would of course hold on to East Pakistan but have it more completely Muslim. I believe Indira Gandhi raised the charge of genocide against the Hindus, in her campaign to get the United States and other countries to pressure West Pakistan to halt. So, there's still a Hindu community, but it's quite small. I was always interested in minority communities and went to several Hindu events or temples just to kind of show support.

Q: Were there any tribal elements there? -- on the Burma side --

BUTENIS: A big issue was the large refugee populations of the Rohingyas, the Burmese Muslims who were not recognized as citizens in Myanmar and were persecuted and driven out. The Myanmar governments have considered the Rohingyas to belong to Bangladesh and ethnically I think that's accurate. But the Bangladeshis do not regard the Rohingyas as their responsibility although they have permitted many to remain in southern Bangladesh, just over the Myanmar border, living in atrocious conditions. I visited one of the camps near Chittagong where the Rohingyas had been living for years. The Bangladeshis in theory expected them to go back, the Myanmar government and the Burmese Buddhists didn't want them back, and yes, there is a militant element which stages violent attacks for which the Myanmar army retaliates against civilians.

Q: -- I've done a number of interviews on this, we may have already covered this, but what about actual disasters? When you think about Bangladesh you think about natural disasters.

BUTENIS: Yes. To their great credit, the Bangladeshis have made significant strides in preparing for disasters. One of the signature events, at least in terms of U.S. assistance, took place when Colin Powell was secretary of state, in 1991, after Bangladesh had been devastated by Cyclone Marian. The U.S. military launched Operation Sea Angel, led by LtGen. Stackpole, commander of the Marine Expeditionary Force based in Okinawa. Of course other countries also gave assistance but our effort was the largest and even when I

was there, people still remembered Gen. Stackpole and Sea Angel. There was a 15 year anniversary commemoration and Gen. Stackpole came as the guest of honor and it was an honor for me to meet him and a pleasure to witness the continuing appreciation Bangladesh had for our efforts.

Unfortunately Bangladesh is routinely flooded since so much of the area is surrounded by water, the seas and rivers. One measure the government implemented was to require each village to have at least one public building built on stilts or pillars which becomes the village safe haven when the waters flood in. These buildings are normally also used for schools or community halls. They also became aware of the huge value of their mangrove swamps as buffers against flooding and now try to protect them against development.

Q: What about women's education and all that? Was the prominence of the two ladies reflected in the society or --

BUTENIS: No, at that time the political leadership of the Two Begums was an anomaly but women were beginning to become more of a political force then at lower levels. Women activists were getting their start in NGOs in their villages. I saw this later in Sri Lanka. Women were also and perhaps primarily motivated by economic necessity. In Bangladesh 80% of the readymade garment workforce were women. Whether they turned over their income to their parents or husbands, nonetheless they had a serious economic role in their households. I thought it was different in Bangladesh than in, say Pakistan, where women worked in the fields but not so much in the factories. Of course, like elsewhere in the world, both Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina inherited the mantle from male family members. Khaleda Zia was, at least initially, seen as a widowed housewife who would never have had a political leadership role on her own, whereas Sheikh Hasina's political shrewdness made her a natural. Regarding women in general in Bangladesh, my impression was that the obstacles to women's advancement in Bangladesh had less to do with Islam than with poverty and they were tackling it. They had improved the overall literacy rate across the board. It was very encouraging to witness this kind of development.

Q: -- On the ready made garments industry, was your embassy sort of monitoring these places to see whether they were meeting what we would consider acceptable standards --

BUTENIS: Not directly but we did support the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations's overseas organization, Solidarity. This was a labor union, labor rights advocate and we worked quite closely with them. They had an office in Dhaka, headed by a very capable, dedicated man, Tim Ryan and they were trying to help organize labor and improve some awful working conditions. Like in a lot of countries Bangladesh had laws on the books that said workers could organize freely but in practice there was a lot of resistance. The factory owners wouldn't allow organizers on the scene. I should say that I was and am sympathetic to labor unions. My father was an official in his own union, the Philadelphia Paper Handlers Union so I grew up with a very positive view of unions. The only factory I think I was ever able to visit was in the export

zone, where the government established an area where companies could set up production facilities and enjoy tax and other concessions. Often those tend to be showplaces and with conditions superior to the usual outside the zone. I did visit some city in the south of Bangladesh and with Solidarity, I think, met with women who were trying to organize the workforce in this shrimp factory. Their work could be dangerous because they are beheading shrimp at a fast clip. They're cutting themselves, they're bleeding all over – terrible. They made such an impression on me that at my next meeting with the Chamber of Commerce, I brought the working conditions up. I assumed that at least several of the businessmen there had interests in the shrimp factors. I probably was not very diplomatic taking the side of the women workers. I don't think they expected or liked that but they were polite and listened. Whether it had any effect I don't know. Recent headlines about factory workers in Bangladesh, again mostly women, dying in factory fires are evidence that conditions are still bad.

Q: Was there any sort of Muslim extremist pressure put on girls' education, or not?

BUTENIS: I wasn't aware of anything negative. What I do remember is the government's imam training academy. I don't recall if attendance in the program was compulsory but it was pretty impressive. In fact, they invited USAID to teach at this academy, to talk about our health programs, whatever development programs we were offering. The whole point was to help the imams who were village leaders to better serve their constituents by giving them information about, and in some cases, direct access to resources in areas like job training, drug prevention and addiction rehab, health care, etc. It was quite progressive and recognized that the imams were often the only or at least the most trusted authority figure in a village. They were like social workers. People would go to them for all kinds of problems. We can't conceive a child, what can we do? My son is taking drugs. I can't get a job. This training program taught the imams where they could go to get help for their villages, thereby enhancing their status and of course, the training also promoted a moderate view of Islam.

Q: Well, in many ways you must have felt you were dealing with a country that had a huge population and yet is doing an awful lot of the right things.

BUTENIS: Very much so. It was frustrating that I couldn't get more attention paid to Bangladesh, especially from senior USG officials. The only member of Congress to visit came because he had a Bangladeshi constituency and he got the royal treatment. I think the highest level State Department visitor we had was our deputy assistant secretary and he had access to very senior Bangladeshi officials, well above his rank. Bangladeshis are such hard-working people, making real progress in improving social and health conditions, friendly to the U.S., and I just wish we could have delivered more, even just in terms of these public, symbolic visits.

On another, cultural note one of the programs I loved was the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. Each embassy's public affairs section can submit proposals for funding specific projects which help preserve local artistic or cultural traditions or skills

that are in danger of disappearing. I remember two in particular that we did. One project was to help preserve the craft of making a particular kind of boat used for fishing on rivers. Fewer and fewer fishermen were using this type of craft and the skills were in danger of being lost. Another one was a type of lost wax bronze casting of statues. I went to the exhibition of the works created through this project, in an art gallery and it was quite exciting. Of course as the ambassador and chief guest I felt I should buy some of them. My favorite remains a statue of the Hindu god Ganesh, in a more modern pose, reclining on a chaise lounge and reading a book held in two of his arms. It's quite wonderful. I learned that the artists that traditionally practiced this craft were Hindu and I wondered how popular their works would be among the largely Muslim community of art lovers. It's important for foreigners and diplomats to support the arts but if the general population did not also support these arts and artists, we were likely postponing the inevitable loss of a tradition.

Q: Well, as an American ambassador and a woman, did you find yourself getting involved in promoting women's issues?

BUTENIS: I certainly gravitated personally toward women's organizations but generally interacted with them through our USAID programs. When you found women who were not just surviving, but thriving and providing leadership, it was so refreshing and inspiring for me. So I always reached out to them.

Q: OK, let's move on to your next assignment, Baghdad. How did you end up by going to Iraq? You were an ambassador for about 14, 15 months?

BUTENIS: Yes, just 14 months in Bangladesh. It was a hell of a thing. I had decided I would not volunteer for Iraq largely because I wasn't an Arabist, I didn't speak Arabic, I'd never served in the Middle East and those weren't issues I am familiar with. Then I heard a rumor that Ryan Crocker had been asked by President Bush to go to Iraq and when I saw Ryan at a conference, he asked if I would go as his DCM, as I was in Islamabad. I think the only thing I asked him was, "What about my dogs", and he assured me they could go too. At some point I also said I did not want to be involved in the policy end of things and he agreed, I would take care of running the mission. I tell people now that it did not occur to me to decline to serve, in part because I took an oath to the U.S. constitution to serve, and we had bilateral relations with Iraq, and an embassy there, so I would go. So I went back to Bangladesh and maintained "radio silence", not telling even my assistant secretary, leaving that to Ryan.

Q: I'd like to talk a little bit about what you were getting from other people. And is this happening before you knew you were going?

BUTENIS: Well, as you remember Iraq was hugely controversial: the whole premise for invading Iraq and how things had not turned out the way at least DOD under Rumsfeld felt it would, and how efforts by the State Department to plan for the aftermath had been just disregarded. So people struggled. I remember a kind of adrenaline rush from people

who had already served the one-year tour. Certainly some people went because they thought it would help or salvage their careers. Another attraction was the ability to get priority assignment to your onward assignment, so people would begin their tour in Iraq already knowing where they would be going next. Most of us were also happy to make the extra money. We had a very generous compensation package, plus three R&R's a year. If you were coming to Iraq from another overseas post you could leave your family in your previous posting, kind of sheltering in place I guess we called it, which was hugely attractive, minimizing the disruption to your family. There were also people serving in Iraq who wanted to escape unhappy marriages or other sad situations. Most importantly, there were the very real concerns about physical safety – it was a war zone. But by and large, the overwhelming majority of Foreign Service employees with whom I served were there because that was our job.

I never told my mother, who was in her late 80's then, that I was leaving Bangladesh to go to Baghdad. She watched the news and would have been very worried, so when I called weekly or visited on R&R, she did not know I was coming from Iraq.

I arrived I think it was in July 2007, thinking it would be a one year assignment. I arranged for my deputy in Dhaka, now Ambassador Geeta Pasi and a friend, to keep my two dogs for the year. Everyone in Dhaka knew my dogs, my little Polish terrier mix Tillie, adopted from a Warsaw animal shelter and Stanley, my one-eyed Dhaka street dog rescued as a puppy by an embassy teenager. Tillie was adorable, looking like Benji or Yoda, with her big ears, and Stanley was Stanley – scrappy, a puppy still chewing everything in sight, and wanting all the attention. When I asked Geeta if she would take my dogs for the one year -- because I thought I could go back, pick them up, and go onto wherever I was going to go next, she said, "I'll take Tillie," meaning the little Polish one. And I just looked at her and she caved and said, "OK, I'll take both of them."

When I arrived we were living in trailers, with no overhead cover, with leaking sand bags along the sides. The trailers were two living areas connected by a bathroom and most people shared them with a trailer mate. I had one to myself. We could only bring maybe 250 pounds of airfreight with us plus our suitcases and all my other belongings went into storage. I learned how easy it was to live without all my stuff, of course in part because all we did was work and sleep, except for a few hours of downtime a week. My wardrobe consisted of dark slacks, tops and jackets, often brown or beige, colors I hate, to match the dust and sand everywhere. I inherited a contraband microwave and there was a TV, a mini-fridge and an embassy unclassified computer, so I could work and check personal e-mail – and shop on-line. .

There were also five or six other ambassadors who had also resigned from their positions to serve in Iraq and they were great, professional colleagues, people like Charlie Ries, who was COM in Greece, Marcie Ries, COM in Albania, Tom Krajlesky, Adam Ereli and others. I did entice a friend to go as well, Phyllis Powers who was then DCM in Lima. We had served in Bogota together and she was a fellow dog-lover. Phyllis had an excellent reputation as the international narcotics and law enforcement affairs director in

Bogotá and she agreed to come to Iraq to head our provincial reconstruction teams. The office was called OPA, perhaps Office of Provincial Assistance.

On a humorous note, getting used to a quasi-military lifestyle took a while. One of my biggest surprises was my initial (and erroneous) impression was there was no food. By that I mean that we all ate from the DFAC (the dining facility) staffed by contractors. There were several and the one closest to the palace was huge, cafeteria-style, hearty portions meant to feed the soldiers who needed the calories. I'm a vegetarian, so I ended up mostly at the salad bar. The DFAC was only open during certain hours, so you had to have breakfast within a certain time, then it closed, then you had to go be there for lunch, closed, then dinner, and then it was closed. I think there were midrats – midnight rations as well but that was past my bedtime. More than once I worked past 8PM, forgetting to grab dinner. I put out a call for help to my friends in the States and soon began receiving care packages of microwaveable food. There were a few fast food places in the Green Zone and the commissary, where we had shopping privileges, but it was hard to make the time to go there.

I also had to get used to having a protective security detail (PSD), bodyguards all the time. Now, I was used to that to a certain extent, certainly in Pakistan as deputy chief of mission and as chief of mission in Bangladesh. I had a full complement from Blackwater, which was one of the three security companies which had State Department contracts in Iraq. Blackwater in central Iraq, and Dyncorp and Triple Canopy covering the rest of our installations. They followed me everywhere, from when they met me outside my trailer in the morning until they escorted me back there at night. They also accompanied me on my pre-dawn walks for exercise. Even inside the palace, during my first year, they remained within view as I worked in my office and followed me from room to room. Since my life was completely centered on work, I didn't find them intrusive. Ryan did not like such an obvious presence, even with his detail of diplomatic security officers, and once he told them he didn't want to see them following him around in the building. One of the RSOs came to me about this order, wondering what to do. So, we decided they would follow him at a distance and hide wherever possible. Ridiculous, and I am sure Ryan wasn't fooled, but it allowed him to think he had a semblance of freedom and the RSOs to do their jobs, after a fashion. I felt strongly that someone in Ryan's position, who was so crucial to the success of our policies and who had such tremendous responsibilities, should have all the support possible. Give the man what he wants. And so if he didn't want the guards right behind him, fine, so let's hide them. Let's remove that source of irritation.

Alarms were a standard feature of almost each day with the Big Voice announcing incoming and telling us to take cover. (For about six months after I left Baghdad, every time we had a drill in Embassy Colombo, my onward assignment, my heart would race and I would flinch a bit, reacting as I did in Iraq, even though I was in the paradise, security wise at least, of Sri Lanka). Indoors we moved away from the windows, even though most of them were covered with metal or wood. My PSDs always came up to me to make sure I was seeking cover. If the siren went off at night we were supposed to roll

onto the floor of our trailer and get into our vest and helmet and then, depending on the trailer's location, either run out to the nearest bunker or shelter in the safest corner of the trailer – maybe in the corner closest to the sandbags or under a table. I think that was what gave me the most anxiety, since I was near a bunker but was I near enough? I didn't want to make a decision, I just wanted to act. If we were lucky and there was no hit, we heard the all-clear and went back to sleep, which became surprisingly easy to do.

There were casualties when we were hit. Once a bunker took a direct hit, with a hole blasted right through the base and several of the people sheltering inside were injured. I can't remember if people were killed, but I know one of our Jordanian contract drivers was badly injured. His pelvis was shattered. I learned that the driver was in the military hospital and his fellow drivers wanted to visit him in the hospital but were not allowed. So I spoke with one of the doctors and got permission to visit the man and told his friends I would convey their greetings and report back to them. When I saw him I learned that his family didn't even know he was in Iraq; he told them he was elsewhere in the Middle East. The real problem, though, was that it wasn't clear if the man was entitled to further USG medical treatment, to a medevac which he desperately needed. Someone said he could be treated at US military facilities in Balad, but then he was sent back to Baghdad. It was very bureaucratic although I understood the need for rules. Finally he called his family and we medevaced him to Jordan for treatment. I think we also arranged for him to get employment with our embassy in Amman. I'm happy to say, just last year when I was still at FSI that I ran into two of his colleagues from Iraq. They recognized me and told me that their friend was alive and well and working in Jordan.

Q: What about the staff?

BUTENIS: The civilian mission was huge and our front office was a bit unusual. Ryan had his office management specialist and also a military aide, courtesy of General Petraeus. The aide for most of the time I was there was Bill Cone, a naval officer, who was so professional, personable, and who managed to pretend that he liked State Department types and got along with us wonderfully. Ryan also respected Bill, otherwise he would not have lasted. Bill would interpret military behavior and protocol, which was a mystery to me. Ryan also had a special assistant, Ali Khadery, whose family came from Iraq and who spoke Arabic. On my side I had a wonderful office management specialist, Sandy McInturff who was the best in the business. We also had a chief of staff and several staff aides, who had to be at least second-tour, since first tour FSOs were not assigned to Iraq. It would have given them a very distorted view of the Foreign Service. Plus, there was absolutely no time to mentor them, to teach them about the job or the career. Everyone was thrown in and expected to start working. Our staff was big but it *paled* in comparison to the CG's staff. When I arrived I think there were about 143,000 U.S. troops in Iraq. I used to say that there were 20 colonels for every FSO.

Shortly before I arrived they had reorganized the civilian mission into two "clusters". There were maybe 26 USG agencies represented and many of them, on paper, anyway, had reported directly to the DCM. This was unworkable, so the agencies were roughly

divided into two clusters. One encompassed all development, economic and financial programs, to include USAID, State's economic section, Treasury, etc. This was headed by Ambassador Charlie Ries, who had resigned as COM in Athens to come to Baghdad. His wife, Ambassador Marcie Ries, also gave up a COM in Albania to head Baghdad's Pol/Mil Section. They were both phenomenally capable, professional, and low-key officers, just who you wanted in a place like Embassy Baghdad. No ego, just a focus on getting the job done. The other cluster included all law enforcement, judicial, legal agencies and programs. This included the FBI, ATF, DHS, and State's INL. This cluster was led by a Department of Justice officer, a former US attorney. The cluster concept was not without problems. In some cases, the heads of the constituent agencies did not like reporting to the cluster head and felt entitled to continue to report to the front office (preferably Crocker). We somehow sorted all this out.

Q: Let me ask a question that needs to be asked. We put the best and the brightest, we really did, in there. We had a huge mission. And yet, it looks like the whole thing was a disaster.

BUTENIS: Well, as I say, it was fine when I left. More seriously, during my almost two years there, there was progress in a number of key areas. The most important at that time was reducing the level of violence. Without improving security, not only for the USG presence but obviously as well for the Iraqis, you couldn't do much else. So, the military tracked this, on a daily basis, with charts and power points, the way our military does these things. The violence in the country peaked in the summer of 2007, measured by the number of IEDs, rocket attacks, vehicular bombs, etc. I can't recall if we distinguished between attacks against the US and against Iraqi security targets and Iraqi civilians. A lot of this violence was Iraqi on Iraqi, Shia against Sunni, Sunni against Shia, and Al Qaeda, a Sunni outfit, against the Sunnis in Anbar province who did not support them. That violence had begun to go down because of Petraeus' approach. One major contributing factor was Petraeus' success in getting the Anbar Sunnis to switch their support from Al Qaeda to the Iraqi government and the Multi National Force (MNF), the coalition the US headed. This was referred to as the Anbar awakening or sometimes the Sons of Iraq – it had different names, but basically MNF recruited the Sunnis to fight against Al Qaeda and receive salaries in return, which gave them a way to support their families. Many of the Sunnis recruited had served in Saddam Hussein's army and had lost their livelihoods when the Coalition Provisional Authority under Jerry Brenner disbanded it. Of course, Al Qaeda's own brutality in Anbar was also a motivating factor in the Sunni tribes switching sides. So things began to improve on the security front. The problem was on the political side. We had supported a Shia politician, Nouri al-Maliki as Prime Minister, who had really come out of nowhere as a politician. We pressed Maliki very hard to not be sectarian, to reach out to the Sunnis, to continue paying the Sons of Iraq as a way to keep them within the government's tent, to oppose the Shia militias and their leaders who were the sources of much of the violence. But Maliki did not see things our way and of course, there was the influence of Iran, which came to play a larger and larger role in Iraqi politics and in the violence.

Q: Let's talk about the people. What sort of things did you notice? How did the population of Foreign Service people and Civil Service work together?

BUTENIS: That was one of my challenges when I got there. We had this diverse set of hiring mechanisms, some non-traditional. There were the traditional direct hire FSOs, State Civil Service on tours out of the Department, we had 3161s who were hired through JOBS USA on one year contracts, a mechanism I think was created just to help staff Iraq and possibly Afghanistan, many of whom had never been overseas before, much less worked in an embassy. We also had people from many other U.S. government agencies because President Bush had made sure that our workforce in Iraq was a whole of government effort. So, in addition to USAID and Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) we also had a large group of US Department of Agriculture (non-FAS) employees, a huge FBI office, Department of Homeland Security, Treasury, etc. My job was to make sure we were all working together or at least not sabotaging each other's efforts inadvertently or otherwise.

Ryan's predecessor was Zalmay Khalilzad and mine was Daniel Speckhard, both with considerable foreign affairs experience but not a traditional Foreign Service front office. Shortly after I arrived I learned that the 3161 staff viewed our arrival and that of the other FS ambassadors as a shift to a Foreign Service focus and less need for their services. Some worried that their contracts would not be renewed and frankly I could not offer much assurance.

There were also concerns that were shared by everyone. Am I going to stay alive? Am I going to get hurt? Am I going to survive this tour? There were also all the traditional concerns that people have about their jobs. Am I going to get promoted? Will I get a good onward assignment? Some people were concerned about the strains on their marriages and families. And there was no time to mentor people. We brought in all these non-FS people who'd never been overseas or worked in an embassy and there was no time to sit down and say well, this is how it works. Many of the military there were similarly unfamiliar with chief of mission authority and the workings of an embassy and what diplomacy was about. Certainly, the military's rules and ways of working were equally unfamiliar to many FSOs.

Sometimes we also had a lack of coordination among the agencies and that was another one of my jobs, to promote coordination. For example, we had three different USG agencies advising the Iraqi government on its agricultural policy. One was our military. Now, what is our military doing with agriculture? But there they were. And they had people on their staff who were trying to promote a certain policy with the Iraqis. Then we had USAID, which felt it was their job to advise on agriculture. And then we had USDA and they thought they should be doing that. I can only imagine the confusion of the Iraqi officials after receiving three separate sets of USG officials all advocating different measures. One day somebody from USAID came to me to complain, very frustrated by the lack of coordination. So I chaired a meeting with all three agencies and established

that USAID should have the policy lead. I wasn't going to waste my time trying to cut out the military. So, after each agency explained their role, I directed that USAID have the lead and that the Iraqis should hear only coordinated recommendations.

Q: Well, you must have been dealing with not just policy, but egos.

BUTENIS: Of course, maybe I chose not to see ego conflicts or people behaved when I was around, but I found our group of senior FSOs, the several with ambassadorial rank, very collegial, very focused on our mission, and felt fortunate to have people with their expertise and experience and, I guess, emotional maturity. Certainly both Crocker and Petraeus had healthy egos. I thought Crocker pretty much stuck to the political side of the bilateral relationship, which was the far messier of the portfolios while Petraeus seemed to think he could solve all problems, not just on the military side but political, economic, social, etc. Crocker was careful about disagreeing with Petraeus on some of the nonmilitary issues, choosing the most important ones, it seemed to me. We'd be in a meeting discussing the prime minister's latest political pronouncement or the energy minister's latest statistics on generation of electricity, and Petraeus would suggest the US do something, take some action and Crocker didn't often challenge Petraeus, at least in meetings with others present, even when I suspected he thought it was a bad idea. He would let the comment go. But when Petraeus proposed a course of action that Crocker thought was not going to work, he would say, "Well Dave, why don't we think about that a bit?" And then Petraeus would listen to him. Despite the tremendous disparity in resources between what DOD had and what we civilians had in Iraq, Crocker managed to more than hold his own. They respected each other and together they were quite a team.

I tried to solve whatever administrative or support problems came to my attention without pushing them up to the Crocker-Petraeus level. I would get all kinds of issues. A colonel would come in and say "I've asked for clearance on this paper and can't get it," or the RSO would say "the military are not following our security rules," that kind of stuff. I would try to sort it out, not necessarily thinking that the State Department solution or position was the best one. Crocker had enormously significant issues to deal with and he didn't need this. Of course, Petraeus had a huge staff to run interference for him so I cultivated a lot of relationships on the military side.

I told my OMS, the legendary Sandy MacInturf, that any general or admiral who wanted to see me, could just show up and come in. Sandy, who was trying to protect my status and my time said, "Well, shouldn't they need an appointment?" I said no, if somebody wants to see me send them in and in that way I made contacts, in some cases friendships. Likewise, they were always accessible to me. Whenever I had an issue, I could work with whomever my counterpart was. And there were millions -- we were just this small State Department contingent compared to the military.

Some of the issues were comical, One early New Year's day I learned from our Public Diplomacy head that the previous evening a British officer assigned to our public diplomacy section had come into the section quite drunk and vomited all over his desk.

The Brits had different rules about alcohol but I did not think that extended to throwing up in one's office. So, I dutifully sought out Petraeus' deputy's deputy – whoever was immediately available. I explained the problem and said I expected him to take action – something, since my people were offended enough to bring it to my attention. I believe the overserved officer was sent out of Iraq. Now perhaps that was the answer to the man's prayers but that didn't matter. I made a complaint and action was taken.

Another issue came up after we moved into the New Embassy Compound, or NEC. We had a helicopter landing zone on the compound and one day the new commanding general, Ray Odierno was about to land. Our RSO controlled the NEC and thought there might be something on the ground, perhaps ordnance that posed a threat, so the RSO denied clearance to land. The helicopter landed anyway and it turned out there hadn't been a threat. However, the RSO was very annoyed that their authority and order had been disregarded, so they brought it to me. I understood that I could not advise the RSO to let it go because the issue really had to do with a fundamental question of who was in charge on the NEC – the civilian State Department or the military MNF-I. So I talked to Gen. Odierno's chief of staff, LtG. Ken Glueck, a Marine, and requested that he look into the incident and take some action. He came back and explained that Odierno's security chief, on the helo with the CG, had determined that they could safely land. I thanked him for the background but said I still needed some response to this disregard of RSO authority. I think Gen. Glueck was hoping this would just go away, and further explained that the security chief was about to retire, had been with the CG a long time, etc. I still said I needed to make the point. I wasn't asking that the security chief be court marshalled but I could not just let it go. So, Gen. Glueck worked out some sort of action that involved an inquiry into the incident and that recognized the authority of the RSO on the NEC. Perhaps the RSO had hoped that the security guy would be canned but that wasn't going to happen, but we had made the point. I also think this incident reflects the two priorities Crocker gave me when I arrived: promote the transition to a more normal embassy and improve our working relationship with our military. I backed up the RSO's authority on the NEC and was able to do so because of a collegial working relationship with MNF-I leadership.

Q: Well, what about the different countries which were part of the Coalition?

BUTENIS: We were the biggest element by far followed by the British. A Brit served as deputy commanding general but my impression was that he never had any significant authority, although the Brits were in charge of Basrah, in the South. They were the junior partner though of course politically, we very much appreciated their participation. I had to deal with one issue in Basrah. We had a provincial reconstruction team (PRT) in Basrah, co-located on an Iraqi military base with the British command and some of the Americans were unhappy with the security the Brits provided for the base. The British approach seemed to be if they did not shoot at the Iraqis the Iraqis would not shoot at them. Basrah had a lot of Shia militia and Iranians running around and the Brits just hunkered down on the base. One day I visited our PRT and had been briefed previously that the Americans did not feel safe. The PRT leader said there had also been a few thefts

on the base which suggested that people were able to get into and out of the base. Someone had actually cut a big hole in the base fence and had stolen some equipment. I met with the British base commander and raised security concerns in a vague sort of way, but when I got back to Baghdad I talked to the deputy CG and asked that they step up the base security.

The Australians were there and so were the Poles. I served in Warsaw for three years, so I have a special place in my heart for the Poles, who are a courageous, tough people. I sometimes met with coalition ambassadors since Crocker was totally immersed in the political drama. The Polish ambassador was retired military. Their embassy was outside the Green Zone though they had plans to relocate. One day the Polish ambassador came out of his home, which was in a cul-de-sac. His motorcade was rocketed and he was trapped in his car. His security detail was trying to contact MNF-I and couldn't get through so they ended up asking our RSO for help. We rescued the ambassador who was badly burned, took him to the combat hospital and eventually medevaced him to Warsaw. Then his DCM told me "Our old location is too unsafe. Can you help us? Can we move in with you?" So we said of course. We found space in the embassy, (still in the Palace). I think their new embassy was eventually built inside the Green Zone.

I would like to talk about one event that came up shortly after I got there that really was a nightmare and very challenging to handle. I was chargé because Crocker and Petraeus were testifying on the Hill, as they were required to do every six months. State had three private security companies in Iraq, Blackwater, Triple Canopy and Dyncorp, with Blackwater covering Baghdad. Blackwater provided my own protective security detail and I found their employees by and large to be professional. Many had military or law enforcement backgrounds. They earned good salaries for serving in a war zone and that generated some resentment and, as I learned later, our military thought some of their tactics and security measures were inappropriate. Our own diplomatic security service simply wasn't able to provide that kind of protection in all our locations in Iraq and we could not hire local, that is Iraqi guards, as we do in other countries. Our RSO shop had about 85 ARSOs and the three security services reported to the RSO.

During my second month on duty one of our Blackwater teams was responding to what they had been told was an attack on embassy personnel. They were stopped in a traffic jam or at a checkpoint and apparently one of them thought that this car coming toward them might be a vehicular bomb and one or more of the guards opened fire. Initially we thought they had killed 17 or 18 people, although I think the death toll reported in court proceedings is now slightly less. The security contractors were already controversial because the Iraqi government did not like them. Some of the measures they took to warn Iraqi vehicles away from their convoys, like throwing full water bottles or setting off flares, were considered ineffective or perhaps insulting. The vehicles also had warnings on them, in Arabic, to "Stay back – keep back". They also I believe had diplomatic immunity from local prosecution. But they killed all these people, not to mention those wounded. My conclusion at that time and now was that the people who were killed were no threat. It was just this awful, awful issue that had many ramifications. I realized that

we always placed more value on American lives than on Iraqi lives. I suppose that was obvious but as someone being protected by Blackwater I would not have wanted them to think very long about whether something was a threat to me or not. I also understood what split-second decisions our contractors had to make, were trained to make. There surely were mistakes and indeed, we killed all these innocent people.

Our RSO was Earl Miller, a wonderful professional who deservedly went on to be a COM which is highly unusual for a security officer. We just handled the more immediate ramifications as best we could. The RSO took the Blackwater guards statements, and I think that caused a problem for the eventual prosecution of the case in the U.S., but it was SOP.

MNF started sniping at us about our contractors, that they weren't professional, theirs were better, etc. As this unfolded, it was the only time I ever spoke directly to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who called to see what the status was. Of course Crocker called from Washington and asked if he needed to come back. I briefed him, reported the call from the Secretary, and he decided he didn't need to return to post early.

Crocker pushed for an FBI inquiry and a Department of Justice prosecution, as warranted. He felt very strongly that we couldn't just let this go without a full investigation. The prosecution is still going on. I also had to engage with the Iraqi government so that our security contractors could continue to work in country, since Prime Minister Malaki was calling for their expulsion. Ultimately the Iraqis had to accept the continued presence of our contractors – we simply could not have functioned without them. Another issue was an effort to have DOD take over the security responsibility for State personnel. There was some support in Congress for this although I didn't think the military wanted to take this on. We pushed back on this, especially Crocker, who said "DS wrote the book on protection". We had to go through this negotiation, with DOD sending out lawyers and the Department sent some L lawyers, in addition to our own L section in the embassy. We ended up with a MOU in which RSO retained responsibility for security and we agreed to modify our rules of engagement to match those of DOD more closely. I saw that as a win, again pushing back against being swallowed up by the military

Secretary Rice appointed a special panel to investigate the Nisour Square killings which came out and conducted an inquiry. The last piece of this, from my perspective, was our decision to make solatia payments to the survivors and next-of-kin of those who had been killed. This is money that you pay someone who has suffered because of your action and which does not imply any acceptance of legal guilt or responsibility. Our military made these payments for their own actions and we borrowed the concept. I think the rates at the time were \$10,000 for a death, \$5000 for injury and \$2500 for property damage. Solatia payments are an accepted, even expected practice in some cultures and I learned not to call them compensation. We proposed to Washington that we make the payments and they agreed. I believe it was Under Secretary for Management Pat Kennedy who made the call. Our legal advisor's office in the embassy, staffed with civil servants who

normally serve only domestically, formed our legal team and, along with Iraqi lawyers, obtained the names of the victims and next-of-kin, contacted them, managed the funds, and set up meetings in which I made the payments. I think almost all of the people affected agreed to meet with us, either the injured themselves or the family members of those killed. Through interpreters I apologized for their loss and said that we did not intend these payments to be compensation in any way. I felt I should do it because I had the title “ambassador.” I wasn't “the ambassador” but I hoped my title would convey our respect and the gravity with which we regarded their loss and grief. We killed a man’s 10-year-old son and he came in, one of the few who spoke English. It took courage for them to come in because we were an overwhelmingly powerful presence. They had to come in on our turf, surrounded by guards, screened for security. Most people were very contained although not all. This man who lost his son, we had this conversation, and what he asked for, what most people asked for, was justice. I eventually facilitated a visa for him to go to the U.S. and sue us.

There was a woman whose husband had been paralyzed in the attack and couldn’t support them anymore. I remember another, now a widow-- and all these women came dressed in black abayas, black head-to-toe coverings, I think that is what they were called in Iraq, which I learned later was the custom for mourning. I felt even worse because apparently under Iraqi Shia custom after a death in the family you’re not even supposed to go out of your house for a certain period of time. So I think some of these women actually came out sooner than they normally would have. This widow came in with her face covered as well with a black veil, she started screaming at me and crying. No one needed to translate. In American culture most of us value remaining in control of our emotions, not giving way to emotion in public. When we see how people in other cultures express grief, tearing their garments and screaming, that makes us uncomfortable. We don't like it, we think “Get a grip”. Another woman, an older woman, had been wounded. She was so intent on showing me how she had been shot that, in this room full of men, my guards, our lawyers, she hiked up her abaya to show me her thigh where the bullet had gone in.

We did the right thing in offering payments but as I said what some people asked for was justice, and all I could say was that I could not promise to deliver justice, only that we would try.

Surprisingly, I found Iraq the most professionally satisfying tour of my career because I constantly had complex, difficult issues and just figured them out or not, but I did my best. There was never time to really sort things out. Whenever I needed guidance from the Department I got it and I don't mean I was running around doing everything myself. Not at all. But with so many things happening at the same time I really did have to say OK, do this, do that, no, don't do that, hoping I was making the right call. You arrive at a post and find an ongoing operation and what do you look at first? There are so many things calling for your attention at the same time. So I figured out that my priority was the safety and security of our people and that was what I was going to pay attention to. So I didn't immediately think that I should review how our security contractors were

operating. We had to look at that after the Nisour Square killings and realized we had to change some things, but still keep our people safe. Even in the Green Zone, which was the safest part in Baghdad, we still wore helmets and kevlar vests and we still took incoming. When you went outside the Green Zone, where there were IEDs, vehicular bombs, etc., you hoped your security professionals knew what they were doing but after Nisour Square we decided we would try to lower our security profile and eventually begin trying to obey, believe it or not, traffic laws there. Well, there were no traffic laws that we observed but there were traffic lights and I remember telling my PSDs one day, "OK, we're going to stop at that traffic light." We were outside the Green Zone, maybe heading to the Foreign Ministry. Everybody looked at me like I was crazy, but we were going to try to be more respectful of Iraqis, not just to blast through and expect people to get out of your way. And the Iraqis were doing it as well, of course. The first time we stopped at a traffic light I started getting tense, thinking "What are we doing? We should keep moving". I think we reverted to the previous disregard of traffic safety pretty quickly.

Q: Just knowing what you know now and after all the time you spent abroad, is there anything you would have done differently?

BUTENIS: I was asked that question for the first time when I was talking to an A100 class. The first thing that came to mind was when I was in New Delhi I had a dog that I adopted from Pakistan, and I rescued a little puppy on the street, paid for its treatment (it had a broken paw), but didn't keep it because my Pakistani dog did not like other dogs, so I gave the dog to a local shelter and made donations for its care. I've always regretted not keeping that dog. I guess the larger point is that I'm not terribly introspective and yes, there are some decisions I have made in my career that I wish I had decided differently, but I don't dwell on them.

I will say how Iraq changed me, more so than any other assignment. I was surprised at how well I could function in Iraq and how much I grew professionally and also a bit personally. I was in my mid-fifties when I went to Baghdad and I used to think that by the time you were forty it was over, in terms of changing your behavior. You can always learn new stuff but I thought that by then your character is formed. If you are impatient you're going to stay impatient, etc. For example, like a lot of people in the Foreign Service I'm a type A, I want to if not control at least stay on top of everything. That was my job as DCM. However, I quickly saw that I couldn't possibly pay attention to everything. It was too much, so I decided that I would focus on the most important couple of issues and for me that was our security and safety and keeping as many issues as possible off Crocker's desk. If I did all I could to meet those two goals, then that was success for me. I did not go to bed at night berating myself because I didn't answer that email or I didn't read this memo. That was a change for me and a good one.

I also changed my definition of an emergency. Since Baghdad when someone says something horrible has happened, my first thought is, did someone die, was someone

injured? If not, I usually think we can handle this. I try not to say, “I’ll tell you what a real emergency is...”

Q: You earlier mentioned the disparity in resources between the State-led civilians and the MNF military.

BUTENIS: Yes, for me it was so obvious every day. An example: our secure commo. General Petraeus had secure communications capability pretty much wherever he went. We didn’t even have encrypted Blackberries. Crocker had to get to a secure, classified PC to receive and send messages or a secure phone line in the embassy. With the time difference between Washington and Iraq, just as we were trying to end our workday Washington was waking up. We had to participate in secure video teleconferences convenient to Washington. Crocker had to come back to the embassy to use any kind of secure communication. It was absurd. One day Crocker told me he wanted to have a classified PC installed in his residence in two days. (This was before we moved to the New Embassy Compound, so we were scattered throughout the Green Zone).

I’m thinking, “This is going to be fun.” I called in our head of IT and someone from RSO, the two offices I knew would tell me appropriately that this couldn’t be done according to regulations. I told them what the ambassador wanted, told them they had a couple of minutes to absorb this, vent and tell me why we couldn’t do it, and then we were going to do it. We of course needed authorization, or at least cover in Washington. So I reached out to the right person, Pat Kennedy. God bless him. It took a little more than two days, but by the third day I think we had the waivers we needed and Crocker had secure communications capability in his residence. Crocker also proposed and signed a memo for the files taking responsibility for this unorthodox arrangement so no one else would get dinged later.

Q: Looking at this, I spent 18 months in Vietnam where the American presence was big, but nowhere near the kind you had. But it does seem to me that we were pouring in so many Americans, including sort of a civilian surge, it struck me as being sort of a PR thing to show that by God, the Foreign Service and Civil Service have balls.

BUTENIS: I would disagree. The military had a mission, we had a mission. We had expertise that the military did not have, to promote economic activity, combat corruption, and most importantly, encourage the Iraqi political class to respect a minimum of democratic principles. You can say, as many did then and do now, that that should not have been our job, to try to remake Iraqi society. But at the time, that was the USG civilian mission. But you can’t do all this when you don’t have security.

We had the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) with civilian and military personnel throughout Iraq and they were civilian led, which bothered some of our military colleagues. But it was sometimes hard to act like you were in charge of a PRT when your counterpart was the colonel and he provided most of the stuff: the transportation, the food, in many cases the security. How do FSOs assert themselves as leaders in an

environment where we don't really control the resources? Some were successful, others not. I saw one case where the FSO in charge was so embarrassingly deferential with the colonel.

We did have USAID in some of the PRTs with development funds but even here, sometimes our military offered a better deal to the local community. We civilians had certain standards and requirements for projects. You would go to the local tribe, to the tribal sheikhs and, for example, solicit proposals for an employment generation project. So the sheikh would say, "Well, we want to do this," but it didn't meet our requirements. Maybe we didn't think that area needed this project or that the local community would not be able to sustain it, so we turned them down. Then they might go to our military, which had its own funds, often CERF money (Commanders Emergency Relief Fund, or something like that) and the military would fund the local project because they were under pressure to expend those funds. These dynamics made it frustrating for our development professionals to do their jobs the way they were supposed to.

Q: As DCM you were at the center of this major activity in the United States government in Iraq and you were kind of the person who had to deal with the repercussions of all this on this large and often not fully prepared group. These were civilians coming in and all of a sudden under fire for the first time. I wondered if you'd talk about it.

BUTENIS: This brings us to our mental health in general, how the civilian population was doing and my own ways of staying sane. We had tremendous mental health resources there and in particular I want to put in a plug for Eric Cipriano, a mental health counselor who became a friend and who went on to serve in Kabul after his amazing tour in Baghdad. Eric had military experience and so was very accessible to a lot of people. He had an office off of one of the long corridors in the Palace and his door was always open and people would just drop in and chat. He is a great person and an outstanding professional. People felt they could run anything by him and he would listen and give advice, if that's what you were looking for. When we moved to the new compound the chancery was structured the way most embassies are, with the health unit where you were supposed to sign in to see someone. I learned that people weren't going to see our mental health professionals because people still were uncomfortable about being seen seeking counseling. We ended up, I think, asking for an office off the lobby, maybe without a sign even, to encourage people to stop by. The need was certainly still there.

Our military had an even bigger problem, with several suicides while I was there. I remember vividly one afternoon we were working and Crocker's military aide told me she was worried about a colleague, a lieutenant colonel, who looked like he needed some help. His marriage was in trouble and he was under a lot of stress but he wouldn't seek help with MNF's counselling office. So, I arranged for one of our professionals to see the guy, off the record I guess.

In terms of my own mental health, I was so busy that I didn't have much time to think of anything else but work. But Crocker did something that I think made an impact. We

agreed that we would not come into work on Friday mornings. We were there six and a half days a week, but Friday we would not come into the office until the afternoon. The point was we were not in the office which signaled to people that it was OK to take that time off. I think the military also encouraged their personnel to take Sunday mornings off. I discovered that scheduled time off was crucial to my mental health, something to look forward to. It was like a holiday, which is kind of pathetic. Friday mornings I took my laundry to the laundry facility, caught up on emails. It wasn't like I was having fun but I wasn't in the office. That taught me something about what was important to me in a stressful environment.

The other thing that helped me stay mentally healthy was exercise. I always enjoyed walking and became serious about it as exercise during my first tour in Bogota where I walked home from the embassy most days. So most mornings Phyllis Powers and I would meet up before dawn and trailed by my PSDs would walk for about 45 minutes in the Green Zone. It was a great way to get energized for the day ahead, blow off steam about any issues, and just move.

The one time I sought Eric's guidance was after the suicide attempt by a friend of mine. I was blaming myself for not paying attention to the individual, who I know was struggling with a couple of issues. Eric really helped me think through that as well as facilitating onward care for my friend.

Q: What you're saying, I can both relate and not relate. It shows the growth of our awareness of these situations. The State Department is basically a big unfeeling organization in the normal course of events. I've had people talk about how they were treated when they were hostages. At first they were sort of shunned. They felt that people didn't want to associate with them. You know, there was sort of a stigma attached to it. Diego Ascencio in Bogota I think was the first one where they made a real effort. They understood this and made a real effort here. I served 18 months in Vietnam. It wasn't the situation that you had in Baghdad but there was a war going on and there were rockets all over the place, and the Tet Offensive had just happened, and people were keyed up. Yet there was very little support. I was there, my wife and family were back in Washington, and finally in the last month or two that I was there I finally went to the doctor and he gave me a couple sleeping pills. That was sort of it.

I was the chief of a section and looking at my people. I didn't see any particular problems there, but I had no training on what to look out for in terms of mental health. We weren't sensitized to it. And I'm sure there were lots of problems.

BUTENIS: I don't know what it was like staffing Vietnam but in Iraq it took a tremendous effort to fill all the positions required for the so-called civilian surge. Some FSOs volunteered for the wrong reasons – to flee a troubled marriage, to save a career- while we took in many individuals on one year contracts and I'm not sure how we screened, or if we did, for mental health and general emotional fitness. A few cases came to my attention, not clearly mental health issues, but people were not behaving well and

were causing difficulty for others. One man was a PRT leader, I don't think he was an FSO, and he'd gotten one of the soldiers to serve as a sort of orderly, doing his laundry – completely unacceptable. He was also verbally abusive and just a real pain in the ass. That was the only time I had to recommend to Crocker a finding of loss of confidence and get this guy out because he was not at all receptive to counselling. We had a no fault curtailment policy which meant that if you were unhappy or the tour just wasn't working out, you could request curtailment without any penalty. It was a solution when we had problem cases, either alcoholism or when people had been in Iraq too long, were not doing their jobs – for whatever reason we were worried about them. In most such cases when no-fault curtailment was suggested, the person agreed and was gone. Everybody except this one guy who was angry and refused to request curtailment. So I made the case and Crocker endorsed the loss of confidence finding, but neither of us was too happy with that, but it eliminated a potentially explosive situation where we were least prepared to handle it.

Q: How did you find alcoholism?

BUTENIS: As you know, in a war zone the U.S. military cannot drink but not so for the British and maybe the Australians and all the civilians could drink. Different agencies had their own small bars like the FBI, RSO had a bar somewhere. I never went to them but you could buy liquor at the liquor stores which were run by the Iraqi Christians, which was legal for their community. I remember making liquor runs. It was in the Green Zone and my security detail would take me there and I'd take some friends because I had the car. My experience with drinking there was limited to wine, having people over to the trailer for a drink. We did become aware of cases of people becoming drunk. For example, we had a congressional delegation in town, senators I think. One senator was in this cafe called the Green Bean, operating in the Palace and was accosted by someone from USAID who was drunk. The employee recognized the senator, grabbed his arm and insisted on describing his development program. The senator politely tried to disengage, the employee kept on and finally an RSO stepped in and rescued the senator.

In another incident, it was New Year's Eve and of course people were drinking. One of our political officers went back to her trailer where she found curled up on her doorstep a drunken ARSO. I'll never forget her response. It was quite cold at night and she said "You know, I'm a New Yorker and I should have just left him out there." But taking pity, she called RSO and they removed the guy.

Crocker recognized that we needed an alcohol use policy, not only for health and safety reasons but also as part of our goal of transitioning to a "normal" embassy. We had addressed this issue when we were in Islamabad, with a big multiagency community, a club on the compound, and the Marine House which had the traditional TGIFs. So we drafted a policy for civilians under COM authority in Iraq, or at least in Baghdad, clearing it through management and legal. Then we called a town hall in the Green Bean cafe, to make sure people noticed. A mere memo would have been ignored. I think Crocker opened the meeting and then handed off to me. There was no second chance – if

you were caught in public drunk, you were out. Some could have argued that no one should have been drinking in a war zone but I think we did the next best thing. Pragmatism ruled the day.

Alcohol was not the only way to maintain morale. We underwent a six or seven week period of intensive bombardment into the Green Zone, that began on Easter Sunday in March 2008. They were firing at us from Sadr City, a Shia militant stronghold in Baghdad. I was out doing my morning walk with my PSDs trailing me when I heard this big boom – and more than one. The Big Voice alarm went off and the PSD who was on foot behind me and I realized we were under fire so we raced to the nearest bunker. The vehicle which was trailing us was armored and the guys later told me they did not hear the explosions or the alarm and when they saw me running, they figured I had decided to up my game and run instead of just walk. Soon they joined us in the bunker and we could see one of our warehouses in flames. As requested, I got face down on the ground, while the detail positioned themselves around me. The explosions continued and all I could think was “Oh shit, I’m wearing a brand new, light beige track suit (*laughs*) and here I am in the dirt”. We finally got the all clear and headed immediately to the embassy (the Palace) to see what was going on, how many casualties, etc. This almost daily bombardment kept up for weeks and in the middle of this Crocker and Petraeus both went to Washington for their six-month testimony before Congress. Neither man wanted to leave but Washington said, “Get back here”. So I was chargé as the bombardment continued. I only survived because I had a remarkable team with me, in particular two individuals who not only were consummate professionals, calm personalities who supported me in any decisions I had to make and gave me their absolute best advice. They kept my morale up just by being there. They were Earl Miller, who was the RSO and who went on to a COM, well deserved, and acting management counsellor Sandy Muench. I trusted their assessments and recommendations completely. I depended on them so much that I almost cried when their tours ended months later and they left me - as I thought of it.

Q: Now, was there a military person in that?

BUTENIS: When Petraeus was not there his British three star was in charge in theory but in effect it was the MNF-Core commander, Ray Odierno at the time, who ran military operations. But MNF-C was based at Camp Victory, outside of the Green Zone so he wasn't always a presence in the embassy. We did coordinate with the military, since we were sharing the same space and relied on them of course for defense against the daily rocket attacks. One small example of our interaction was the decision I made to order all COM personnel to sleep under hardened cover, meaning not in our trailers but in the buildings where we worked. We had lost people when their trailers were hit. I informed the military office in charge of their admin arrangements (it may have been a National Guard outfit) since we would be issuing cots to the civilians and perhaps they wanted to do the same for their personnel. They lived in trailers too. The response was along the lines of “No, we’re soldiers. Don’t worry about us.”

So we issued the order and told people to queue up for cots. Of course, uniformed military joined the line for the cots and we didn't have enough to go around for all. So I went back to the military and said, "Your people are lining up and we don't want to turn them away." So, they opted to contribute cots and everybody slept in hardened quarters.

These six weeks were a very difficult yet exhilarating time for me. Of course, we were also keeping Washington informed. We had SVTCs, secure video teleconferences at night, during the workday for Washington but our evenings. Sometimes you could hear the blasts outside and we joked about faking a near hit, having someone blow some dust into the conference room, so we could tell Washington we had to end the SVTC to find shelter. Washington at one point, trying to be helpful, suggested that we stop any transit in and out -- in other words, people who were out of Iraq on R&R should stay out and nobody could leave Baghdad for R&R, for example. And I just said no, I didn't even think about it, because I knew that people who were away from post were feeling guilty because they're not back here with their colleagues while people here were very much looking forward to their R&R. So Washington didn't press it.

A tough issue was when some of the civilian employees began to grumble about what they saw as the lack of effective response by our military to this continuous incoming bombardment. Some asked, "Well, where's our great military? Why aren't they protecting us?" This was not good and I didn't think it should be allowed to continue. Of course a lot of what our military was doing was classified or with classified weapons systems, not something you can talk about openly. I decided to address this with a town hall. I asked General Odierno if he could send some poor colonel or somebody to stand up in front of this assembly in an unclassified setting and do his best to address concerns. And it worked, it was a good session. We had an excellent turnout and nobody became hysterical or rude. The colonel explained, "Yes, we know where these rockets are coming from but we cannot respond because you can't take out a heavily populated six-block area of a city to retaliate. We can't do that." And people accepted that. I don't think it allayed anyone's concerns so much as demonstrated that their leadership knew what they were worried about and tried to address it.

Q: Did you find that well, let's say Civil Service from other Departments than State, as a group, were they as disciplined -- or maybe the Foreign Service wasn't as disciplined as I would like to think they were?

BUTENIS: I would say by and large people were disciplined. I thought about what motivates soldiers in wartime and to the extent it applied to us in Iraq, one motivation being not to let down your colleagues or disgrace yourself with cowardly or bad behavior. In my own case I had served in danger posts before, but not like that, not where there was a real possibility we were going to get hit. Most of the time I was so busy, so consumed with work that I didn't think much about the danger, except when I visited casualties, people who had been injured in bombings or rocket attacks. Then I wondered if I would be in that hospital bed, or even if I were lucky to survive an attack. I remember sleeping in my trailer my first year, hearing a boom, realizing by the sound that it was

likely a car bomb across the river, and going back to sleep. I do feel that some officers had low morale, like reporting officers, political officers, or economic officers, who couldn't get out and meet the contacts they normally meet and write their cables. If you couldn't do your job then of course you began to wonder, why am I here? I never wondered why I was there.

Q: This is it. Would you talk about your feelings and the people around you about the mission? It always struck me from way beyond, it's an excessive amount of people out there, and realizing the conditions they were working under, figuring what the hell were they doing?

BUTENIS: They were doing the job we were supposed to do, Stu. I took an oath to serve, I was asked to go. End of story for me. We had diplomatic relations with Iraq and an embassy which had to be staffed. If Crocker thought I could help, I would be there. I emphasize that I was not involved in the policy end of things, I was there to manage the embassy, which I believed I could do. If Crocker had said he wanted me to think of new policy initiatives in Iraq, I would have declined, as that was not my strength. So my own mission was always clear to me.

Q: What were consular officers doing? This is my trade.

BUTENIS: And mine. We did have a consular section and for my first year we were still scattered throughout the Green Zone, and the consular section was in a separate building. I think they felt isolated from the rest of the mission. I made it a point to visit them a few times. The head of the consular section at that time wasn't very good, frankly and morale was low. I think the only visas we were issuing were to Iraqi officials traveling on official business. But there were third country national applicants so they were busy. If I recall, they offered the usual range of American citizen services if people could get to the embassy. In addition to the poor consular leadership, they had had a very traumatic incident which they felt was not handled well. An incoming rocket or mortar exploded very close to their building. No one was hurt but in addition to the shock of the close call, the vice consuls said they hadn't been trained how to respond: should they have remained in the building or left for the closest bunker? They had told the RSO about this but weren't satisfied with the response which made them feel even more isolated. We had a really good new consul coming in and I asked the RSO to meet with the consular officers and hear them out and be prepared to make suggestions. RSO agreed and acknowledged to them that there were issues and worked with them on clear SOPs.

An issue I had with CA was their choice of officers to head the section. Very soon after my arrival at post I figured out why Crocker had recruited so many high-ranking FSOs – six or seven of us with the title of ambassador. We really needed section heads who knew what they were doing, didn't need much guidance, could draw on experience. We also needed people with the authority to stand up to the military, because there were generals all over the place. You know, one, two, three-star generals, some admirals. We were constantly engaging with them every day. Because we don't wear our ranks on our

shoulders, some people felt we sometimes didn't get the respect or at least recognition we felt our seniority and expertise warranted. In administrative and policy discussions, disputes, we needed people with the authority to stand our ground. The consular section at the time was headed by I think FSO-01s, two very capable successors to the first washout, but an FSO-01 is not a very high rank.

Q: About a colonel.

BUTENIS: Yes and I thought that mattered. So I was annoyed with CA for not sending somebody with more experience or higher rank, someone who would also have been able to look out for the morale and psychological welfare of the consular staff. I didn't think the work itself justified a higher grade but there were other reasons which did. CA did not tap a star, somebody on the way up and say, "We need you there." Again, this is not at all to criticize the FSO-1s on the ground, but I just thought it made a difference and I said so. (I also thought that MED was another bureau that just didn't get it. They kept sending us junior people whose medical bona fides were fine but it took more than that to function there successfully). With consular, with so many American contractors there of course were deaths, sometimes suicides. One night we had an awful incident in which two or maybe three Americans were killed, contractors and it may have been at least one homicide. I don't recall the details, other than these were not combat-related deaths. So I just went to the consular section to make sure they were feeling OK, I guess. I didn't doubt their professionalism but they had some more junior officers and if you have never seen a dead body before, particularly from a violent death, it's hard.

My last comment about consular work had to do with policy. Obviously we were trying to stand up an embassy and moving toward normalization of relations. Once we were on the New Embassy Compound, in proper offices and with public waiting areas, we wanted to begin issuing a more expanded range of visas to Iraqis, at a minimum immigrant visas because there were people who were already in the pipeline, with approved petitions. For most of the war they had to leave Iraq to apply in Jordan I think, or other countries that had agreed to accept Iraqis for immigrant visa processing. But that was a burden on those posts and for Iraqi applicants. Our consular section was ready to take on the workload. We had this big new section. CA was a little reluctant. Understandably they didn't want us to take on more than we could chew, but we pushed it, we worked it, and I think by the time I left we were accepting immigrant visa applicants, which was a big deal.

I don't mean to minimize the challenges. Security was at the top of everyone's list, with suicide bombers a constant threat, respectfully but thoroughly screening women applicants in burqas, etc. So there were several layers of security before you ever got into the consular section. Then we needed interpreters because we had very few Iraqi local employees at the time. We had Arabic speaking nationals from other countries or from other U.S. embassies, but we didn't have the backbone of any consular section, your FSNs, who would have not only the languages but the local knowledge. We had to figure out how to communicate with applicants who may have been waiting outside Iraq and it was even harder to notify people who were in Iraq on a timely basis.

Q: I may just add a little footnote here. You're talking about the isolation of the consular section. When I was consul general in Saigon you had this embassy with a wall around it and Marine Security guards and all. And outside the embassy was another little house with the consular section and sort of an open gate, you could walk in. And I was there 18 months and I know the ambassador was never in there, never.

BUTENIS: You talk about the consular section being outside the hard line in Saigon. That was true of USAID in Baghdad, in a way. Most of us were in the Palace while USAID had this lovely compound that was the envy of all. It was a separate compound, still in the Green Zone with lovely little houses and landscaping and it was really something quite different, pleasant. Toward the end of my tour when our military was drawing down, and most of the civilians were moving onto the new compound, we were also preparing to cede security control of the Green Zone to the Iraqi government. This was part of our agreement with them. Up until that point we staffed and controlled the checkpoints, although there may have also been Iraqi soldiers, but they would have reported to MNF. I think when USAID realized that, they moved onto the NEC. There were also many, many blast walls and concrete barriers throughout the Green Zone and the city beyond, to protect against car bombs and other attacks. In some mixed neighborhoods they served to separate the Shia and Sunni from each other even though they had lived together during Saddam's time. And the walls worked – the violence decreased. Well, one of the first things Prime Minister Maliki wanted to do once our security agreement came into force was to take these walls down, because he wanted to demonstrate that security had gotten better. We thought it was a little early for that. We were quite concerned about these kinds of security issues when the Iraqis began assuming control. A few months after I left post, two huge truck bombs detonated in August, at the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Finance, a few miles away, where the blast walls had been removed. Almost 100 people died and Maliki recognized that he may have been premature in dismantling the security barriers, as much as it was a symbol of Iraqi control and authority.

Q: Well when you left what did you think about Iraq at that time?

BUTENIS: I thought at the time they had a chance to continue to bring the violence down and that if they had the political will for reforms, the trajectory could continue. I always thought that Iraq would settle at a level of violence that might have been still horrifying for us but would have been acceptable in Iraq. In retrospect it's clear we held onto Maliki for too long. I didn't think that he was a willing tool of Iran but that his Shia perspective was too strong to expect him to reach out to the Sunnis. And they were bloody too. It wasn't as if anybody's hands were clean. I thought that Kurdistan would probably go its own way since it was already more developed and much safer. I went to the only cultural event that we ever hosted during my time, in Erbil and for a while I felt like I was back in the normal Foreign Service. I was hopeful.

Could we have negotiated for a longer-term military presence? I didn't think so at the time, I didn't think that Maliki nor his members of parliament would accept that, without even factoring in Iran.

Q: Well, you know, we were making a big deal about how we were going to hand this over.

BUTENIS: That's a fair statement. We always had a lot of visits, lots of congressional delegations, Senators John McCain, Lindsey Graham, Joe Lieberman.—both from people who supported or opposed our policy.

When President Bush came it was always with no notice to the Iraqis because of security concerns. Once he was flying into one of our bases, it might have been Balad. We told the Iraqis, including the Prime Minister and the President, “We're going to take you to see somebody” with a few hours' notice. It seemed a high-handed way to treat the Iraqi leadership but of course the security of President Bush was paramount. I'm sure they knew it was going to be Bush. My job was to meet their arrivals in our helicopters and escort them to where they would meet Bush. It was almost unbearably, scorching hot and there was sand blowing, not a major sandstorm but still enough to be very uncomfortable. President Talabani arrived first and clearly wasn't happy being dragged out into the desert. When I went out to meet Prime Minister Maliki I was told by one of his aides that he had just had eye surgery, I think in Iran and he was still recovering. We had put him in a helicopter with no door, which was standard, if I recall for chopper rides there, but the Prime Minister was riding with the hot, sandy wind blowing into his face and injured eye. The aide told me he was livid. It was so disrespectful but at the same time, purely unintentional. But they go in and President Bush in his very friendly way met them and they had their meeting, but these face-to-face meetings were more for show and symbolic, I thought, than substantive. Any serious business had been worked out before.

Then President Obama, who campaigned on, “Get us out of Iraq and Afghanistan.” visited in early April. As charge I received him with General Odierno, the combatant commander after Petraeus' departure, as he got off the plane It was a very short visit, a few hours, but it got even shorter when a dust storm developed. This time we had told the Iraqis ahead of time that the President was coming and outlined the program we wanted. Originally President Obama was going to come to the Green Zone which would have been a big deal. But then the dust storm developed and the issue became is he going to come at all or do we just make it a real short visit at Camp Victory at the airport. That meant all the Iraqi dignitaries had to drive out to Victory to see Obama and that's what happened. I was hoping that the Iraqis wouldn't stand us up to make a point, but they came, they had their time with the president. There was, as always, a bit of unanticipated humor. The meetings with Obama took place in the palace which Odierno was using as his residence and office, and we had President Talabani wait in one of the many rooms in the building. It was such a last minute event that there wasn't much time to prepare as carefully as we might have wished and if I recall, Talabani was offended because the room we asked him to wait in was being used by someone as a bedroom and there was

underwear strewn about. President Obama also spoke to the troops assembled at Camp Victory. He was very enthusiastically received. So that was my 15 minutes of fame with President Obama.

Q: Well then, where'd you go after this?

BUTENIS: I resigned from Bangladesh almost two years before my term normally would have ended to go to Baghdad. I was asked what embassy I would like and when I saw Colombo on the list, given my South Asia experience, I bid on that and that's where I went.

Q: You came back from Iraq. Were you debriefed?

BUTENIS: No. There were so many people involved in Iraq policy and again, I was mostly on the management side of operations. If I came through Washington on R&R I would check in. There was obviously a lot of attention on Iraq so I sometimes saw the under secretary for political affairs, the coordinator for Iraq, but never anyone from NEA, which kept its distance from Iraqi affairs. The belief was that the NEA leadership did not want to be tainted by our policy in Iraq. I also met with people at DOD and with General Doug Lute, then the deputy national security adviser for Iraq and Afghanistan.

I did get involved in mental health issues in Iraq and I did talk to people about that, because I felt that people misunderstood some of the stresses we were under. I heard explosions around me and my trailer shook, but I never saw anybody get blown up, although I visited people in the military hospital who were horribly injured. For me the more obvious stress was the extremely long hours we all put in. All we did was work. After a while I noticed I had a very short attention span, I think because people would come in to see me all the time and I would hardly even say hi, how are you but what do you need? OK, next. I realized that I no longer enjoyed reading a magazine or going shopping on R&Rs. I loved to shop for books and shoes, but after half an hour, get me out of here. I was too restless. It took me a while to normalize. I also had a new standard of what was an emergency and this has stayed with me. When you have people coming in your office saying so and so was killed, or we just had an explosion, *that's* an emergency. Anything else, we'll deal with it.

The one thing I should have done -- and I didn't, and there's no excuse -- was to be interviewed by MED about possible post traumatic stress disorder. There was a requirement that was instituted shortly before I left that anybody departing post was supposed to talk to MED. And I just refused to do it. I didn't feel that I was suffering from any symptoms that I couldn't deal with myself. I was sleeping OK. I did realize that my attention span had shrunk and I became restless after a few minutes of reading the newspaper, for example. But I wasn't having nightmares, I don't think I was more irritable than usual. I wriggled out of a formal interview. There was always the daily threat of being killed or injured. I'm not minimizing that. But on a day-to-day basis for me it was more the stress of the job, of the pace of work. I wasn't drinking or taking pills,

I did a good job of keeping up with my friends and family. I still read mysteries, spy stories, police stuff, a few pages before I fell asleep each night and that relaxed me a bit. I also had several good friends there who shared our danger and that helped a lot, too.

Q: Would you say there was anything different about the way men and women reacted or responded to the dangers in Iraq?

BUTENIS: No, I didn't see any difference between the men and women serving in Iraq. We were all sharing the danger. I remember shortly after I got there a nurse in the combat hospital was killed by shrapnel when a bomb exploded. That was the first memorial service I went to in Iraq and it was incredibly sad. The memorial service includes having the deceased's boots displayed, along with I think their rifle, arranged in the shape of a cross. People went up and left mementos, mostly those challenge coins. The nurse's colleagues spoke about her, very simply and yet eloquently, and then everyone went back to work. While the nurse was not in a combat role, she was killed in the middle of a war zone, and that no longer seemed extraordinary.

Q: It's remarkable how quickly we've moved into this --

BUTENIS: Absolutely. It's no longer an issue. Of course, even though I had served in danger posts before, I did wonder how I would react to the very real possibility of being killed. I was aware of my responsibility as the number two civilian there and having to hold up my end. We had several staff aides, second tour officers, all younger, and I thought that how I behaved when the Big Voice announced "incoming" would make an impression on them.

I did think that married couples serving in the embassy had a special burden, I guess, worrying not only about your own safety but that of your spouse. Shortly before I left post there was a couple, the husband in the political section, the wife heading another section. The woman went out by road to look at a development project outside Baghdad and on the way back, going over the same road they had used to go out, the vehicle behind her detonated an IED, killing three people. We didn't know at first who had been killed and I remember her husband managing to hold it together until we learned that his wife was OK. Of course, she felt terrible, losing those three members of her team and I think that likely overshadowed any reaction she may have had otherwise to so narrowly escaping death herself.

We had another tandem couple, Ambassadors Charlie and Marcie Ries. They were fabulous people, professionally and personally. Prime Minister Maliki had just launched an offensive in Basra against Shia militia who were operating independently of the government. Maliki had not given us advance notice of this push and he himself was down there, sort of leading the charge. General Lloyd Austin, who at the time was commander of the Multi-National Corps-Iraq, the number two in our military and who later became the commanding general, was flying down to meet with Maliki and Crocker though Marcie should go, in part to reinforce the civilian component of the US presence..

Austin is a very big man and Marcie is on the short, petite side, and they made quite a contrast. I was told that when Austin and Marcie walked into the room, Maliki was startled to see Marcie, a woman, in that situation. I do think it was also good for our military to see our senior civilian women there, leading our sections, sharing the danger, making decisions, and standing up to the military when they tried to roll over the civilians' authority.

I remember another incident. We had a few provincial reconstruction teams in Baghdad, and one was scheduled to attend a local political meeting. Someone placed an IED in a knapsack or something in the room and it detonated, killing at least one American and there may have been Iraqi victims as well. One FSO, a woman, had left the room to use the restroom, otherwise she would have also been hurt or worse. She went to the aid of the injured and basically disregarded her own safety, as there could have been follow-on attacks. I met her just hours after the incident and I'm sure there was some element of shock, but I was struck by how calm, collected she was and how she didn't see herself as having done anything extraordinary. So, in terms of the civilians, women and men did their jobs.

Q: Then to Sri Lanka.

BUTENIS: Yes. I was offered the chance to be nominated for Sri Lanka and Maldives, which would bring me back to South Asia. When I had my hearings Sri Lanka was controversial because of human rights issues. The 26 year war between the Tamil Tigers and the Sinhalese-dominated government had just ended in May of 2009 and my hearing was in June. The Democratic committee staff weren't happy with the Obama administration, believing that we had not been tough enough with the Sri Lankan government in pushing for a ceasefire during the last months of the fighting and then later in urging better treatment of the Tamils. The government was largely treating the entire Tamil population in the north, where the Tigers had held territory and made their last stand, as if they'd all been Tigers, and that wasn't the case. So the human rights groups were very unhappy. The Tamil diaspora is well organized and active, especially in Canada. When I had preliminary meetings with Senate staffers they were a bit difficult. They delayed my hearing, to make a point, I guess, and then asked to see me a second time. Their message was that we should be more aggressive in pressuring the Sri Lankan government to respect the Tamils' human rights and improve their treatment. Anyway, I had my hearing and I was approved. During my pre-departure consultations I met with Samantha Power, at that time the NSC director of multilateral affairs and human rights, who was quite focused on Sri Lanka and the human rights situation there.

I want to emphasize that the war ended quite brutally, following years of terrorist attacks by the Tigers, so from a human rights perspective, it was hard to find any "good guys". We later learned that the Tamil Tiger leader, Prabhakaran, calculated that if there were sufficient Tamil casualties the UN or the West (including the United States) would intervene, somehow, so he refused to allow Tamil civilians to flee the battleground to safe haven. He kept civilians with them as a shield and as a reason for an intervention,

which never happened and his plan ended catastrophically. There was evidence that Prabhakaran and his 12-year-old son were captured alive but then killed. The Sri Lankan government denied that. The exact number of casualties from the final battles is still controversial, but thousands died and many who surrendered were unaccounted for. The point was that on the Hill, among the Democrats in particular, there was a lot of concern that we hadn't done enough.

I asked Pat Kennedy, our undersecretary for management at the time, to swear me in. I was very sorry that my mother, who had died a few months earlier, was not there to see me sworn in this second time so it was a bit bittersweet for me.

Q: So you were in Sri Lanka, Colombo, from when to when?

BUTENIS: I arrived in the fall of 2009 and left in July of 2012. In many ways, it seemed as if I were leaving the hell of war-torn Iraq for the paradise of Sri Lanka, with all its natural beauty. Only 20 million people, no threat to us - a real family post. Here I was going from the highest threat possible to no threat. I was aware that I had to make the transition, as did my DCM, Val Fowler, who's a fabulous, fabulous officer and who became a good friend, who was coming from Afghanistan. I didn't know her but she had an excellent reputation. So the new front office was coming from a war zone and I heard that people were a little afraid. Both of us were no-nonsense, by the book officers and I can be very direct. Not that I considered changing my personality, even if I could but I knew I had to ramp down in terms of security. I was going from a Blackwater detail to local guards, and that was certainly enough in view of the non-existent threat. But I had to stop being hyper about security practices. I joke that in this family post, I could not demand to know what that baby wasn't wearing a Kevlar diaper - that sort of thing. That was refreshing. The Tamil Tigers were a recognized, feared terrorist organization, but they had been defeated decisively and they had never targeted us anyway. Sri Lanka had been somewhat isolated by their decades of separatist war, with most people without the income to travel to the West and with few Western tourists coming there. But there was this friendly feeling about America.

Still, I worried about complacency so one of the things I did upon arrival was to conduct my own security survey. With the RSO and management officer I walked the inside perimeter of our compound, checked the lines of sight from the roof, found that the keys to the gate connecting us to the adjoining, empty British High Commission compound could not immediately be located, which would have cut off an escape route, etc. So, I did pay extra attention to security, including participating in monthly security drills but tried not to get in anyone's hair.

One immediate issue was Overseas Buildings Operations plans for our new chancery. The current one was over 25 years old and the location, right on the sea, meant corrosion by water, salt and wind. During consultations I learned that Diplomatic Security had vetoed buying the adjacent British compound, combining it with ours and building the new chancery on that expanded lot, because they didn't think it was a secure location.

The Brits were happy to sell to us and we could remain in the old chancery as the new one was built. The security argument was that the location was right on the ocean and the fact that there was a railroad (unused, if I call) between the chancery and the beach, gave easy access to attackers. A counter argument was that the seaside location also offered an escape route, if necessary. We'd been there for 25 years, but now it was too dangerous.

We eventually made the case to Washington which approved buying the British compound. Of course, dealing with the US and the UK governments was the easy part. It wasn't until three years after Val and I had left post that the Sri Lankan government finally agreed to the sale. They had withheld approval for all sorts of reasons, all spurious, in my view and I think the real reason for their delay was to hope for some kind of leverage over us, not for any particular issue, but as insurance of sorts. I also heard that some politicians advised President Rajapaksa not to approve the sale since the US was not being friendly (our push for war crime investigations, I suppose) so why should Sri Lanka do us a favor. Every time I saw the president or the foreign minister I raised the issue and was told, certainly, no problem – and then nothing would happen. But in the end, it came through.

The main policy issue that occupied us was the aftermath of the war, in which thousands died. We still don't know exactly how many and likely will never know. Tigers, soldiers, Tiger families and camp followers, some of whom were not free to leave, and civilians, villagers caught in the middle, victims of the Tigers' suicide bombings and other terror attacks. Part of our focus was also on alleged war crimes. Shortly after the last battle, cell phone photos and videos, obviously taken by soldiers, since the army banned journalists and humanitarian organizations, including the UN from the battlefield began to appear showing corpses killed in ways that pointed to torture and execution. There were photos of Prabhakaran himself, whom we were told had been taken alive, with the top of his head gone, blown off. I believe the government said he had tried to escape. There were photos of piles of bodies, of naked men, apparently executed. The only eyewitnesses were the soldiers themselves.

The Tamil population in the north was in shock. From the government's point of view they took good care of the Tamils. There were an estimated 300,000 civilians, those who'd survived the fighting, who were placed in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. Some called them concentration camps, which was extreme but at least initially, the IDPs could not leave the camps and so were, effectively, under detention. The government said the barbed wire, soldiers and other controls were for the inhabitants' protection and there was no question that Tigers, combatants, had managed to blend in with the civilians and infiltrated the IDP camps. It was a very chaotic situation. To this day there are women who say their husbands, combatants, surrendered to the army and have not been seen since. This was another concern we had, accounting for the disappeared.

Q: Was there any effort on anybody's part to take the Tamils and relocate them back into India?

BUTENIS: Well they all didn't come from India, at least not for many generations. There are two distinct Tamil populations in Sri Lanka. One is the population in the north and to a certain extent in the east which has been in Sri Lanka since perhaps the second century BCE and has lived with the Sinhalese Buddhists for hundreds of years. India is not their home – Sri Lanka is. There is also a Tamil community, sometimes called Hill Country or Up Country Tamils, who are descendants of Tamils brought from India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by the British to work the tea plantations in Sri Lanka. These two populations have distinct histories and cultures, really. The Tamils in the north have a tradition of higher education and attainment and Jaffna was the center of Tamil culture in Sri Lanka. The Tamils who were brought by the British were much less educated and still pretty much living on the tea plantations, earning very little and not integrated into the larger Tamil society although they did have politicians representing their interests. You did have a large refugee population of Sri Lankan Tamils living in Tamil Nadu, India, where they were given shelter during the war years. New Delhi was encouraging them to go back to Sri Lanka, but by this time, the younger generation, born in India, felt less of a connection to Sri Lanka.

Going back to the IDP camps, while the government, with support from other countries, our USAID included, was trying to meet basic needs, it also remained extremely suspicious of this population, knowing that there were some fighters in there and therefore limiting foreign access to the camps. There was also the Tamil diaspora, especially in Canada and Western Europe which was very critical of the government. My talking point was freedom of movement, that the IDPs should be allowed to choose to stay in the camps or return to their homes, even though many of them had been destroyed in the fighting. Looking back we were a little unfair to the Sri Lankan government because we insisted that the Tamils should be allowed to leave while not fully acknowledging the difficulties. There were also legitimate security concerns. As I mentioned, Tiger combatants had passed themselves off as civilians and were in the camps and I was told that with enough money they could buy their way out and flee the country. The people who remained in the camps had no such resources and there were many who had been injured and disabled among them. Children hadn't been in school for years. It was just a very sad, desperate situation.

Q: Lots of mines?

BUTENIS: Yes. Both the Tigers and the military planted mines over large tracts of land in the north. This was another reason why the government said it could not immediately return people to their villages, that until the areas were demined (and we helped fund that program) people risked injury or worse by reoccupying their land. In the area of demining our assistance was welcomed. There were three or four internationally recognized demining companies, Halo Trust is one, and there were several, one was Indian, one was Swedish. To watch them work is extraordinary and a bit scary. The first problem is to locate where the mines have been sown and since neither the Tigers nor the army kept records, often locations were discovered tragically – by someone stepping on a

mine and being killed or injured. It's a very painstaking, tedious process. First they brought in these big flailing machines, with chains attached to the front and if I recall correctly, the flails were used to uncover the dirt and brush layers concealing the mines and then the mines were removed by hand. People creep along on their hands and knees and gently probe and brush away the surrounding dirt, lifting the mines out to be destroyed later. The companies hired local residents to do this work and trained them well, but it was still dangerous, nerve-wracking work. We also funded trained mine sniffing canines, brought from Germany and trained in Texas. Once I visited a location where the dogs were working and of course brought some Milk Bones as treats.

The Sri Lankan army initially was very suspicious of these internationally-sponsored demining efforts because they thought we were going to look for mass graves of all these people who had disappeared at the end of the fighting. So it took a while to get the cooperation we needed with the Sri Lankan military, which had its own demining unit. That was one of the areas where I pushed to increase our aid and we succeeded in getting more money.

As I said, at one point we realized we were being a little unfair to the Sri Lankan government by insisting on releasing the IDPs almost immediately, because, really, in some cases their home villages were mined, or completely destroyed in the fighting, vegetation had reclaimed the fields and farms. Where would they go? We changed our position a bit, advocating for freedom of movement into and out of the camps. Eventually the government did permit people to apply for passes or some such system.

Q: Where had the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora settled?

BUTENIS: The UK and Canada and to a lesser extent, in the US and Australia. In the US I think there was a fairly good balance of Tamils and Sinhalese. There was an activist element in the Tamil community, for example one group called Tamils for Obama and other groups, some quite adamant that the US government not provide any assistance to the Sri Lankan government but focus on investigation and prosecution of alleged war crimes. In Canada the Tamil community seemed to be less politically engaged or at least, lower profile.

Q: How involved were other countries?

BUTENIS: Quite involved. The United Nations had a very large mission there and the resident representative had a high profile. The US and the UK also had high profiles and generally shared the same concerns and policies as the Canadians and Australians and the European Union. And of course, there was India, the regional big power which had played a controversial role in the war but was resistant to open cooperation or collaboration with other diplomatic missions, preferring to conduct its diplomacy directly with the Sri Lankan government. Then there was China, probably the most influential country represented in Colombo. As far as the rest of us could tell, China was completely uninterested in humanitarian issues, focused exclusively on business deals and

infrastructure projects, financed through loans at commercial rates. The Chinese were given the contract to build a port and other facilities in Hambantota, in what Sri Lankans call their “deep south”, ancestral home of the Rajapaksa family. Many people believed the decision to build there was a political one and not based on the development or trade needs of the country.

I should also mention Japan’s role in Sri Lanka. Japan was very generous with its development assistance and would never speak out publicly or at least very strongly about alleged human rights abuses or treatment of the IDPs. The Japanese government had appointed a special envoy to Sri Lanka, senior diplomat Yasushi Akashi who visited Sri Lanka from time to time. We were always encouraging the Japanese to make the same points we were, in their own discussions with the Sri Lankans.

Q: The Indians had actually been involved at one point.

BUTENIS: Yes. They sent a peace keeping force in 1987 to help maintain a negotiated settlement but were soon fighting the Tigers and losing, and withdrew their troops in 1990. Former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by a Tiger suicide bomber in 1991, in Tamil Nadu. So the Indians had a lot of skin in the game and were basically pursuing the same general goals we were but didn't want to publically join forces with anyone else. The Indian high commissioner would always say that the Indians viewed their relationship as bilateral, not multilateral. That changed a bit toward the very end of my tour when I think they were getting desperate, because the Sri Lankan government just would keep putting them off about fulfilling commitments they had made. The Indians were feeling very frustrated. While the Sri Lankans paid a lot of attention to the Indians at the end of the day they didn't do what the Indians wanted them to do. The other issue here is money. None of us, except China, had the big bucks, the big rupees, to fund infrastructure, housing projects in Sri Lanka. We didn't. We were scaling down and it really had very little to do with any tension in the relationship. Sri Lanka was not considered an impoverished country but rather almost a middle income country and Washington determined to spend our USAID dollars where they were more urgently needed. So we were scaling down anyway, but the fact was that the Sri Lankan government didn't want our aid in certain areas, they didn't want us to promote election awareness or human rights or anything like that. They were suspicious of that. Neither could India compete with China in assistance. The Sri Lankans always would explain that they gave India a chance to build the port in Hambantota but the Indians said no. So the Chinese said, “We’ll do it.” So how could anybody complain now?

Q: What were the human rights problems there?

BUTENIS: As I said before, the condition of the almost 300,000 Tamil civilians in the IDP camps where they initially didn't have freedom of movement, they needed medical attention, their kids didn't have access to schools. Other issues were related. One was the disappeared. What happened to these husbands and brothers and sons and daughters who were Tigers, combatants or supporters, some of whom were seen alive and being led

away by the army? The Sri Lankan government wanted the country to forget the past and look to the future, arguing that there was no point in examining the war and the causes, the grievances that led to it. War is war. I don't at all say that only the Tamil populations suffered. Many Sri Lankan soldiers and regular citizens were killed by the Tigers. But government was in a victorious mood and wanted to begin to rebuild and not think about the Tamils' needs in the north, other than rebuilding roads and other infrastructure. I would say there was no recognition that the war left psychological, emotional, social wounds that were just as important as the physical ones. That was our message: what you are doing is good, needed – but what about these other issues?

There were other human rights concerns, like freedom of the press and of expression. Sri Lanka became one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists, who were killed or threatened or in some cases, were disappeared, a phrase that I first learned in El Salvador in the early 1980's, and unfortunately still applicable elsewhere. Sometimes the government, or individual officials would bring a lawsuit against a reporter or a paper for libel, as a form of intimidation.

In terms of our assistance, we naturally focused on the Tamils in the north, those in the IDP camps and after they began to be released to return to their homes, we had programs to assist with land titling so people could reclaim their land from the army and navy who occupied it during the fighting, skills training for widows and other women now heading households and demining. These weren't the only areas we worked in but perhaps they were the most visible and the government and some Sinhalese began to ask why the US only cared about Tamils. There were Sinhalese who were poor, as well. We tried to be sensitive to that and to see if we couldn't direct some of our USAID projects to deserving communities in predominantly Buddhist areas. At the same time, I don't at all regret that we were focused on the Tamils. They were pretty miserable.

Q: Was there any movement of Sinhalese to move into Tamil territory and take over businesses and that sort of--

BUTENIS: Yes, that was another issue. The government rebuilt a major road, the A3 I think, which had been damaged in the war and that enabled people to access the north, including businessmen from the rest of the country who saw opportunities. The other development was the military's refusal, initially, to vacate the properties they had occupied during the fighting for their bases and operations. They were also entrepreneurial and opened restaurants, travelers' rest stops, etc. The Tamils objected, since the people who lived there needed employment and business opportunities much more than the military hierarchy did and could not compete with the capital and connections the army had. I raised this with Defense Secretary Gota Rajapaksa, with no effect. Even construction projects in the north, such as rebuilding a hospital, were carried out by construction companies from elsewhere in the country or by the military. In many cases they did not even hire locally for the labor, saying that builders could not find even-semi skilled workers, like masons. There was probably something to that. A lot of the men living in the north had been killed or disabled or had fled.

The government was also very sensitive, I might even say paranoid, about contact between Tamils released from the IDP camps, many of them family members of Tigers, and foreigners, especially those of us from Western countries. Once I made a trip north and met a group of Tamil women, most of them widows, several no doubt Tiger widows and possibly Tigers themselves who had no resources, worried about their missing menfolk, and who were reliant on foreign-funded aid programs. They wanted to tell their story. A few days later we learned that the non-governmental organization which sponsored the visit was being questioned repeatedly by the police about what the women had said to me and I to them. So I went to Defense Secretary Rajapaksa and asked why they were harassing these women, that I never did anything in secret, that there was nothing surprising in our conversations. Did he think otherwise? And he said “No, we know what you say.”

I will say that I understood the government’s position, its suspicion of the Tiger base and remnants, no doubt about it. They had just defeated a brutal terrorist group which had a base of support outside the country, and at least several of the Tiger leaders had managed to leave the country and were at large. So they could not completely let down their guard, but my repeated point was that if they continued to treat all Tamils like defeated Tigers, they were just laying the groundwork for future conflict.

Q: Let’s talk about whatever you have to say about Tamils and Sinhalese.

BUTENS: I have thought a lot about reconciliation, both as a concept and as our policy objective in Sri Lanka and I left post not convinced that outsiders can do much to promote it. We believed that the Sinhalese-dominated government should reach out to the Tamil population, which had been traumatized by decades of war, and then the really brutal military defeat that the Tamil Tigers suffered. The government and the population at large should, if not embrace the Tamils, at least recognize the need to reintegrate them into Sri Lankan life. There were a couple of problems though. The government was very wary of any policies or actions that looked like they would lead to a separate state or entity within Sri Lanka for the Tamils which had been what the Tigers had established at one point and was their endgame goal. In addition to control over large sections of the country, the Tigers had their own army, navy and air force equivalents, their own TV station, they collected taxes – many of the trappings of an independent country. We consistently stressed to the Rajapaksa government that we supported the physical integrity and unity of the country and in fact were pushing them to address grievances so the Tamils would not again be seeking separation. But we distinguished that from a cultural homeland where the Tamils traditionally in the north and east should feel comfortable and able to speak their own language, which is mutually unintelligible with Sinhala, reclaim their land, etc. But the government kept the army and navy in the north where they were viewed by Tamils as an occupation force, whereas the government, and no doubt the majority of Sinhalese, saw no reason why the national army (which had few Tamils in it) should not be deployed in the northern part of the country where terrorism in the government’s view remained a threat.

Another factor that worked against reconciliation was that the war ended with the Tigers' decisive defeat, with a clear, complete military victory by the government. There was no negotiated settlement, no concessions extracted from the government. They won – period and while we argued that Sri Lanka had signed international humanitarian agreements and that our efforts were not to be seen as the west trying to impose foreign, outside policies, that's how many in the Rajapaksa government saw it.

You know, once you're in a place you begin to figure it out and you have these light bulb moments where you suddenly understand something. In trying to talk to Sinhalese about reaching out to Tamils, promoting reconciliation, eventually people explained to me, once I knew them a bit, that the Sinhalese felt that no one, not the United States or the West in general, had cared when their communities suffered violence. There had been an insurrection in 1971 by the Sinhalese Communist Party, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) largely in the south, with attacks on police stations and military targets. This was largely a Sinhalese conflict and it was defeated by the army with an estimated 10,000 insurgent deaths. The International Committee of the Red Cross head told me that their largest case load of disappeared people was still from that period, from that conflict, with thousands missing and no accounting. -- thousands of people killed, missing and nobody knows what happened, -- the government didn't look for anybody. Life went on. People asked me, why didn't you care about our losses? Why should we care about the Tamil Tiger losses? The point was let's just move on, there's no reason to look back and dwell on the deaths, the suffering. Everyone suffers.

I also came to see that reconciliation works best from the bottom up, from the villages and towns where Tamils and Sinhalese and Muslims could be brought together, in a safe setting, to discuss what had happened and to see each other not as "the other" but as fellow citizens. But the society was very divided and Tamil kids went to Tamil language schools and Sinhalese kids went to Sinhalese language schools although the more educated among them also learned English, which served as a common language.

Another argument I made was that Sri Lanka's pattern tragically had been episodes of shocking violence (the 1971 JVP insurgency, the 1983 killings of Tamils, then the 26 year war) each followed by what seemed to be a willful refusal to address the issues resulting in those spasms of violence. Adopting the attitude that there was nothing to be gained from examining causes, investigating abuses, establishing accountability, etc. only guaranteed that the pattern of violence would continue and was that what they wanted? So it was kind of depressing but how do you change a culture like that if the majority community, or at least their political leaders, didn't recognize a problem?

It also must be said that the Tamils in the north, who were so traumatized by the years of fighting and then the catastrophic military defeat and the devastation in the north, understandably focused on survival, on getting released from the IDP camps, on regaining their land, on putting their kids in school, in finding employment. Of course, those women who wanted to know what happened to their menfolk went public with their

demands, working with local human rights organizations. Tamil political leaders also called for human rights inquiries.

We needed carrots as well as sticks to motivate the Sri Lankan government and as I said, the U.S. did not have a large aid program nor much in the way of other assistance. I concluded that funding aside, what the government wanted from us was a closer military-to-military relationship, investments, and respect. None of these things could be deliverables during my time. In terms of military cooperation, we had imposed sanctions, limits, on the kind of military hardware we could sell to the Sri Lankans. We did support them during the war by providing intelligence, we gave their navy a Coast Guard cutter, and in 1997 we put the Tamil Tigers on the Foreign Terrorist Organizations list. We clearly were supporting the government in the war. But because of the allegations of human rights atrocities and war crimes the Administration didn't want a closer mil-to-mil relationship, which I favored as a way to maintain influence. We were in what I called a "Mother, may I mode" where every time we wanted to do a project or some kind of training we had to go back to Washington, sometimes to the National Security staff, specifically to then Senior Director of Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights Samantha Power. Power followed developments in Sri Lanka and the belief was that she wanted to make Sri Lanka the poster child for human rights in the Obama Administration, to make a sort of example of them.

Q: How significant was the problem of Sri Lanka within the National Security Council and elsewhere? Public opinion and all?

BUTENS: Well, from my field perspective, the NSC focus was on human rights only. Power had someone on her staff whose title was something like representative for war crimes investigations and he accompanied Power on her visit to Colombo. I could have done without the man's title, since it ensured a suspicious reception, to say the least. That's the view that I think Washington had. Without minimizing the significance of our human rights concerns, I thought we could still do other things, but it was hard. However, I did appreciate Power's visit as it reinforced our messaging at a very high level.

The second thing that Sri Lanka wanted was investment but that's not something the USG can deliver, even if that had been our policy. We always sought to promote U.S. business interests in Sri Lanka, as every U.S. Embassy does but when a government official would complain that American companies were not flocking to Sri Lanka, I would point out the obstacles. There was the sheer distance from US markets and tourism, which was just beginning to revive, had never attracted many Americans. India had a wealth of historical and archaeological sites and Maldives had fabulous beaches and resorts. Not Sri Lanka and it had been in a war for so long as well.

I also pointed out that the relative lack of certainty of the rule of law, that American businesses want to know that they have a solid legal foundation, that the legal system will support them if they feel they're being cheated, that corruption is not a huge issue. Of course, the allegations of war crimes and human rights abuses that were beginning to

circulate were another reason why some companies would not look at Sri Lanka as a potential for business.

The last thing I thought that the Sri Lankans wanted from us was respect for having won the war. This was huge for them. They had fought this war for decades and nobody thought they could win, including us so when they did win everybody was surprised. The Sri Lankan government thought this was their moment. I remember President Rajapaksa telling me more than once, in frustration, that when he met President Bush on the margins of I think UNGA, President Rajapaksa was telling President Bush about fighting the Tamil Tigers and President Bush said, "You go get 'em," in an encouraging way. And so they did. But now we have the Obama administration which paid more attention to more traditional human rights issues. So the praise, the gratitude that I think the Sri Lankan government expected from us for defeating a terrorist organization wasn't there. We never said congratulations. As diplomats, we expressed relief that the fighting was over but our concern was now the civilian cost of the victory and the aftermath. The Sri Lankans also sought to promote their model of combating and defeating a terrorist insurgency as something other countries could adopt. We objected because they completely ignored the civilian cost.

But, as I said, I thought engagement with the Sri Lankan military, even limited, would be the wiser course of action. Of course, no good deed goes unpunished. Before I left post for consultations or something in Washington, I had persuaded the Department to allow our defense attaché (DATT) to attend one of these conferences that the Sri Lankan government was organizing to discuss the war. We were not sending a speaker but my idea was to have our DATT attend and hear what was presented. While I was in the States I learned that the DATT ignored instructions and in this very public forum with the cameras rolling stood up, identified himself, and said something which gave the impression that he was supporting the Sri Lankan government's post-war approach and therefore opposing our human rights emphasis. If I recall, I think he was agreeing with the Sri Lankans' rejection of higher civilian casualty figures. He may have had a valid point but that was not the time or place to make that point, especially since he had been told not to say anything. So I had to talk to the National Security Staff and accept responsibility. But the damage was done and until the end of my tour various Sri Lankan officials would bring up the fact that the embassy's own attaché agreed with their position. The DATT had no good explanation and never said a word to me when I returned to post. My assumption was that he was close to retirement and thought "What the heck?" or perhaps inexplicably thought he could offer a personal opinion.

I haven't said anything about Maldives, to which I was also accredited. It's a country with 1192 or so islands and a population then of about 300,000, very dependent on tourism. There are about 60 islands which have become resorts for various nationalities. There are resorts where Chinese is spoken, Russian, and of course almost everyone in the tourist sector also speaks English. The capital, Male, is only about 2.5 square miles in area and about eight feet above sea level. It is densely populated. When I visited, I would walk the perimeter in under an hour. We maintained a small, sort of cultural office in

Male but I was always trying to get the Department to upgrade or at least expand our physical presence on Male. It would not have made sense to have an embassy or anyone permanently posted there, although India, Bangladesh and Pakistan all had embassies. In recognition of China's increasing influence in South Asia, just before I finished my tour, the Chinese opened an embassy there. The Indians were not happy about that and the rivalry between India and China for influence in Maldives was apparent. I remember meeting with the newly-arrived Chinese ambassador who complained about how isolated the assignment was. Bangladesh's principal bilateral interest was in the huge number of Bangladeshi nationals working in Maldives, many of them illegally. Yet, as is so often the case in many countries, they provided much needed labor in construction and other areas. The Pakistanis offered madrassa training to Maldivian boys and the rumor was that many of them became radicalized. We had reliable reports of Maldivians captured while fighting with the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Mohamed Nasheed was the president when I arrived and he was known internationally as a forceful advocate for recognizing and mitigating climate change. I was told that Maldives had already lost five islands to the rising sea level and that others were threatened. When I asked about relocating the communities on the most threatened islands, Nasheed explained that people were resistant to moving, since each island community, no matter how small, had its own traditions and it would be hard for them to integrate into another community.

Our interests there were largely centered on military cooperation and training, especially since African-based pirates were operating ever closer to Maldives. The U.S. Navy, out of Pacific Command, made regular visits and exchanges which I imagine the Indians and the Chinese did not like. I remember we were trying to persuade the Maldivians to accept several Uighurs ready to be released from imprisonment in our Guantanamo Bay naval base camp. I can't imagine what kind of life they would have led there but we were trying to place these former fighters, to help empty the camp. Finally, I was told by a Maldivian official that the Chinese, who considered the Uighurs domestic terrorists, had offered the Maldives a hefty sum not to take them, and so no Uighurs ever made it to Maldives, at least while I was there.

The central event there during my tour was the controversial resignation of Nasheed. He had been elected president in 2008, in the country's first multiparty presidential election by popular vote, following decades of autocratic rule by Mamoon Abdul Gayoom. Nasheed and other members of the opposition party had been imprisoned and tortured under Gayoom's government and I once asked Nasheed how he viewed reconciliation (thinking about how Sri Lanka was treating the issue). He said that he thought it was best to move on, not to seek justice or retribution. I also talked about this with a member of Nasheed's cabinet, who had also been tortured, and it was a very emotional discussion. The man said he had felt humiliated by the experience and had never discussed it with his family after his release. Later in my tour, I asked Nasheed again if he still felt it was possible or perhaps best to not address the past and maintain a stable, democratic society and he said that he had changed his mind, that some events needed to be addressed.

I thought that Nasheed needed a bigger stage upon which to act. He was charismatic, eloquent, skilled in global diplomacy and yet he became embroiled in the same party politics and rivalries that afflict other South Asian countries. Nasheed began to lose support from his coalition members. There was also former President Gayoom, ostensibly out of politics but playing a key role behind the scenes opposing Nasheed. I was told that there had been an unwritten understanding between Nasheed and Gayoom that Nasheed's government would not launch any corruption or criminal investigations into Gayoom if he stayed out of politics but Nasheed did initiate some sort of inquiry, which I think prompted Gayoom to take Nasheed down. Anyway, in January 2012 public demonstrations against Nasheed went on for over 20 days, with the police declining to disperse the protesters and then joining them, as did some military. It was all very confusing and led to Nasheed's resignation on February 7. Nasheed later (and still) claimed that he was forced to resign under threat to his life.

Nasheed appealed to the West for support. I must say, our own reaction was not very well thought out. We were keeping Washington informed of developments, preparing talking points, etc. but neither we nor Washington had focused on the issue of recognition of the new government. At that stage I would have recommended recognition, or at least a wait-and-see stance, but at the State Department daily noon press briefing, the spokesperson was asked if the United States recognized the new government and the answer was yes. Nasheed of course objected strenuously to what was now our position and the few times I met with him after that, before my departure from post, he regularly brought it up, rather bitterly.

I finished my tour that summer and went to FSI as dean of the School of Professional and Area Studies. Ruth Whitesides was the Director and it was a pleasure to work with Ruth. She had been a real morale booster when I was in Baghdad. We spoke occasionally and it meant a lot to know that there were people in Washington who cared about us. I also had two wonderful, professional and super-competent deputies, Dr. Nazih Daher and Mirembe Nantongo. I retired in 2014, focused on building my retirement home in my hometown in South Jersey, and moved there in 2015. I discovered a new opportunity to keep my hand in foreign affairs by mentoring undergrads interested in a career in diplomacy, national security or development assistance. It's quite rewarding for me and I am heartened that young people are still drawn to US foreign policy and service to the American people.

End of interview