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

JOYCE WINCHEL NAMDE

Interviewed by: Nathan V. Holt & Mark Tauber
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INTERVIEW

Q: Welcome Joyce. If you don't mind, just tell us your name, how long you were in the Foreign Service, and what you're doing now.

NAMDE: Okay. My name is Joyce Winchel Namde. I was in the Foreign Service for about 26 years. I retired in July 2018. Now I'm mostly pursuing volunteer work with a couple different organizations and . . . spending time with my daughter's cats.

Q: Well, that's wonderful. You've had a distinguished career. You were a DCM twice in some interesting places. You did enormous amounts of service in the consular world, but not exclusively. You also did important things in other places. But, if you don't mind, I like to start with, where are you from? Where were you born and where'd you grow up? And, ultimately, how did you get into the Foreign Service?

NAMDE: I was born and raised in La Crosse, Wisconsin, which is a town of about 50,000 people on the Mississippi River, on the border with Minnesota. I went all through school there, and then I went to college at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, which is a similar-sized town--about an hour and a half or so from La Crosse. I went there primarily because they were known for a good foreign language program, which I was very interested in. While I was there--the people interested in international studies and languages--there was a mentor there, a retired Foreign Service Officer; and that's actually the first time I'd ever heard of the Foreign Service. He was very interesting, and encouraged people to consider the Foreign Service. I considered it. I took the [Foreign Service] exam a long time ago. So, it was a very different written exam in two separate parts: a general part, and then you actually had to take a part that was specific to the cone you were interested in. I passed the general part. I did not pass the consular part. So, I did not join the Foreign Service after college. I went off to do other things.

Q: Before we go there, do you recall the name of the mentor?

NAMDE: I wish I could. Off the top of my head I do not.

Q: And you were majoring in...

NAMDE: I was majoring in Latin American Studies and Spanish.

Q: So, by the time you got to university, you were interested in the world beyond the United States and beyond Wisconsin. Had you traveled?

NAMDE: I had not traveled outside the United States. I traveled for the first time when I was in college. I went to summer school in Monterrey, Mexico. That was the first time I had left the United States. So yes, I was very interested in other cultures and languages. But at the time, there weren't a lot of options. I mean it was the early seventies, so basically, I assumed I would be a Spanish teacher.

Q: I see. And so, you graduated before you went on to, really, a distinguished career doing a lot of consular work. You "flunked" the consular section of the Foreign Service Exam.

NAMDE: Yes. I went off to grad school, and then I spent a year in Colombia and traveled all around South America as part of a Rotary Fellowship. So, I went to Universidad de Los Andes in Bogotá, Colombia for a year.

Q: Those are wonderful fellowships, the Rotary International...

NAMDE: They are. They are really wonderful. Yes. I had a very interesting professor there -- actually, who taught literary theory with sort of a Marxist bent -- who married Aldrich Ames. My personal theory is that's where he became involved in what he became involved in.

Q: Aldrich Ames was a CIA spy for the Soviets. For a long time. And they are the hotbed of Marxist thought of early seventies Colombia.

NAMDE: Yes. That's where his wife was from. They weren't married at the time.

Q: But you knew her.

NAMDE: I knew her. Yes. So, then I went on to the University of Arizona. I ran a refugee resettlement program in Arizona. I married my husband, who was a J-visa holder -- a USAID scholarship.

Q: Yes. From where?

NAMDE: From Chad. We had three children, and then the U.S. Government decided he would not have his two-year residency requirement waived. So, we packed up our three little children -- seven, five, and two and a half years old -- and returned to Chad.

Q: We are moving quickly through some pretty interesting chapters. That's okay. Just remind me where you met your husband.

NAMDE: At the University of Arizona in Tucson. We were both students there.

Q: He was there on a J-visa. And what was he studying?

NAMDE: He was studying range management.

Q: I see. So, having grown up in Wisconsin, having caught some kind of bug that led you to a pronounced interest in the world beyond our borders, you went to Colombia for a year; you ended up at the University of Arizona studying for a degree in teaching English as a second language, is that right?

NAMDE: Right. I actually got two master's degrees there: one in Latin American Studies and one in teaching English as a Second Language.

Q: All right. And then -- we don't have to do every chapter -- but three children came into the world, and there was a determination about a J-visa, which is, as you say, a visa that we issue to folks who come here on some sort of an exchange program, and who then are required...

NAMDE: To return to their country for at least two years.

Q: Right. Which, in this case, was Chad.

NAMDE: Yes.

Q: Now, Colombia is a challenging place to fly off to for the first time, but Chad with three kids? Tell us about that.

NAMDE: Well, it was definitely a challenge. We had actually been in the United States a long time. My husband had been in the U.S. for thirteen years by the time we left. Chad was fighting a war with Libya, and so, USIA [United States Information Agency] deferred a decision on whether he could stay in the United States as the spouse of a U.S. citizen for about four and a half years until the war ended. Then they decided that the Chadians had to go home. So, the choice was: he would go and we would stay -- at which point our children would barely know him, or we would all go. He hadn't been home in about 10 years, so we decided to go -- not quite realizing the very difficult circumstances in Chad. Chad had been devastated by the war with Libya, by civil war, and by a very authoritarian leader.

Q: That was Hissène Habré, right?

NAMDE: Yes. We did go back, but it was to a very poor and devastated country. We stayed three years.

Q: I see. What did you do?

NAMDE: Well, the first year I was there in N'Djamena. The first year I taught English classes at my children's elementary school, at the UN Development Program (UNDP), and a few other places. I actually taught English at seven different places. And then, the second year I was there, the U.S. wanted to have a Fulbright lecturer position there, but the government was unable to provide housing. Since I was already there, they hired me as the Fulbright lecturer. I trained English teachers, which was a required subject in the secondary schools in Chad. I trained English teachers at the National Teachers College. Our second and third year I was there as a Fulbright lecturer. The U.S. paid my salary, but the government of Chad wasn't able to provide anything else, which is why I was able to do it because I was already on the ground.

Q: Did you adjust quickly? How would you assess your own transition?

NAMDE: It was a really difficult time, I think. I'm very glad we went, and I'm very glad my children went because, first of all, they met all their family; they learned their dad's language.

Q: Which is what, by the way?

NAMDE: Well his native language is Sara, but he also spoke French and Arabic. And one son was very good at languages, he picked up three other African languages. Half the time I didn't know what he was saying. But it was really difficult because we really didn't know what we were walking into. I remember the plane landed, they opened the door, and we stepped out onto the stairs because there was no such thing as a jet way. The airport was basically a large metal building that shook when the French fighter planes took off. We walked out--it was about 110 degrees--and there were armed military on the tarmac.

Q: Welcome to Chad…

NAMDE: Yes, welcome to Chad. It was very difficult. The family compound had been destroyed in the civil war; that was difficult. When we arrived at the compound, they didn't recognize my husband until he started to speak. It was very different: our children didn't speak French.

Q: Did you speak French?

NAMDE: I spoke some French. I had learned French along the way. We taught them to count to 10 and ask where the bathroom was, and sent them off to school, at least two of them. So, it was very difficult, very poor. Eventually, my husband got work at Africare (a

development NGO) and I taught English, but there was a lot of sickness, malaria and all of that.

Q: Your immediate family--among them were people who contracted malaria at times, is that right?

NAMDE: Yes, that's true. We rebuilt the family compound and we lived there. The big concession to me was the screens on the windows, because the mosquitoes were very bad. The water came from a faucet in the yard, the bathroom was an outhouse, and that's the way we lived for three years.

Q: Well, good for you. One of the things the Foreign Service is supposed to recruit for is resilience.

NAMDE: Well, yes. We were actually there on December 1, 1990, when the president who was not democratic in any way was overthrown. At that time Colonel [Idriss] Déby led a coup and Habré left the country. We were there at the start of Déby's regime, and we were there at the last part. I took the Foreign Service Exam again in the old embassy in Chad. They've since moved to a new one, so when my last overseas assignment was as DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] in Chad, I sort of came full circle to where I took the exam and then where I finished my overseas assignments. Some of the LES [locally employed staff] were people we had known. In fact, my best student at the National Teachers College was going to be sent north to teach in a place where very few Arabic speakers went to secondary school. But USIA [United States Information Agency] in those days needed a public affairs assistant. So, I convinced the officer that this was the man for the job, and he will retire this year. He's worked all these years as an LES at the embassy.

Q: Yes and that embassy and that country, of course, has had some ups and downs. It is one of the places where we've asked our FSNs [Foreign Service Nationals] to stick with it through difficult times. I'm sure your colleague who is just now retiring did us all good service in the course of that life.

NAMDE: He did, yes.

Q: How did you then find yourself in the Foreign Service? You took the exam again, in the old embassy.

NAMDE: Yes, and I passed that. Then I needed to come back to the U.S. to take the oral -- again under a very different system, where they didn't consider your skills, your education, or anything in your background. They also didn't tell you at the time whether you passed or not. So, you just went home and waited for them to send you something that said, "Yes, you passed." Or, "No, you didn't." So, they did send me something via the Embassy in Chad that said I had passed the oral. But then I didn't hear from them. We actually did the security clearance, the medicals, and everything at the Embassy in Chad;

didn't hear from them. So, after the coup in December of 1990, we were evacuated to France, but the Chadian government asked us to come back because the National Teachers College had reopened.

Unlike the rest of the embassy that went on to the U.S., the ambassador gave us permission to go back, because the government wanted me to come back and continue teaching. About six months later, in June of 1991, we could see that conditions, security wise, were continuing to deteriorate. So, we decided to return to the U.S. We came back to the U.S. About two months after we got back, they called me and asked if I was still interested, but they said my husband hadn't been cleared medically. We said, "Yes, he had." It turned out that the State Department had misfiled his medical records with mine. Once they cleared that up, they offered me a place in a class starting in October of 1991. That's when I joined the Foreign Service.

Q: I see. And your husband and family...

NAMDE: Joined with me, yes.

Q: Chad went on to have many, many chapters of confusion and power struggles. A lot of things which are not fully resolved. But meanwhile, you went elsewhere.

NAMDE: Right. I joined the service in that somewhat misguided period when officers came in unconed. So, we jokingly called ourselves the unconed, untenured, unwashed. I actually, because I had just returned from Africa and I was off language probation, ironically in Spanish because FSI [Foreign Service Institute] did not in those days care for African French. So, they sent me to London for my first tour. I mean, I was in need of schools [inaudible]. It was, I have to say, our least favorite tour. I never served in Europe again.

Q: I often wonder in those initial assignments what's on their mind.

NAMDE: I don't know. I think they thought I had just come out of Africa. And so, they said, "Well, we can't send you back to Africa" -- as if it was all the same place. I was off language probation, so I didn't need to go to a place where officers that needed language training were being assigned. I needed schools, so I ended up in London for my first tour, which was . . .

Q: Which wasn't your favorite place, but it was the place, I'm guessing that you learned some of your chops in terms of consular work.

NAMDE: Correct. Certainly, everything you can see comes across the desk or the interview window in London. They were very good about rotating officers around. So, you did NIV [non-immigrant visa] work, you did IV [immigrant visa] work. In those days they had the AA [for a select group of countries that had been "adversely affected" by earlier immigration laws] program, which was the precursor of the diversity visa

program. Then they had American Citizen Services and a large Special Citizen Services unit because there were Americans incarcerated in Britain and that kind of thing. So yes, you certainly did learn every aspect of consular work there.

Q: Did you feel you were well trained and mentored and guided and all of that? Or perhaps you didn't need so much of that -- you seem to be a self-starter. But looking back…

NAMDE: I think that, as in every place, there are some that are more concerned about mentoring and training than others. I think I did have a couple of very good mentors there. The embassy was very, very big, and there were a lot of, as we were called, "JOs" [junior officers] in those days, entry-level officers. So, if you could arrange your own month or two in another section, they would let you do that. So, I was fortunate that I was able to go to the Econ section, and there was an officer there (Paul Tyson) that was very good about working with the junior officers. And, because they had so much to do, they didn't pay a lot of attention to Africa, which was one of my interests. I was fortunate they sent me off to the equivalent of the foreign affairs committee in Parliament to talk to them about their Africa policy. It was very, very interesting to do that.

At the time, I was unconed, so I was very interested in consular work, but I was glad to have a chance to get a taste of econ work as I decided what cone I would prefer, if possible. So that turned out to be very good. We joke that probably one of the best official functions that we were ever fortunate to attend -- by a complete fluke -- was my husband and I were able to attend the diplomatic reception at Buckingham Palace, which is white tie, black tail, formal, very formal. I'm probably the only entry-level officer that ever got to attend by some fluke of an amazing matrix where they figure out who goes. "So you must go because you cannot transfer it," they said to me, and I said, "Even on death?" He said, "Well, for death maybe." I said, "okay."

Q: Did you meet the Queen? Were you in the presence of the Queen?

NAMDE: Yes. It was a very special function that there's little else that probably can qualify.

Q: I think you'd have to look long and hard, I think. And then Joyce, if looked at your material correctly, you then went to Lagos?

NAMDE: We did. That actually was my top choice. We had always assumed we would serve in the developing world. We were very happy to be assigned to Lagos; it had good schools, good opportunities for spouse employment. So, my husband began working in the consular section as well. He did non-immigrant visa interviews, and I ran the immigrant visa section. There was just a lot of good housing, we enjoyed it. A lot of people probably didn't.

Q: There are occasional reports of corruption and fraud in Nigeria. [Laughs] Now in your work with people who sought to immigrate or to get the Diversity Visa, what was your experience there?

NAMDE: Well, obviously, there was a lot of fraud. There was a lot of demand. A lot of people wanted to leave Nigeria; people wanted to get to the United States. You could buy pretty much anything you wanted in the market in terms of diplomas or other documents. So, a lot of it was very much the interview, the way the person acted, and the way they responded to questions was a very important part of it. Also, it was pre-digital photo days, which was actually very helpful for immigrant visas because they would--kind of the equivalent of Photoshop -- they would add someone into a photo. So, one person would have no shadow and everyone else would, or one person would have no legs because he had been added to a group photo.

So, it was much easier to detect those kinds of things when they had to do it with an actual photo. Some of them were pretty amusing. A lot of people claim to -- we would have musical groups that would perform to show us; they're not allowed to do that now. I thought it was a great thing to be able to do if, "Oh, this is a dance troupe going to perform in New York or a singing group going to perform." So, we'd say, "Do something for us." You could quickly pick out who didn't know the steps or who was just mouthing and wasn't singing, or really playing an instrument. So, you knew who was not a legitimate part of the musical group. There were a lot of religious pieces as well. People wanted to come and visit churches and preach. They do things differently now than we did. But, in those days we made up a list of questions in certain areas where you got a lot of applicants, so that officers would have a range of questions to help them determine the legitimacy of people. Religious questions were one of the things that we made a list of. It started very simple: Who wrote the Gospels? You know, if he didn't know Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Okay, well that was a very easy interview. I have to tell you one story: the last question was, "What's the shortest verse in the Bible?" The person being interviewed said, "Oh shit!" The interviewer said, "It is two words, but not those two."

NAMDE: Unfortunately, there was a lot of corruption and fraud in a lot of things. It happened within the embassy as well. Our cashier was embezzling and had to be fired. And so, it did take a lot of vigilance.

Q: Was there a DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) agent in those years that got in trouble?

NAMDE: I don't remember a DEA agent. This would have been '94 to '96. You did have to be very vigilant. It was also a very violent society. There's a big island of Lagos and there's two smaller islands. We basically lived, went to school, and worked on the two smaller islands. We couldn't go on Lagos Island, except to go to the airport; And then, in an armored vehicle.

Q: Did the embassy have a boat to ferry people between those two islands?

NAMDE: It did; it ferried people between those two islands, yes. Because people lived on both of the islands and there was actually the American Club on one island; the embassy was on the other. The school was on the same island as the embassy, but many people lived on the other island. So yes, there was.

Q: But at the end did you like Nigeria? How do you look back at that time?

NAMDE: We did like it. I think my kids enjoyed it. The school was good, they made some very good friends there, some of which they're still friends with. We still are friends with a family that lived in our compound, for example. The work was hard, and sometimes it was kind of depressing because there was a lot of fraud. But I think for the families it was a pretty good experience. My children liked it in general. We had some good experiences; some bad experiences, like when our house caught on fire due to really bad wiring. But overall, I think that it was good. The embassy, of course, is now in Abuja, and then they were just getting ready to move to Abuja. The government also had not yet moved fully to Abuja at the time we were there. But I think people say it's a much better place to live now. It's not as violent. Air connections are much better than in those days. The airport was banned for U.S. carriers, so we had to take a European carrier into Europe and then pick up a U.S. carrier to return to the U.S.

Q: The solution to sets of rules that don't permit U.S. carriers to fly is to ask our diplomats and others to get on other airlines.

NAMDE: Right. Well, luckily KLM [Royal Dutch Airlines] flew in and out of there, so we would take them into Amsterdam. The famous 419 scams -- a lot of Americans getting scammed for money. So, it was...

Q: Did you talk to victims of those kinds of scams?

NAMDE: We did -- often on the telephone trying very hard to discourage them. Sometimes they just didn't believe us, and they would lose their money. Sometimes they would travel to Nigeria. As a consular officer, I took part in at least one rescue of someone who was being held in a hotel and managed to get a hold of us. The RSO and I went out, and we were able to bring that person back to the embassy and help them get on a plane and get back to the U.S. It's just like any scam. People, especially once they invest themselves in it, it was very difficult for some people to believe that this was not what's going to happen. Of course, there was a lot of fiancé fraud. Now you can watch "90-day Fiancé" on cable TV, and you'll see some Nigerians there.

Q: It is puzzling, isn't it, the psychology of somebody who even when they're on the phone with an American consular officer, who lives in Nigeria and knows the issue -- and you're explaining, and the person is still not quite ready to cut that cord.

NAMDE: Exactly. Yes. It is. The cases were usually very sad that people were being exploited.

Q: If we may, let's take a little break now because we need to stop this recording. Okay. Well, thank you. That was an interesting set of reflections about a time in Nigeria in the mid-1990s. A young family and new officers working in a difficult environment, but looking back at it with some degree of fondness. That's good. Now, I'm not content with having done--what are we three or four continents at this point? Then I guess you next go to Asia...

NAMDE: Right. When we left Nigeria, we went to Manila, to the embassy in the Philippines, where I spent three years in the consular section as the fraud prevention manager. I'm not sure now, but in those days, there were nine LES and two officers that worked in anti-fraud. It was the largest fraud prevention unit in the world, and the first to have a DS agent [State Department Diplomatic Security] specifically assigned to it to pursue visa fraud, but also a very heavy emphasis on passport fraud.

Q: Yes. And as you know, far better than I, that later became a very widespread practice that you were pioneering, really. How did that work?

NAMDE: I think it worked really well. Having the DS agent assigned there worked very well because he was there immediately, helping with interviewing or when we saw something that we felt was, for example, the "tip of the iceberg" might be part of a visa fraud ring or a passport fraud ring. He was right there, but also that was his job. He wasn't a DS agent doing other things in the embassy. That was entirely his focus, which in a high fraud post was extremely important. It worked very well.

Filipinos are great "entrepreneurs," let's say. They were the first to figure out how to wash or clean a machine-readable visa of the original biodata information and reprint it -- enterprising, very enterprising -- so that they could peel them and put them into other passports. They were very good at photo subbing passports--both Filipino and U.S. passports, which in those days were not digitized. Again, it was actually easier to detect fraud before we were as digitized. Now, obviously, we have lots of other security features, but we had some security features. We encountered a lot of photo-subbed passports; washed and reprinted visas. Some of the first of those items were encountered in Manila. Manila also became a conduit for fraud from other countries. A lot of Chinese immigrant visas that were fake would come through the airport. The Chinese never quite figured out how to spell in English. There were often misspellings, and we'd be like, "All you had to do was copy this!" But luckily, they misspelled things.

NAMDE: I did a lot of training. We had a very strong training program with the immigration officials, but also with the airlines. The airlines in those days were fined $3,000 for boarding someone who shouldn't have been taken to the United States -- who had to be turned around. Because they had direct flights into the U.S., into the West Coast. So, they were very happy to be able to keep people off the planes that shouldn't

have been on there because it was very good economically for them to be able to do that. We also got a fair amount of drug traffic. Manila, Thailand, kind of -- those were frequently Nigerians who were carrying photo-substituted U.S. passports. I would get calls from the airport, and I would go out, interview people, and I would seize documents: passports and immigrant visas primarily.

Q: Now, here you are: you're in your third tour. It's also the third heavily consular tour. Has the Department decided, at this point, that you belong in the consular cone?

NAMDE: Yes. Well I got tenure when I was in Nigeria. At that point you needed to state your preferences. My first choice was to be a consular officer. I was very happy to have the Department accept that and make me a consular officer. That didn't always work out well for everyone that came in unconed, because you had to list your preferences in order, and if you were high enough on the list, you would get a chance at your higher choice.

Q: However that list was compiled...

NAMDE: However that list was compiled. So, I wanted to be a consular officer. I think anyone who wanted to be a consular officer or management probably had a much better shot than the people that were interested in Political and Economic [career track "cones"].

I liked consular work. Yes, there was a lot of fraud; Yes, you could get sick of interviewing visa applicants sometimes, but it was also very fulfilling. You would see American citizens that really needed your help. You would see them come in with a new baby to document this new U.S. citizen. You would see immigrant visas where a legal permanent resident or a new U.S. citizen would come back to get his family, and take them to the U.S. Those were very good things to do. I have to be honest: although I had done my share of events, receptions, and all that as part of a diplomatic career, I actually preferred my job to come to me. So, being a consular officer there was always demand.

Q: That's right.

NAMDE: It wasn't necessary for me to go out and look for information, a visa applicant, or anything else. Obviously, you did that with local immigration officials, airlines, and those kinds of things. It was a bit different. It wasn't reporting-based. I wrote some reports/cables, obviously, but I wasn't seeking information to write reports. I was actually helping either protect the United States borders or to help people to go to the United States legitimately. Although you don't hear it much now in those days, our slogan was kind of, "We are the first line of defense." That's not necessarily said a lot, but it is, in fact, true. It's still very true that the consular officer in the window doing visa interviews is the first line of defense for our borders.

Q: I would add that some of the things that you were observing early on -- the washing of the visas, the identity fraud of various kinds, the kind of connectedness with drug

trafficking and other kinds of fraud, and criminality -- really was a taste of things to come. We recognize more clearly now how those networks operate and how they can...

NAMDE: Very interconnected: money laundering, drug trafficking, human trafficking, wildlife trafficking. If you're smart, you traffic in humans because the penalties are so much less than trafficking in drugs and you can make just as much money. So, there's an interconnection. Now, of course, there's a terrorism financing connection as well.

Q: Yes. So, you grew up in Wisconsin, and you find yourself in the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire. You had never met a Foreign Service Officer and never knew much about the Foreign Service. You met someone, a mentor there. So, you had not thought much about the Foreign Service at that point in your life. Probably even by the time you're getting into the Foreign Service, I'm not sure how much you had thought about the consular aspect, but then three tours in, you're pretty experienced. Whether they recognize it or not, you're pretty expert at a lot of varieties of consular work, and you found it fulfilling and chose to do it. That's a good story.

NAMDE: I did. I think that it's unfortunate that people look at it very short-term, because it's still necessary that many people work the visa line. Understandably, it's not their favorite job, in some cases. There are days when it's like, "Ugh, I don't want to talk to another visa applicant." There are other days when it is very good. Consular officers then go on to be managers and to help be sure that we're providing the right services; that we're doing it effectively, efficiently. So, consular officers play a very important role as consular managers as you stay in there longer. Along the way, you have the opportunity to help people and to help the United States.

Q: And your children are growing up, getting educated, and all that. So then, you move on to Mexico.

NAMDE: Yes. The schools were important, as was spouse employment. I moved from Manila where one of my sons graduated from high school. We moved to Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, which is on the U.S.-Mexico border, directly across from El Paso, Texas. I was the American Citizens Services chief there. That was originally a three-year assignment, because on the border the assignments were a little longer. I asked to stay a fourth year so that my other two children could finish high school. There were no schools in Mexico that were considered appropriate. So, they crossed the border every morning to go to high school in El Paso, and came back at the end of the day across the bridge.

Q: So how did you like it in Ciudad Juárez?

NAMDE: I would say it was a bit of a twilight zone because it's not really Mexico. I had spent some time in Mexico. I had friends in Mexico. It's not really Mexico; it's not really the U.S. It's kind of this weird zone. We lived there for six weeks without having any pesos because they take pesos and dollars. You can go to stores in El Paso where you can't find a clerk that speaks English. So, it was a very strange kind of blend of Mexican

and U.S. culture, ideas, trends -- where if you went further south, just for example, you could go to the capital of Chihuahua, which is Chihuahua [City]. If you went to Chihuahua, which was maybe three hours' drive, on very good roads, then you were really in Mexico. It felt like it. The culture was very strong there and that. So, Ciudad Juarez was a very strange kind of blend of things.

Q: And you're finally using your Spanish in this assignment…

NAMDE: I am, finally. It took the Department something like 9 years before I had a Spanish [language] assignment. I did use my Spanish there, all the time, and we covered a pretty wide swath of northern Mexico as part of American Citizen Services. It was good to be able to use my Spanish.

Q: Was there any particular kind of trouble that Americans got themselves into?

NAMDE: Yes. Unfortunately, there were actually two kinds. One was, you know -- sometimes you thought, how stupid can people be sometimes? And the other was very tragic. People got involved in drugs -- whether they were selling them, or in many cases they had come to Mexico to purchase drugs.

We had people that overdosed on drugs in Juarez, and that was always very sad. We would have to go to the morgue and identify them. Usually the parents would come to take their child home, and we would say, "If you will authorize us, we will identify him based on his passport." (It was usually a man.) And, they would want to see him. We would try very hard to discourage them because dying of a drug overdose and being in a morgue with no refrigeration -- the combination accelerates decomposition. They would come out, and I know that they, for the rest of their life, would wish they had not seen their child that way. So, we would help them. The bodies would have to be cremated because it was the only way they would be allowed back into the U.S., because of the decomposition. We would work with the airlines in El Paso. They were very understanding and accommodating. We would accompany them to the airport in El Paso -- in those days, security was a lot lighter; It was pre-9/11 -- so that they would help them board the plane first because they would be carrying their child's ashes. That was usually a very sad kind of thing, unlike in some countries, where there are smugglers, and profiting from the trade. It wasn't usually that kind of thing.

Q: I did a little consular work in my day as well. One of the things that I thought about at the time, but also since then, in greater depth, is that there is an emotional toll on a person who goes to morgues, and who must be the person who tells the mother of a deceased American how, where, and when this happened, and that it happened. At the end of that day, you go home, and there's your family. Some people are very resilient, but for others it's tougher. How did you…

NAMDE: It can be very difficult. I always say that, quite frankly, I'd rather go to the morgue than make the death call. Because calling the family and saying, "I'm calling, is

this so and so? Are you the mother of so and so? I'm calling from Mexico with some news." Then you have to tell them. Sometimes, you would tell one parent who would then of course be hysterical or unable to really deal with it. Then, you would have to relay this to a second parent on the phone call. So, I always said, "I'd much rather go identify the body then make that death call because they were very, very difficult and very, very sad." And sometimes, there were things like drug overdoses, which of course was usually a shock to the parents that their child was involved in any way with drugs -- not always, but often. I did one death call in London where a woman had done all the right things. She had rented a car, she was tired, she pulled over on the side of the road, a truck mistook the wayside for an exit and rammed into her car and killed her. So, there are a lot of sad things. In the end, you had to compartmentalize, and hopefully on that day there was something else that also happened that could be good. We did talk about it. I did check in a lot with my local staff to make sure how they were coping because they often had to deal with the Mexican authorities to get the death certificate and that kind of thing as well. So, you tried to go home and set that aside.

My children -- they played sports; they were involved in lots of different activities. So, then you would try to go to those activities and spend time with them. By then, the Department had offered my husband a civil service position as a visa interviewer. Now it's all Foreign Service Officers. But when we were there, the vast majority of the visa interviews -- not American citizen services, not the consular managers, but the actual visa interviews -- were done by civil service officers who crossed over from Texas every morning. He had been doing visa work all along, but he no longer was doing it as a family member at that point. So, we made a lot of friends. My husband's best friend from high school in Chad actually married a Mexican woman, and was living three hours away in Chihuahua.

So, we had friends there. I know, they ended up in Mexico. The other thing was, I think we either went further into Mexico or we spent time in Texas, quite frankly, more than in Juarez when we weren't at work because Juarez was extraordinarily dangerous from drug traffickers. Also, at that time it was the murder capital of the world. At least 500 women had disappeared; assumed murdered and buried in the desert in Juarez. Our children went to meet their friends in Texas. My son had a few friends that he visited with in Mexico, but they lived in nice walled compounds. But, my daughter, for example, was not allowed to do any kind of socializing in Mexico. She always went to Texas to meet her friends because it was so dangerous, particularly for young women in Juarez at that time. There were a lot of drug trafficking people. There were drive-by shootings in the drive-through lane of the equivalent of a 7-11 a block from our house. It's like, "Oh, that's gunfire." Someone had been killed. So, it was a pretty violent place at that time. That meant you didn't spend a lot of time out and about in that.

Q: You said that Americans tended to find themselves in two kinds of trouble…

NAMDE: Right. The other kind, which we would scratch our heads and be like, "Oh, please, how could you do this?" It is extremely illegal to bring guns or ammunition into

Mexico. You can go to prison for 30 years. We lived across the border from Texas, where everybody and their brother has their shotgun in the back of the pickup. We worked, actually, with both the US and the Mexican governments to put huge signs on the bridge coming into Mexico, "Turn back, do not bring guns, or ammo to Mexico." Now, they would do it. They'd get stopped. It wasn't, in most cases, that they were trying to hide it. It was pretty obvious. All the Mexicans had to do is look in the truck. So, these people would go to jail.

Sometimes, with a lawyer and thousands of dollars and months, they might finally get sentenced -- to take pity on them -- to time served or something. Months. There was an older man who had a lot of health problems, and I think the gun was about as old as he was. I'm not sure it even fired anymore. He was in jail. We finally -- we literally begged the Mexican Government -- please just sentence him because then he could apply to be moved to prison in the U.S. Okay. So, they sentenced him to time served, and we picked him up and drove him across the border. Which was a happy story. Between drugs and guns, Mexican jails were not a good place to be. People would be sentenced to years there.

So, we had a prisoner exchange program where they could apply to be transferred to the U.S. In many countries, people wouldn't want to be transferred back to the U.S. because if you are convicted of a felony overseas, and served all your time overseas, you have no criminal record in the United States. However, most people did not want to serve their time in a Mexican prison. So, they would agree to be transferred back to the U.S. -- even though that meant they would then have a criminal record -- to serve their time in the U.S. In many countries, they would do it once a year. In Mexico, we did it once a quarter. We would transfer U.S. prisoners back, and then Mexicans in the U.S. could apply to be transferred back to Mexico, so they could be close to family, et cetera. It was a pretty fulsome exchange every three months. They would bring all the U.S. prisoners from all over Mexico into Juarez. Then they would put them on little planes and fly them into the El Paso airport to be loaded on buses to be taken to federal prison. It was a little bit like "Con Air" because there would be armed prison guards standing on the tarmac. The prisoners were all shackled, so it wasn't like they were going to make a break for it, but the guards would all be standing there. We got to know the U.S. prisoners quite well. When they were flown in, they would get off, then be put on the bus to go to federal prison, and they'd be, like, "Oh, hello; thank you."

And I'm like, "I'm not sure you should be thanking us. The good news is that you will be better cared for and get health care and good food; The bad news is you will get it in prison." It was astounding how many people would get arrested for guns, including two young men who were in the Air Force, and had a beef with the Air Force, and therefore stole a bunch of weapons from the Air Force at a base further in the interior, including a rocket launcher. They were dumb enough to bring them to Mexico, where, of course, they were caught with boxes of ammo. They were sentenced in Mexico, and they said, "We'd rather take our chances with court-martial if you will get us out of here." So, we did get them out of there. It was very interesting, because neither the FBI [Federal Bureau of

Investigation] nor the military would allow their people to come into Mexico and go to the capital of Chihuahua to retrieve these guys. For the military and the FBI, it was too dangerous for them, but I could do it! Also, we had to pick up the weapons and ammo, which is illegal for us as well in Mexico. So, the Mexican Government gave us an escort. I'm sure the people behind us hated us, because they wouldn't allow anyone to pass us on the equivalent of their freeway. They escorted us to the border. We crossed the border, and the FBI and the military were waiting for us, and they got all the weapons and everything. It was me and my 90-pound female LES. More like, "Okay, here are your weapons." It was very funny. I have a very funny picture of me holding an M-16, which is that weapon, you know, when Rambo comes up out of the water, that's it. It weighs so much. And I have ammo crossed over my chest, like the old pictures of the revolution in Mexico. I'm holding the weapon, and I'm like, "Take the picture. Take it! I said, "You know, at least we get a picture." So, they took a picture.

Q: We'd love to get that picture from you.

NAMDE: If I can find it.

Q: There is a tornado alert that just came in here, and so why don't we go downstairs…

NAMDE: Are you kidding me? Wow!

Q: It is Thursday the 20th, June 2019. This is the second interview with Joyce Namde. Welcome Joyce.

NAMDE: Thank you.

Q: Our last conversation ended fairly dramatically with the tornado alert and we all went down in the basement and all of that. You had just about finished talking about your time at Ciudad Juárez. I think you had a story where you were describing various ways in which Americans got in trouble and one was drugs, but another was to carry their good old Texas firearms across the border where it's totally illegal and where people got in trouble. And I think you were about to tell us about an incident with air force personnel?

NAMDE: Yes. A lot of the incidents were just, you know, standard Texans who drive around with their gun in their pickup. But in one case, two young men from the U.S. Air Force were arrested bringing quite a cache of weapons and ammo into Mexico. Apparently they were disgruntled with the Air Force, so they had stolen, you know, a rocket launcher and M-16 and lots of boxes of ammo. They had stolen a whole bunch of arms from the Air Force, actually the northern Midwest was where they were based and they drove them into Mexico and were arrested.

Q: Unbelievable. The obvious question is, what was on their mind?

NAMDE: Well, they were just disgruntled with the Air Force for some reason. So they decided to steal these weapons and bring them to Mexico. And I don't know if they thought they could sell them there or I assume they thought they could do something with them -- some of them, they actually threw into a lake, we think.

NAMDE: But they did get caught with quite a few of them and a lot of ammo. So they were in jail in the capital city because it was pretty major -- it wasn't your standard rifle-in-a-pickup arrest. So they were arrested and they were jailed in the capital city of Chihuahua. And then of course the Air Force and the FBI were also informed and they realized that life in a Mexican jail was pretty tough. So they said they would rather go back and face court-martial then to be convicted and spend time in Mexico. But they did have all those weapons, which the Mexicans had seized and were holding. So the Air Force went back and then the Air Force wanted their -- they were sent back to the U.S. To be disciplined, tried whatever by the Air Force.

NAMDE: But the Air Force wanted the weapons back for many reasons, including evidence in the case. And they just wanted their weapons back. But the Air Force and the FBI would not give permission for their officers to come into Mexico to retrieve the weapons. So I was asked--

Q: --Because it was unsafe, or --?

NAMDE: I believe they considered it unsafe. So instead, I and one of my staff -- a very tiny LES [locally employed staff] and one of the other LES's who agreed to drive -- we headed to the capital, which was about three hours from Juárez, to pick up the weapons. So we went and we got the judge to release them to us. We put the weapons in the vehicle, but it was also illegal for us to have those weapons. So the Mexican police gave us an escort to the border, which I'm sure made lots of people unhappy because they were in front of us and behind us. It's a four-lane highway, two lanes on each side -- kind of like our interstate. It's a very good road, people go really fast. But no one was allowed to pass us. And so it was kind of funny because our driver, an LES, was very nervous -- so he's driving really slowly. And I finally said, "You know, my grandmother drives faster than you do." So he finally agreed to pick it up a little bit. So we got to the border and we crossed over in the commercial lane, which is what the trucks pass through and the Air Force and the FBI were waiting for us on the other side. So they, with great anticipation, started unloading their guns. And so jokingly, I said, "So don't we at least get a picture with the weapons?"

NAMDE: And so they said, "Oh, sure!" So they handed me an M-16, which, if you don't know weapons, if you think of Rambo coming up out of the water with that weapon, that's what he's got. And it weighs a ton. And so I had two gun belts sort of crisscrossed across me like the famous picture of the women that followed the Mexican revolutionaries. And I'm holding this M-16 and I'm like, "Take the picture, take the picture!" It was so heavy. I have new respect for anybody who hauls a weapon like that around with them in the field. So that was our weapons adventure. And that one was kind

of fun. There were a lot of times when you felt sorry for people. Some of them you didn't because there were huge signs on the bridge leading into Mexico, even before the bridge, that we worked with the Texas state government to put up.

NAMDE: And they were like, "Illegal. Do not bring guns into Mexico. Turn back now." They were huge, huge signs. And people still brought them in. And so that was one thing. Although, we did have a very old man who was arrested with a weapon that was about as old or older than he was. I'm not sure it even fired. And he had been in jail for over a year, waiting trial and he was getting sicker and sicker and we finally said to the judge, "Please, just sentence him so we can process him to be transferred to the U.S." So we didn't ask -- we don't ask for special favors. We just asked for what the locals would also get. So we just asked that he be sentenced. The judge kindly sentenced him to time served. He could have sentenced him to 30 years.

Q: Wow.

NAMDE: And so they released him and we immediately took him across to Texas so that he could get medical care. Those are the kinds of cases that you have some sympathy for. But the other people that just don't bother to read the sign... they would often be able to get out after. But it would cost them thousands of dollars and months in jail to settle their cases. It was tricky.

Q: Yes, well, tough environment and interesting, interesting work.

NAMDE: It was. Now I'm just going to say in Juárez, you know, a while ago... under the current administration, there was a survey done of, "What are some of the things you remember? What are some of the highlights of your career?" And I have to say that I wrote that one of mine was actually in Juárez, when two runaways from the U.S.-- their car broke down on the Chihuahua state-New Mexico border.

NAMDE: So they decided to cross into Mexico through the desert. And I'm not sure if I mentioned this before, but it was a bad time of year to be out in the desert and not only that, but it was a very dangerous part of the desert, where drug traffickers and smugglers were known to cross.

Q: These were young women, young men...?

NAMDE: So it was a young man and a young woman, and ultimately the young man turned out to be over 18 and the young woman was not. And they were afraid he might get in trouble, even though they had agreed to do this together. Her sister had been part of the group, but she decided not to cross. And so they crossed, and everyone assumed they had died in the desert after three days. But my staff and I wouldn't give up. So we convinced the Mexican authorities and then convinced their counterparts in Texas to put up their helicopters to look along the border.

NAMDE: They didn't find them. But we got a call suddenly from someone in a small town, who said a rancher that lived out in the desert had found these two people and brought them into the town. They had managed to find a couple puddles of water that were leftover from a light rain. And that's how they survived. So we tore through the night, on roads we weren't supposed to be on at night, to pick them up and get them across the border into New Mexico just before the border closed at midnight. And their fathers were waiting for them on the other side. And so it was one of the best things we ever did. And the father of one of them wrote to the Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs and said how grateful he was and that they really were appreciative. They knew that we were doing something very special for them. And he also said that the young man did not get in trouble. No one made trouble for him once he got home. They were just very glad to have them back.

Q: So I think people in the broader population do not necessarily understand just how much effort consular officers are called upon to make in order to render assistance to American citizens in distress. So thank you.

NAMDE: Yes. I mean, everyone does a consular tour, and at that time they work as consular officers. But those who are actually coned as consular officers I think just always go above and beyond.

Q: Yes. And the other thing that your story brings to mind is that, you know, in a border situation -- in this case between the United States and Mexico, which is currently the subject of so much dispute -- that in the real world people have to cooperate across that border. You need connections and phone numbers and the ability to persuade your Mexican colleagues to put helicopters in the air. It's the texture of consular work. And it's also diplomacy.

NAMDE: Yes, and it's such a vital region. I think people probably don't realize that the flow back and forth every day is probably hundreds of thousands of people in both directions. Into the U.S. And also into Mexico, there's a lot of traffic back and forth in terms of commerce and Americans going to Mexico for health care, dental care, all of that.

Q: Well, at this point Joyce, you've been in the foreign service for almost a decade, I think it is.

NAMDE: A little more.

Q: And you've not yet served in Washington?

NAMDE: No, I actually served overseas for 12 years before I came back to Washington at the urging of people I knew, including Mary Ryan, who was a mentor for so many of us in consular affairs. I was in Juárez on 9/11 and we were all deeply disappointed,

deeply shocked, and enraged when Mary Ryan resigned. Someone had to go as a result of 9/11, and she was the one. But she left a great legacy as a mentor.

Q: She was a scapegoat, is what she was?

NAMDE: She was. And I wrote to her and she wrote back and I said how sad we all were. And she said that if it meant the visa function stayed in the State Department, she was okay with that. Because at that time there was a big discussion about whether the visa function could or should go to the Department of Homeland Security, which many of us thought would be an enormous mistake.

Q: Talk a little bit more about Mary Ryan. I knew her, as well. She was the mentor to our A-100 class [of freshmen diplomats]. I, like many others, loved her and really respected her work. But you knew her better than I, so--

NAMDE: --Well, I think she was just a very generous person who believed in mentoring the newer officers, who believed that the way to help us all be the best we could be and serve our country the best we could was to provide that kind of mentoring. And she was always very willing to answer questions. You could send her a message, she would give you career advice when it came time for bidding. She was one of the people who I would check with both for her knowledge of the different positions, but also reality check, you know-- "Am I looking for the right things? Am I headed in the right direction? Am I way off base?" Things like that. She also was willing to read people's EERs [Employee Evaluation Reports]-- she was just a really generous person. And she actually was not a consular officer.

NAMDE: She was a management cone, she was an admin officer. But she was a wonderful Assistant Secretary [of State for Consular Affairs]. When I joined, briefly it was [Elizabeth M.] Tamposi, who many of us will remember as the one who ordered the search of the London passport records for any derogatory information on candidate Clinton -- Bill, that is.

NAMDE: And then Mary Ryan came and she was -- for many of us, for years -- she was the only assistant secretary that we knew. And she really took consular affairs forward. Because there was so much going on as computer technology started being used. There was always--the volume of what was going on, training was improved, she just--

Q: And not to refight old fights, but she also was a person who was an advocate for resources for the consular function. And when 9/11 finally got the nation's attention, all of a sudden, the sort of alleged deficiencies -- which were many of them connected to starving the State Department of necessary resources -- all of a sudden that was our fault, and her fault specifically.

NAMDE: Right. I think that's very true. She also had been an advocate of data sharing for many years. For example, the fact that we had no access to FBI databases - that came

about only after 9/11. But she had wanted that for a long time, and the resources... it was very important. I remember when we were in Juárez, we were one of the test posts for the Internet and we weren't allowed to have it on our desktop computers. It had to be on a standalone computer. So if you wanted to look something up on the Internet, you would have to go to a separate computer. And so finally, when Secretary Powell came in, he really upgraded technology. Finally we were able to have the Internet! Our entire national security was not going to be compromised by us having the Internet on our desktop.

NAMDE: But we were so far behind. After I left Juárez and came back to Washington, I did a lot of negotiating in international forums, often with a team that was made up of State Department and others -- might be Defense or Patent office or different groups -- and they would all laugh at us. Because we couldn't access our accounts off-site. I remember at one point the Department was like, "Oh, you shouldn't be using a Hotmail or Yahoo account to do official business." And we were like, "Really? Really? And how are we supposed to know what the changes are that you've made to this document?" So we just had to ignore that. But Defense and Patents and all of those people could access their accounts remotely, and we could not. And they thought that was just hysterical.

Q: So by the way, there you are just backing up to Juárez for a second, there you are, it's the eve of 9/11. And by the way, a couple of embassies have already been blown up in 1998. Dar es Salaam, [Tanzania] and Nairobi, [Kenya] and you're dealing with this antiquated equipment.

NAMDE: Yes. 9/11. I think for consular work, 9/11 made big changes similar to the way Lockerbie did. Big changes in the way we handle things. The 'no double standards' rule that came out of Lockerbie -- similarly, data sharing and upgraded equipment and all that came out, much more accountability when you issue visas -- came out of 9/11. So, yes.

Q: The Lockerbie was earlier, was 93, I think --?

NAMDE: Lockerbie was before that, because I went to London in 92 and Lockerbie I believe was in 89.

[Editor's Note: Namde and the interviewer are referring to the December 21, 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. The explosion killed the 259 people on board the flight and 11 people on the ground.]

Q: That sounds right.

NAMDE: But London was very much the ground zero for many of those changes and recommendations that came out of Lockerbie since they had to deal with it.

Q: Okay. So Joyce, you do finally go to Washington.

NAMDE: I did.

Q: You listen to some advice and you do work in a couple of different bureaus. And how was that experience for you?

NAMDE: It was really good in the sense that, although I followed advice to go back to Washington, my career is in no way typical and in many ways didn't follow the standard line. Because when I came back to Washington, I went to serve in functional bureaus, not regional bureaus. And at that time in the early 2000s, people were still saying that serving in functional bureaus was not a good thing for your career. But I looked for something I really wanted to do and I thought it was time to do something outside consular. So I went to our Bureau of Oceans and Environmental Science. I went to OES to work on wetlands and desertification issues. So I did two years of that and my daughter used to joke and say, "It's mom's chance to save the world."

NAMDE: So I worked a lot, I traveled a lot to Switzerland. Because one of the organizations, Ramsar -- which is the international organization that deals with the Convention on Wetlands -- was based right outside Geneva. So I traveled there a lot and I really enjoyed the environmental work. And then the desertification work was often done in Bonn [Germany], with the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. So I really enjoyed working on the environmental issues.

Q: Did you have a feeling that environmental issues had a kind of appropriate priority at State or did you feel neglected? How did you--

NAMDE: --I think in some ways we were kind of left alone, which was good. But there were certain issues that were getting more attention, which were really good. That's when there was the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, which was very good to look at desertification and preserving the Congo Basin watershed in Africa, which is huge. People don't realize it's like--

Q: --It extends across multiple countries.

NAMDE: Yes. Like a third of Africa is part of the Congo Basin. So that hope was going on. So there was a lot to do with combating illegal logging and also the big push to combat illegal wildlife trafficking, which started or was ramped up in that period. So that was really good. We also, I think, were looking at the oceans. It didn't get necessarily a lot of press, but I think we were paying a lot of attention to the Arctic oceans and the Antarctic -- that laid the groundwork for now. Now it's much more, even more so, important. But I think wildlife could often appeal to people.

NAMDE: And we did have a very interesting Assistant Secretary, John F. Turner, who came out of Wyoming and really, really believed in -- I mean, he was a hunter and all those things -- but he really believed in preserving nature. And his family actually owns the only privately owned dude ranch inside Grand Teton National Park. So really, like so

many hunters, they understand the value of preserving natural spaces and wildlife. He was actually a really good advocate--

Q: --And he was a political appointee during the Bush administration?

NAMDE: He was a political appointee, yes. We used to joke Wyoming was the center of the universe because it was amazing how many people came out of Wyoming. But he was a really, really good advocate for OES.

Q: That's good. Well, that's good stuff. And then you had a job in IO [State Department Bureau of International Organization Affairs]?

NAMDE: I did. From OES I went to IO, thanks to Ambassador Don Booth, which I learned just coming back to State to do--

Q: --He is now envoy for Sudan.

NAMDE: Yes. He was a great ambassador. He encouraged me to come to IO. He had been the director there and--

Q: --How'd you know Don Booth, if I may?

NAMDE: I didn't know him very well at that time. He knew people in OES and they had recommended me and then later I got to know him just a little in IO before he left. But things keep coming around in the Foreign Service. He was the ambassador to Zambia when I was a desk officer. So I went out to Zambia, saw him there. And I had done a short bridge assignment when I entered the Foreign Service -- before I went off to London -- for his wife, Anita, who was doing a personnel study. She was a management officer. So at the very beginning, I had worked for his wife. So sooner or later you run into everybody.

Q: It's a mutual admirations thing, and Don Booth is great. So he was part of the reason you ended up in IO, and then he was there.

NAMDE: Yes, yes. And then he left shortly after that. But I handled intellectual property rights, telecommunications, WIPO [World Intellectual Property Organization], ITU [International Telecommunication Union] and I worked on the World Summit on the Information Society, which was a UN conference in two parts, five years apart. I always tell people, "If you're ever asked to work on a UN conference in multiple parts, run screaming from the room because it just goes on forever." So I knew nothing about any of those things when I took the job. I had to learn very quickly because I started just before the UN General Assembly, and there are always resolutions that deal with telecommunications, intellectual property rights, freedom of information, all of that comes in. So they would send them down and say, "Can we take this language?" And I'd

be like, "Oh, let's do this, this, this." And then they'd send me the final resolution and the language I suggested, it would be there. And I was like, "Wow."

Q: Yes! Here I sat, at my little desk...

NAMDE: That was an amazing moment to think that the UN adopted language that I said, "We can't take that, but we can take this." So that was a really interesting experience. Telecommunications was very important because the ITU controls things like area codes around the world, and has to do with a lot of Internet access. So that was very important. With intellectual property rights, of course, the team always included the Patent and Trademark Office as we dealt with those kinds of violations and protecting authors' and musicians' rights and those kinds of things around the world.

Q: Well it's an extraordinary range of stuff that you worked on in those two assignments. Are you a happy foreign service officer at this point, stimulated by--

NAMDE: --I am. It was a very interesting experience, and I was learning things that I hadn't learned before. And then I also backed up the International Maritime Organization and the ICAO, which is the [International] Civil Aviation Organization.

NAMDE: The ICAO was the one thing I did know something about before I started, because I had served as the aviation officer in Nigeria. And so I knew what a wet lease, a dry lease, and a bunch of other things were when it came to planes. But it was really interesting, and you learn so much. And plus I had the opportunity to work very closely with other agencies, even NASA and the Department of Defense, but also in the [State] Department because the Economic Bureau had the lead on so many of those issues. So it was a great way to learn from them, because they were always part of the team. So the team wasn't just one, IO only. It was always IO and EB [Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs] or whatever they're called nowadays --

Q: --I think it's still EB.

NAMDE: And so that was really good, particularly for the Internet and telecommunications. There was an excellent political appointee ambassador who actually had made his fortune with Telecom. So he was a real expert and really willing to share that expertise, which was great. And it was interesting because we did a lot of negotiating on a multilateral level, and a lot of people who haven't done it don't realize that bilateral negotiation and multilateral negotiation are two completely different animals. So I had done some bilateral and these two assignments were an opportunity to do multilateral negotiation, which was very, very interesting.

NAMDE: It involved so many different countries and organizations -- the EU was always part of it, other organizations as well. So you also ran into political aspects of it that you didn't run into bilaterally unless you were in a particular country. Specifically, there was always the Palestinian issue and always the Cuban issue. And so those would come up,

for example, in negotiating telecommunications with Cuba, the Radio [Televisión] Martí and our blocking of signals from Cuba, that would always come up in international forums. Since I spoke Spanish, I was often involved with dealing with the Cubans, but we couldn't deal with the Cubans. We and the Cubans would have a meeting in a room with the ITU people, and we would talk to the ITU people, who would talk to the Cubans, and the Cubans talked to the ITU people, who then talked to us. We never talked, we never negotiated directly with--

Q: --Literally physically, that's how--

NAMDE: --Physically we were in the room, but we did not deal directly with the Cubans. So it was very interesting.

Q: And as, by now, I guess a mid-ranking officer of some kind, you're getting exposure to really the meat and potatoes of multilateral diplomacy and just how it's done. And also how to move paper around that beautiful building over on C St.

NAMDE: Right. It was a big issue because there were lots of different organizations and different regional bureaus -- virtually everything, all the regional bureaus would have to see it. The other thing I learned a lot about was negotiating conventions and treaties, because the ITU, the telecommunications, is unique in that that treaty is actually renegotiated every four years. And it happened to be that convention that took place while I was in IO. And so for a month, we were in Turkey renegotiating that treaty.

Q: People don't realize how intense a negotiation process can be--

NAMDE: It is very intense.

Q: I suspect you didn't see a lot of Turkey during that period.

NAMDE: No. I think one day we saw some ruins, but otherwise we were pretty much trapped in this one place. But it is, and you start very early -- could be six in the morning, because you have pre-meetings and you go all day and sometimes you go late into the night negotiating -- twelve, one, or two in the morning. I remember one time we were negotiating and someone's like, "I am so hungry!" And so I opened my purse, and I had dried fruit and stuff. And they said, "You have food!" And I'm like, "Who taught you to negotiate? The first rule is bring food and go to the bathroom anytime you can, because you never know when you'll be able to again."

Q: Well who taught you to negotiate? Did you learn on the job or--

NAMDE: I'd learned some on the job. I'd learned some from Don Booth. And I have enormous respect for him because he is the one that actually negotiated probably the best human rights language -- in this UN World Summit on the Information Society, reaffirming the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) -- that we will ever get.

You will never get it again, I am sure. And the world agreed to, in essence, say "Yes, we back, we still believe in the UDHR." So yes, it was really interesting. I was fortunate to watch several people that were very good at it. And you learn a lot that way. Unfortunately you also learn, if there's somebody who's not quite so good at it... you kind of pick up, "Oh, this works, and this maybe didn't work quite as well. How can we approach different things and how can we build bridges and alliances on this issue that may be completely different on a separate issue?"

Q: Right. And I think you make the point beautifully that a person who's not yet at the sort of senior ranks in the Department can still have a meaningful impact on negotiations and is still in the mix, getting it done.

NAMDE: That's very true because the meat of it, the working out the language, the laying the groundwork, all of that -- that's all done at the lower level. It's only when you're getting close to the end or you've hit some real impasse or some real issue that the higher ups are directly involved. Of course they're obviously giving you direction, they're making sure we're on the right track with the policy, they're letting us know if there are any changes -- that kind of thing. But it's the mid-level people that are really working this out and getting it close to the finish line and getting in the language.

Q: Good stuff. Moving along in your career Joyce, the next thing, is what sounds like a fascinating assignment: working narcotics issues in Haiti. Is that right?

NAMDE: It was. It turned out to be a wonderful assignment. In the State Department, you know, we never have any money for anything. Well, in INL [Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement] they do. And so it was the only time in my career that I could do things that cost money. I came to it in a rather odd way in the sense that, my husband, who also works for the State Department as a civil service officer, volunteered to go to Haiti, on a two-year excursion for consular affairs. Because those excursions come up on very short notice, he went to Haiti while I was still in IO. And so my goal was to get an assignment in Haiti. So--

Q: --Just set the stage for a moment. Haiti's had so many earthquakes and coups and changes of government and [President Jean-Bertrand] Aristide has gone by this point, as had the Duvaliers, correct?

NAMDE: The Duvaliers are gone. Aristide is not. This is pre-quake. And so, it was a very interesting time. Then Aristide was gone and the next president came in. I wanted a job in Haiti, but there didn't seem to be any consular assignments. So the DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] suggested that they were looking for their first full-time director of basically INL there, but in those days we called it counter narcotics. So I said, "I'm willing to do that." So they said, "Come on down." So I did. It was actually an O-1 position. I was an O-2 at the time, so it really was a great opportunity for me. So I went. They'd had a person that visited periodically, but they'd never had a director posted there.

NAMDE: And they had something called the Haiti Stabilization Initiative, which had money as well. Haiti is unique in the sense that after the Duvaliers, they did away with the military. So the police were everything. They were the police, they were the coast guard, they were all; they did all those functions. And a lot of them had been trained and had been in the military, and when they selected those that they felt should continue, they were brought into the police. So the director of the Haitian National Police -- who had been trained at the military academy and who had been a former general -- actually turned out to be a very good partner with us.

NAMDE: They did not wholescale take the military in -- they were selective. And so they took in certain numbers. So a lot of their leaders-- their coast guard was like all former naval officers. So they used the expertise that they felt was not particularly tainted or particularly corrupt. I don't know if there were any that weren't some of that, but they tried to avoid bringing in those that were known for human rights violations, etc.

NAMDE: So my job was to professionalize and improve the Haitian National Police. So we had $40 million.

Q: So you had a big budget?

NAMDE: We did. And it's nothing compared to what they have now. I think they have like $150 million or something now. But we had that, and DOD [Department of Defense] also had some funds and had people there, so we collaborated a lot. But it was very interesting to be able to do projects. They would say, "We need blah, blah, blah; we need search lights to turn on when there's a major event so that we can control crowds, etc." And we could do that.

NAMDE: Haiti, as you said, has had a lot of problems. The police had been driven out of the slums, particularly a large slum known as Cité Soleil. And so part of our job was to try to reintroduce the police to Cité Soleil and other places. And so the Brazilian peacekeeping, the Brazilian battalion, occupied what used to be the police station there. So we worked with the Brazilians to figure out where they would go, and we worked with the Haitian National Police to begin reaching out to officials in the area so that we could help reintroduce the police. So we refurbished and built a huge police station there. We worked with the police to introduce community policing, so that people could come to the police station instead of being afraid of the police.

Q: So it was a hopeful time.

NAMDE: It was, in a lot of ways. It was fun. I mean, I had to wear a flak jacket and had to be escorted by the Brazilian soldiers to go there. And the RSO [Regional Security Officer], of course, he had final say on whether I got to go or not. But we really did a lot and we saw a lot of changes. And it was a hopeful time. The police were getting better. I think they were taking seriously what the international community was trying to do. And we worked closely with the Canadians and the French and several other countries too, to

cooperate, for example, to expand their police academy -- because they did need to train more police officers. So that way they had training that was very good. And it was really a hopeful time.

NAMDE: And we left September of '09 and the quake was January 10 [2010]. And the quake set them back about 50 years. It was pretty extraordinary. Everything we knew just was gone. I mean, the president was very interested in the police improvement and we used to go brief him every week.

Q: The president of Haiti?

NAMDE: The president of Haiti (Preval). Yes. And we would go brief him every week in the part of the palace that pancaked. That's where we would go every week and give him a briefing. And he knew a lot. He was very interested in that.

NAMDE: One of the things that caused so much damage in the quake is the construction. And I was very happy that--people thought we were a little--

Q: Obsessive.

NAMDE: Yes. Obsessive. Because when loads of concrete blocks would be delivered for our construction, we would test them to see if they were really strong enough. Or if you whack 'em and they crumble...it's like, "hmm, this is probably not mixed correctly." And I'm very glad we did that because the police stations we built, the buildings, and the barracks we built in the police academy stood in the quake. And so Cité Soleil, for example, became very much a place where people could come because so much of everything else had been devastated. But it was a horrible loss. Everyone but one person at the top that we worked with at the UN was killed when their headquarters collapsed. It was just a huge loss for Haiti and just set them back so far.

Q: Who was our ambassador when you were there?

NAMDE: Ambassador Sanderson, Janet Sanderson.

Q: Was she there at the time of the quake, as well? Do you recall?

NAMDE: I think at the time of the quake she had left and it was [Ambassador Kenneth] Merten. He came after us, so she had left.

Q: Was ambassador Sanderson a good supporter of your programs?

NAMDE: She was very much so. She was a very active ambassador and very well regarded by the Haitians. She was very successful in working with them and getting them to work on things that we felt should be priorities for them.

Q: So your focus the whole time was on professionalizing the Haitian police, not so much interdicting narcotics?

NAMDE: No, it was related of course, because narcotics were an issue. Haiti was being used as a transit point for narcotics coming out of Columbia.

NAMDE: So they often went from Colombia to Venezuela to Haiti, and then on. So there was a lot. So a lot of what we did had to do with interdiction of drugs -- better skills for that, help improving the benefits and the professional treatment of the police so that they were less vulnerable to corruption and things like that -- all so that they could interdict drugs. So they worked a lot with the DEA [Drug Enforcement Administration] as well. We worked on a broad scale writ large. Treating the people better, but also, "How do you be better policemen? How do you interdict drugs? And when you catch somebody, how do you treat them and how do you keep them?" Which was really important. We also did some work with the correction system, which was in horrible condition. The main prison, which was right across the street from the palace, held anywhere from two to three times the number of people that it had been built for.

NAMDE: So it was horrible. I'm probably the only woman that's gone above the first floor in that prison in many, many years because it was so horrific. It was a horrible place.

Q: Pretty grim place -- did you provide assistance to improve it?

NAMDE: We did some training with the corrections officers and we also provided some supplements: we made some improvements to the kitchen and some food supplements. And we also built a health clinic in the prison.

Q: The time of the Tonton Macoutes [Haitian paramilitary force] had passed. Were there any remnant effects lingering?

NAMDE: Not really. I mean people knew they existed and they might know who some of them had been, yes. But that wasn't really part of it. They had moved quite a bit beyond that, I think. Obviously they still have problems. They still have problems with corruption. They still have problems with elections and that the people weren't getting what, in many cases, they thought they would, but they had made progress in many areas. But the quake really ended all that.

Q: Were you glad to be back in the field?

NAMDE: I was. I always enjoyed serving overseas much more than in Washington. I mean, I liked my jobs in Washington. I didn't like being in Washington necessarily. Plus, in the field you can have a much more direct impact and you also have guidelines, obviously you have policy, but you have a lot more flexibility within that. So, if this is our policy, how do we accomplish that? That's much more in the field where you can

have input and design programs and make contacts. And so that's what makes it, I think, a lot more exciting and from the day you start in the Foreign Service when you're overseas, you have so much more responsibility and ability to do things and to impact relations with the country you're in, than you do as a desk officer or something in Washington.

Q: And particularly, in the kinds of places you served, right?

NAMDE: Yes. If you don't want to be in London and Paris. Paris may be nice after work, but you're not going to get as, I don't think, personally, as much as -- certainly in London, I didn't get a chance to do the kinds of things that -- from London, I went to Lagos and it was night and day in terms of responsibility. So I always looked for places that I felt you had more of that opportunity, as well as more of an embassy community to deal with. And of course, I needed schools and I was always interested in employment for my husband. So all of those things rolled together lent another aspect to why my career was very different because I ended up serving in four geographic bureaus, which is unusual. Most people focus on one with maybe a second -- sort of a major and minor kind of thing -- where I served in four because that's where the jobs plus the schools and everything came together.

Q: All of that notwithstanding, after Haiti, you did go to Washington and served as a desk officer in the Africa Bureau.

NAMDE: I did. And Africa, I've always had a great interest in. So, I was very happy. But I have to say that I've done fine in the Service, for all its warts. But coming out of Haiti, because Haiti was a danger post, was a very difficult place, officers coming out were supposed to get some sort of bump or advantage in bidding. We did not. So I was coming out of Haiti without a job. And so I liked the Africa Bureau. I had always wanted to go back to Africa. So I reached out to colleagues there and they said, "We have one desk officer job left at grade, would you be interested?" I'm like, "Sure." I was in the Southern African office, which is a very interesting place. It was like Mozambique and South Africa and Namibia and a lot of other things -- very, very interesting issues. So that's why I went to be a desk officer in AF/S, as it was called, for two years and I dealt with Mozambique -- Lesotho, primarily. Zambia for a while and then I would back up Malawi and Zimbabwe, which of course, there's always a lot going on in Zimbabwe.

Q: Were you challenged by that job? Or was this, after running a $40 million program to fix the police in a troubled country, was it anticlimactic? How did you feel?

NAMDE: In some ways, it was. It was much quieter, much more regular hours. But that said, it was an office of interesting things. South Africa, of course, is always interesting. In Zimbabwe, there was always a lot going on in Zimbabwe. Mozambique, we had things going on with Mozambique in terms of the president and that. It was an interesting time because WikiLeaks came along.

Q: Oh yes. Good old WikiLeaks.

NAMDE: Good old WikiLeaks. In fact, you know, one of the things I did on that was serve on the task force. And one of my jobs was, at set intervals, I had to go to a separate standalone computer because we weren't allowed to access anything from WikiLeaks on a State Department account. So I would go to a separate computer and because I spoke three other languages, my job was to check what was being reported in the press. Like Le Monde and you know, the Spanish press, the French press, the Portuguese press -- what was being said. So it was a very interesting time. And a lot came out of that about African countries and leaders. For example, there were cables alleging that the president of Mozambique had been involved in some illegal activities. So, Mozambique was an important partner, we put a lot into Mozambique in terms of assistance and Mozambique was sort of the poster child for how you settle a civil war. You know, when they ended their civil war and the way they set up their government and they really were the poster child for what do you do when you--

Q: --They had phenomenal economic growth. They had a series of elections that were pretty good.

NAMDE: So, that was a tense moment and I was the Mozambique desk officer, so I was in the room when our assistant secretary would speak with the president of Mozambique.

Q: Was that a tense phone call?

NAMDE: It was. The president of Mozambique, at that time, was not a particularly loquacious person. He didn't necessarily speak a lot when you would talk to him. I had talked to him, I'd been on part of phone calls with him before this.

Q: Armando Guebuza

NAMDE: But he was almost completely silent on this particular phone call. So, he obviously was very, very angry, but you know, things smoothed over and progressed. So, it worked okay.

Q: It was a fascinating time, wasn't it? The WikiLeaks disclosures.

NAMDE: It was, it impacted so many relationships. And there was so much in there that a lot of what the public never realized -- they might focus on certain high-profile countries -- but it affected so many of our relationships with many other countries that people wouldn't necessarily think about or pay much attention to. So it was interesting.

Q: And trust was compromised and feelings were hurt and there were a lot of negative consequences. There were a few positive consequences in the sense that at least some elements of the American public read our cables.

NAMDE: That was one point where they were like, "Oh, well that's interesting." They, I think, realized that we weren't just clueless and that we really had a lot of information that we were sending back. And it also, I think, kind of made it clear that -- especially after the breakup of the Soviet Union, there was always this kind of idea like with CNN and everything, "Why do we really need people on the ground?" And this kind of showed why people on the ground were really important -- because they got so much more information. Sometimes, they got real information, information that you were never going to hear on CNN or any other news outlet, and could put it all in context: "Why does this matter? What's the true story here?" So, I think people were surprised at some of the stuff and I think they also were surprised at some of the issues and the challenges we faced, that life wasn't all fun and games out there. People were really making difficult trips out into the countryside, sometimes being harassed. So, that was a positive aspect of it.

Q: Alrighty. And then, I guess the tug of consular affairs is now felt somehow? And you're an experienced ACS [American Citizens Services and Crisis Management] person at this point.

NAMDE: Well, in Juárez, I had been the ACS chief, and it was a three-year assignment -- I stayed for four. I asked for an extension so my daughter could finish high school.

Q: My goodness, they're growing up quickly, these children of yours.

NAMDE: Yes, these children of mine, they're launching out into the world. But I had also, not intentionally, but because of the series of jobs and the opportunities that came along, I had actually been out of consular work for six years.

Q: And this was your cone.

NAMDE: Eight years. I came in un-coned. I became a consular officer. I did 12 years of consular work, then I did eight years of other work. Like I said, not because I always sought out non-consular jobs, but that's just the way things fell. So I really needed to get back into consular work. So, I was looking for jobs and the managing director of -- who's still the managing director of Overseas Citizens Services was Michelle Bernier-Toth, who was a foreign service officer and then became a civil service officer. And so I had known her as a foreign service officer. So, I went to see her and she agreed. She thought I would be good.

Q: She's still there. I did not know that.

NAMDE: She's still there, yes. And so, that's when I became the Director of American Citizens Services for Europe and Eurasia. It was 48 countries that included the 'stans and all of Europe. So that was my next assignment for two years.

Q: I have to say, Joyce, that as I listen to your career trajectory, you really don't go from one thing to the logical sequence of that thing to the next thing where you're building your skills in South Asia or something or another. But in fact, you move into sort of radically new kinds of responsibilities.

NAMDE: Yeah. That's why I said my career never followed the path that people say, "This is what you should do." So, I guess I'm the example of--perhaps I would have gone farther or been promoted sooner. I don't know. But I ended up in the Senior Foreign Service. I made it across the threshold even though I didn't do basically the way they say you should: pick a specialty and stay in a certain region and less work in functional bureaus and all of those things. I didn't do that, but I still managed to make a good career out of it.

Q: But now what occurs to me is you've clearly got a bunch of different kinds of experiences. Wonderful that you were a four-year ACS officer and in Mexico and that you'd done ACS work back in Lagos and London in the early days. But my goodness, now you're handed a couple of continents. How do you do that?

NAMDE: Well, in consular work I had done it all. I had been an anti-fraud manager and had done immigrant visa and diversity visa and NIV [Nonimmigrant Visas] and all of that. But that was a real area of expertise for me. So the other advantage I had is, over the years, visa law and visa regulations and visa systems have changed substantially. ACS, not so much. Passports and ACS had stayed very much -- the law did not and the regulations did not change a great deal. They changed some but not compared to visas. So, there was less to catch up on in ACS than there would have been in visas, for example.

Q: But you're a manager now, among other things.

NAMDE: Right. I had a really great staff that was a blend of civil service and foreign service officers. So they were very good, very capable, very good at multitasking because Europe is a busy, busy place for ACS because Americans go to Europe a lot. Probably Mexico is the only place where you get more. So, there's always a lot going on in Europe and in terms of Americans needing assistance. Plus just the sheer volume, you're bound to run across things.

Q: What was the toughest case you remember?

NAMDE: Well, Amanda Knox, was being tried for murder in Italy when I was there. And I remember we were watching the broadcast live when the verdict came in, and when they found her not guilty, we were just stunned but thrilled because we had helped deal with her case and with her family and that here in the U.S. for several years. She was incarcerated for four years. So when she was found not guilty and then released and came back to the United States, it was like, "Oh, thank God."

Q: --She just returned to Italy.

NAMDE: She just went back to Italy for a conference. She did, she spoke at a conference in Italy. It's her first time back, because she went through a lot of appeals. And first she was not guilty and then she was guilty and then the highest court in the land finally said "No, she's not guilty." So she actually couldn't leave the U.S. for some time because Italy would have asked for her to be arrested wherever she was. But there were some other big things. The sinking of the cruise ship off the coast of, I think it was Italy again. They came too close to the shore -- and two Americans were killed in that, a couple from Minnesota, and they were actually the last two recovered. It took some weeks to recover their bodies. So that was another huge issue and helping those families cope with first, not having the bodies and then finally when the bodies were recovered and returning them to the U.S.

Q: Was it easy to recruit people into your division?

NAMDE: It was. ACS work is very interesting, I think, to consular officers in the sense that you feel like you have an impact on people's lives. So you can help people. We're talking about people who may have been incarcerated, there may have been a death overseas. We also adjudicated some citizenship cases. Like people with complicated -- posts would send to us, for an opinion, -- complicated cases in which they had to decide whether a child was a U.S. citizen or not, which was very interesting. We dealt with a lot of renunciation of citizenship, especially as different financing laws came into effect and there was an uptick in that. So it was very much a kind of helping people, whatever the issue they had run into. And sometimes, it was just people who'd lost everything to a pickpocket in Barcelona -- that kind of thing -- on a holiday weekend. So, I think people liked it. We dealt with some children's issues and some child abduction issues, parental abduction issues. But there is a special children's issues section, so they dealt with most of those but sometimes because it involved passports or the citizen parent and a non-citizen parent, we would become involved in those cases as well.

Q: You've also got the Internet and a 24-hour news cycle and a degree of interest.

NAMDE: And American Citizens Services also does the travel advisories.

Q: Well those are always welcome in any country I've ever served!

NAMDE: Yes. So especially when you're like, "Don't go to this part of the country," -- then they are always upset. But we were responsible for keeping those updated for the countries. So there was a real wide variety of things. So that made it interesting and in some cases, it didn't work out, but in many cases, a very positive thing. We had one situation where a mother was trying to escape an abusive husband who was considered a war hero in his country. She knew she couldn't leave with her two U.S. citizen children by plane. So, we worked with her on getting them passports and ultimately she went by land to the border with another European country, crossed that border, then took a train to

another capital and was finally able to get on a plane to return to the United States. But those are the kinds of things where you're like, you really know that you are positively impacting someone's life.

Q: And at this point in your career, Joyce, what are you hoping to do further? What is your kind of horizon by this point?

NAMDE: Well, I was an O-2 and got promoted to an O-1while I was in that job. But when I joined the service, you know how it is in your A-100 class, there's always those people who are, you know, "I'm going to be the youngest ambassador ever! I'm going to be the first ambassador from this A-100 class, straight to the top." I came in, and I mean, I wanted to be a consular officer. I never really thought far beyond that. You know, I figured I would have a long career as a consular officer. So when someone suggested that maybe I should look at DCM-ships, I was originally an O-2 and there are a few O-2 DCM-ships.

NAMDE: So I looked at several of those and bid on several of those. And one of them was Equatorial Guinea which is the only Spanish-speaking country in Africa. And I had my Spanish, I had my French too. But having both Spanish and French was helpful too because a part of Equatorial Guinea is on the mainland by Cameroon and part of it is an island. And so the French comes in handy too. So I decided that it would be interesting to serve as a DCM. So that's what I decided I would try to do. And I was fortunate that I was selected and then I was promoted and the ambassador said, "Do you still want to take the job?" And I said, "Yes, I still want to be a DCM."

Q: Who was the ambassador?

NAMDE: Mark Asquino, a terrific ambassador. A former public diplomacy officer. And so that's when I went to be DCM in Equatorial Guinea.

Q: Now, two things come to mind for me with Equatorial Guinea, maybe three. One is the sort of related issues of corruption and human rights violations. And the other is oil. How did both of those factors play out during your time in Equatorial Guinea?

NAMDE: They were both extremely important. The president of Equatorial Guinea, [Teodoro] Obiang, is the longest serving authoritarian ruler in Africa. At that time, he had come to power a few months before [Zimbabwean Prime Minister Robert] Mugabe, so he was the longest serving. More than 40 years, I think, at this point. And he -- when oil was discovered -- decided he wanted American companies to exploit their oil. So, the only companies pumping oil when I was there -- I think the Chinese may have a small foothold now -- were American companies. So oil was extremely important because it was all American companies that were exploiting the oil. Human rights and corruption were always a big issue. Ambassador Asquino was very good at making sure the government remembered that. They have an infamous prison there called Black Beach, which is where people are taken and tortured. So when the opposition was arrested and

taken there, we would speak up and stand up for political prisoners. We supported the opposition to the extent you could, the political opposition. The political parties, the opposition parties are very small--

Q: --Supported them in the sense of--

NAMDE: --Supporting the sense that we would meet with them, we would--

Q: --supporting their right to exist.

NAMDE: Right. We weren't supporting them financially, but we would encourage the government to allow political parties that had met the requirements to register, to appear on the ballots, to hold legitimate elections, to let them hold rallies, to let them have access to the media -- which of course they did not want to do, and in most cases didn't do. Didn't let them have a rally, for example. They would usually deny that. They didn't get much access to the media. But we did support freedom for political parties, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, those things and human rights. And we monitored if people were arrested and that kind of thing.

Q: Were there tensions with the government?

NAMDE: There were sometimes, think also because of corruption. The Obiang family is extraordinarily wealthy and has massive houses all over the place and in Europe. The son that's being groomed to be president, had a huge case for fraud. *"Biens mal acquis"* in French, it's like misappropriated funds or, "things badly acquired," literally. There was a very funny video we watched on YouTube of when they hauled away his -- I don't know what it was -- Lamborghini or something, in Paris. They towed it away. They confiscated it. So, there were always those things. They were always very angry with the French because this case was proceeding. But there was actually a case against him in the United States that he settled and he agreed to give up a $30 million mansion in Malibu. And the money was to be distributed to organizations for the benefit of the Equatorial Guinea people once it was sold.

Q: Did that occur?

NAMDE: The settlement occurred. I don't know if the mansion was ever sold. Obviously there's no benefit from it until the mansion is sold.

Q: And the Riggs Bank scandal was--

NAMDE: --Yes, Equatorial Guinea brought down Riggs Bank. They did.

Q: That was a fixture in Washington D.C. Been there for decades, if not centuries.

NAMDE: Yes. Equatorial Guinea brought down Riggs with all the money laundering.

Q: Were you there at the time?

NAMDE: No, that had occurred before I was there. Riggs was gone by the time I got to Equatorial Guinea.

Q: But people were still chasing around Obiang's wealth in multiple jurisdictions.

NAMDE: Multiple jurisdictions and suits, and they [the Obiangs] were quite successful in avoiding having to really give up much -- although things were still pending, but they didn't care.

Q: And the society itself had both extreme poverty and extreme wealth.

NAMDE: Yes, definitely. The people at the top were very, very wealthy -- fancy sports cars and huge houses on both parts of the mainland and the island. The island wasn't very big, you know. We drove around the entire island one day and put less than 100 miles on the car and we stopped for lunch and still it only took us like five hours. So it's a relatively small island, but as soon as you got away from the capital, out in the hills, people were living a very basic subsistence life. You know, no electricity, no running water. Lot of subsistence agriculture, that kind of thing. They were fortunate that it's a country with the kind of climate where they were able to grow a lot of things. So they were in that sense --nutritionally -- they were relatively better off than many African countries where growing is much more difficult. But they were still extremely poor and they lived a subsistence living, sometimes without much schooling. The government was the biggest employer so, for young people, there weren't a lot of opportunities if you didn't have the right connections or if you didn't somehow get into the government, there weren't a lot of other jobs. So there were big extremes of poverty and wealth. But, it was somewhat frustrating in the sense that, for example, there was -- ironically -- a measles outbreak. As we know, that's a very contagious thing. There's less than a million people in Equatorial Guinea. For like less than a dollar per person, they could have vaccinated everyone in the country -- but the government didn't do it. The government wouldn't provide the funds. So charities and nonprofits and other countries and the WHO [World Health Organization] and things like that, which were trying to do campaigns. The CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] sent experts to help with vaccination campaigns. But it was frustrating because, at the same time, they were building the eighth palace or whatever on the mainland. So for a million dollars, they could have vaccinated everyone in the entire country, but they didn't do it.

Q: Well first time DCM, you were. Looking back, were you a good DCM?

NAMDE: Well I'm probably not the right person to ask that question. I think I was pretty good.

Q: It's a tough job.

NAMDE: It is. It was very interesting because they had just built a new embassy in Equatorial Guinea, which is kind of ironic. But at one point I think it was Senator Isakson that came to visit Equatorial Guinea.

Q: Johnny Isakson from Georgia.

NAMDE: He said that embassy there was the most pathetic thing he had ever seen. It was the worst he had ever seen. It was like a ramshackle house where they would hand out the visas on the front porch, it was bug infested -- it was a disaster. So that's the only reason Equatorial Guinea jumped up the list for construction.

Q: Because Isakson came through.

NAMDE: Yes, and he said "That's pathetic. We should not have people working in those conditions." And of course it was zero security. It was a house with a fence around it kind of thing. So they had just completed when we arrived, we arrived just as they were moving into a new embassy and the embassy housing was in the compound. The government had given us a nice plot, a big plot of land. So it was beautiful housing. And I said "It's probably the best housing in the Foreign Service I'll ever have," because it was a brand new DCM residence. So, that was really nice. And my commute was a minute if I was slow, but it could be 30 seconds if I was in a hurry, because it was just down the sidewalk to the embassy. But there were challenges with that. Anytime you have a new facility, there are always challenges with the facility. The facility had some major construction issues. We had 13 water main breaks in a year, which means, okay, the embassy's out of water, we'll send everybody home, except we lived in the compound so that meant our homes had no water either. So there were some real construction issues that we had to work through. The ability to expand somewhat -- our staff was provided with a newer facility so we could move into some areas, hire some people that we hadn't done before. So it was the first time they ever had classified material in the embassy. So they did not have a classified system. They used to have to go to Cameroon. The ambassador once was told he had to read something and he had to go to Cameroon to do it, because there was no classified material. So the classifieds came. So part of it was that, developing the systems and that -- so I tried to be a good DCM, I think, a good manager.

NAMDE: I'm a good organizer. That's one of my skills. So that helps when you're trying to put in place new policies for things like classified or access to the building when it's a completely different kind of compound and access requirements than in the past. In Equatorial Guinea, there's always the challenges of recruiting people because it's not usually high on anyone's bid list to go to Equatorial Guinea. First of all, people don't know it exists.

Q: (Laughs)

NAMDE: So that was one of the challenges; to recruit people to be able to cover all the things. You know, we had a halftime consular officer who was also the halftime PD [public diplomacy] officer. So to be able to cover all those things -- but we did have a new position for a facility manager, which was absolutely crucial and those kinds of things.

NAMDE: But we were also able then to -- because we had a little more staffing, better facility, a little more opportunity to reach out -- we were able to do some things we'd never done before. Like I'm still very much on the environmental issues -- we did the first ever week of events related to Earth Day. So we designed a logo with the Ceiba -- which is this huge tree that's the national symbol of Equatorial Guinea -- and that was part of our Earth Day thing. And we went to the beach, where the turtles nest. Equatorial Guinea has a big sea turtle nesting area. So we went there and in two hours we picked up two tons of trash. And it took two huge trucks loaded with trash to haul it all away. So we were able to do more environmental things. We were able to get some small grants that we were able to give to a couple of different environmental groups. We were also able to do a couple of grants with some groups that were looking more at -- no group could be registered as like an NGO dealing with human rights, but they could be registered to help with education or women. And so we were able to support, to give small grants to some of those groups where indirectly, they addressed human rights by working with certain populations.

Q: Well that's an example of how, you know, you're out there, you're accredited to kind of a knucklehead government that really isn't on the same page as we are in any fundamental way. But you're still able to do positive things in society.

NAMDE: Yes, we also were fortunate that American oil companies were very important there because we worked with them. They all had very strong social responsibility programs. So they would do programs to train medical people or first responders and they would do programs with girls' education and we would partner with them. They might provide the funding, but we would partner to help them work on those issues. And we would be part of the selection committees in that. So those social responsibility programs, we helped companies dovetail them into some of the U.S. government priorities. And because the companies are very important -- that was the income for the government -- the government was quite a little more flexible in what kind of programs the oil companies could put forward.

Q: Yes, it's interesting that we often think in terms of development assistance and USAID, but corporate social responsibility programs can be quite important in some places and it's really good to hear that you and the embassy were involved.

NAMDE: And there was no AID program for Equatorial Guinea. There's no assistance program per se. We had the ambassador's self-help program, which we also used to our benefit. We would make sure that we gave grants for self-help projects all over. So some on the mainland, some on the island. Different kinds of grants, whether it was a women's

cooperative or it might be a school, to build a wall to enclose their compound, or different kinds of projects. So we used the ambassador's self help fund a great deal. Unfortunately, we were one of the countries that had it cut. It's kind of shortsighted that more funds were channeled to other countries. So several countries that had no other assistance programs, no USAID or anything, lost some of their funding while countries that had AID and other programs often gained. And it seemed sort of a reverse. So we worked very hard to get as much as we could and use it as much as we could.

Q: Fascinating place. We're nearing your final couple of assignments here and the one in Chad kind of looms. First of all, had you been chargé [d'affaires] at all?

NAMDE: Yes, I was chargé several times in Equatorial Guinea. Whenever the ambassador would go -- sometimes he would go to meetings, sometimes to the ambassador conference in Washington or whatever the case may be. So I did serve as chargé a few times.

Q: Did you enjoy it?

NAMDE: I did. It was very interesting. I often accompanied the ambassador to, for example, meet with the president. So, I knew a lot of the players, which is really crucial for a DCM to be known and to know the players. But then that gave you the ability to step in to be chargé and the government would accept that. And so I was chargé a few times and it was good.

Q: You mentioned going with the ambassador or going on your own, I suppose if necessary, to see President Obiang. This long-serving -- Describe the atmospherics of that a little bit, if you don't mind. How did he run a meeting?

NAMDE: Well, it was very ornate kind of furniture and there were always, of course, several other people in the room. And the room was quite large. So you'd be sitting kind of a long way from him, like often opposite him. So you kinda had to speak up and hope he did to be sure you caught everything. He was famous for being late. You would always have to wait for him, whether he was coming to an event or you were going to a meeting with him. I remember one time, he asked the ambassador to come at nine o'clock and we were like, "Nine o'clock? Is he even up?" But we went, because that was when we were requested. At a little after 12, he saw the ambassador. So he made the U.S. ambassador wait three hours and that was the longest that he had ever waited. But we did jump several other people who were waiting before us. So apparently when the president decided he was going to speak to anyone, he spoke to the U.S. ambassador first. But it was always a very pleasant conversation. Even when we were speaking on topics that he wasn't that crazy about, he wouldn't usually get visibly annoyed. Often, he would have others deliver a message if he was annoyed about something. But there was a lot of ornate, very ornate palace, a lot of opulence obviously. But he was famous for making people wait. And he was so well known for that, that the ambassadors or the DCMs, -- whoever was attending a meeting -- if he was opening the supreme court or the

parliament, we got pretty good at gauging what time the thing was supposed to start. What time we could actually leave the embassy to make it there just ahead of the president.

Q: When he traveled, was the diplomatic corps expected to assemble?

NAMDE: Yes.

Q: Oh really? So you would trundle down to the airport?

NAMDE: Which, you know, it was Equatorial Guinea -- it was 10 minutes away. It wasn't like some places where it's much more difficult. But yes. And they had his departure area and then they had a VIP departure area. And so yes, there was a lot of that. So there was a lot of pomp and circumstance. They're in power. That's what they want. They want people to recognize them, that they're important, that "I'm the president." And so I think the keeping people waiting thing was probably the worst. And it didn't matter who you were, he would always make people wait.

Q: Joyce, you spent a lot of time in Africa. So did I, through the years. And so I want to ask this question, not coming from a place of stereotypes and all that kind of stuff, but one does hear of the role of sort of witchcraft and superstition and some of that attaching to people in power. What were your perceptions of that at the time?

NAMDE: Well I think that it's legitimate. For example, in Haiti, it's very much the same thing. For example, in Equatorial Guinea there were always rumors that his wife was somehow some sort of witch or magically endowed with powers. There were always that kind of rumors. So, it definitely plays a role and I think that those in power can exploit that if they want to. Whether it's with symbolism or rumors or you know, that sort of thing. When I started in Africa, when I was in Nigeria, our fraud investigators, I would give them money out of my own pocket, because how do you expense out the cost of going to the market to get an amulet to get protection to take on the road with you? But they wouldn't travel outside without it. So I would just give them money to go get what they needed, what they felt protected them. Because they were undertaking dangerous trips when they were going to go ask people or uncover fraud -- that would mean people wouldn't immigrate to the United States. That was a very dangerous thing. So, it definitely plays a part and we might call it witchcraft. We might call it suspicions. For them, it's beliefs, it's part of their belief system. So I think it goes beyond what we would define as superstition. It goes beyond that. This is an actual belief that's based on being protected or not being protected and ancestors and all of those things. And I think it exists, it's existed everywhere that I've been in Africa and in Haiti as well. But I think it exists in a lot of cultures. It exists in Mexico, for example. And I'm sure in other countries as well, where people have these beliefs often related to ancestors and powers -- certain people having power that others don't have. So I think it might be perhaps a little

more mentioned in reference to say, Haiti or Africa, but it exists, I think virtually everywhere.

Q: It's a belief system. And people everywhere have beliefs and if people in society all believe a set of things then those set of things have a reality. It's not --

NAMDE: --Right. And, you know, there are a lot of animists. They believe that, you know, nature has power whether it's certain plants or animals. All of that is woven together. And it's still very much part, I think of the belief system of many, many places.

Q: Yes, I think so too. I'm really fascinated by your time in Chad. I'm wondering if we should perhaps come back to that in a final chat because there's a lot to unpack there, I think.

NAMDE: There is a lot. There's a lot related to Chad, but also, I have ties to Chad that are a bit unusual. So, yes.

Q: Well maybe don't take off your thing as I'm taking off mine, because I want to ask Natalie if she wants to ask a question or two if that's okay.

NAMDE: Sure.

Q: Well thank you for this opportunity. I would love to know a bit, you said you speak multiple languages, correct? So how has that impacted where you've been placed or where you've chosen, in particular. And the learning process, were you learning on the ground? You came in--

NAMDE: --I came in with three languages, Spanish was my best. I had just left Francophone Africa, so I had French. FSI is better about French now. When I left Africa, right, 1991, they didn't think much of African French -- the two blonde Parisians that gave me my language test gave me a 2/2+ after living three years in Chad. And then, I had Portuguese, also at an okay level but not great. My Spanish was the best. It's ironic, I think the Department has gotten better now perhaps at this, but when I came in they were not particularly good at utilizing people's language skills. Like I took the language tests and therefore I got a high enough score in Spanish that I was off language probation so I was assigned. That's why, among other reasons, I was assigned to London because I didn't need language training like many others in the class did. So since I was off language probation, I spoke a language at least a 3/3. I didn't need language so I wasn't going to be assigned to a language post. And then I think I was actually in the service for, let's see, from '91 to '99 before I used my Spanish.

NAMDE: But the service doesn't require you to go anywhere where you speak the language. So they never required me to bid on a Spanish speaking post. I just bid on Juárez because it was a good, decent job. My husband could get a job and my children could cross the border to go to high school. So we don't have requirements. Even if the

Department spends two years teaching you Arabic and you go to one Arabic speaking post, you're never required to go to another one. They want people to have that flexibility and many people that learn a language will focus in that area and will reuse their language. Like they'll focus in Latin America or the Middle East.

NAMDE: But, I took the short express course in Arabic. I always wanted to learn Arabic, but I was afraid I would have to serve in Saudi Arabia if I did, so I never pursued learning it. I would have loved to serve in Jordan, which is wonderful. I visited my daughter there when she went there to study Arabic for nine months, but I didn't want to think that I might have to serve in Saudi Arabia because I've done a TDY [temporary duty assignment] in Saudi Arabia and my personal opinion is that any woman who goes to Saudi Arabia should get additional pay because it is a totally difficult, terribly difficult place to be. But the advantage is if you want to learn a language, you can bid for that place. So if you really want to learn Polish, you can bid for an assignment in Poland, or China or any of those places. Sometimes, the job attracts you. And a language you'll never use anywhere else. A friend of mine wanted to be a DCM, and they asked her to be DCM in Estonia. So she learned Estonian and she'll never use the Estonian again. But it was part of getting the job she wanted. So you can use your language as much or as little as you want, but you can also explore learning anything from Mongolian to Pashto.

Q: Okay, it's June 26th, 2019. This is, I think going to be our last interview with Joyce Namde, whose career we have tracked right up to the moment of our return to Chad. And it's an interesting tour for you, Joyce, which I thought we might dwell on a little bit because you married a man from Chad. You lived in Chad before joining the Foreign Service or working for the U.S. Government. You came into federal employment in Chad, and then you ultimately entered the State Department, coming from Chad, and then many years later, you returned as a deputy chief of mission. Chad never lacked for controversy and confusion and violence. Well let's talk about your return to Chad. First of all, you were on your second DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) tour?

NAMDE: I was, yes. I had been DCM in Equatorial Guinea. And when the DCM-ship in Chad came open for bids and I had always hoped to serve in Chad because, although I had lived there, I had taken the exam in the embassy there, I had visited there many times, in the interim, I had never served there. So, I applied with my ambassador's support from Equatorial Guinea, who reached out to the ambassador in Chad to put in a good word for me.

Q: This is Mark Asquino talking to Jim Knight?

NAMDE: Yes, Jim Knight. So I spoke to Ambassador Knight on the phone and I had a couple other options in Africa for DCM-ships, but I really wanted to go to Chad and I joked that that was my ideal Foreign Service job and the perfect way to end my overseas career, because I knew that I was going to age out and have to retire in about three years when I took that job. You won't hear that probably ever again that Chad was someone's

ideal assignment in the Foreign Service. So that's how I came to be assigned as DCM and people were quite, colleagues who knew us, were quite surprised. They're like, "The Department doesn't mind that your husband was born there and he still has family there?" And the Department didn't mind as long as Chad didn't mind and Chad didn't care. My husband has been a U.S. Citizen since I joined the Service (expedited naturalization) and he's always traveled to Chad on a U.S. passport with a visa and the Chadians never cared. They put the visa in his passport and that was it. So there were no objections and he was given the full diplomatic ID once he arrived and had full diplomatic immunities and coverage while we were there. So it wasn't an issue for anyone, unlike some countries, where you can't really serve there if your spouse is from there. But in the case of Chad, it wasn't an issue.

Q: And as you went through the tour, the fact that you were married to a Chadian who became a U.S. citizen had no operational impact or did it?

NAMDE: Actually probably it gave me an advantage because the Chadians immediately recognized my name, my last name as a Chadian name. And then they would ask about it. I would say I was married to a Chadian, a person born in Chad, and then it would be, "Ah, my sister!" And it really actually opened doors. It was known very quickly that I was there and so I had a lot of ability to talk to ministers. In addition to that, I was in my sixties, my husband's in that same age group, and he and his peers in Chad are from that generation that, they were educated, they held positions of power. Some still did. So we knew a lot of people who had worked for international organizations, former ministers who would come by the house to say hello. So, it was an advantage, in that sense. It also was an advantage that we very quickly heard things. People would call me, call my husband, tell us what they had heard. In fact, one morning, while I was there, one thing that happened was the embassy was attacked early one morning by a self-radicalized person who started shooting at the embassy.

Q: This was a single incident?

NAMDE: It was a single person, Yes. It was a single shooter. And even before I heard from our security people, my phone and my husband's phone started lighting up because Chadians knew that the embassy had been shot at.

Q: So tell me about that incident, and what year was it from, for one thing?

NAMDE: That incident took place in November 2016.

Q: So this was a time of heightened concern. Of course al-Qaeda had blown up a couple of American embassies in East Africa in 1998, then came 9/11, then came escalating concern across the Sahel.

NAMDE: Yeah, I think that in Chad, what had happened when I arrived in 2015, the embassy actually had been on authorized departure and I was given permission to go

shortly before that ended because the previous DCM had departed. And that was brought about by threats. The Boko Haram, which is a terrorist group in the region, based primarily in Nigeria, but was operating across Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad. Boko Haram had blown up the police academy and the main police station in Chad. They had attacked those with suicide bombers. And then subsequently also the Grand Marche, the big market. The main market was also a target of bombing.

Q: All prior to your arrival?

NAMDE: All prior to my arrival, but, when I arrived, the embassy was just about to come off authorized departure. And there were a lot of very strong restrictions, security restrictions at that time such that Chad had danger pay. So it was always very nervous. Boko Haram did not attack again in N'Djamena, in the capital, but they did continue to attack in the Lake Chad region. And the multinational force that was operating against Boko Haram in the region was based in N'Djamena.

Q: This was the G-5 Sahel group or the MNJTF (Multinational Joint Task Force)?

NAMDE: It was MNJTF. And so there was always a lot of concern about bombings, about terrorist infiltration, so we cooperated, we worked closely with the Chadians, our FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), our security people, to try and ensure that more attacks did not take place, certainly in the capital, which meant of course that there was a heavy police and army military presence, a lot of checkpoints, a lot of restrictions, which we understood in some sense, but it also became a reason to really strongly control the population. So no permits were issued for public demonstrations, including during the election period. If people did demonstrate, that would be broken up. Periodically, the internet would be shut down, for security reasons, supposedly. And around the time of the election, they shut it down before the election, did not turn it back on for some time afterwards. But that would happen periodically. Always in the name of security.

Q: There was an election in 2016 in which now-president Deby had freed himself of the third term restrictions some years before.

NAMDE: Right. The constitution had been changed I believe in 2011. They were a little ahead of the curve on eliminating term limits compared to the rest of Africa. So we hadn't, I don't think we had really paid a lot of attention or objected strenuously then. So yes, he had no term limits.

Q: And this was his fifth or sixth or so reelection, wasn't it?

NAMDE: Yeah, I think it might've been the fifth, although he also served as interim president before that. He came to power on December 1st, 1990 as a colonel in a coup d'etat. And then, along the way, as people, as us and other countries pushed them to move beyond military rule, he reinvented himself, under "democracy" and then ran for president, and ran for president, and ran for president. He kept getting reelected. Some

elections were better than others, but there were always issues. This election, he probably either lost or came very close to losing. He certainly probably should've had a runoff election and the election board managed to say he had just enough that he did not have to have a runoff. But it was only in the high fifties percent, which was by far the lowest that he had ever gotten in terms of the vote. So, he's still there; he's still president.

Q: Was it your sense that President Deby had a plan for succession, a vision of life without him?

NAMDE: No. In fact he I think was very careful not to make any plans for succession, because he plans to be there as long as he can. So it actually was quite a concern to us and to the Europeans and many others that there was no plan for succession. And he is Muslim and he follows those rules, the rules of that religion, substantially, let's say, now, but in his younger years, he did not necessarily. So I think as a result of some of that, we were always left guessing about his health and, he would go to France at least once, sometimes more often a year, for medical treatment and medical checkups. But he has never made any move to consider succession. I think in fact he tries to make sure that no one gains very much power to be able to contest his position or his power.

Q: I want to go back and talk about the terrorism problem and a couple of other things for a moment. But Deby himself, you, as I say, were a seasoned observer of Chad. In the course of your last tour, did you come to grasp sort of, you know, did he have popular support, was he respected, tolerated, loathed? How do different parts of the population—?

NAMDE: Well, I guess it depends on who you talk to; it could be any of the above. He comes from a very small tribe, the Zaghawa. And so they had a lot of power, a lot of positions. Corruption was rampant, unlike when I lived there in the ‘80s - there wasn't a lot of corruption because everyone was equally poor, there was no oil in those days, no one had any money. But now that the oil was flowing, there were billions of dollars. And so the jockeying was always who was in a position to benefit from that. And Zaghawa people connected to him became very wealthy. Corruption was widespread and people knew it. People resented it because the schools - I mean I taught at the National Teachers College when I was a Fulbright lecturer there in 1989 to 91, so I had reason to go into the high schools and the high schools in 2016 were no different than they were then. They had not been improved. There had not been schools built. They did not have equipment, despite all the money. And despite an attempt by the international community and the World Bank to control more of the money that came in from oil, but that started to fall apart, which allowed him then to, he wasn't supposed to be able to spend most of that money on defense and military, but ultimately he was able to. So there was very poor healthcare. If you went to the hospital, you had to pay for everything, including the sheet to put on the bed. Someone had to bring you food, someone had to go out to a pharmacy and buy any medication you needed. Those kinds of things. So neither the education nor the healthcare system had basically been improved. I think one large hospital had been built in N'Djamena that was the mothers' and children's hospital, which was basically

built because the first lady wanted it to be built. There were some private hospitals or private clinics that opened, but healthcare and education basically had not improved and in fact probably had gotten worse, in spite of the oil money. But when you spoke to President Deby, he understood how important relations with the U.S. were. But while we were very concerned about security in the region and Boko Haram, he was much more concerned about Libya.

Q: Yeah, he had some history with Libya.

NAMDE: Strong history with Libya. Chad fought a war with Libya, back in the 80s, which, they were always still very proud to this day that they beat Libya and made them retreat back into Libya.

Q: And of course, with the fall of Gaddafi, demons were unleashed in Libya and weapons flooded into southern Libya, and to some degree across the Sahel. There were Al Qaeda related elements, there were ultimately some Isis related folks.

NAMDE: And there have always been rebel groups or groups that opposed President Deby, and they could find more of a safe haven in post-Gaddafi Libya as well. So, yeah, there were a lot of reasons to be concerned and, but he was very concerned about Libya.

Q: Now, President Deby specifically and the Chadians more broadly in their military, you know, had a reputation of being pretty tough. So for instance, Deby sent Chadian forces into northern Mali to help—

NAMDE: The Chadian military actually in the region is respected as being the most capable. And we did provide a lot of military assistance, to the tune of probably around a hundred million dollars a year, to Chad, to support the military, to develop the military for their anti-terrorist support, and their ability to be a stable force in the region, which is ironic because there was a time when Chad was definitely not the most stable country in the region. But then now you look at Chad, and what's around them? Northern Nigeria, Niger, Libya, Sudan, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Cameroon, northern Cameroon. These are all places that have bigger problems than Chad does in terms of security now.

Q: It is remarkable, isn't it?

NAMDE: It is remarkable that they are the stable country in the region. But yes, they are respected for their ability to fight and for their resilience, and determination. And it is true that when hostilities began in northern Mali, while there was a lot of discussion and people, groups, countries were deciding who would go, who would do what, the Chadians literally drove across the desert to northern Mali to assist, before anyone else. And they remain in the most dangerous sector in the north. So, they're pretty well respected for that.

Q: Was there a tension in the embassy? Did anybody feel a sort of tension in balancing advocacy for, respect for human rights, spending on social development, health, and education, you want to advocate those things, but at the same time you've got this regional partner in the fight against terrorism and $100 million in military aid a year. Was that a difficult balance to maintain or how did you all do it?

NAMDE: I think it was difficult, but it was something that we did not shy away from, in terms of human rights. But it was part of what we tried to do for example with the military, training about how you interact with prisoners on the battlefield, with the population. We also, through our own military, encouraged them to do some activities with the community (although that was relatively small), but it was difficult and it was made more difficult by the fact that we actually had no assistance program there. So there was no AID mission. There was, prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union, but that mission was closed many years ago. And then I think OTI (Office of Transition Initiatives), under AID, went back. They were preparing to come back to do some more work particularly in the Lake Chad region. But, there was basically, you know, the ambassador's self-help fund and whatever else we could sort of put together. There were some PD (public diplomacy) funds and programs to work with the English teachers, to work with women's groups. But human rights groups and political groups, groups really didn't use those labels. So it might be a women's empowerment or a youth program. So that was a way we could get at things like human rights, equal participation or opportunities regardless of tribal affiliation and some of those kinds of things. So the programming was limited, but we would try to be creative in what we could do to put forward those kinds of things. For example, we developed a multi-faceted series of programs, showings and discussions for targeted groups of the movie "Hidden Figures", about the pioneering African-American women who were key to the success of the U.S. space program. We got some grants to do some environmental work particularly with the elephants down in Zakouma National Park and worked with the DOD to provide training and equipment for the anti-poaching brigade. And it wasn't necessarily easy, and we would always push them on economic issues and corruption. I mean everyone knew that freedom of the press and freedom of speech, of course when the Internet would go down, freedom of assembly when they would deny permits for people to hold rallies were under threat. So we did try to present those things, but it was not always easy.

Q: Let me ask you about another part of your experience, that of being a DCM. What were your thoughts of now being a DCM in two small African posts? Talk, if you don't mind, just for a moment about the challenge of maintaining morale and mentoring and encouraging younger officers in a place that's got limited resources and is not necessarily in the spotlight.

NAMDE: I think that, it's very true. Although, you really can't put Equatorial Guinea and Chad in the same basket. Equatorial Guinea had, when I got there, nine officers, by the time I left, 11 and maybe a hundred LES (Locally Employed Staff) max, and that included like drivers and electricians and everyone else, in a brand-new embassy where everybody lived in the compound except one officer. So it was a very different kind of

setting. Chad was actually bigger than that. Chad had several hundred LES, it had five agencies there. There were probably about 75 Americans if it had been fully staffed. DOD had a very big contingent. It dealt with very different kinds of issues. Obviously oil was very important in both countries, but security, and terrorism, and the military partnership and all those kinds of things were very different in Chad. So Chad's really more a medium size embassy that is confronting a lot of the issues there in Africa, but the security issues had raised it to a whole other level, in terms of what we dealt with, the people that came through, came to visit. AFRICOM had their big African military counter-terrorism exercise (Flintlock) there. They had actually held it there twice while I was there (2015 and 2017), not that far apart, so that was another huge accomplishment that Chad was host for that. So being DCM, there's some things that are the same in all places. There's other things that are different. But I always joke that as DCM, your job is to be the COO. Your job is to keep the embassy chugging along smoothly, and a lot of that involves personnel as well, and then being an advisor to the ambassador, to bring to the ambassador the things that the ambassador needs to know about, to offer your best advice and recommendations in terms of issues and activities, and policies that may be coming up. So on the personnel side, I always used to joke that there were days when it was kind of like being the principal of a middle school, because you were like, "Really, you can't work this out together?" There were those moments.

One big responsibility was trying to maintain the appropriate staffing in the embassy. So, when we had a job, recruiting someone to come. And that was difficult in both of those posts, recruiting people to come to difficult places. I think anyone who came to Equatorial Guinea assumed it was kind of a run-of-the-mill assignment. People came for different reasons. Some people were assigned there, entry-level officers. Chad was also that way, but a bit different. Chad was at a place where it attracted a little more attention in terms of defense and counterterrorism and those kinds of things. But it was still not easy to recruit for. And sadly, one of the things that didn't work particularly well was these were people working flat out 60 hours a week, often doing two or three jobs, in a really tough environment, under massive security restrictions, and then they took away the danger pay, but the security restrictions were still there. They just took away the danger pay but didn't change the way you had to live. So the problem recruiting for places like Chad is exacerbated by the fact that, for the time I was in Chad, I was the only person in the embassy that was promoted, in spite of what people were doing there. And so I think that service in those really difficult places is not always recognized or rewarded. And sometimes we had to fight the mental image in Washington of Chad— of what it is, of what it's like, of what you do there, of what you can do there. Because I don't think the image sometimes in the bureaus has caught up with the reality on the ground. So we were constantly dealing with that. But it was sad that in over two years, and I'm told in the next year it also happened, that no one basically was promoted for serving in Chad. And they did a lot of great things under really difficult circumstances, but there didn't seem to be much reward. Maybe people weren't taking it as seriously or weren't seeing it as a place of value to the U.S., not understanding the context, the counter terrorism. And part of that is the way of course you write evaluations, but the fact remains that I was the only person promoted there in three years.

Q: I can see where that would have an effect on morale.

NAMDE: Very discouraging. And the other effect on morale of course, is that we had a lot of restrictions, which, some were loosened over time. You could only go to certain restaurants. You couldn't go to certain parts of town. When I lived there back in the eighties and early nineties, I went every day to the big market. In the two years I was in Chad as DCM, I was never able to go to the market. So you couldn't go to the market. You had restrictions on where you could go outside of N'Djamena, although that was loosening up, but it required a lot of planning and permission from the RSO. Limited restaurants you could go to. It just was very, very restricted and you couldn't use taxis or public transportation. You couldn't walk at night. You could only walk during the day in a certain neighborhood where the majority of the people lived. So all of that was still in place. And at first you had danger pay and then danger pay disappeared and all of that was still in place. And people kind of felt a little bit restricted. Obviously, you would go to each other's houses and things like that. I think people also kind of resented that they knew that places that did have danger pay— For example, we went on vacation to Egypt. I probably shouldn't talk about other countries, but we did. And we could take taxis and we could walk at night and we could go to the mall and we could travel, and to everywhere, except I think the Sinai, and they had danger pay! So we were like, "Wow, this is so wonderful! There's so much freedom here!"

Q: I hear you, I hear you.

NAMDE: Yeah, so I think that's one thing that's difficult when people are competing for promotions - sometimes people have a mental image or a certain idea about a country that they don't—

Q: They don't trouble themselves to learn.

NAMDE: Right. And so it was just really demoralizing that people came and worked under really difficult circumstances. Now, while I was there, one of the last things that happened just a few months before I left was we finally moved to the new embassy. The move, of course, had been delayed by about over a year, been delayed almost 18 months. It was a beautiful new structure. It was a huge game changer, in terms of facility, where the other embassy was old and ramshackle and people were literally working in closets and those containers that they used to have in Afghanistan, they brought a few of those in, and it was just a really awful situation. So moving to a new building improved in terms of actual physical working conditions in some ways. But in other ways, in the new way we design embassies, virtually all the LES worked in two huge bullpens, there aren't even cubicles anymore. The walls are only about six inches higher than your desktop. So there's no privacy, you hear everyone's phone conversations. That was a difficult adjustment for a lot of people.

Q: So you have locally employed staff who maybe spent 20 years, that have worked themselves into an office, and who may well have stuck it out through coups and counter coups and evacuations and you name it, and all of a sudden—

NAMDE: Here's your desk next to everyone else. So there were good things about the move and there were bad things about the move. People were very surprised we chose to build our new embassy in the heart of town instead of going out to the edge of town like the UN did and some others. But that meant we were all immediately restricted for space. So the marines were now living in the embassy compound, which they had not been before. They'd been like a couple miles down the road before. But they did not build an ambassador's residence and there was no room for an ambassador's residence. So the old compound still had to be kept functional because that's where the ambassador's residence was. So there were some things that the people scratched their heads, both us and the Chadians, about it, but it made a big difference in terms of just office space and everyone being under one roof and people adapted. It took some getting used to, but I think overall— it also gave us a lot more space to use to do programming. And a learning center, a public diplomacy center where people could come and use the internet. We were able to show films like *Hidden Figures*. We did a series of showings for targeted audiences, university students, the press, certain ministries that dealt with women's issues.

Q: And that has a great resonance, I'm sure, in the society.

NAMDE: It did, yeah. And people really, because there's a lack of programming, there was a French cultural center, but there's a lack of real programming there. There's one movie theater that sometimes operates. So anything that we did in terms of programming and that ability to do more programming was really popular that people wanted to come and see the films or hear the speakers or participate in whatever they could. So that was really good.

Q: Let's widen the aperture a little bit. You joined the Foreign Service in, what was it, 1993?

NAMDE: 91.

Q: I'm sorry. You joined the Foreign Service in 1991. Your gender was no longer barred from the Foreign Service, but nor had the service fully recognized that women and men in two-career relationships and marriages, and women and men without spouses, and various configurations no longer fit the traditional model. I think American society was probably well ahead of where the Foreign Service was. But those are my thoughts. I'm interested in your thoughts.

NAMDE: Well, I joined the service, in some ways I was kind of an anomaly in my A-100 class in that I was married, I had three young children, and I was older. I had not come to the Foreign Service out of college. There were four women in my A-100 class and we

formed a sort of group to support each other because we were all nearing 40 or over 40, which was unusual. The Department, when I joined, was grappling with the Palmer suit (for discrimination against women) and responding to what they had been told to do and what the courts had determined. And I think that was difficult for the Department to the point where I think they did not comply and they basically had to be ordered again to comply in certain areas. I came in in the un-coned group, but I had always been interested in consular work. So, when I had the opportunity to say a preference for a cone, I chose consular (because that's where my interests lie) knowing that people in the admin (or management cone as it's called now) and consular, many more of them were women and they did not rise necessarily to leadership positions.

Q: We should interject that, and you mentioned earlier in your interview about being un-coned, untenured, and unwashed or something, like that—

NAMDE: Yeah, I mean, we joked about that.

Q: But, the reason you were un-coned was because the Department was under court supervision and how it recruited and assigned people to parts of the profession and the interim solution was to bring people in without designation and as you say, you subsequently chose to be a consular.

NAMDE: Right. And I think that ultimately, after not too many years, they did away with that system because it wasn't, I'm not sure it was particularly successful in the sense that, it just opened the door for people to try to be "coneally rectified," as they would call it (which I thought was a terrible expression) that people would in essence appeal that they wanted to be in a different cone. And so that just created some bigger issues rather than just coming in and saying, "This is what you are and then you can fight down the line if you want." Knowing that though, I liked consular for the fact that you could help people that deserved your help. A lot of those were American citizens. Sometimes they were qualified visa applicants. They were families seeking reunification under immigrant visas or various things. But you also were, we used to say that we were the first line of defense. We don't say that much anymore as I mentioned earlier, but, we really were guarding our borders and our national security, even more so subsequently to Nairobi and subsequently to 9/11. In addition, I must admit that although I'm very outgoing, I really did not enjoy diplomatic functions. I liked my job to come to me, which it certainly did in consular. Not that I didn't write reports and I didn't make contacts. I did all those things, and I made contacts in consular as well that proved very useful in that. But I wasn't looking for a job where I in essence would go out and talk to people and try and figure out what the next big central bank move would be or something. So I enjoyed that consular work. A misconception is many people are like, "Oh, consular work, working the line." Well you don't do that after, you know, the first few years. You're a consular manager. Your job is to run a consular section effectively, often with large American and very large LES, local staff, to be sure that the laws applied appropriately, to fight fraud. Those are all the things that you do as consular manager. And, I think as times changed and consular officers began to serve in more leadership positions in the embassy or in the Department at large,

consular officers had an advantage in the sense that it was a cone along with management where you managed resources. So for me to be a DCM, I was used to managing people. I was used to managing resources. I was used to being sure that the law was covered and that policies were met and that we were doing everything accountably. And so, that's why I think ultimately down the line it was recognized that actually management and consular people are the best prepared to be those kinds of leaders. Because you can go through some of the other cones, can go through most of your career without having managed more than maybe one local staff member. So there are things, positive things in each cone, but for consular officers I think, whenever you would get those questions, like, "Have you ever managed people?" they are like, "Really? I'm a consular officer."

Q: Of course I have.

NAMDE: Of course I have.

Q: And processes, and resources, and policies.

NAMDE: And all of that, you know accountability, resources. There's no way one of those visa foils is going missing and somebody doesn't have to deal with it or track it down and that kind of thing. So I think that over time that helped. When I was in AF/S [Office of Southern African Affairs in the Africa Bureau] we had several ambassadors that were being prepared to go out to post in the southern African region. And three consular women were among the ambassadors being prepared. And so we were like, "Yes, consular women rock!" So that part I think has changed, and to the credit and to the benefit for the Department that they are better at tapping the people that have developed those skills throughout their careers. And a lot more women since consular tended to have a lot of women too, then you did get more ambassadors and DCMs that were women.

Q: Now the other thing that you had a real sort of perch to observe and you have personal experiences is as you say, you joined the Foreign Service with three young children. You went through a career that took you to many different places with those children and with a husband who ultimately found work with the Department. I've always said the biggest challenge for most of us is finding a way to make a marriage work in terms of spousal employment. A lot of people this day and age are unwilling to follow their spouse to Equatorial Guinea. Talk about that part of your life, if you don't mind.

NAMDE: I think it probably has changed a lot and just in terms of the number of two career couples that there are, and sometimes that means a tandem couple, two Foreign Service, but often it means a Foreign Service officer and someone else who has a career. In my case, when I joined, my husband and children came along with me, but it was always a family decision. I had a good career, I had a full career, I retired as a member of the Senior Foreign Service. But along the way, especially early on, there were literally times when I couldn't tell you exactly what the job was. I had bid in X location, but I knew that it had possibilities for spouse employment, I knew it had the schools I needed.

So my bidding and my career, at least through the first three assignments, was driven by schools and spouse employment, not by my wanting to advance. It was also driven by a choice we made that we wanted to serve overseas. I joined the Foreign Service for the foreign part, and so we were always happiest serving overseas and we felt that the schools, the opportunity for our children to be educated at international schools or in good schools, was best overseas. But we also made a conscious decision not to send our children to boarding school ever. So that also meant that I bid according to where my children could be with us. But it was difficult, my husband started out applying for jobs in the embassies. My first tour was in London and there wasn't much spouse employment there. He did apply for a couple of jobs, including in the mail room, but he has a PhD, so they decided he was overqualified and it was like "If I'm willing to do the work," but he did not get hired. And I must say that luckily many of the old guard that had attitudes that maybe didn't quite jibe with where the country was going and where the Department was going, are not around anymore. But my first DCM in London told me that he was very fortunate to have a traditional wife and spouse employment really wasn't a concern of the Department. Fortunately though, that kind of attitude has fallen by the wayside. But it's not easy, my husband did a variety of jobs and the Department over the years designed programs that gave spouses more responsibility, more opportunities, including finally being able to contribute to the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) and get credit for their employment as federal employment. And that happened, we were in Manila, so that happened around 1998 and they could actually buy back credit for their previous service. And from there on they were able to count that as federal service.

Q: These things make an enormous difference.

NAMDE: They make a huge difference. And when the Department became more able to allow teleworking, a wonderful program they had was what they call DETO (Domestic Employees Teleworking Overseas). And that was great. So, consular was particularly good at using that program I would say. For example, as DCM, my husband wouldn't have been able to work in any of the embassies I was in, plus by now he was a civil service employee of the State Department. He was able to telework for two years from Equatorial Guinea and then for two years from Chad for his office in Washington, DC. Unfortunately, sometimes, there's a step forward and a step back. In 2016, the Department changed its DETO program and they took away all allowances. So there was no locality pay for Washington, which is actually their assignment place. There was no locality pay for the place you are physically present in. He existed in cyberspace. So all he got was base salary. He didn't get any locality pay anywhere. He didn't get danger pay. When we were getting it in Chad, if you came TDY, after six hours on the ground you got danger pay. He didn't get danger pay for living there. And depending on where you are in your career or lifespan, that may not be such a big deal for some people, but in our case we were approaching retirement, both of us. And so when he returned to the U.S., he actually is still working and worked longer than he anticipated he would because that affected his high three. So that affected his pension and could affect his pension forever. And it was just such a non-family-friendly decision, handled very poorly. They didn't notify them until the day they released the cable saying, "By the way, we've changed

your—" Even though there were signed agreements with the bureau, with the Department, with the post, with the officer. So that was a step backwards. And I think it was a very popular program among those of us who were foreign and civil service couples. And that's technically a tandem, you check tandem. When I filled out a form, I checked tandem because he was civil service. But, it was kind of the forgotten tandem. And so this was one of the few ways that they were accommodating those couples.

Q: You know,— that whole sort of conversation about spousal employment and benefits, sometimes it was couched in terms of the system's giving you something or that, you know, there's this benefit that's been created and that's fine if you want to look at it that way. But it's also in the cold-eyed, clear interests of the Department to open up its pool of prospective DCMs in Chad for instance. If the door was shut to you because you couldn't arrange spousal employment, which as you said was central to your thinking and decision making, well then you have a much narrower pool and you're denying yourselves the opportunity to bring in a woman who's very experienced and who has herself lived in Chad. And you know, why would you not create a system that—

NAMDE: I think it's been a challenge and they've worked through various things over time but this was a step back. But I think it's an issue that the Department struggles with, but we'll need to address more and more. I came in and a lot of the people that came in around the time I did, we kind of worked through that. In many cases spouses, whether it was authors or— were in work that allowed them to work, not from a particular office, or may have joined the service, so then you were a tandem. But I get the feeling, and I may be misspeaking here, but I get the feeling that the subsequent generations of officers are not going to tolerate that or be willing to accept too much sacrifice on the behalf of one spouse because of the career of the other. So I think that there is a potential now as two career families become the norm, I think there's a potential that the Department will lose people earlier in their careers as they need to find a place or careers that work for both members of the couple. I know we lost a very good engineer that was part of building the embassy in Chad because his wife was unhappy that she hadn't been able to really find work that she liked. And she was offered a good teaching position in the U.S., so he chose to resign, and they returned to the U.S. And I think that kind of scenario hurts the Department overall. I am fortunate that I'm not fighting about schools or children issues now, but I read about some of the struggles of people, for example, with disabled children. My son was actually diagnosed with some learning disabilities when we joined the service, which subsequently I think educators decided that he really didn't have much in the way of learning disabilities. He had learned to read in French and not in English. And he had been raised in Chad in the local culture. So when they tested him, some of his answers didn't fit, but they fit perfectly for where he had been living. Subsequently, we were fortunate, we had the benefit of extra tutors under the Department's classification and he was reading at grade level and then we wanted to get him off that because that's another restriction on where you can go. And the Department told us that we would have to pay to have him tested again. I'm like, "We could save you thousands of dollars if you would retest this child." The way we got around it was the school in London and the school in Nigeria collaborated on his records and the school in Nigeria agreed to take

him. And then after we left Nigeria, the Department agreed to, because he was at grade level, they agreed to drop that designation. He had a class two med because of that. So I know that there's a lot of children's issues as well that the Department has to struggle with and deal with.

Q: Joyce, this has been very good. I want to ask our intern if she has a question or so and then we'll wrap up the interview, I think.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about democracy and Chad and the state of that there?

NAMDE: Well, like so many developing countries, democracy can be defined very, very differently and the way they may define it, may be different than the way we define it. I think the real danger in Chad and in so many other countries is defining democracy by elections. Because many countries hold elections. Chad held elections. They weren't free and fair elections, but they held elections. But that doesn't make them a democracy. So I think holding elections is one part of it, and the quality of the elections, but also the level of corruption and whether at least some of the resources are used for the benefit of people, is also, I think, part of democracy. Chad made billions of dollars every year from oil. And I always used to say, even if they stole 90% of it and just left 10% of it to be used for things like education, health, and roads - the roads, it was sometimes better to drive off the road than on the road, they would have such huge holes in them. So I think that democracy in Chad theoretically exists in that they hold elections and they do some things that are democratic. But I think in any country free and fair elections, caring for, doing some things that are for the benefit of the people and controlling corruption, are really the keys to having a democracy where people can get an education and therefore can start a business or get a job. In many countries, including Chad, if you have an idea and you start a small business and it turns out to be successful, someone probably from the ruling class, the ruling tribe, the ruling family, whoever it may be, will probably take over that business. So, I think that's part of it. And just making it a democracy makes opportunity more available and resources more available across the board. And, so, democracy is not just elections, which is the way many people want to think of it, it's a part of it, but that's not the whole way you can define it.

Q: Well if I may, that was a great question and a great answer. To steal a line from, you know, we often thank our military colleagues for their service, but I want to thank you, Joyce, for your service and thank you for sharing your memories and your insights with ADST and the broader public. Thank you very much.

NAMDE: Thank you for letting me do it, asking me to do it.

Q: It's a pleasure. Thanks a lot.

Q: So today is February 27, 2020 we're resuming our interview with Joyce Namde and Joyce, where would you like to begin?

NAMDE: Well, I think I'd like to talk a little more about the work I did on environmental organizations. From 2003 to 2005, I was assigned to the Bureau of Oceans and Environmental Science [OES, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental Scientific Affairs]. The acronyms of the offices have changed, but in those days I was in the office that dealt with wildlife and certain international conventions and organizations that dealt with both wildlife and the, I guess, earth in general, such as desertification, wetlands, flooding as well as Congo Basin Forest Partnership, CITES, which is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. And I dealt with—I backed people up on some of those, but I dealt very specifically with the Ramsar Convention, which is—Ramsar is R, A, M, S, A, R, and people think it's an acronym, but it's not, it's actually the city in Iran where the convention was negotiated and signed originally. So, the Ramsar Convention deals with wetlands of international importance and every member country must designate—in order to sign onto the Ramsar Convention, must designate at least one wetland of international importance. The U.S. is up to about 39, I think, now. But when I was in that office, I was really fortunate to be able to work on our first transboundary Ramsar site. It was with Mexico and it's a part of the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research National Wildlife Preserve. It's a long title, but it's the Tijuana River National Wildlife Reserve and it's south of San Diego and spans the U.S.-Mexico border there. That one was designated in February of 2005, but it was a long work to coordinate. It was the first time we were coordinating with another country. So, we were able to get federal fish and wildlife—U.S. Fish and Wildlife of course is very involved in these things as is the equivalent in Mexico. So we had to do a lot of work with Mexico and with the federal government, with the state government. We, on our side already, the wildlife reserve, existed. But we were working with Mexico to designate land on their side of the border. And so, it wasn't easy, but we formed some very good liaisons with the Mexican counterparts and we were able to designate and I was able to go to the ceremony that was held on the U.S. side of the border to officially designate that Ramsar wetland of international importance. It's still there, they continue to collaborate on it. It is of course challenged by some of the things today. There's always been a fence there, but hardening that fence will cause disruption to both the wildlife and the water flow. So, they're working very hard on how to maintain and help this wetland thrive. But I was really excited to be part of designating that wetland because it's surrounded by Tijuana and San Diego. So, it's an important thing that we save there.

The other organization I worked with while in OES was the IUCN, it was called the World Conservation Union in those days. It's the International Union for Conservation of Nature. It had dual names in those days, but it's known as IUCN, they publish the famous red list of endangered and threatened species. So, we worked very—they're based in Switzerland, and we worked very closely with them. In fact, Ramsar Convention and IUCN were based in the same building in a town outside Geneva. And so, we worked very closely there as well on conservation issues and wildlife issues writ large. And I was able to participate in their quadrennial - every four years they hold a World Conservation Congress. The one I attended in 2004 was in Bangkok. So, it was very interesting—and the member states work very closely to look at what's the science, what's on the red list,

what sorts of initiatives should we support, where do we see the threats. Sometimes those overlapped with Ramsar as well, there was a quite a threat from Ukraine dredging the Danube and things like that. So, it was a very interesting time and that was when I was fortunate, that I mentioned earlier, to accompany Assistant Secretary John Turner from OES to visit Laos and Cambodia, which was very, very interesting. We went to the headwaters of the Mekong, which sort of reminded me of what I watched as a youth on TV from the war in Vietnam. We flew up there in a Lao army Russian made helicopter with no seats but plastic lawn chairs. And we were thrilled to be at the headwaters of the Mekong and—but you ducked down where the blades were still turning on the helicopter to run out. They were very pleased that they were building a huge dam. So, we went there as part of our concerns about what happened down river and the Mekong continues to be threatened by dams all along it. So that was a very, very interesting time.

We also were fortunate to actually go out on the Mekong and see the river dolphins, which are also a threatened species, although they are making a bit of a comeback, they're not out of the deep woods yet. But the Conservation Congress was also really important because it's only every four years and it sets policy for IUCN and where the priorities are for the member states. So, I was very pleased that I was able to be part of that as well. And the U.S. is still a participant in all these organizations and frequently as part of the governing body or council, but isn't an alternate right now, certainly at IUCN, and we've always held a leadership role and been a very important leader in those organizations. And I think that still holds true, perhaps, in some ways because those organizations aren't high on a lot of people's list or radar screen. And so we're able to continue to support the environmental and wildlife issues, in line of course with the overall policy, but because they're a lower tier organization, we often can continue our leadership roles without having to adjust a great deal from administration to administration.

Q: Now, the period you're there is, you said 2003 to 2005?

NAMDE: Yes.

Q: I'm just curious about one wetland area, the area that used to be or hopefully is again occupied by the Marsh Arabs in Iraq. Was that addressed while you were there?

NAMDE: Actually, when I was in OES, one of the things I dealt with were the Iraqi marshlands, which had been drained by Saddam during the war with Iran. It was a way to stop the advance of the Iranians. They still existed in those days to a limited extent. And there were definitely organizations and countries, including the U.S., that were interested in what can we do, at a minimum to maintain them, but hopefully to restore them. So we were part of making a plan to see if they could be dealt with. They would never be—I think it was acknowledged, they would never be fully returned, but there were areas where it would be possible to flood the area to some extent and to help preserve some of the lifestyle of the original Marsh inhabitants.

Of course, after they were drained, a lot of others moved in to graze animals and those kinds of things. But the point was to try and restore enough of the marshes that the people who lived there originally and made their living off the Marsh would still be able to do so. In addition to wildlife, one of the big threats was people had started growing dates in that area, which took up, of course, a lot of land and also water. So I have to admit, I don't know where that stands now, but certainly it was an issue that was on the radar screen for the nations that have been involved in Iraq and the environmental organizations in the world. So yeah, it was one of the things I dealt with, but it was early enough in the war there, that was also a limiting factor.

So, that's, in a nutshell, perhaps some additional input on what I did environmentally, which I think—I'm very proud of and it helped me—I continued to carry that forward as I've talked about starting Earth Day and Earth Week in Equatorial Guinea and some of those things. It was a passion of mine in Chad too, when we were able to get funding for elephant conservation. And that's a great story, a great success story. And it was one of the best things I was able to do was go to Zakouma National Park in Southern Chad, which actually among international travelers is considered sort of a hidden gem. So, it is really good. But, I wanted to double back a little and talk about the environment. But, also, when we last talked about Chad, I talked about some of the things that happened there. Certainly our military assistance and things like the Flintlock military exercises, which were very successful there. And the women connections that we were able to put together a program on among local entrepreneurs and the military and others continues to be a model for Flintlock exercises in other countries.

Q: Take just one moment. I'm sure you explained this in your earlier recording, but just to be sure, describe for a moment what the Flintlock exercises were.

NAMDE: Well, Flintlock is an annual exercise that the U.S. AFRICOM, the U.S. Africa Command, which ironically is based in Germany, holds somewhere on the African continent. Okay. It rotates around in different countries. There are different hosts. It involves African partner nations, but also other partner nations. There are usually several European nations that participate, and sometimes others from Asia or South America that have close ties depending on what they're doing and what country it's held in. Chad, although it's not necessarily seen as a place where you would hold a lot of meetings—Chad, because of its strong military, it's viewed as the strongest military in the central African region. And in West Africa too, for example, they are fighting in Mali, in Northern Mali as part of the contingent there and in the most dangerous sector. So, they have a lot of respect. And so, they hosted it actually twice while we were there because another country wasn't able to do it, so Chad stepped in to do it a second time. So they've actually hosted it three times, I believe. And so, it brings military from all the participating countries to do joint exercises to practice how do you do coordinated exercises. And then as part of it, they generally do some civilian military cooperation. They usually bring some doctors and/or dentists to do some medical clinics. In our case they brought veterinarians and vaccinated like, I don't know, 2000 camels. So, the

veterinarians—Chad depends to a large extent on livestock, they actually take a livestock census and they have like 90 million animals and 15 million people.

So, having veterinarian clinics was very well received. Then there's also—that's where we came in with a women's program where we brought business leaders, religious leaders, educators and military together. Our military, their military and police, their highest-ranking woman in the military spoke. So, that became kind of a model for when you're looking to do those civilian collaboration efforts, this is one of them that worked very well with a population that often is not highly visible when you're talking about military exercises. So, Flintlock is a very, very big deal. It takes a lot of planning, and the embassy will remember it not too fondly for all of that planning, but both Flintlock exercises were big, big successes. So, but when we were in Chad, I think, sometimes because we do so much military cooperation at the time I was there, it was about a hundred million dollars annually in military cooperation, big—in addition to the defense attaché, there were SEALs and other military contingents in country and a lot of visitors in country as well. But in some ways people question, "Well, what about civil liberties? What about human rights"? But, in some ways the military assistance can be a double-edged sword, but it did give us a lot of entree, I think, and the ability to put some pressure points that we might not have had if we hadn't had as much assistance. And on things like trafficking in persons, Chad was facing going to tier three, which is the lowest level. And if you're on tier three in the trafficking of persons, after a certain time it is an automatic cutoff of all assistance except certain humanitarian assistance. So they stood to lose their military assistance. This allowed us somewhat some pressure points to get them to pass a trafficking in persons law and do some of those things. We also supported the prosecution of the former leader of Chad—at the time when I was there Hisséne Habré, the former dictator in Chad who was overthrown in 1990, December 1st, 1990 by the current president who at that time was a colonel in the military. Hisséne Habré fled to Senegal and eventually, he was put on trial in Senegal for crimes against humanity. It was very unusual. It's the first time a country, not an international organization or court, put a former leader on trial for things that he had done while he was a leader. That started in 2013. The court was called the Extraordinary African Chamber and it was actually put together by the AU [African Union], but the U.S. provided substantial financial support throughout the trial to bring Hisséne Habré to justice. And it was successful - in May of 2016 Hisséne Habré was convicted of crimes against humanity, war crimes, torture, sexual slavery and rape. So, it was a milestone for justice in Africa, acknowledged by the New York Times and European papers and Human Rights Watch and a lot of others that this was an extraordinary thing. And he appealed of course, but it was upheld and he's serving a life sentence in Senegal. We strongly supported that and we supported it financially, but also, for example, by strongly encouraging the government to be sure that those that were taking testimony and researching what had happened were able to gain access to Chad. And one of the main people that represented the victims was able to come there and was given access to what turned out to be a treasure trove, in a very sad way, of documents. He found a room with —full of documents, a foot deep, that turned out to be crucial in that trial because it included lists of those detained, 40,000 people were detained or disappeared. It documented over 12,000 of those, it documented those

that were—some of those were killed, most of them were, but it documented some of that—and it contained proof that Hisséne Habré was aware and was giving orders about what to do with those people. So it was crucial for the prosecution.

And we also supported—there were victims groups in Chad that we would meet with and support. And at one point, UN Ambassador Samantha Power visited Chad and over the government's objections met with one of the victims groups at the ambassador's residence, which was very, very powerful. These women, they were all women, except one man, talked about how their husbands and sons disappeared and they never saw them or heard from them again. And how they themselves then were also targeted, lost jobs, couldn't work, were harassed and so they were a very impressive and amazing group of people. They did win a judgment in Chad that they were supposed to get paid—I'm losing the word now, retro, not retribution—reparations, and Hisséne Habré was also ordered to pay millions of dollars by the court in Senegal because he had millions of dollars. I was actually living in Chad, not connected with the U.S. government at the time of the coup that overthrew him, and he literally emptied the treasury and loaded the money into vehicles and drove out of Chad with millions of dollars. So, he was ordered to pay as well. I'm not sure—it's always been very difficult for people to get those payments. But it also sent a very powerful message that Samantha Power met with this group. And she was very willing to speak up and speak out. She spoke to the Chadian president about it, and we put out press releases that she had met with them. So, that was something that also helped support the search for justice. It took 26 years for those people to get justice. But they were very happy to say that they had, and they took a risk by speaking up and we always supported that when people would come and take down their stories. So, that was another way we could indirectly support making sure that people were able to tell those stories to the people that came to Chad to document that. We also pushed the government to allow people to go to Senegal to testify because at one point it was becoming somewhat difficult for people to leave the country to testify in Senegal, but it was crucial that they were able to do so.

So, those are some of the things we did. One of the things that we did in terms of Chad's democracy, which can be challenged at times, let's say—the current president, Idriss Déby came to power in the coup in December of 1990, then he actually—I think sometimes the West didn't give him enough credit, because he did—he was very smart. He maintained close ties with France, and France was crucial to whoever's in power. But he also reinvented himself; ran for election several times. Sadly, Chad was ahead of other African countries and removed term limits in 2011 before we were paying as much attention. So in 2016, he was reelected for his fifth term as president. So he's been in power since 1990. I was there when the coup happened and it's amazing to me that he is still there. But he does have a very, very strong hold on the country and on the government and is making the country much more Islamic. So, for the 2016 election, we set up an entire election monitoring operation and we weren't able to do much monitoring ourselves outside of N'Djamena, outside of the capital because of both travel and security and monetary restrictions. But we did have a robust monitoring operation in the capital area. We sent people out to observe, and of course, there were some irregularities as there

always are, but we felt confident that he did not get the necessary majority to avoid a second round. However—that was in April of 2016. However, the election commission decided he got 59.9 percent of the vote, so there would be no second round. But that is the closest the opposition has come, ever. I mean, in the last election, I believe, he got like 85 percent or something. So we felt that although the opposition was very split, which is unfortunate, they did not coalesce around one person. Each of their candidates and parties got enough that we felt that there probably should have been a second round, but there was not.

It was a very interesting time when he supposedly won the election. The night of the election the military celebrated by shooting off a lot of weapons, including an anti-aircraft gun in the neighborhood where diplomats lived and enough weapons, enough rifles, AKs, etc, that people were hurt or killed by the gunfire. And, in fact, some bullets came through the carport and dented the ambassador's vehicle and each of the major missions there, France, the EU, Germany had at least one staff member who reported some sort of family injury. One of our staff, their daughter ended up shot in the leg by falling ammunition. What goes up must come down. We worked very closely—it was an example of how well we worked with the EU, France and Germany and the U.S. together protested to the government very strongly about that. And when the official results were announced a couple of weeks later, there was none of that. The government had really clamped down on the military on that because it raised so many issues for them to have that kind of uncontrolled military action.

But, in the course of the election, we supported the opposition's right—we didn't support the opposition in the sense that they should win, but we supported their right to participate. Some of them were detained and we then protested with the government. And at one point one of the major opposition candidates was detained in the southern part of the country and other opposition members trying to travel to see him were stopped. So we protested those things and eventually people would get out of jail. The government controls all the media, so the opposition really had no access to the media and before the election, as they did in any crisis, the government shut down the internet. So it became very difficult to communicate, which is one of the things that we also pushed them on, restarting that communication. But one of the biggest things that happened during the election that, I think, the U.S. played a key role afterwards in helping resolve was the—before the actual day of the election, when people went to vote, the military voted first and they voted in their barracks, on their bases, and they voted publicly, even though it was supposed to be a secret ballot. So they had to vote and hand in their ballot basically to their commanders. And in spite of that, a few of them did defy the government and voted for other candidates, other than the president. And then we started to hear, I think the U.S. Embassy was the first to start to hear rumors and talk about how those who did not vote for the president had disappeared. So, first, you know, people were saying, "Oh, I heard this and that." And then finally one of our own staff came forward and said, "My husband has disappeared." So, we started to try to look into that. And then France also began to get information that these people were gone. Well, then once we publicly asked, "Where are these people"? the government was sort of forced to respond and they said,

"Oh, they just were sent North on a special project" even though they had disappeared without being able to tell their families or anything. They had not been in touch with anyone. And then one night on TV, there were a couple of people there who were not the names of the people—we had a list by now of people that we believed had disappeared.—These guys were not on it, although they were clearly somewhere in the North, speaking. And then the disappeared started to come back, trickle back into N'Djamena. They would suddenly return, our staff member said, "My husband returned yesterday." Most of them—we weren't able to talk too much,—most of them were very careful, very reluctant to say anything. I'm sure they had been sufficiently cowed by disappearing, although they quietly passed along their thanks to the countries that had stood up for them because otherwise they figured they were exiled to Northern Chad, which is the Sahara, perhaps, for the rest of their time in the military, perhaps, the rest of their lives, if they were ever seen again.

So, I think that's an example of—although it's hard and people sometimes feel we may not do enough of the kinds of things that we tried to do to advance human rights in a country that is on paper, a democracy, but clearly has an authoritarian leader who controls everything and does not allow public demonstrations, you need a permit and they're never given and those kinds of things. But we did our best through our ability to speak directly to the president and the ministers, and to speak frankly to them by virtue of our strong military cooperation. And so, both on human rights and things like trafficking in persons, I think, we tried to move the needle and I think we did move the needle some, although obviously there's always more that can be done. So, I think that those are things that are important for us to recognize, but very few people see those, as we quietly work to make those things better, to get laws passed and to stand up for groups that are less advantaged or disadvantaged, to hold the government accountable when in spite of a lack of a permit the students, for example, went on strike. In 1990 when the students went on strike, the police fired on them. I know this because I helped take one of the wounded students to the hospital. I was a teacher at the National Teachers College at the time. This time students were arrested, but we would press in terms of where are they and generally they would be released and that kind of thing. But there was at least some constraint and some restraint in terms of how they were responded to. They often broke up the demonstrations and that, but the use of lethal force had been dramatically reduced.

Q: Let me ask just one question as you are talking about the election and opposition. When the government shuts down the internet, are there tricky alternatives for the people to use to, at least for some of them, to be able to remain in contact?

NAMDE: I think there are, of course there's VPNs and people were figuring it out. The other thing that happened was, you know, N'Djamena at least, the capital, is right on the border with Cameroon and sometimes, depending on where you were, you could get both cell phone service and internet service from the Cameroon side. So there were some ways to get around that. Of course, we with our own systems as the other international organizations and embassies still had access. And so I think, we could work with the local groups that we worked with to be sure that they were up to date. It did, in some

ways, impact organizing. But on the other hand, if you've ever worked in Africa, you know that Africa long before the U.S. was addicted to texting, Africa had taken—they had never had what they call landlines. They never had a good telephone system. They just leaped right over that and went to cell phones. And everyone, the lady in the market who speaks no language that anyone else knows in that particular part of the market will have a cell phone. So that would remain the other way as they built their network, they could still text because even when voicemail wouldn't go through, text would often work. So that did allow them to do it.

But also in a place like Chad, which is ranked among the poorest countries in the world, if not the poorest—it's way down in the bottom five, in spite of all that oil money, but—they still had a lot of more traditional ways of communicating. I always joked that—my husband's originally from Chad and his generation now is a lot of the ministers and all this kind of thing, and people would show up at our gate to bring us news. And people still pass news that way in the market. So, somebody would tell somebody who would tell somebody. So, the word would spread very quickly and people would go to other people's houses to spread the news. The morning the embassy was attacked by a self-radicalized shooter, before the RSO [Regional Security Officer] let me know, someone appeared at my gate and said, "There's been a shooting at the embassy".

Q: Wow.

NAMDE: It still has those oral networks, almost like an enormous national game of telephone that people could pass news. So, even though the internet may have been restricted or even when the cell towers were restricted, people managed to pass the word and know if people were gathering at a certain location or what was going on. So, in some ways, those old ways and the lack of, perhaps, technology, but the maintaining of those old networks, serve Chad very well. Whereas if you went to someplace like Tunisia or, perhaps, Kenya, in the capital I'm not sure you would still get that ability to spread the word in the same way that they are able to do it in Chad to the advantage of the people versus the government.

Q: Yeah, interesting.

NAMDE: So I think that that's kind of what I wanted to add about Chad because I think that it is important on balance—I am not in any way excusing Chad, they have a lot of issues and they are not a good example of a democracy and a human rights protector. But we did do the best we could and I think we did make progress and continue to make progress by maintaining the kinds of ties and speaking out and using public diplomacy programs, which we used extensively to do things. It's difficult to say, "We want to do something on human rights", or impossible, "on women's rights", but we can do programs on women entrepreneurs, which allows us to get at a lot of those other issues.

Q: Speaking of women, it occurred to me as you were talking about the now long staying president and his efforts to Islamicize the country, is that effort going on at the expense of women in society?

NAMDE: I wouldn't say that it's at the expense of women as much as at the expense of non-Muslims. It has exacerbated the herder-pastoralist conflict, because the herders are from the North and they're Muslim, the pastoralists are generally in the South and are Christian or animist. It also impacted education because Arabic speakers are now given preference. Arabic is now also an official language where education was traditionally done in French. Now there's much more Arabic. The government uses Arabic extensively, so that can disadvantage non-Muslims, because those are sometimes not the Arabic speakers—When I lived in Chad in the late eighties and early nineties, you went to an office, there was always a French speaker, there were probably some Arabic speakers too, but you can use French. Now to go to a government office, it's quite possible you won't find anyone who speaks French because the government is heavily laden now with Arabic speakers. So, I think women have always of course had a bit more of a struggle, have not always had full rights in terms of land ownership, in the more traditional southern cultures, yes, but not up North, but that probably is creeping further South. The Arabic speakers, generally Muslims, because they're connected to the government, are huge participants in the corruption that takes place. So, that's the part of society that has money, which in a big change they are purchasing land in the South. And, it used to be, you went to Sarh, one of the big cities in the South, and there was like one mosque, now there's a mosque in every neighborhood and they wake everyone up, the vast majority of which are still Christian, with a call to prayers by loudspeaker every morning at like 5:00 AM, it's still dark out.

Those are the things that people are seeing and that people resent because they can't protest it or stop it, they just have to accept it because it has the backing of the government, the highest levels of government. So, it is creating more conflict, I think, in general between the groups, the sort of North-South split between the groups that are non-Arabic speaking, non-Muslim and more likely to be pastoralists in the South. And the South still is the economic powerhouse of the country. It's also where the majority of the oil is, even though there's some up North, and it's also where there's more ability to function, because the North, especially as you get further North closer to Libya, which now is a failed state,—so, eventually, perhaps, it will affect women more, but right now I think it's more affecting the larger groups of Arabic and non-Arabic speakers, or you would say Arabic and French is generally the split. So that is a problem.

The first lady, the official first lady, Hinda Déby,—I say the official first lady, because she's actually not the first lady, she's the sixth wife, but she's the one that has become elevated as the first lady, she's very fluent in Arabic and French, very well educated, very powerful person. And she does stand up for women's rights. She insisted that they build a women and children's hospital in N'Djamena. The International Women's Day is very big in most countries outside the U.S. and so in Chad they would make fabric that had

Journée Internationale de la Femme [International Women's Day] all over it. And business may close for that specific day. There was always a big parade and a big celebration and speeches. And the first lady spoke and she called out the ministers. She said,—because they all sent women that were lower-ranked to represent them at this event, and we're sitting there, you know, and I was chargé, and the ambassadors came, male or female. And she called out the government and said, "Where are the men? Why are there no ministers here"? So, I give her credit for that, for trying to stand up for women and children in terms of things like health, and that she's a very, very powerful person in Chad and has a huge influence in education, health, but also in the economy.

Q: One other thing occurred to me also, based on your work in the office of environment, oceans and science. Was there any activity related to Lake Chad with relation to the environment while you were there?

NAMDE: There was deep concern about Lake Chad. Lake Chad is 10 percent as it was in 1960, I mean, you used to be able to see it from space and it was huge. So, there is some concern about it. President Déby has talked about the need to care for it and coordinate in the region, because the water that feeds Lake Chad, of course, comes through other countries. So when Niger builds a dam and that kind of thing, it causes issues. So it's shrunk a great deal. The problem for trying to deal with it is, it's almost impossible to do much work in that area because of Boko Haram.

Q: That was my next question, but, please, continue.

NAMDE: So, there is concern environmentally that it is shrinking. I mean, towns that used to be on the edge of the Lake are now several kilometers from the shore of the Lake. Boko Haram, which is a terrorist organization that started out based in Northern Nigeria, but now has a huge impact in Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad, it's active in all those areas. And Chad actually coordinates with those other countries to try and address Boko Haram. There is a multinational task force, as they call it, of the militaries that actually has its headquarters in N'Djamena, to try and address Boko Haram along with what each country does. But Boko Haram has moved into the Lake Chad area, whether it's on the Niger side or Chad side, and, because they raid or attack villages, they will attack fishermen on the Lake. They've been known to take their equipment, they've been known to kidnap people, and make them come into Boko Haram. So what it has had is a huge impact on the fact that the people cannot go out onto the Lake to fish. So, people can't do environmental work, but people also aren't able to make a living. So, it exacerbates what's an extremely poor area, but it also causes displacement. People moving away from the Lake out of fear of Boko Haram, and also because they're unable to make a living. So we could only go to the parts of the Lake and the towns that were the closest to the capital. We did have some programs up there in terms of trying to aid people who are displaced. Also we were working on programs for those that left Boko Haram. We were encouraging people to leave Boko Haram, but that then placed a strain on the cities they came to. And in some cases they—in many cases—most cases, the town they had left

would not take them back out of fear that they were still part of Boko Haram or that Boko Haram would come to get them.

So, we were working to write some programming on that. USAID has an office called OTI,—

Q: Office of Transition Initiatives.

NAMDE: Yes. And OTI, when I was leaving N'Djamena in 2017, OTI was working to come into the country and I know they did. And one of the things they were going to do was to try and do some development, some self-sufficiency projects and some reintegration projects up in the area of Lake Chad to try and mitigate some of the impact of Boko Haram. But Boko Haram affected that whole region in terms of security, but also in terms of economics. It had a huge impact in Chad because, it was funny, the price of fish went up because people couldn't fish as much. The price of beef and goat and sheep, lamb, etc. went down because there was a glut of livestock, because traditionally Chad sold much of its livestock in particularly Northern Nigeria and in fact they would drive their cattle into Northern Nigeria to be sold in the town of Maiduguri. And that was a huge, huge economic factor, that's Chad's biggest export after oil, and had a huge impact on the local people, much more so than oil. Oil was handled by the upper echelon, and that's where the money stayed, it did not trickle down to do much in Chad. But livestock caused—that impacted a lot of people. So, the inability to sell their livestock meant that now there was too much. Chad has always had a lot of meat, unlike many African countries, because they raised livestock, so you could always eat beef. And Chad, unlike in Nigeria where they charge you by the piece of meat, it was never like that in Chad. So, that had a huge impact on them to the point that, you know, for the big holidays like the Eid and New Year's, they would sell goat and sheep in the market to butcher and have for the festivities. And, the price had dropped to the point where if they weren't sold, the people who own them sometimes just abandoned them in the market because it would cost them more to take them back to where they raised them than it would to just abandon them.

Q: And there are no other alternate markets yet for them?

NAMDE: No, because, alternatively, Cameroon, Northern Cameroon, which borders on Chad has a lot of issues with Boko Haram. Niger has issues with Boko Haram, and access to Niger is more in the Lake Chad region than in the capital—where you can get to Cameroon and Northern Nigeria easier by land. And then the Central African Republic to the South is in even worse condition than some other countries, through their own civil conflict. So it was dangerous to go that way. In addition, there's a lot of resentment of Chad in the Central African Republic because they believe that Chad exacerbated the civil war and the conflict there. So, that creates security issues for anyone trying to move down there. Plus they have a lot of people [who] try to take cattle to the Central African Republic, it's going to get stolen. Then you look to the other side, what do they have? Sudan, South Sudan. To the North they have Libya. Ironically, it's astounding to those of

us who've worked with Chad or followed Chad over the years that Chad, which was always kind of the basket case of the region, not doing so well, is now in a way some stability in the middle of all of that. So, yeah, it's ironic, but Boko Haram continues to have a huge impact, and the inability to fully deal with that situation and the frustration among the countries there that Nigeria has not dealt with the situation and did not deal with it, and let it become what it is. Because Northern Nigeria is not important enough economically or culturally or tribally to the Nigerian government to address the issue, they are forced to address it to some extent because of the violence, but their focus is always to the South, to the Delta where they have issues as well, and trying to protect their oil production. So, as long as Boko Haram continues to exist, it will continue to impact that region, and will heavily impact Chad in the sense that they have lost their second stream of revenue through their agricultural products.

Q: So, one kind of concluding question before we move on. We now know that Northern Sudan is changing, the people's revolution or however you want to describe it, did drive the ruling authoritarian group out, and there appears to be some efforts being made to truly democratize Northern Sudan. Is the authoritarian government in Chad looking over the border and beginning to worry about its longevity?

NAMDE: I think that President Déby is always very cognizant of his place and wanting to maintain power. He has done virtually nothing in terms of succession. So, there's no,—at one point there was one son, that perhaps,—but that son died. But he maintains a very tight control, micromanagement of the government. He maintains the position of his tribe in the government and does that through corruption and through using the billions of dollars that Chad has gotten from its oil, not to improve the country, but to maintain his power. He is very authoritarian. He has very close ties to Sudan. There are some people who believe he was probably born in Sudan. His Zaghawa tribe is very much a cross border tribe, Sudan and Chad, and so he has always been very close to the ruling authoritarians in Sudan. So clearly he does look at the demise of certain leaders in the region. He did make peace with Gaddafi,—years ago Libya and Chad fought a war, and it's still a source of pride in Chad that Chad kicked their butts in the Aouzou Strip and pushed them back into Libya. So, he did later on make peace with Gaddafi, but I think the lack of control in Libya worries him probably more than anything else in the region. Libya has always been the traditional enemy of Chad. And the lack of the authority in Libya right now means that there's a lot of potential for mercenaries, arms, terrorists, etc.—revolutionaries, rebels, whatever you want to call them, to come into Chad. There were always Chadians that were in Libya and now are back. Northern Chad is a route across that part of Africa that can connect Mali, Libya, Sudan, etc.

So, I think that President Déby is very—always has been and will always be- very concerned about Libya, but obviously he is concerned that his friends in Sudan are no longer there. And his ties to Sudan are very close, he has at least one wife from there. He did somewhat defy the authorities in Sudan, the previous ones, in the sense that Chad hosted thousands of Darfurians and continues to host them. Chad is the host of the most refugees in Africa, tens of thousands between some from Cameroon, from Central

African Republic, from Libya, but heavily from Darfur. So, Chad benefited from the positive reputation of that, and the support that they received as a result of being willing to host large numbers of refugees. And that's still there, although some Darfurians are returning to Darfur now. But I think that since he has given no indication he wants anyone else to be in charge, he is definitely looking around the region, particularly to the North and to the East with a bit more trepidation than previously, which is also why Chad has the best military in the region and spends a great deal of money to maintain their military power, which of course is loyal to the president.

Q: All right, if you're ready to conclude on Chad, we can move on to your next talk.

NAMDE: Sure. I wanted to talk a little bit about the American Foreign Service Association, AFSA. AFSA is both a professional association and our union, labor management organization. AFSA has existed for many years. It started out as the professional association and then the Young Turks, which included for example, Tex Harris who just passed away, they wanted to be sure they had an association that represented the working officers, that protected us and looked at how we were treated and the benefits and conditions of our job.

Years ago it was probably,—it's always important in the days when we sometimes took ships to get places and there was no internet and there were no cell phones, it was even more important, I think. But AFSA remains extremely important because sometimes people, many Foreign Service Officers, Foreign Service specialists join AFSA when they join the service. And that's when I joined. And there are some that don't, and they're kind of like, "Well, you know, why should I pay dues? What do they do for me"? Well, they do a lot for you because, I always say, in the end, the Department is not looking out for you, the Department is looking out for itself, and they will do whatever they feel they want to do, unless there is some way to be accountable and, in the most egregious cases, to be constrained. On the other hand, they also need a partner, so we can work with them to negotiate, to bring forward issues that the management or the Department may not really be aware of, but we hear from officers, particularly posted overseas. So AFSA has AFSA representatives in all the embassies, they're unpaid, they may be elected, they may self-select, depending on where you are, but they're very important. I believe that AFSA is absolutely crucial to maintaining the integrity of the service, but also the health and wellbeing, and appropriate working conditions, and conditions of service for the Foreign Service. Most recently AFSA raised—they have a legal fund—and they raised over a quarter of a million dollars to help our colleagues such as Ambassador Yovanovitch who had to go up on the Hill [Capitol Hill] and testify. The Department wasn't defending them, at least initially, later they said they could have some legal representation, but legal representation when you are facing the kinds of issues they were facing is expensive. And so, the AFSA members and even non-members responded to a call from AFSA to help get additional funding for the legal fund, for example. AFSA has a fabulous team of attorneys and they have member representatives that work with our members. If you're having trouble getting a reimbursement, you think you're entitled to a reimbursement for a certain travel or PCS [Permanent Change of Station], and the Department is saying no,

AFSA has someone who can talk to them and say, "What is this"? And many times they will help resolve it. Sometimes in your favor, sometimes not, or maybe somewhere in between, but the Department can't capriciously do something.

I started out being actively involved with AFSA, as the AFSA representative in Nigeria when I was serving there, which was actually my second tour. And an issue came up that showed me just how important it is that someone speaks up for the officers. It was a time of very tight funding in the Department, the Soviet Union had broken up and the secretary had generously offered to open embassies in all of those countries with no additional resources. So we were robbing Peter to pay Paul. We were taking people and sending them to places like Kazakhstan and Kurdistan and all the stans, as well as the Balkans and places where we hadn't had as much representation. And we were also doing—financing all that, opening all those embassies without additional funding.

So, one of the things that brought home to me how important AFSA was, was MED [the Bureau of Medical Services] had decided that they were going to change a policy in terms of what was covered by the Department, if you were medevaced [medical evacuation], what would have to be covered by the officer, by the officer's private insurance and by the Department. And what they decided was that if you were injured in a non-work-related capacity, which we would argue was, you know,—if you're assigned to Nigeria and you're in a car accident, it's still work-related. But they were drawing a distinction. If you were, I don't know, driving to the beach and had a car accident and had to be medevaced, when you arrived at your medevac point, the Department was not responsible for your medical bills, you had to file with your insurance company and all of that. But if you were injured in the country you were serving in and treated there, it was covered. So it raised the issue of, for example, if you were in a car accident in Nigeria where traffic is crazy, and had to be medevaced, you could be out of pocket and you had to file forms, etc. If you broke your leg skiing while assigned in Switzerland, you were covered.

Q: Let me ask a quick question here. My understanding as a former Foreign Service Officer was that you are always on duty essentially, because even if you drive to the beach, if you do something that might reflect poorly on the embassy, you could be curtailed, even though you are "officially not on your official time".

NAMDE: Right.

Q: So under that understanding, if you also, you know, hit a gigantic pothole in the road that's filled with water and you had no idea how deep it was and, you know, your car is ruined and now you've got a broken arm or something, it just doesn't make sense.

NAMDE: It didn't make sense, because obviously 24/7 is what we are told and what we're expected to do. So, I remember I was part of a conference call with MED with other AFSA reps [representatives] in Africa and we raised all these issues and they backed off. And that policy was never put into effect. So, that showed me that having

AFSA stand up for the officers was very important. They also, for example, were crucial in getting kindergarten funded. Originally it was not. So things like that were very important and AFSA continues to do those things. I also served on the governing board of AFSA, I was elected as a State officers' representative. I served—I was elected three times. The first time was 2005 to 2007, then I went overseas. I came back and in 2009 until 2013 I again was elected and served two additional terms on the governing board. And the governing board sets the policy and represents us officially in places such as on the Hill, while tracking legislation that would impact us, if they're trying to change it from high three to high five for retiring, if they're trying to defund the Department a lot, those kinds of things, AFSA is the one that will also go and represent us, not just the Department. But I think there were—all along in those times I was on the board, there were important issues that came up in 2005 to 2007, Iraq and the issue of how do we staff Iraq and then Afghanistan, those are things that were still being struggled with by the Department. And sometimes the Department put forth—originally there actually was a proposal if you served in Iraq, you would get promoted. Now they had tried to do that in Vietnam and they got away with it better then but, AFSA said, "No, this is a meritocracy. So, just going there or going there because you think you're going to save your career is not what this organization is about". And so, that did not happen, but we negotiated other benefits, for example, the linked assignments. But also a cap on the number of those because we could see the impact down the line. If you left after a year in Iraq and went to a three-year post in Europe, then that took that—basically for four years, took that job off the bid list. So those were some of the things that were dealt with.

The issue of mid-level entry has come up repeatedly. And the conditions, under which AFSA exists,—there are certain conditions of service that the Department must negotiate with AFSA on. So we have a very close working relationship with HR in the Department and leadership in the Department to make sure that we come to an agreement on what can be done and find common ground, perhaps not everything they want or perhaps not everything we want, but a common ground that we can work with. For example, the idea of linked assignments, that was not something that AFSA was particularly fond of, but we were able to work with the Department to make that happen, but on a kept number of positions. So, those are the kinds of things that the board of governors work on,—and I think, throughout my career I've always told people AFSA is really important. Much of what we have is because AFSA has stood up for us and made sure that the officers and specialists are AFSA's number one priority. You can't say that about the Department. The Department's number one priority is how they carry out their business of foreign policy overseas. So, safe living conditions, appropriate benefits, not being disadvantaged because, perhaps, you have a family member that does not have a worldwide medical clearance. Those are the kinds of issues that AFSA deals with. And we do have a legal Department, and the legal Department, for example, assists people that are fighting some sort of DS [Diplomatic Security] investigation often work with AFSA or at least start with AFSA in terms of understanding their rights and having someone that can assist them.

Q: I'm curious about one benefit that appeared during the,—or that was rolled out during the time Hillary Clinton was secretary of state, which is a special visa for same sex couples, allowing the foreign spouse to come to the U.S. on a kind of student visa that permitted the foreign spouse to live in the United States. This was of course all before the Supreme Court ruled in favor of gay marriage, but prior to that it was impossible for same sex spouses to live in the U.S. except under very unusual conditions.

NAMDE: It is true, and that was one of the things, for example, that AFSA was involved in, as well as some of the other organizations in the Department, there is an organization for LGBTQ officers. So I think that it was important that ways were found, concessions were found for couples that were in that situation.

Q: And, you know, again, I mention this only because these are sort of the interesting, sometimes unusual, accommodations that are made, other accommodations are made for people with disabilities or special needs for children and so many other things.

NAMDE: And I think it's—of course that policy has changed now because with the legalization of same sex marriage they're like, "Well, you can get married." So, but I think it's really important. And the one way that AFSA continues to be really important to the members of the Foreign Service is AFSA is more on the ground. So if you are—even individuals, as I said, there are people that can help with individual issues, but if we start to see issues or trends that are coming up and, what you mentioned one how to deal with disabilities, particularly disabled children. And also things like early education, all of those are the kinds of issues that AFSA can become an advocate for, to work with MED, for example, on,—when I joined the service, I had a child that was evaluated by MED and determined to have some learning disabilities and put on a class two MED. Ultimately after our first posting, the schools and reading authorities, etc determined that he really didn't have learning disabilities. He had never learned to read in English before he was tested because he had been being raised in a French-speaking country. So, ultimately, the school officials said he doesn't need, you know, special education or anything. Now he's up to reading on the proper grade level, he's fine. MED would not reevaluate him without charging me a fortune, $1,000, which back in 1993 was a lot of money. I mean, it's still a lot of money, but—And so, we had to find a back door getting the two schools, the losing and gaining school, to agree that he could come. At which point MED agreed they would take him off Class 2 clearance—they would give him a class one MED clearance. But I know that what I went through to get that done AFSA can advocate and make sure that they can standardize, and people don't have to fight those kinds of fights on their own, to make sure that they get the services they need or that they're not disadvantaged.

Obviously worldwide service is one of our requirements, but I think the accommodation for those that have an issue that does not allow them necessarily to do worldwide service, in a large part is because AFSA advocated for—you can't force someone to bid on, you know, hardship posts, and if they can't take their family, you can't enforce that upon

someone. If they choose to bid, for example, no families or a single officer post, that's their choice, but to not allow them other options if needed—So I think that AFSA remains crucial, and I'm really proud of my service with AFSA that remains crucial as our union and protecting our conditions of service and our benefits, but also as a professional association. From 2005 to 2007, while I was on the board, I also served on the Foreign Service Journal editorial board, and that's the other function of AFSA that people sometimes forget, that AFSA is in fact a professional association as well. The Foreign Service Journal is a superb publication, an award-winning publication that's considered at the forefront and crucial in the diplomatic field in terms of what it publishes. And that's one example of what they do. But AFSA does others—they do presentations and they usually tape them so people overseas can see them too. Bill Burns, Ambassador Burns, came and spoke about his book, The Back Channel [The Back Channel: A Memoir of American Diplomacy and the Case for Its Renewal], which is a superb book and makes me feel like I've sat around on my hands throughout my entire career, because he was in the thick of some of the most amazing diplomatic developments of the 20th century. But those are the kinds of things they do as a professional association.

So, I think they play a dual role that's very important. And, yes, we pay dues, but I think they're very, very well spent. What we get back from AFSA far outweighs what we put in. And, I know that they are dedicated—I know I was, when I was part of the group, of the Board—to making sure that they protect and promote and advocate for the Foreign Service. And I think in this day and age it's even more important, our efforts on the Hill, for example, and those kinds of things are super important. I'm a retiree, I still am a member of AFSA and I go to the periodic retiree luncheons and hear people like Ambassador Prudence Bushnell come and speak about her book, and various other speakers. So, I always encourage people to join AFSA but also be active in AFSA.

So, if you're at a post, it doesn't take a lot of work, but it's super important. I actually was in Ciudad Juarez, when one morning we came into the consulate and over 60 DS [Diplomatic Security Service] Agents descended on the consulate to investigate allegations of fraud and locked down the consulate with the local staff isolated from the American staff. And the lockdown lasted all day. And, I remember the DS Agents weren't at the time really happy with me because I, from being part of AFSA, working as a rep, understood our rights. And I stood up in the meeting with all the Americans and said, "You are entitled to have someone with you when you are being interviewed", which is the one of the things that AFSA helped make a reality. And so, anyone who wanted someone else there was allowed to have them there. And so, I remember, because I was American Citizen Services chief, I had to be allowed to use the phones and the computers, no one else was, just me and my senior staff, because we had an American who had been kidnapped. So, in between dealing with the American that [was] kidnapped though I did ring up AFSA and say, "Are you aware of what's happening in Ciudad Juarez today"? They were not, but they were quickly—and they contacted Diplomatic Security in Washington and said, "What is happening"? etc. So, that's an example of that AFSA will stand up for you, whether you need the protection or not, you're entitled to

that kind of support. And so, I think that—I always encourage people that if no one else has your back AFSA will, so I've always been very proud of my service to AFSA.

Q: Are there other elements of AFSA that you want to mention, the Senior Living Fund [Senior Living Foundation] or any of the other essential things?

NAMDE: It's always a good thing to take a look at AFSA's website. All three of my children benefited from AFSA scholarships and financial aid. That's one of the things they do, if you have a high schooler, high school senior, they have scholarships. They have the Senior Living Foundation, they work with retirees generally that may need some assistance temporarily or perhaps to help pay their bill, their utility bills or things like that, they do that. AFSA has several funds —they have the Fund for Diplomacy, which helps present some of the—I don't want to misspeak, but they do support, for example, the museum that is being established in the Department for diplomacy. They have a legislative fund where they support advocacy on the Hill for bills that impact the Foreign Service and federal service in general, they coordinate very closely with the civil service union organization. And so, they have the legal fund which is for those that need assistance with legal representation when they are in an official capacity. I've mentioned they have the—we have our own legal Department that have superb lawyers that can assist people with more individual legal issues. They have the retiree office that supports retirees and helps them understand what's going on and still have connections to the Foreign Service, but also retiree issues, any problems with pensions or anything like that. They have member representatives that help members, as I mentioned, if you're having issues getting a voucher paid or you've been denied a certain service, then you can speak with them. Something that crosses those lines, perhaps, a little bit with the legal Department is there have been issues with people, whether people got MSIs, Meritorious Step Increases, related to performance, which has changed somewhat. It used to be attached to the promotion board lists, how many of those were given.—People that were disadvantaged in the promotion or board consideration because something was left out of their file or supervisor didn't do what they were required to do in terms of giving them evaluations, AFSA can deal with those issues, has actually worked with the Department where the Department had to reconvene promotion boards to consider people who are disadvantaged in the process. So, sometimes it can have a huge impact. Sometimes it's just annoying, like "They owe me this money and I want it", and that's important, but sometimes it impacts your career long-term, whether you're promoted or therefore you don't ticed out (Time in Class), whether you're granted an MSI, which is, you know, the gift that keeps on giving because once you get the Meritorious Step Increase, your pay for life continues to rise based on that additional pay raise.

So, I would urge people to look at AFSA's website to see the full range of what they can do and the information they have there. They publish a lot of information and pamphlets, and information that is very concise, and they have people that specialize in different topics—like retirees or issues with medical vouchers, etc, that it's always a good first place to start when you're not quite sure how to handle something or move something forward or get an answer. They're always a good resource for that.

Q: All right. Now at this point, do you want to move to any other topic?

NAMDE: No, I think that those were the topics that we,—I hadn't mentioned AFSA before and I wanted to loop back a little bit on some of the work that I think we've done in the past and continue to do and hopefully we'll be able to continue to do in the future in different countries, but also in the environment.

Q: Now, the only other thing I want to be sure is, in any part of your interviews, have you had a chance to reflect on the way the Department does its business and if you had made any recommendations either about policy or process?

NAMDE: I think we talked a little bit about this, but I think a couple things. I want to give the Department credit for what it has done in terms of diversity, and particularly in terms of women, and making up for or accepting and acknowledging and dealing with the way that women were treated in the service in the past. I think people who've come in more recently may not fully understand. I came in in 1991 and I actually,—I came in, I took the test, it was the second time I'd taken the test, I came in, I took the test, I took the oral, I came in, I passed. I never asked for consideration, although I was eligible under Palmer, because the first time I took the test and did not pass that was when they were determining that the test was prejudicial. And so, I came in when Palmer was being dealt with, the Palmer suit, which was when women sued the Department for discrimination in terms of what cone they were assigned to, promotions, awards, and what positions they served in. So, and the Department,—I always say the Department wasn't a very good learner in those days, let's say, because they actually were sued a second time because they did not comply with what they agreed to do for Palmer. And then after the women were successful, then they were sued by African American officers. So, the Department, to its credit, finally realized that they had to comply and that they had to deal with people across the board. Obviously it's not perfect there. We all know that there have been other groups along the way that have had to ask for that relief and redress.

I think that it's important that people remember that when I came in it was—women were predominantly in the management and consular cones, they did not rise to be DCMs [deputy chief of mission] or ambassadors very often. They didn't get awards in the same percentage as men. They didn't get promoted as quickly. I think a lot of that has been corrected, I won't say all of it has been, because I think throughout any woman's career in the service they've found that they may have had to work extra hard or they may have experienced some discrimination, prejudice that was perhaps conscious or unconscious, more subtle than it was perhaps in the past. We've all had that. I had someone who came to me early in my career and said, "You know, your boss said that he thinks you have to choose between being a mother and an officer", because I would take a half day off to go to school events. So the next school event, I didn't go, feeling that I didn't dare, but he did for his children. Those were the kinds of things that happened certainly in the 90s. And so I think that's important to continue to address diversity and issues of prejudice.

I think the way the Department views families is better. It's still not great, but their willingness to create the programs where family members get clearances, you used to lose your clearance every time you left a post, now you carry it with you. There are special programs of professional associates and others where a family member can be hired, pass an exam here in Washington, and be brought on to work in different missions they're going to. So, I think that those things are very important. Telework is important—I think the Bureau of Consular Affairs has been a leader in letting people telework. I was DCM twice for four years running, and my husband was allowed to telework for his office in Washington, he's in the State Department, for four years. So, those things are an improvement.

The fact that I served as a DCM twice, I chose to be a consular officer, I came in the unconed era, a rather bad experiment that the Department didn't stick with very long, thankfully, but I chose to be a consular officer because that was my interest from the very beginning. For a consular officer woman to rise to be a DCM in two different places is progress—at one point I worked in the Africa Bureau, I think I mentioned it before, and three of the four ambassadors, we were preparing to go out from our office of Southern African Affairs, were consular women. And we were like, "Yes, consular women rock". So, I think that the Department is better at dealing with diversity and with certain groups of employees. I think that that's where AFSA plays a big role in continuing to ensure that they stick to that.

I think that sometimes the focus—I think the Department is not as good at retention as recruitment. I think that they focus very heavily on recruitment, that they want a diverse Foreign Service, which is appropriate, that reflects your society. But you know, it's kind of like, "Well, what are we- chopped liver?", you know, those of us who are here and that diversity that they have brought in also needs to be nurtured and advanced and taken care of. So, recruitment is also very important, but so is retention. So, I think the Department is continuing to feel its way somewhat in retention. I think this administration has dealt a blow to retention and I think particularly at the top. I retired because I joined the service later than most people, and so I hit mandatory retirement or I would still be hoping to be in the service. But a lot of other officers that have risen to O-1 or moved into the senior ranks, are not at the age where they have mandatory retirement but are leaving. And I think that down the line we are going to pay for that lack of leadership, the skills at the top that you need—so there will be openings and you could promote people, but there's a certain level of skill and knowledge and expertise and diplomacy that you learn as you progress, and promoting people very quickly has some advantages, but also has some disadvantages because people can arrive at the top without a full breadth of experience that they need. So, I think that those things are very important.

I think the fact that Congress is fighting for us in terms of resources is crucial. What we have to do continues to expand in the world and we need to have the resources to keep pace with that. And I would hope that the subsequent administrations would see the value of keeping the diplomacy apparatus well-funded and well taken care of, because, you

know, there are the famous quotes from a general that, you know, "If you don't do diplomacy, I'm going to have to buy more bullets". So, there is that balance that, I think, maybe needs to be restored. The military, certainly in Africa, certainly in Chad, the military was doing a lot of the things that the State Department might have done in the past, but we were able to tap their funding to do things, which is good, they gave us the ability to do something, but it wasn't necessarily where their expertise lay. So, them doing those things, it was very important that they have the State Department as a partner because that wasn't what they were there to do. It wasn't where their expertise lay. So, I think that rebalancing between diplomacy and the military is very important.

I also think that, I come at it, obviously I have my own perspective, I come at it as a woman—I think the Department needs to be very vigilant because, I think, in some ways it's improved, some of the old school is gone, but I think it's very easy for people to assume that it's all taken care of, and then it can backslide. Women still, I believe, work harder to get where they are, and it's still important both in our meetings,—there are still places in the Department, we can go into a meeting and there's only a couple of women in the room. Some offices you go into the meeting and it's mostly women in the room, but we know where that is.— The reason that that's important is because the skills we gain within our own structure go with us when we're overseas, and overseas we have to represent our values. And I think that that's something that's somewhat been lost. So, when I walked into a meeting, whether as DCM or chargé, and I might be the only woman in a room full of ministers in a country, that sends a message, and it's those subtle messages that the Department needs to continue to send, that that is powerful in putting forward our values and what we hope others will do, even if we don't say it. So, I think that those are really important things and I would hope the Department would continue to nurture retention as well as recruitment diversity. And, there's always a tension. Some group thinks, "Well, why is that group favored"— you know, within the Department we need to all play together well. But, I would hope the Department would continue to be sure that at the top the diversity that they claim they value so highly is equally evident and I think there's still some room for that to be improved.

Q: Okay. All right. Well with that, I want to thank you on behalf of ADST for recording your oral history with us. We'll conclude your interviews, your recordings now, and, wish you the best.

NAMDE: Thank you. It was my privilege.

End of interview