Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

JOHN NIX

Interviewed by: Raymond Ewing
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INTERVIEW

Q: This is a Foreign Affairs Oral History Program interview with John Nix. It's being conducted on the 18th of February, 1997. I am Raymond Ewing. John, you entered the Foreign Service, I see, in about 1971. You were born in Alabama and went to the military academy at West Point. Tell me, with that beginning how you wound up in the Foreign Service. Is that something that you were headed for right along or did this develop at a later stage?

NIX: Both developed during my years in the Army. As you mentioned, I graduated from West Point in 1960. I immediately went off to serve in Germany, in Berlin. I happened, by coincidence, to be there at the time the Berlin Wall went up. Then I came back to the United States and went off to Vietnam. In the meantime, I got married and had a little boy. The experience of leaving him behind when he was one year old and not seeing him again until he was two years old made a deep impression on me. So, I started thinking seriously about getting out of the Army.

I investigated opportunities with the U.S. government and decided that the Foreign Service would be a good way to continue my public service career as well as something that I thought I was well suited for. So, I took the Foreign Service exam as soon as I came back from Vietnam. I passed everything and was all set, I thought, to enter the Foreign Service when, lo and behold, the Army refused to accept my resignation and sent me back to Vietnam for a second tour. I think the Board of Examiners was extremely accommodating to me and I will always be grateful to several people on the Board. Don Woodward's name stands out in my memory as someone who went the extra mile to keep me on the rank order list, even though a number of years passed before the Army eventually agreed to release me and allowed me to come into the Foreign Service. That finally occurred in 1971.

Q: Did you have contact with State Department Foreign Service officers in Berlin or Vietnam?

NIX: When I came back from Vietnam the second time, I had some contact in Berlin with then minister Brewster Morris, who had been a member of the Board of Examiners. I had originally taken the test to come into the Foreign Service as a political officer. In those days, you tested according to cones. Things dragged on, and I was having great difficulty

in getting out of the Army at that time, the chief examiner on the Board of Examiners for the admin. cone was Bill Jones. He also happened to be a West Point graduate. He was interested in my case it called me up in Berlin and said that he could guarantee me a position in the class as an admin. officer, which of course was of great interest to me. I discussed that with the Board of Examiners. It was necessary actually to take another oral examination to switch from political to administrative. Brewster Morris convened a panel in Berlin and I took another oral exam and switched from political to admin. and everything worked out. They gave me a class date in June of '71. The Army finally agreed to release me because, coincidentally at that time, President Nixon had announced that U.S. forces would be pulling out of Vietnam, beginning in '71.

Q: So, you served two tours in Vietnam and then a second tour in Berlin?

NIX: Right, two tours in Berlin; two tours in Vietnam. Other than various schools and short term assignments in the United States, that was the heart of my active-duty military career. Both my Stateside duty and Vietnam tours were with the U.S. Army Special Forces. After entering the Foreign Service, I remained in the U.S. Army Reserve, and retired in June 1990, as a Colonel, Special Forces branch.

Q: So, you finally came into the Foreign Service in the summer of 1971. Did the State Department - much later they sent you to Berlin, but did they want to send you to Vietnam at that point?

NIX: During my second tour in Vietnam, I learned that entry into the Foreign Service had become severely restricted for various reasons. In a development I thought humorous at the time, I got a letter while I was in Vietnam in the Army offering me a position in an upcoming class if I would agree to go to Vietnam for 18 months. I wasn't too attracted by that, so, I let that one pass. I seriously doubt the Army would have released me anyway. I finished my tour in Vietnam, went back to Berlin, and then started reinvestigating things. As I said, by then, the policy of both the State Department and the Army had changed to the point where I was able to get my release from the Army and arrange a normal entry into the Foreign Service.

Q: The only difference from what you envisaged earlier was that you came in as an admin. officer rather than as a political?

NIX: I came in as an admin. officer. In fact, Mr. Jones convinced me at that period that, due to my rather “advanced” age at the time, I could have a better career as an administrative officer. I think I was three years older than the next oldest person in my entering class. In those days, you had to be under 32 to come in as a junior officer. I was 31. So, I was sort of just under the wire. He stressed that my background would be ideally suited to an administrative officer, and that I could make a contribution to the Foreign Service as well as have a good career in the administrative cone.

Q: Your first two assignments, I see, were in the administrative area. Tell me about

particularly the first one. Where did you go after your period of training in Washington?

NIX: For first tour junior officers in those days, there weren't a great number of overseas assignments available. I was offered a job in the administrative section in Nairobi and I was very happy to accept it. In those days, it was called a rotational position. I was the Personnel Officer in the embassy and also the assistant GSO. It was one of those periods when embassies were downsizing. They had cut the position of assistant GSO. I rotated between personnel officer and assistant GSO. I would normally spend my mornings in the personnel office and my afternoons in the assistant GSO position, which was very interesting and gave me a good background, I think, in both jobs. It certainly kept me busy, which was very important.

Q: Were either of those jobs regional? Did you have regional responsibilities beyond the borders of Kenya?

NIX: Not technically. There were no formal guidelines setting up regional responsibilities for me, but in fact, we did have a lot of regional offices in the embassy. We had the regional medical officer, for example, and the regional security officer. By association and extension, we ended up supporting a lot of other posts. I remember, we supported Mogadishu in those days for an awful lot of things they couldn't get locally. We would run around and find what they needed and ship it off when they gave us an urgent call in the middle of the night.

Q: The U.S. military, certainly the Navy, used the Port of Mombasa quite a bit. But I guess that was later in the 1970s after you had left?

NIX: No, that had started in the period I was there. Because of various political factors, the Navy had been restricted in the number of ports it could use. Requests were being denied all up and down the Red Sea and Indian Ocean coasts. Many of the countries of Africa and Asia were not allowing our ships to make port calls in those days. The Navy started using Mombasa quite regularly while I was there. We did not have a defense attache office in the embassy. I was appointed by the DCM to be the liaison for these port visits. That was a very interesting aspect to my work because we had as many as four vessels in port at one time and I was able to go down and spend a week in Mombasa. We did not have a consulate there at the time. It was quite exciting work for a young junior officer to be able to go down and make all the arrangements for a port visit and liaison between the local authorities and the U.S. Navy.

Q: Did the Navy have any personnel ashore as opposed to on board the ships?

NIX: No, the Navy did not have any personnel on shore. We would make arrangements with an agent in Mombasa to handle all the resupply operations for the Navy. Then, of course, we would be responsible for handling any problems which arose, such as the inevitable disciplinary problems ashore. These usually fell to us to resolve after the ships had sailed off into the sunset.

Q: I suppose, as far as the government of Kenya was concerned at that point, the arrangements were fairly informal. I assume there was not a status of forces agreement.

NIX: There was none. This was true. It created some problems at the time. We had some serious issues, but we were able to resolve them. The government was usually very cooperative. In fact, at that time, the Kenyan navy was still commanded by a British officer. We had very easy liaison with the naval authorities in the port.

Q: Was there anything else particularly about that tour in Nairobi that stands out in your memory?

NIX: The thing that stands out in my memory is that it was such a wonderful country.

Q: I spent about three weeks on a vacation in Kenya and Tanzania in 1965. I had many of the same recollections from that visit.

NIX: East Africa is easily the most beautiful place I've seen in the world so far.

Q: At the time you were there, in the early '70s, was crime a major problem in Kenya?

NIX: Not at all. We were, I felt, totally secure. We had a local guard force which looked out for your house. But actually, during they year and a half to two years I was there, I don't remember a significant incident ever occurring.

Q: Of course, Nairobi has a wonderful climate.

NIX: A beautiful climate.

Q: Major attractions to see and experience.

NIX: It was one of the few African posts where there was absolutely no allowance. That tells the story right there. The climate was thought to be healthful and there were no factors which would give you a reason to expect an hardship allowance or a cost of living allowance.

Q: So, you finished up in Nairobi in about 1973 and where did you go then?

NIX: In '73, I came back to Washington, studied Russian, and then went off to Moscow as assistant GSO in the embassy in Moscow.

Q: How much Russian did you study? How many months?

NIX: I was able to get in about three months of Russian, which got me to the 2/2 level.

Q: Had you had some Russian before?

NIX: No, I had never studied it before. But it's a fairly easy language to get up to the 2/2 level in. Making the next step is difficult.

Q: Fluency.

NIX: Complete fluency is very difficult. But it was absolutely necessary to get to the 2/2 level because, in those days in the embassy in Moscow, we had about 300 Russian employees assigned to us by the Russian Foreign Ministry. The interface between those Russian employees and the embassy personnel was with the lower level employees like myself. As the assistant GSO, I supervised the Russians who did the maintenance work in the apartments and office buildings. We also operated our own garage, motor pool, etc. It was absolutely necessary to have at least a 2/2 level in Russian. By the time I left, I had gotten to the 3/3 level in terms of the working vocabulary that I needed to communicate with the Russian workers.

Q: Because the Russian employees that you worked with or supervised mostly did not speak English?

NIX: A few in the front office spoke English. But when I was out on a job working with the crews, no, they did not speak English at all. At least, they didn't admit it.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time that you were there and what was the political situation generally?

NIX: In the beginning, Spike Dubbs, who was later killed by terrorists in Afghanistan, was the chargé. He remained the chargé for about a year, and then Walter Stoessel took over as ambassador. We were in a period of what in those days was considered detente. Nixon, of course, had started this policy toward the Soviet Union. As hallmarks, I can just mention that in the summer of 1974, Nixon made his last trip abroad to Moscow. We traveled with him around the Soviet Union. I helped support his visit to Yalta. He was accompanied on that visit by Henry Kissinger and Al Haig and various other well-known figures. They spent a couple of days in Yalta with Brezhnev. So, we were in a period where we considered relations to be on the upswing, let's say, at least on the national level. For example, on the day I left Moscow in the summer of 1975, we had the Apollo-Soyuz linkup in outer space, which at that time certainly was the high point of our relations for many years. It wasn't long after that that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan took place, which led to reintroduction of the Cold War for a number of years.

Q: I'd be interested in hearing a little bit more about President Nixon's visit to Yalta and the Crimea. That was, what, in the summer?

NIX: The summer of '74, very, very shortly before he resigned.

Q: He also went to the Middle East on that trip, didn't he? Or was that a separate trip?

NIX: I believe he did go to Egypt and Israel.

Q: But the talks with Brezhnev were held in Yalta because that was kind of their summer...?

NIX: Well, there was that, but there was also the idea that in some way President Nixon wanted to undo the results of the Yalta meeting from World War II days. There was a lot of symbolism, but in actual fact, of course, because of Nixon's weakened political situation, to my knowledge, there were no significant agreements reached.

To back up just a moment, in '73, you remember, of course, Henry Kissinger was appointed the Secretary of State and the Mid East war broke out. His first trip abroad as Secretary of State was to Moscow. We had worked closely with Moscow through that period from late '73 to the summer of '74, trying to resolve the Mid East conflict and eventually, of course, did sign the disengagement agreement, which basically is still in effect to this day with Egypt. We're still patrolling the disengagement zone.

Q: Right, and I think there was also at least an understanding reached with Syria about the Golan Heights.

NIX: There probably was at the same time, but I'm just trying to put in context that Nixon's trip came more or less at the end of this period of closely working with Moscow in trying to resolve the Middle East problem. I think most of the discussions probably revolved around that.

Q: What were some of the other main responsibilities, chores, problems that you had while you were in Moscow?

NIX: The biggest thing, of course, was the day to day life. For example, we did open, while I was there a commercial office. It was the first one we had ever had in Moscow. Tom Niles, who is now ambassador to Greece, was our first commercial officer.

Q: Was that in the embassy?

NIX: No, we had to acquire space and prepare it and outfit it so that it could function in a way that would at least be helpful to American businessmen coming to Moscow and trying to set up some kind of business presence there. In those days, it was still very common for a businessman to come to Moscow, check into a hotel, stay there two or three years trying to get a business relationship going and when he left, still be in the same hotel. You just couldn’t get facilities. You couldn't get apartments to live in. You couldn't get office space. So, our new commercial office, as we called it, turned out to be their offices. We established rooms and cubicles and so forth with telephones and connections to the outside world.

Q: Where businessmen could actually function.

NIX: Where businessmen could come in and use the facilities to their hearts' content and have access to whatever advice and support we could provide to them. One of my major responsibilities was to set up this office and get it running and then to conduct the interminable negotiations with the Soviet foreign ministry over every minor detail involved in the process. Even to put an air conditioner outside the building, so that we could keep it livable in there in the summer, required months of negotiations.

Q: Did other countries have similar commercial offices in Moscow at that time or were we kind of setting the precedent?

NIX: We were setting the precedent because this was one of those statements emanating from a high level meeting: "We will establish commercial offices in each other's capitals." Then, of course, it boils down to how do we get this done. It took a year to actually get the thing set up and running.

I did get to travel around quite a bit in support of high level visits. For example, Treasury Secretary Simon made a couple of very important visits there and I was assigned to be his advance man in Tashkent. I spent two or three weeks out there preparing the ground for his visit. This experience was very interesting to me travel, since travel outside Moscow and Leningrad by foreign diplomats was severely restricted. You couldn't just book a flight and go somewhere. You had to have a reason and it had to be approved by the Foreign Ministry.

Q: But from the point of view of the Soviet government, they probably were pleased to have the American Secretary of the Treasury or the American President prepare to visit and allowed us, allowed you, to do some things in Tashkent or Yalta or wherever that a political officer of the embassy probably wouldn't have been able to have done at all.

NIX: Possibly. I think that's one interpretation. Usually, it boiled down to the simple question of embassy resources and the fact that instead of sending a team of three or four people to a place, they tried to pick someone who both spoke Russian, had a little bit of knowledge of the country, that basically could handle all of the administrative aspects of the visit. So, you wouldn't have to send two or three people. You could just send one.

Q: To take the example of the Treasury Secretary's visit, you went two or three weeks ahead of time to Tashkent and then you stayed through the visit itself?

NIX: Yes, I stayed through the visit. Administrative support was my primary responsibility.

Q: And then, I suppose, others from the embassy, including perhaps the ambassador, came down for the actual visit?

NIX: They did accompany him on his plane to the actual meetings. He flew from Tashkent directly on to New Delhi. That was another thing that happened that had not been allowed by the Soviets before. They were able to depart from Tashkent directly to another capital rather than going back through Moscow and leaving in that direction.

The entire two years was interesting. As I said, things looked to be on the upswing when I left because of the Apollo-Soyuz linkup, which in itself, of course, was the culmination of a long period of close cooperation in the space program. We had Russian astronauts in Houston training and American astronauts had been in Moscow and out at the Soviet space facilities for two years.

Q: When did you leave? You left in 1975?

NIX: In July of '75.

Q: Which was just prior to the conference in Helsinki that President Ford attended of the Conference of Security, Cooperation in Europe, which was very important.

NIX: That's right. One of Ford's first trips abroad after the Nixon resignation was in 1974 to Vladivostok to meet with Brezhnev. For the Ford administration, that was a key point in its relationship with the Soviet Union.

Q: I think he combined that with some visits elsewhere in the Far East.

NIX: Japan. The interesting thing was, of course, that Brezhnev would agree to go to Vladivostok to meet him, which in itself showed that we had a fairly good relationship.

Q: Of course, it's amazing how large the Soviet Union was in terms of...

NIX: Of course, Vladivostok had been closed to foreigners since the war, let alone a national leader.

Q: At the time you were there, John, was our consulate in Leningrad open?

NIX: Yes, it was. It opened a year before I arrived. I actually studied Russian with Gary Matthews, who went out to be the deputy principal officer up there. Culver Gleysteen was the consulate general at that time. It was open and it represented another major step forward in our relations.

Q: Were you involved in supporting the consulate much?

NIX: To a certain extent. There were several things that we did help them with, but they had their own administrative and communications staff. Of course, they called on us when necessary. There were a lot of things they couldn't procure in Leningrad that we

could get for them in Moscow. But on the other hand, they had easier access to Finland and to the outside world, so to speak, then we did, so they were able to get most of the things they needed for themselves.

Q: Helsinki has always been an important outlook, if you will, for St. Petersburg, Leningrad, Moscow. Were you getting a lot of administrative support in those days from Helsinki or from elsewhere in Western Europe?

NIX: We got most of it from Helsinki, although there was still a regularly scheduled military support flight out of Frankfurt. We also got a lot of support from Berlin. We had, for example, a food shipment allowance and most of it came out of the commissary in West Berlin via truck to Moscow. The mission in Berlin had a Moscow support unit. The consulate in Frankfurt had a Moscow support unit and the embassy in Helsinki had a Moscow support unit. We got our mail, our pouches, and so forth, through Helsinki. They came in by train each Friday from Helsinki. The APO was run through Helsinki. We got almost all of our fresh food from Helsinki by train.

Q: How often did the flight come in from Frankfurt?

NIX: It was irregular, basically because each flight required lengthy negotiation with the Russians. There was no such thing as just saying to the Russians, "Can we have a military support flight each month?" Each one was a new ballgame. You went in and started negotiating. I'd say, on the average, probably every three months.

Q: At the time you were there, had we started the construction of the new chancery, the new embassy building?

NIX: No, all I saw was the model. We had done all the preliminary work with the architects. Of course, the site was there right behind the old embassy. We had supported the architects in their evaluation of the site. As I say, they had gotten to the point of making a model showing exactly how the thing was going to be constructed. But then that had to be put in the deep freeze for a while because of a decline of our relations following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Then the well-known history played out.

Q: Part of that history, of course, involved questions about the Foreign Service national employees and to whom were they loyal and whether they were security risks for us and so on. Was that a major concern at the time you were there with the Soviet/Russian employees who you worked with? Were they competent? Were they qualified to do the jobs they were doing for the most part?

NIX: For the most part, they were qualified, responsive and followed orders. They didn't go beyond the minimum, of course. Their colleagues would not have accepted it if they had used their own initiative to do anything. Exactly what they wanted to do, they normally did. We were told that all local employers must be considered intelligence agents for the Soviet intelligence services. At the very least, they would all be required

periodically to go back and be debriefed by the Soviet intelligence services on everything they had heard, seen, learned, while they were working for us. I'm morally certain that some penetrations of the embassy occurred over the years which could be traced to the Soviet workers.

Q: You mentioned at the time you were there, John, that American businessmen would come in, often spend two or three years in a hotel because they couldn't get other accommodations or facilities. The American community at the time, was it mostly the business people and generalists and a few students? Was that about it?

NIX: You've just pretty well summed it up. We had a fairly large embassy staff, which, of course, was the center of the American community in Moscow. We had representation from most of the leading newspapers and news organizations. Then a few business people and students. That was it. There were very few American tourists coming to Moscow in those days, very few. Since Russians were very restricted in their travel, to be honest, our consular section had very little to do. They worked a lot on minority affairs. For example, shortly after I left, a family from a Christian sect took refuge in the embassy and actually lived there for a number of years in the basement before the issue was finally resolved. Of course, the Jewish immigration question was always something that was of great concern to the consular section, trying to resolve the so-called "Refusnik" issues, people who had applied for visas to emigrate to Israel and the exit visas hadn't been granted. (Yes, the Soviet Union required exit visas for all its citizens.) But there was not a lot of intercourse with American tourists, nor with Russians and tourists traveling to the United States.

Q: Is there anything else about you tour in Moscow that was memorable that you want to mention at this point?

NIX: I remember an embassy under great psychological pressure. Living conditions were tense and difficult. It was by far the most unpleasant working experience that I've ever gone through in the Foreign Service because the people in the American community were on edge and under pressure. For example, during the time I was there, we had the infamous incident of microwave radiation being directed against the embassy by the Soviets. Of course, this led to galloping paranoia among everyone. We did, coincidentally, have a large number of deaths from cancer and several birth defects.

Q: After people had left?

NIX: During and after. We had at least three instances of birth defects in children born to people who were serving at the embassy in that period. Some of this happened during the time we were there. This built up into a climate of near- hysteria. Employee town meetings in Moscow were not easy things to get through.

Q: As I recall, the microwave incident, with the rays allegedly directed at the embassy, that became a public matter in the American press probably after you left Moscow.

NIX: It became public after, I believe, in 1975 or 1976.

Q: But you were quite aware of it at the time you were there?

NIX: Certainly the rumor mill was active. Of course, that was even worse than having it become well-known and officially acknowledged. I believe the Department made a huge mistake in not just coming clean with the employees up front, perhaps by asking them to sign a statement of awareness that in Moscow they were going to be subject to microwave radiation. The Department did, in fact, keep it secret from the employees for as long as it could, until the subject broke in the newspaper. That was an unenlightened personnel policy that would not be repeated in today's climate.

Q: Against everything you've just said about the difficulties of service in Moscow from the period of 1973 to '75, how would you describe the morale overall of the Embassy?

NIX: It was terrible, just terrible. The worst morale I've ever seen. The divorce rate among employees in Moscow was unbelievable. I do believe it had something to do with service in Moscow. I don't think it was the sole reason, but I think in a lot of cases, the service there just forced people inward upon themselves and led to a lot of family and personality problems that surfaced in this way.

Q: What sort of living accommodations did you have?

NIX: Living accommodations were not bad. I had a nice large apartment in the embassy, in the north wing, three bedrooms, fairly large living room/dining room combination, decent kitchen, quite a bit of storage space. The accommodations were good. The support facilities were always suspect. I mean, your electricity would go off and your hot water would go off and so forth. But you can find those kind of conditions in any third world country. We considered it a third world country as far as basic living conditions were concerned. The facilities just weren't there. Moscow had seven million people and not one functioning garage where a person could take a car to be fixed. It's hard for people to believe that such conditions could exist who've never experienced them, but they did. It didn't appear to bother the Russians. They were accustomed to this. But foreigners had a hard time adjusting.

Q: Many years after you left Moscow, the Soviet Union collapsed and the various republics that constituted the Soviet Union became independent nations, independent states. You described some of the problems of living in Moscow and the difficulties that were prevalent, very apparent at the time. Could you have anticipated that it was going to come to that within two decades of the time you left?

NIX: No, absolutely not. I could never have predicted that it would happen so quickly. If you look at it from the standpoint of the Soviet Union alone, it's still hard to believe. Even today, I'm sure there are a great number of former Soviet citizens who would like to return to the days when they had a fairly secure, well-ordered, predictable life. As we all

know, they're having a great deal of difficulty adjusting right now. The Eastern European satellites, of course, we always knew were a weak point in the so-called "Soviet Empire." Even during the years when I was in the military and during my subsequent career in the reserve forces, one of the major estimates, if you will, was that the Eastern European satellites would not be reliable allies for the Soviet Union in the case of a crisis. Some people in those days who were experts on the Soviet Union went further to say that the nationalities within the Soviet Union would not be reliable and I think that's been proven to be valid.

But to your original question, I couldn't have foreseen it. I never thought the Soviet system made sense in individual terms or in national terms, but they seemed to have things tightly controlled. Even now, though I was stationed in Berlin just after the wall fell, it's still hard to believe that the system crumbled so rapidly.

Q: Let me come back to something that isn't directly related to your service in Moscow. You said you were in the Army Reserve after you left active duty. I assume that when you were in Nairobi and Moscow, you really didn't have any Reserve obligation, or did you?

NIX: I didn't technically have an obligation, but I was able normally to do my two weeks training every year. I took correspondence courses. I completed the Army Command and General Staff College and the Army War College by correspondence. I kept as active as I could. In my period back here in Washington between '75 and '80, I stayed very active and held several positions in Reserve units in the Washington area.

Q: Okay. We do have you in Washington now after you finished your tour in Moscow in the summer of 1975. What was your initial assignment in the Department? Or was it in the Department?

NIX: It was. Basically when I left Moscow, I was offered several options. I was offered admin. officer in Lilongwe and a GSO position in Tel Aviv. But I had already decided that I wanted to leave the admin. cone and get into political work. I had to find some sort of bridge to get me out of that cycle. I was offered an assignment on the INR watch in the Op Center. I took that. I came back to INR, worked there for a wonderful lady who is dead now named Dolores Wahl, who was head of the watch for many years.

Q: That's certainly one of those jobs where you get to know what is the breadth and scope of what's going on in the Department and the role of the 7th floor.

NIX: It really was. We were able to go down and deliver our briefings every day, written briefings, of course, to the Office of the Secretary and all the principals. It helped someone new to the Department get an idea as to how the Department really worked. Kissinger was Secretary of State at the time, so things were really hopping on the 7th floor. Eagleburger was the Under Secretary for Management. It was an active place up there.

Q: And you were there for the presidential election, I guess, of Carter and the subsequent transfer.

NIX: I stayed in INR over a year, just about to the election.

Q: In the watch?

NIX: Yes. At that time, it was a 15 month job because it was shift work. It was physically demanding, the midnight shift followed by the evening shift and so forth.

Q: Were you able to change your cone during that period?

NIX: Not there. That was a long struggle. Admin. was a shortage cone and political cone was oversubscribed. So, it wasn't easy. I went from INR to the Pol-Mil Bureau and was assigned as an exchange officer to the Pentagon.

Q: You were starting to summarize your Department experience in the late 1970s. Why don't you keep going?

NIX: Right. I'll just briefly summarize it because there were a number of short assignments. Basically, they were short because I was trying to get out of admin. cone and into political cone. I could not get Personnel to approve an overseas assignment in a political job as an admin. officer. So, I was reduced to staying in Washington for a while.

I started out in INR, as I mentioned. That was a very interesting period, by the way, because it was during those years that the Lebanese civil war actually broke out. We were watching that on a 24 hour basis. We actually started the so-called "Middle East Summary" in those days, which even today is a mainstay of analytical opinion around the State Department. Also, we had the Angola war, which became a foreign policy focus for a year or so of the administration.

I went to the Political/Military Bureau and was assigned as a liaison officer with the Department of the Army. I worked in the Political/Military Bureau at the Department of the Army, focusing on East Asian Affairs. I was involved to a certain degree in a stage of the Philippine base negotiations. Also, those were the years when we were giving up our trust territories in the Pacific. I handled that action for the Department of the Army. Then I came back and worked briefly in non-proliferation policy in the Political/Military Bureau before I got an opportunity to go to the National Security staff as director of the White House Situation Room under Mr. Brzezinski, the National Security Advisor. I stayed for a year in that position. Then I came back and worked in the Bureau of International Organizations, United Nations Political Affairs, for a year and a half, handling international peacekeeping in the Middle East and Cyprus. That's how I got involved in Cyprus, which of course became a major focus of my career subsequently. So that takes care of the ‘70s. By the end of the ‘70s, I had gone into Greek language training and moved on to other things.

Q: At some point along the way there, you were successfully able to become a political officer.

NIX: That's right. It is still a little unclear to me why the Department finally gave in and allowed me to convert, frankly, because even when I converted, the political cone was still oversubscribed. But in 1978, while I was at the National Security Council, the approval came through. I had had a longstanding request. As we know, these boards periodically meet and consider people for conal transfers. After that, I was able to get the political position in IO/UNP and then a political job overseas.

Q: So, you were in Washington for five years and you really had quite a variety of assignments, at the White House and-

NIX: The Pentagon and the State Department, three different bureaus in the State Department. The functional bureaus. I used to be teased a lot about how I was the only political officer who ever made it into the Senior Foreign Service without serving in a geographic bureau.

Q: I know from my days in Personnel, there was always kind of an argument about whether one should go for breadth and a variety of experience or depth. At least in that initial Washington assignment for you, you clearly went, as it turned out at least-

NIX: It worked well for me. I wouldn't recommend it for everyone. I found it was very interesting because in a short period of time, I was able to get a fairly broad appreciation of what a lot of different bureaus were doing and what was important to them in the big scheme of things. But I wouldn't say that it ever helped me advance my career or get a choice assignment or anything of that nature, as it might have done if I had been in a geographic bureau.

Q: Or if you had been in one office, one job, for a while.

NIX: For a lengthy period of time. As I say, it worked fairly well for me. But I wouldn't recommend it for most people.

Q: I'll let you talk just a little bit about the Situation Room. You were the Director of that. Is that kind of normally a State Department Foreign Service job?

NIX: As far as I know, I'm still the only State FSO before or since to get that job. But it was a strange set of circumstances. Briefly, what had happened was that when Kissinger came to be Secretary of State, he brought the then Deputy Director of the Situation Room to be the Deputy Director of the INR watch staff. He wanted the INR watch in the State Department to have some of the same kinds of expertise that he had grown accustomed to in the White House. That person happened to be an NSA officer. Eventually, he went back to become Director of the White House Situation Room. When he decided to leave

in order to get promoted, he recommended me.

Q: Because you had worked for him.

NIX: Because I had worked for him in the State Department he recommended me as his successor and I went over and had my interviews with all the staff. Lo and behold, they selected me.

Q: And the White House Situation Room basically did the same kind of thing that the INR watch did, provide some analysis, but mostly make sure that-

NIX: There is a lot more pressure. There is a lot more pressure because you get the same kinds of input, but you're also the focal point for all of the 24 hour watch offices in the Washington area. It all funnels into the White House Situation Room, everything from the CIA, NSA, from the military watch centers, it all comes in there in real time. Your watch officers over there are really under the gun to make a decision quickly on whatever the National Security Advisor or the President needs to be briefed on right away. These lengthy periods when everybody else is at home and the Watch Room staff are the only ones there to make those decisions, there is a lot of pressure in that.

Q: The area of responsibility for the Situation Room is always basically foreign policy, national security, defense, intelligence.

NIX: It is the early warning crisis management center for the President and the National Security Council.

Q: But in terms of staffing, the numbers are pretty small, aren't they?

NIX: Very small. I haven't kept up with it since I left, but in the days when I was there, we just had our Director, Deputy Director, who came from NSA, and three analysts who rotated duty so that we had someone on 24 hours a day. Then, we had watch officers positions, rotating so that three of them were on duty at all times, 24 hours a day seven days a week. Beyond that, we had a military liaison person, and a person who files and keeps the President's records. Anything that comes out of the President's office goes to the Situation Room. It's catalogued and filed and eventually transferred either to the Archives or to his library at the end of the administration. We had a long term obligation there to make sure these documents were safeguarded and filed. Of course, they needed to be accessible for a certain length of time in case the President needed to see them again, in case someone forgot what he had written in the margin of a document.

Q: Of course, at that time, with President Carter, who had a very intense interest in everything, especially in the foreign policy area, there were lots of notations and documents.

NIX: He was a truly amazing man, President Carter. As you say, he read voraciously. The

number of documents is just unbelievable and he made notes on almost everything. His precision of thought was such that in all the time I read these documents, I don't ever remember seeing any note lined through or crossed out. He knew exactly what he wanted to write and he wrote it precisely every time.

Q: He also knew the context. He didn't need a lot of background.

NIX: He would come in very early. We would get the call that "The President's in his office" at about five o'clock in the morning or 5:30, 6:00. We'd take all his folders up to his secretary. He normally got in before Brzezinski or anyone else on the staff. We had to prepare a briefing every day that Brzezinski would then present to the President. But if there was anything really hot, he would always see the original documents by the time Brzezinski presented that briefing.

Q: Besides the National Security Advisor to the President, did you work pretty closely with others on the NSC staff or not so much?

NIX: Yes, we were their information source, let's say. If any of the officers needed something, they would come to us and say, "I need this document from CIA" or "I need this document from NSA" or "I saw this report. Can you get the background material for me" and so forth. We were their source to plug into the broad intelligence community and support them. I worked closely, for example, with Bill Odom, who at that time was the military advisor to Brzezinski and whom I had known in Moscow. We served together when he was an attache there. I remember very well that he was a steady user of our product. Quite a few of the people had their own folders in the Situation Room and had told us topics they were interested in. We were responsible to make sure that anything that came up on those topics was filed properly and put in the reading file so that they could keep current.

Q: Where physically was the Situation Room located?

NIX: In the basement of the West Wing of the White House, rather cramped quarters. It's right next door to the White House mess, as a matter of fact. The Director of the White House mess used to complain all the time that we got too noisy over there, whenever the Situation Room was being used for national security meetings.

Q: You probably could complain sometimes that the smell from the mess was too difficult to work under.

NIX: Well, it was. It made you hungry, that's for sure.

Q: That would be West Executive Avenue, I think.

NIX: Yes, they call it West Executive Avenue. The entrance was right into the basement from there.

Q: Let's talk a little bit more about the International Organization Bureau. You said there you were an officer responsible for East Asia and Cyprus.

NIX: And peacekeeping. I also had international peacekeeping in those days. Now they have an entire office. In those days, they had one mid-grade officer. I represented the State Department in international peacekeeping meetings and conferences around the world, including the first-ever African peacekeeping conference in Lagos in 1979. The East Asia account was also very busy, with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia (Kampuchea at that time) occurring in successive Christmas weeks. I served for a year on the "Kampuchea Working Group" under Tom Barnes, working to find a humane solution for the thousands of refugees fleeing Kampuchea.

Q: I know the one question always involving the International Organization Bureau, IO, was the relationship with the U.S. mission to the United Nations in New York. People there actually participated in Security Council meetings, General Assembly sessions and so on. How did you find that relationship at that time? Who was the ambassador to the United Nations?

NIX: It was Andrew Young. Also during that period, Ambassador Young resigned and Don McHenry took over. We had excellent relations with the New York staff at the working level, at my level. There was a wonderful relationship with the staff up there. We were on the phone every day, on the fax every day. It was just like working in the same office. We had a direct fax line. You didn't even have to dial them up. If they had a document they needed to send to us, they would send it to us right away. There might have been some tensions at the higher level that I was not aware of. I'm sure there probably were. There always is in that situation. But as far as doing the job I had to do, I couldn't have asked for better colleagues.

Q: You had to work so closely with the geographic bureaus, the East Asian Bureau.

NIX: Yes. It was a question of making sure that you were known and that you had credibility with the people there. You didn't lose sight of the fact that normally the major interest of the United States in that particular area was projected through the geographic bureau and not through IO. Of course, you had to keep in mind that most of the time in IO, we were supporting or trying to at least cooperate with whatever ongoing foreign policy initiatives the geographic bureau was undertaking. I definitely kept that uppermost in my mind. I think it worked pretty well. I had excellent relations with EAP administrators and, I think, with EUR, the office you directed. We were working very closely.

Q: Certainly as far as Cyprus was concerned in that period and before and long after, too, the role of the United Nations was really very important. Not only the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus, but the Secretary General, his special representative. Do

you remember who the special representative was in the time you were there?

NIX: At the time I was in UNP, we were between special representatives.

Q: But Javier Perez de Cuellar had been there before.

NIX: He had been there, but at the time, he was working on Cyprus in his capacity as an Under Secretary General in New York. He actually did come down to Washington a couple of times, to discuss Cyprus. He always had an intense interest. Of course, we all thought, when he became Secretary General, that it would be a great opportunity to make progress on Cyprus. Through no fault of his, it just didn't work out. I guess the major things that happened during that period though was something you were really involved in. It was our initiative on Cyprus in '78 when the United States, probably for the first and last time, tried to play a major direct role in resolving the Cyprus problem, under then Counselor to the Department, Matthew Nimitz.

Q: Secretary Haig, I think, had Matthew Nimitz's function and role very much in mind when, I think, he was the first one to actually appoint a special Cyprus coordinator with that title.

NIX: Ambassador Bartholomew.

Q: Right. But I think that they [came] directly from Secretary Haig. I was told and had the impression that that's what he had in mind. Certainly at the time that Nimitz was playing that role, Haig was the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe and Nimitz worked very closely with him, not so much about Cyprus, but about Greece and Turkey. Haig was very aware that Nimitz spent a lot of energy on Cyprus' role. He had that in mind. Of course, Clark Clifford also played a role under President Carter. The other area to mention always on the Cyprus issue is the domestic political, congressional aspect. I think that's another reason that Haig wanted to have somebody that he trusted that had some seniority in the State Department. He could divert attention to Cyprus so that he didn't have to do it and have to answer too many questions.

NIX: One of the major things we had to focus on in UNP was making sure the mandate for the UN force was renewed each six months without any undue controversy or any negative aspects creeping in. We were also trying to get more nations to contribute to the cost of the UN security force. It was very important to us, in principle, to get the other permanent members of the Security Council more involved. I must say we were never fully successful in that. But it was always a major effort that required a lot of cooperation between UNP and EUR/SE.

Q: And the mission in New York. The funding of the UN peacekeeping force in Cyprus, UNFICYP in that period was on a voluntary basis. So, it did involve arm twisting and trying to persuade others that this was a worthwhile activity.

NIX: The United States was by far the major supporter. We had, I guess, in fairly recent years there, established the principle that we wouldn't pay more than, I think, 28% of the overall UN budget. But we were paying a much higher percentage for the UN force in Cyprus, which was a little difficult with Congress whenever we had to go down and ask for the money in the peacekeeping budget.

Q: Of course, the countries that contributed troops were not always reimbursed for the cost that they incurred. So, in a sense, some of them were pretty substantial.

NIX: As you know, the stalwart troop contributors were Great Britain, Canada, Austria, Denmark, and Sweden. Over the years now, just about everybody's gone home but Great Britain and Austria, mainly because of the financial pressure of eating the cost of the involvement there.

Q: There is, of course, demand from other parts of the world for United Nations peacekeeping troops. I would think a country like Canada has had to respond more often.

NIX: Finland had the same problem, I remember, when they pulled out of UNFICYP. Sweden as well.

Q: I think we've pretty well summarized that period in Washington of about five years - or was it closer to six years by the time you finished?

NIX: About five and a half. I came back in the summer of 1975 and I eventually left Washington in December of 1980.

Q: You went then to Nicosia as political officer after how much Greek language training?

NIX: I had three months. A tragic series of circumstances curtailed my training because the son of an officer named William Shepherd in Greece had died suddenly. His tour was curtailed. The then-political officer in Cyprus, Jesse Lewis, was immediately pulled out to replace him in Athens. I was sort of given the choice by the ambassador in Cyprus to come now or he'd find somebody else. So, I broke out of training and went ahead. I reported in in January of 1981.

Q: Three months of Greek is...

NIX: I got my 2/2 in three months. I felt that I was well grounded enough to continue instruction after I arrived at post, which I did. I got up to a 3/3 in short order.

In Cyprus, as you remember, normally Greek is not absolutely essential for the conduct of your duties on a day to day basis. Occasionally it's needed. It's not needed as badly as it is in Greece.

Q: Because so many people do speak English. There is even some English language newspapers.

NIX: There are, yes. There is an English language news service, which covers most of the political events.

Q: Let's back up just a minute. I want you to describe your job in Nicosia. What were some of the main issues and concerns or responsibilities at the time that you were there?

NIX: The most interesting thing about the job in Nicosia proceeds from the fact that it is a divided island. Approximately 80% of the people are Greek Cypriot and live in the southern part of the island. The other 20% are Turkish Cypriot and live in the northern part of the island, which also has a fairly large complement of Turkish troops. The island is physically divided along this ethnic line by the UN demilitarized zone, which we referred to earlier.

The political section was rather small. There were only two State officers: The chief, myself, normally being a Greek-language political officer and the other officer being a Turkish language political officer. Basically, the challenge is to cover both communities, to get good political coverage, to try to predict what's happening. It's also to realize that we have diplomatic relations with the recognized government of Cyprus, which is in the Greek part of Nicosia, but to balance this so that you don't allow it either to color your reporting or somehow to inhibit your contacts in the North. During the time I was there, we had a sincere belief that we could help to solve the Cyprus problem. We participated in a number of efforts in conjunction with the United Nations Special Representative, Ambassador Gobi, to try to come up with a solution which would be accepted by the parties. As a former colony, the UK still has a very, very prominent role in Cyprus. It really boiled down normally to the American ambassador, the British High Commissioner, and the Special Representative of the Secretary General getting together and trying to work out something which could be presented to the two parties, which would in turn be workable and acceptable. This had to be done very discreetly. The Political Section supported the ambassador in laying the groundwork for these efforts. We worked with our counterparts in the UN and on the British Commissioner staff to come up with ideas, float concepts, devise schemes that in turn could be considered in Washington, London and New York and possibly presented to the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities.

In addition, of course, we had a number of issues that were of concern to the United States. There was the issue of missing persons after the 1974 events, which included nine American citizens. This was still of great concern to the American Congress and to the people of the United States, because some of these people might possibly still be alive. Time was flying by, and we wanted to try to find out exactly what had happened to them. There was the issue of what to do with the $15 million which was routinely provided every year by Congress for assistance to the Cypriots. Under Ambassador Ewing, we came up with a very novel approach to that problem, which even today is one of the

centerpieces of our relationship with the island of Cyprus.

Q: The scholarship program.

NIX: Yes. The Cyprus-American scholarship program. It is unique in history.

Q: Probably, we should give your first ambassador credit for the idea that...

NIX: Galen Stone?

Q: Yes. It was his idea.

NIX: Unfortunately, he and I didn't overlap very long. I just never had an opportunity really to discuss it with him. But I know it didn't go anywhere until you came on board. I know it was a hard sell. Anytime you come up with something new that no one has done before, it's awfully hard to get everybody in the U.S. government and in the host government to agree. There were even skeptics and detractors continuing in the first few years. There probably still are today. But I think it's been a wonderful program. It certainly has been a very constructive way to spend the money on an item which is in the long-term best interest of both the United States and the Cypriots.

Q: You mentioned that as the chief of the Political Section and the Greek language political officer, your primary responsibility was on the Greek side of Cyprus. To what extent did you also have contacts and get to know some of the political figures on the Turkish side during this period?

NIX: I did get to know the so-called Foreign Minister at the time. We became close friends. I got to know quite a few of the businessmen in the north through social contacts more than anything else. I got to know quite a number of the officers in the Turkish embassy, who even today are still some of my diplomatic friends. There was quite a bit of intercourse. I did not feel inhibited or restricted in my contacts at all. Being a little more senior than the Turkish language political officer, sometimes in a structured society like that, I was accepted a bit more readily than my colleague. On the other hand, one thing that was interesting is that even today, I don't think I've ever received any overt negative reaction to the fact that I studied Greek, which was interesting. I thought I would.

Q: From the Turkish.

NIX: From the Turkish Cypriots. Sometimes they do ask, "Do you speak Greek?" "Yes." "Do you speak Turkish?" "Unfortunately, no." If you don't go on to show any kind of bias, they usually accept you immediately as a well-meaning colleague.

Q: How about on the Greek side? Discuss briefly what the political situation was and then the kind of contacts that you were able to have with the government, members of parliament, members of the assembly, political figures in general.

NIX: The Cypriot political party situation is interesting because even though it's a very advanced European-style society, it has a longstanding strong communist party. This goes back many, many years. It became a very well-organized, very strong party that was able to portray itself both as a party which would take care of its members, and also as a party which did not threaten the democracy of Cyprus so that others, even non-communists in Cyprus, did not necessarily perceive the party as a threat to their democracy, to their economic society and way of life. It escaped any sort of strong, adverse reaction from the other political parties. Parenthetically, one of the very interesting things about the communist party was that it was always strongly in favor of a negotiated settlement to the Cyprus problem. So, even though we didn't deal with them on a very close basis, we found a lot of times that we basically had the same objectives, albeit for very different reasons. We wanted to solve the Cyprus problem to strengthen NATO. The communists wanted to solve the Cyprus problem because they wanted the island to become a demilitarized, non-aligned power in its own right without any influence at all from Greece and Turkey, who were NATO powers. So that was one segment of the electorate. The communists have basically controlled about a third of the electorate in most elections, which makes it very difficult to ignore them.

Q: And you had some contact with them?

NIX: I had some contact. It was fairly restricted. There was one fellow in the communist hierarchy, about number three, a fellow named Dinos Constantinou, who was designated by the party to maintain contacts with us. There was also a communist newspaper, Haravghi, which had an editor who was able to talk freely with western diplomats. Interestingly, these 2 individuals, along with the party's youth leader, later broke with AKEL and formed a splinter "Euro-Communist" party which supported Gorbachev's "Glasnost" policy. AKEL itself, almost alone among the communist parties of Europe, staunchly maintained its Stalinist views and policies.

Beyond that you had basically three other parties. One was a small radical socialist party. It has been led for many, many years by a gentleman by the name of Vassos Lyssarides. Then there were two conservative parties, which basically had the same political philosophy, but were split because of adherence to the long-time leaders of the two parties, two gentlemen named Glafkos Clerides, currently President of Cyprus, and Spyros Kyprianou. During the years we're discussing, Spyros Kyprianou was President of Cyprus. Kyprianou had been installed as President of the House of Representatives under Makarios. When Makarios died suddenly, he took over in the constitutional succession and then managed to build his support to a point where he was able to win the subsequent two elections in his own right. Glafkos Clerides, who is now President of Cyprus, was the leader of the other conservative party. He had broken with Makarios ostensibly over differing approaches to a negotiated settlement of the Cyprus problem, but probably really over personality conflicts and the succession question. I'm sure he felt that he should have been anointed as the successor to Makarios. I think Makarios was reluctant to do that, possibly because of resentment about the role Clerides played when Makarios fled the

island during the 1974 coup attempt. At any rate, that was the basic constellation of political forces on the Greek Cypriot side. Four major parties. All except AKEL were more or less grouped around the personality of a strong leader. To emphasize that point, these three people are still the leaders of their parties today, even as we sit here.

Q: You mentioned that Glafkos Clerides is currently President of Cyprus. At that time, he was leader of a party in opposition. I think you had quite a bit of contact with him and with other of his lieutenants in the party. I asked you about whether you anticipated that the Soviet Union would break up. This is not quite of the same magnitude of question, but would you have anticipated in that period that Clerides would ever be elected President of Cyprus?

NIX: No, I honestly didn't. I thought that there were too many people who actively resented, even hated, him. One has to go back in history on a small island like Cyprus. At the time of the national guard coup in 1974 against Makarios, Clerides, as President of the Parliament, rightfully took over power when Makarios was forced to flee the island, and restored democracy. But many people felt that he held power too long. He was always accused unjustly of having tried to usurp power. I didn't think the communists would ever support Clerides, and that's a third of the electorate. I certainly believed that another 20% or so would always remember his opposition, if you put it that way, to Makarios, and that would keep him out of power. In effect, in order to be elected, Clerides had first to forge a political alliance with a person that he has bitterly opposed for years, ex-President Kyprianou. Even then he won by only 1,900 votes, so it was a very narrow thing.

Q: I seem to remember at the time, the issue was exactly the way you describe it. Also, the question was, who would succeed Clerides as leader of the party. He had had a full career. He was a distinguished person. At some point, it seemed likely that he would retire from party leadership.

NIX: The person that, I guess, was more or less designated, even in those days, was a man named John Matsis, who now is the President of the House of Representatives. He is very well thought of in Cyprus. His brother was one of the heroes of the resistance against the British in the ‘50s.

Q: You mentioned contact with the Turkish embassy and the British High Commission. Did you have contact with the Greek embassy as well?

NIX: Yes, we has some very good relations there. As a matter of fact, my counterpart in the Greek embassy at that time is now the Greek ambassador to Cyprus. I saw him a year or so ago when I visited there. We had a very distinguished ambassador there from Greece, if you remember, Ambassador Zacharakis, who went on to become the Greek ambassador to NATO, to the UN, and to the United States. Cyprus has always been a very high priority post for Greece, for obvious reasons. They've sent some good people over there. We did try to work together.

Q: In the recent period in Cyprus, there has been quite a bit of attention to defense systems and anti-air missiles and so on. Was there much interest in the defense aspect at the time that you were first in Nicosia?

NIX: In Cyprus, I don't believe that I perceived a great interest. I mean, that was really, very frankly, very shortly after the 1974 events. My perception was that people really did not believe that there was much point in trying to build up the defenses. They really believed that they didn't have the resources to make a credible defense, and wanted to concentrate on a negotiated solution. I think the way the situation has changed now is, the memory of the '74 events has dimmed in a lot of people, and the fact is that those people who are still working on the Cyprus problem are just becoming frustrated at the inability over this lengthy period of time to make any progress. Maybe I can say they are lashing out a little bit in desperation, trying to do something to shake up the situation.

Q: Yes, that's essentially the way I recall that period. I think there was also another factor. I think you've sort of alluded to it. That is that there was a belief on the Greek part of Cyprus that what Turkey had done in 1974, invade the island, occupy a substantial part of it, could easily be repeated. That was always kind of the underlying fear, that the situation would become such that Turkey would do even more than they had done already.

NIX: The focus really in those days was the UN resolutions, make sure the international bodies are strongly behind returning to the status quo ante bellum, and work with the non-aligned movement. Cyprus was one of the founding members of the non-aligned movement under Makarios. It was something of an article of faith among all political parties that working with the non-aligned and passing UN resolutions repeatedly could have an effect on the resolution of the problem. That was the focus of Cypriot diplomatic efforts when we were there. They were not as rich in those days as they are today. I don't think they could probably afford to spend quite as much on defense as they appear to be ready to spend today. The Greeks were not, for whatever reason, ready to provide quite the degree of assistance in those days. One has to keep in mind the geographic realities. Cyprus is not militarily supportable from Greece.

Q: It's a long way away.

NIX: It's too far away. It's absolutely impossible to support a defense of Cyprus from Greece. So, one's left basically with building bases on the island. Of course, those are long-term, expensive propositions which are open to diplomatic reaction and even to military reaction if Turkey became sufficiently upset.

Q: Cyprus is very close to Turkey and all that that implies.

NIX: Less than 100 miles away.

Q: Within sight.

NIX: Exactly!

Q: The other land area that Cyprus is within sight of on a very clear day is Lebanon.

NIX: Oh, yes, Lebanon.

Q: I think we're just about to finish this tape, so maybe we'll make that the first topic of our next conversation.

NIX: It certainly deserves talking about because that's one aspect of our policy where Cyprus has played a key role even in the days when you and I were there, and continues to play a key role today.

Q: Thank you, John.

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This is March 5, 1997. We're doing the second interview with John Nix. John, when we finished the other day, we were talking about your assignment to Nicosia as political officer from 1981-1983. I think we pretty well covered your involvement with all of the ins and outs of the innercommunal situation in Cyprus. One thing that did happen, of course, during the period in which you were there in 1982 was the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and Beirut. Was the American embassy in Nicosia, in Cyprus, involved with things relating to Beirut during the period that you were there? If so, what was your involvement?

NIX: I certainly did become heavily involved in the summer of 1982. As a matter of fact, the embassy had been involved to a certain extent in supporting the embassy in Beirut ever since the Lebanese civil war broke out. Just to sketch again briefly, there were lengthy periods when the Beirut airport was closed for various reasons. During those periods, the only real connection to the outside world for Beirut was two choices. One was over water to Cyprus. Another was over land to Damascus. So, for that reason, there had always been a certain role for the embassy in Cyprus to provide logistical support and to facilitate various kinds of traffic to and from Lebanon for the embassy. But in 1982, as I remember, the situation... We were looking forward in Cyprus (at least I was) to a nice, quiet summer. Cyprus normally has quiet summers. It's very, very hot there and most of the people go away on vacation and so on and so forth. Our DCM, Jim Tull, was taking a long vacation that summer back in the States. I had been appointed acting DCM by Ambassador Ewing. Suddenly, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon took place. We had not been following on a day to day basis the political situation, so it took us a bit by surprise. At any rate, the Israeli invasion proceeded to a point where it appeared as if the Israelis were going to overrun Beirut. Most of the Palestinian fighters had been pushed back and cornered in Beirut. The United States got heavily involved in this in an effort to mediate

the situation through the Habib mission. As I said before, there was really no way to get in and out of Beirut except through Cyprus. A transportation line was set up whereby Ambassador Habib and his top assistant, Ambassador Draper, would fly to Cyprus by fixed wing aircraft and then be flown by a U.S. military helicopter from Cyprus to Beirut. Our initial involvement was in supporting this transportation line and making sure that the Habib mission got all the support it needed in going to and from Lebanon in a manner that would be conducive to helping them in any way we could.

The helicopters were originally coming from ships at sea. We decided that it would be much more appropriate to have the helicopters stationed in Cyprus. That's another story, but we eventually prevailed upon the Cyprus and British governments to allow us to station helicopters in the British sovereign bases in Cyprus to help ferry people back and forth as needed.

Q: I think originally, John, they were at Larnaca.

NIX: Yes, they were originally in Larnaca, you're absolutely correct. They were moved to the sovereign base areas due to security considerations. At any rate, that was one involvement. But the other involvement came about when, in fact, the Habib mission was successful in negotiating an armistice whereby the Israeli government agreed not to overrun the city of Beirut if the PLO fighters could and would be evacuated from the city. This presented a practical problem. There was really no possibility of doing it by air. We in Cyprus were asked by the Department of State to investigate the possibilities of evacuating the PLO fighters by ship to Cyprus. Ambassador Ewing sent me down to the coast of Cyprus to see if I could find anyone who would be both willing and able to take on this rather herculean task. At the same time, of course, we were working on the diplomatic front with the government of Cyprus to try to secure their acquiescence in allowing the PLO fighters to transit the territory of the government of Cyprus en route to various Arab countries which had agreed to provide sanctuary.

Q: I don't think there was ever any consideration of the PLO fighters actually staying in Cyprus. I don't think they wanted to do that, nor probably did the government of Cyprus want that.

NIX: As I remember it, the government of Cyprus made it clear that they were holding us directly responsible to ensure that the PLO fighters passed through quickly and without any incident. To cut a long story short, I went up and down the coast of Cyprus, checked the ports, and finally found an individual whom, I think, ambassador Ewing and I both feel was rather remarkable, a gentleman named Takis Solomonides. He happened to be the French consul in Limassol and in those days was the only Cypriot who owned his own shipping line. Most of the other shipping lines were owned by Greek ship owners.

Q: They used the Cyprus flag as a (inaudible) flag.

NIX: Exactly. They used Cyprus as a flag of convenience. But Mr. Solomonides

impressed me right away as a man of his word and someone we could depend on. We so informed the Department of State and recommended that we contract with him to perform this job. He took it on. For about two weeks, he had three ships sailing day and night. They continually ferried heavily armed PLO fighters from Beirut to Cyprus. Later on in the stage of this exercise, they actually took some of the fighters directly from Lebanon to Tunisia and to Yemen. It was a remarkable operation on his part. We provided, let's say, the moral and financial support. Obviously, he ran into a lot of obstacles. He would call me and then we would relay the problem either to the embassy in Lebanon or to the Habib negotiating team or to the State Department and try to work out a solution to whatever problem had come up.

Q: I don't want to leave anybody with the impression that these ships of Solomonides were big ships or grand vessels. I happened to take a trip to Greece on the Sol Phryne before all this happened. It would probably best be described as a fairly aged ferry boat.

NIX: Very aged. You're exactly right. Believe it or not, we did get some complaints from the Palestinian fighters about the conditions on these ships. So, that must be an indicator that they were even worse than the conditions they were suffering in Beirut. But Solomonides never flagged in his determination to do the job. He carried it through right to the end. I think he deserved a great vote of thanks from the United States government for doing this job when no one else really was willing to take it on.

Q: I recall that I think there was one other incident that I think you were involved with, John. It happened over a weekend when one of his vessels coming out of Beirut or preparing to leave Beirut was discovered to have boarded or loaded a number of vehicles. Do you remember that?

NIX: I remember that vividly. According to the terms of the negotiated armistice agreement, the PLO fighters were allowed to board ship carrying their personal arms, but not any other kind of military equipment. One group overrode the port authorities and went on board ship with its vehicles. The Israeli government, via Ambassador Sam Lewis, notified the U.S. government that if these vehicles were not unloaded and placed either in American or Israeli control, there would be a danger that the armistice agreement would collapse. In fact, they refused to allow any further loading of PLO fighters in Beirut until this crisis was resolved. As Ambassador Ewing mentioned, it happened over a weekend. He and I got together in the embassy and tried to decide what we could do. Actually, after a day of back and forth with the Department and the government of Cyprus, the final resolution came about, I remember, very late on Saturday evening. We managed to contact the Cypriot Foreign Minister, Nikos Rolandis, and his assistant, a man who is now the Director General of the Cypriot Foreign Ministry, Alecos Shambos, who at the time were having dinner with the PLO spokesman in a place called "Charlie's Bar" in Cyprus. We discussed this problem on the phone with them. They, fortunately, having access to a PLO authority at the time, managed to give us their acquiescence in having these vehicles offloaded in Cyprus. This would not have been possible, unless they had been able to discuss it with the PLO at the same time they were discussing it

with us. They were very sensitive to their relationship with the PLO in those days. So, at any rate, we did succeed in getting these vehicles offloaded in Cyprus. They were technically placed under U.S. control in the sense that the government of Cyprus agreed not to do anything at all with the vehicles unless we gave our approval. To my knowledge, those vehicles are still sitting in Cyprus to this day. This is probably one of the most iron clad verbal agreements in history. It's never been able to be broken by either side.

Q: One reason for that perhaps is that the vehicles which were Land Rovers, four wheel drive vehicles, that kind of car, were not in very good shape at the time (in 1982). As I recall, at least one of them or a couple of them had to be pushed off the ferry boat when it arrived. We're talking about maybe 20 or so.

NIX: Roughly 20.

Q: You can imagine what they're like today, 15 years later after sitting, I think, in the open in sunny, dusty Cyprus.

NIX: They're sitting in the open in a so-called bonded parking lot in the customs area of Limassol Port. But I think that certainly typifies the difficulty of dealing with political issues in that part of the world. Even though the substance of the issue appears intrinsically resolvable, the sensitivities on both sides make it almost impossible to come to a realistic solution. At any rate, the end result was that, we in the embassy in Cyprus received accolades for keeping the Habib mission and the armistice agreement from foundering. The whole operation proceeded to its conclusion and the armistice agreement did, in fact, take effect as you and I were fortunate enough to see later on when we were invited to come to Beirut to drive through the Green Line and see first hand how it had been broken up.

Q: You were with me, I think. We had lunch.

NIX: We had lunch together. The ambassador invited us to lunch at the residence there. We were first taken to the aircraft carrier Independence as an expression of gratitude from the fleet for the support we had provided to the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean during their operations in Lebanon.

Q: That support, at least partly, was through the provision or through the opportunity for some Navy helicopters to be located in Larnaca Airport to supply mail.

NIX: Absolutely. The carrier onboard delivery, or COD, aircraft, flew regularly in and out of Larnaca to pick up the mail, and all sorts of provisions. We were very careful to make sure that we coordinated thoroughly with the Cypriot government on our requests for these flights. I have to give credit to Nikos Rolandis, who was the Cypriot Foreign Minister at the time, a very intelligent man who had a well-developed view of Cyprus' position in the world community. He was particularly sensitive to the need to have

Cyprus play a responsible role in crises like this. So, he was a very responsive and positive collaborator for the embassy in working out all these arrangements.

Q: Of course, part of the interest of the Cyprus government in the situation was because it was in its very close neighborhood. Beirut is very close. They obviously have lots of interaction with the various Lebanese elements.

NIX: That's true. As I think you mentioned in our first session, after the Lebanese civil war broke out, many Lebanese, as well as the regional financial operations, which had previously been operating out of Beirut, moved to Cyprus. Cyprus did benefit in some respects from the infusion of capital from Beirut and from infusion of the capital which might have gone to Beirut if the situation had been different. But having said all that, I go back to one of my earlier points. The government of Cyprus definitely wanted to help us as much as it could in fulfilling this armistice agreement. Due to its geographic and political position, however, Cyprus was also very sensitive to the needs and wants of the other political forces, in particular, the PLO. It would not have been possible to cooperate when we did if we hadn't been able to find a middle way which would be acceptable to both sides.

Q: There was an Israeli embassy in Nicosia headed by an ambassador. They had flights to Tel Aviv. Their relationship was perhaps not as close and cordial as it was with the PLO because Cyprus was a leader of the non-aligned movement and saw support for the Palestinians as part of their general effort to get international support for themselves on the Cyprus issue.

NIX: That's an interesting point. As I remember, in those days, Cyprus may have been the only country in the world with full diplomatic relations with both Israel and the PLO. Obviously, both those countries accepted that status because they thought it was in their own best interest.

Q: John, you completed your first assignment to Cyprus in 1983. Is there anything else we should say about that first period that you were there?

NIX: No, I think we pretty well summed up the major points. At the time I left, I remember, we were quite hopeful that we were reaching some progress toward a resolution of the Cyprus problem. We had Ambassador Gobi then as the special representative to the Secretary General, an extremely intelligent and hardworking individual who had come up with a whole series of what we thought were very positive proposals to resolve the situation. I left Cyprus hopeful that the situation could be resolved.

Q: I think you were involved with several visitors from the United States who in one way or another were expressing, demonstrating, United States interest in Cyprus. Do you recall any of those?

NIX: Well, I can recall several of them. Starting from the top, we had Senator Percy out for two weeks once at the time when he was Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He attracted a great deal of attention. He came out for several reasons. He wanted to visit Lebanon, which he did. We were still the only way to get into and out of Lebanon. He had a great interest in establishing a bicommunal university in Nicosia. He met with both sides and actually made a proposal that if the two communities would agree to establish a bicommunal university in the Green Line area of Nicosia, he would commit to raise a million dollars to help fund of the university. He talked at length with both sides about that. But he had to go away disappointed, as so many of us have over the years in trying to reach an agreement. At the time, of course, he hadn't given up hope. It's only later that we can look back and see that the effort did in fact fail.

Q: Then he was defeated in the election not too long afterwards.

NIX: We also hosted a huge delegation headed by Lee Hamilton, who at the time was Chairman of the House Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East. He went to Lebanon, but also he was very interested in Cyprus. We conducted him around to meetings with both the President of Cyprus and Mr. Denktash. We had a real heavy stream of visitors coming through. I'm sure they were all interested in Cyprus, but many of them came because that was the only way to get into Lebanon. I remember Senator Tsongas came through en route to Lebanon.

Q: I recall Senator Tsongas saying to me once earlier - I asked him if he would like to visit Cyprus or would think about it. He said, "Well, probably not because I think I know what the situation there is. I don't want to create problems for myself or for you or for anybody." But because he wanted to go to Beirut and was very concerned about the situation there and the only way to get there was through Cyprus, he did come. His flight was delayed. He wound up having to spend the night. So, he got to see a little bit of Cyprus. I think the Foreign Minister at the time gave him breakfast the next morning before his flight to Beirut. All of this may have happened after you were there. I'm not sure. I remember that it happened on a weekend and he was accompanied by about four staff people. I think it was an important opportunity for him, even though he might not have planned it or looked forward to it. I think it was helpful to him.

NIX: One of the aspects of handling high level visitors was that our policy, which of course was the policy of the United States government, was that official visitors should in fact visit with the heads of both communities if they came to Cyprus. Otherwise, it tended to compromise our role as an impartial arbitrator in the efforts to resolve the Cyprus dispute. This, of course, placed a little pressure on some visitors who didn't feel that they really could go into the northern part of Cyprus and meet with Mr. Denktash.

Q: The reason we took that position was that we thought it was important that people have a perspective from both points of view and not go away with only one dimension.

NIX: Exactly.

Q: In 1983, you went to Athens. What did you do there? How long were you in Athens?

NIX: I was there a total of four years. My first two years were taken up primarily in Political Section duties. Very standard political work. I was the number two officer there in the Political Section working for Townsend Friedman. I continued monitoring Cyprus from the Greek standpoint. I still handled anything that came up for the embassy having to deal with Cyprus. I was "in charge" of our reporting on the New Democracy Party, which is the conservative party in Athens.

Q: Was it in opposition?

NIX: It was in opposition at that time. Andreas Papandreou had been elected Prime Minister and Greece had entered what was then called the EC, now the EU. As a matter of fact, the summer I arrived, Greece was just taking up its first presidency of the EC, the rotating presidency. We had an officer in the Political Section who for that six month period was assigned to liaise with the person down in the Greek Foreign Ministry who was handing the Greek EC presidency duties and to handle all of our diplomatic input into that role.

Q: Even at that time, there was sort of an established pattern that we would exchange views with the country occupying the European Community presidency on all sorts of world issues of interest to us and then receive briefings after there had been discussions in the Council meetings.

NIX: Exactly. To just add a little more perspective, Greece had already shown signs that it would be a thorn in the side of the EC. It was sort of a strange situation. The government had always been vocally opposed to EC membership, to NATO membership, to all of these western-style ideas-

Q: That the party had been against.

NIX: The party when it was out of office. It came into office and it almost seemed as if they were fighting against the institutions from within. At least, I'm sure that's the way it was perceived by certain people in Washington, by certain people in Brussels. We in the embassy in Greece often found ourselves in the role of trying to maintain a certain stability in the relationship when people on both sides were almost, it seemed, operating at a level of relations which couldn't get any worse. There was almost a daily crisis in Greek-American relations through those years. There was a hypersensitivity in certain U. S. quarters to Papandreou. Whatever he said critical of the U.S. and /or NATO tended to be magnified beyond the level that would have been the case with another leader.

We also had the terrible problem of anti-U.S. terrorism in Greece at the time. A few months after I arrived, Colonel Tsantes from the U.S. military mission was killed by the November 17 terrorist group. Attacks continued throughout the decade. The perception in

the United States that the Greek government was not doing enough to combat terrorism or was not being cooperative enough with the U.S. government was widespread and deep. I certainly believe that this perception still exists today.

Q: As you said, the main point of contact in the Political Section with the opposition, with the New Democracy Party, which had been the government party until not too long before and was against PASOK and Papandreou - were some of these feelings about the unreliability of Papandreou, PASOK, Greece being sent to you by New Democracy, or were they trying to maybe put things into a longer-term perspective?

NIX: No, they tried to play that game, but I personally didn't buy it. I didn't buy it for a very good reason. The anti-U.S. terrorism actually began in 1976 with the assassination of Richard Welch there. That was during the New Democracy government. The New Democracy government remained in power for another six years. They were either unable or unwilling to do anything about it. This was always my personal argument, that it's not the PASOK government that's the problem here. It's the fact that they don't have a well-developed, modern counterterrorism system within their security establishment.

Q: How about the attitude though toward NATO, toward the European Community, toward the United States aside from the question of terrorism?

NIX: On the surface, they definitely gave lip service to being more cooperative. Of course, we don't want to downgrade the importance of Karamanlis in being the Greek leader who had the courage to bring Greece into the EC in the first place. This was very important. But on the other hand, that New Democracy government was not able to establish a NATO land headquarters in Greece, for example, which was one of the longstanding objectives of NATO at the time. Because of Greek political realities, the fact that the Greek-Turkish rivalry is so important in Greece, even though they might have wished to be more accommodating to the United States and to the NATO Commanding General, they simply couldn’t do it. They could not make that move to be more cooperative. I don't believe they went out of their way to create problems for the relationship, which in fact certain people in the Papandreou government did do during the period when I was there.

Q: When you went to Athens, I think the ambassador was Monty Stearns.

NIX: That's correct. Monty Stearns was the ambassador. Alan Berlind was the DCM. We had an extremely professional and very well-run embassy. Ambassador Stearns was very careful always to maintain cordial relationships with Papandreou. They met regularly. He was very, very assiduous in assuring that, even though the atmospherics were bad sometimes, when we had to talk about truly important things, he always had access to Papandreou and they could talk about what they needed to talk about.

Q: He also, of course, would see people on the New Democracy side as well, former...

NIX: Absolutely. He was very close friends with George Rallis, who had been the Prime Minister between Karamanlis and Papandreou. Then, after the election was lost by New Democracy, Rallis was succeeded by Evangelos Averoff, who was the party leader at the time I arrived. He was also very close to Stearns. My own contacts in the party were very easy. It was a very approachable party. They didn't stand on ceremony. You could virtually go and see almost anyone you wanted. The American embassy had a certain status in town. Gathering information was not hard. The hard part was trying to sift it out and figure out which information was credible and worthwhile.

Q: Who was the President of Greece at this time, 1983?

NIX: Karamanlis was President when I arrived. He served out his term and then Papandreou pushed him out sort of unceremoniously and installed a little known judge, Sartzetakis. The only thing this judge had on his record that would seem to make him an obvious choice was that he was the judge in the famous "Z" case, about which a well-known movie was made.

Q: But when Karamanlis was President after having, as you said before, led Greece back toward NATO, into the European Community, and so on, restored democracy in Greece, had enormous prestige both within the country and internationally, his presence as President, even though he did not have a direct political role, served to temper somewhat the PASOK tendencies and gave people both within the country and outside some confidence that things would go on a somewhat even keel. Was that right?

NIX: That's absolutely correct. As a matter of fact, the Greek constitution had a pretty strong role for the Greek President. In the final analysis, the Greek President had the ability to dissolve Parliament and call new elections solely on his own authority. In fact, that has not been done. It probably never will be done. But the point is that it was always there. It has been debated in the press and in political circles as a limitation on the power of the Prime Minister.

When we look back, we can see clearly what Papandreou had in mind. He wanted to weaken the role of the Presidency and to strengthen the role of the Prime Minister. In order to do that, he had to get rid of Karamanlis. There was no way that Karamanlis would have allowed this to take place. He unceremoniously dumped him and then he proceeded to do a whole series of audacious things. He installed his own President, a relatively unknown person. In order to install this President, in order to muster the 180 votes which were necessary under the so-called "third ballot" in Parliament (Out of 300, you have to have 180 on the third ballot. Otherwise, Parliament is automatically dissolved and new elections are called.), he had to bring back into Parliament to vote the person that he had appointed as acting President in Karamanlis' place. Once he had his own President placed, he proceeded to introduce changes to the Constitution. He changed the Constitution. The Presidency in Greece today is virtually powerless. It's a figurehead, as compared to what it was before Papandreou did all this. So, Papandreou was bold. He was absolutely single-minded in his purpose. He did outrageous things, but he got away

with it.

Q: You didn't have any direct contact with Papandreou while you were there?

NIX: Very seldom. I went along a few times to take notes at meetings.

Q: Who was the succeeding ambassador?

NIX: Robert Keeley.

Q: In the summer of 1985, I think you switched jobs. You stayed in Athens, but you became (inaudible).

NIX: I had an opportunity to move and take over my own section. The political/military field in Athens in those days was an extremely interesting place to work. So, the ambassador asked me to take that job and I was glad to do it. At that time, we had in Greece four major bases, all of which the Pentagon considered vital to U.S. military operations in the eastern Mediterranean. So, you can imagine, given what I've said earlier about our relationship with the Papandreou government overall, how difficult this could be at times. Just to briefly summarize the bases so that if we mention them, we'll know what we're talking about, Hellenikon was a major air base near Athens located contiguous to the civilian airport; Nea Makri was a large naval base slightly north of Athens near the town of Marathon on the mainland; then there were two major bases on Crete, Iraklion, which was an air force signals station; and Souda Bay, which is the only remaining one today, and was and is a vital refueling and communications point for the Navy aircraft and ships of the Sixth Fleet and for any other forces that we deploy to the area. Basically, my job when I took over the Political/Military Section, was to maintain U.S. access to the bases. It was that simple. We had a lot of operations going into and out of those bases. Virtually every operation required the acquiescence of the Greek government. They would not give any blanket approval. Every single operation, every flight that took off and landed at any base required the specific approval of the Greek government. There was both a lot of volume plus a lot of sensitivity to the work at that time.

Q: When you received instructions to seek approval for a particular activity coming up- (end of tape)

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You were talking about how you went about getting approval for activities and the role of the base negotiator.

NIX: What I was just going to mention is that the base negotiator (originally Ambassador Bartholemew) when he negotiated the so-called DECA (Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement) with Greece, the negotiators came up with a way to manage the relationship which I had not seen before. It was called the Joint Commission. We had a

joint commission which was chaired on our side by the DCM in the embassy, and on the Greek side by the head of the Greek-American Relations Department of the Greek Foreign Ministry. We were in fact entrusted with managing the bases. I was the so-called executive secretary on the American side and a very, very accomplished diplomat named Elias Gounaris, who later became Greek ambassador to London, was my counterpart on the Greek side.

Q: When was the DECA concluded?

NIX: The DECA was concluded in 1981, under the New Democracy government. It was ready for signature, but the election took place before it could be signed and it had to be renegotiated with the PASOK government.

Q: Besides the Joint Commission, was there actually a status of forces arrangement in Greece?

NIX: We used the NATO status of forces agreement.

Q: So it was not bilateral.

NIX: There are some paragraphs in the DECA which appear to conflict with the NATO Status of Forces Agreement and which became huge bones of contention between ourselves and the Greeks. Our own military establishment is certainly unwilling to accept anything less from any NATO ally than is included in the NATO Status of Forces Agreement. The Greeks were unwilling to accept anything less than what was in the DECA itself. But for better or for worse, we usually managed to negotiate some solution.

At any rate, we had a number of crises. We were trying to keep access to these bases so that we could keep up uninterrupted support for a host of critical military activities which we had going on in that part of the world. In the final analysis, the Greek Government almost always agreed to cooperate with us.

Q: They might have been slow sometimes or raised issues or questions, but they never said "No."

NIX: They never said "No."

Q: I suppose they had problems sometimes with last minute requests or requests that didn't give reasonable lead time?

NIX: Last minute requests usually took a high level call. Either the ambassador or the DCM would have to call somebody very senior. Certainly, they don't have the 24 hour machinery there to deal with this sort of thing.

Q: Given the overall atmosphere that you've described, were there greater problems for

you in the embassy with the U.S. military that perhaps assumed or didn't understand sometimes that Greece was a little bit different or that there were some issues that they had to be aware of or did you generally have a very good relationship with the Air Force and the Navy and so on?

NIX: I had a good relationship with everyone in the U.S. military, but there were certainly people both in the Pentagon and in Ramstein, which is the European Air Force headquarters, and in Brussels, and the base in Hellenikon, who didn't think the State Department and the Embassy were doing enough to pressure the Greek government to acquiesce in certain things.

Q: Would you want to say something more about the general question of security assistance to Greece during the period in which you were there? What was the extent to which U.S. arms sales were a significant factor? I know that there has been talk in subsequent years about something of an arms race between Greece and Turkey and a level of U.S. security assistance to Greece. Related to that, Turkey has always been an element.

NIX: When the DECA was negotiated, a commitment was made by the U.S. government to take into account the historical political realities of the region when considering levels of security assistance.

Q: Including the military balance.

NIX: Taking into account maintaining the military balance. Those were the magic words. What this meant to the Greeks was that we would forever and ever retain the same balance of aid between Greece and Turkey that we had had up until that time.

Q: Which is a ratio of about 7:10.

NIX: Yes. That means seven dollars to Greece for every 10 dollars that goes to Turkey. The Turkish military establishment is far more complex, of much greater magnitude, was considered a real bulwark of NATO's southeastern flank, whereas Greece at that time was playing almost no role in NATO's defense plan. Maybe a little bit vis a vis Bulgaria. But other than use of the geographic space of Greece, the Greek forces had been pulled out of NATO at the time of the '74 Turkish advance in Cyprus by Karamanlis. They had never been formally reintegrated under NATO command. The maintenance of this 7:10 ratio was an annual political exercise, involving the U.S. Congress, the administration, the Greek government, the embassy, and the Pentagon.

Q: Is there anything else we should say about the second phase of your period in Athens?

NIX: There were a lot of interesting things. We also had an Army artillery group in Greece, which was stationed all over Greece in small detachments. Basically, their job was to maintain Nike and Honest John missiles stationed in Greece as a part of NATO

deployment. We also had multiple communications sites. This was still at the beginning of the age where we were only beginning to transfer most of our communications to satellites. We still needed ground relay sights to maintain a reliable NATO communications network. All over Greece, the mountaintops here and there, you found these little U.S. communications sites, the Nike sites, the Honest John missile sites. I would just say that keeping the status of all of these places on an even keel was a real challenge. These guys were isolated. They had very little knowledge of Greek language, knowledge of the local political conditions. Given the particular political situation in Greece, even the smallest incident at one of these sites would immediately become front page news in the Athens media. So, it kept us hopping. As I look back on it, I still think it was one of the most interesting jobs I had in my entire Foreign Service career.

Q: Well, it had to be managed well by the embassy and by the U.S. side, but it's also, I think, remarkable how much cooperation was received from the PASOK government. I think, in a sense, that to me showed that they in their views about Europe and NATO and the United States also recognized that in the Cold War period and with their constant awareness of Turkey it was important to do the right thing, to be a good partner with the United States.

NIX: That's a very valid point. We mentioned the 7:10 ratio, for example, We had pressure to maintain the 7:10 ratio, but the Greek government had a huge degree of political pressure to make sure that this was not disturbed. If a Greek government had been in office at a time when the 7:10 ratio were grossly overturned, that would have been a major failure and could probably have led to the defeat of that government in the next election.

Q: Largely because of the perception of Turkey.

NIX: The fact that they would then have been perceived by the electorate as ineffective in managing this vital relationship with the United States to protect Greek interests.

Q: How would you compare attitudes, perceptions of Turkey, in the period that you were in Athens compared with your experience in Cyprus both before and then after? You did return to Cyprus after you left Greece.

NIX: There are several aspects of Greek attitudes toward Turkey. One is certainly historical and long-term. Another one is what I almost would refer to as day to day. Greek civilization will never forget the 400 years of occupation by the Ottoman Empire. It will take millennia before this is removed from the consciousness. So, we have to begin from that point. We can never expect this relationship to be what we would call normal. But at the same time, there are people in Greece who realize that you cannot change geographic realities and that it is in their best interest to maintain a cordial relationship with Turkey, to have a commercial relationship, to have a certain degree of exchange in business and so forth, tourism, and that sort of thing. In Cyprus, and to a lesser degree in Greece, people feel threatened by Turkey. They hope that the United States and the European

Union will stand with them. At least in the time I was involved, the United States was seen as the best hope to protect them against what they see as the long-term expansionist aspirations of Turkey. The Greek Cypriots feel that Turkey has long-term aspirations to control the entire island. The Greeks feel that Turkey wants to control the Aegean - the islands, the continental shelves on both sides, the air space. They see this as a deadly threat to their own national sovereignty. So, these are two realities that you have to deal with on a daily basis. I frankly never saw much amelioration on this, no matter who was in power.

Q: In 1987, I think, you had finished your four years in Greece and went back to Nicosia, Cyprus. Anything else to say about winding up Greece?

NIX: No, I think that covers it.

Q: What did you do in Nicosia this time?

NIX: I was paneled as DCM in Nicosia. I went over to replace, as it turned out, the then ambassador, Dick Bohm, because our nominated ambassador, Bill Perrin, had not been confirmed. The DCM had already departed. Ambassador Bohm and I had a week overlap. He left. I looked around and there I was, just me. Very few others were around. No DCM under me, of course. No admin. officer. No consular officer. One political officer because the senior political officer had just resigned to get married. That was it. We had the presidential election coming up in a month or so. Of course, we were still responsible for the ongoing day to day support of Lebanon, which had greatly expanded since my previous tour in Cyprus. So, it was a challenge. I really enjoyed it. I must say, you get intensely involved in every aspect of running an embassy when you have a situation like that.

Q: Let's talk first about Lebanon for a second. The situation there, you say, was even more demanding on Embassy Nicosia, but it was not so much supporting the U.S. military as supporting the embassy, is that correct?

NIX: Supporting the embassy, yes. We were doing just about everything for them when I arrived. We were getting the mail. We were getting provisions for them. When I arrived, they were basically confined to their embassy compound. They had almost no freedom to move around in Lebanon. By that time, we had a fairly large detachment of U.S. Army helicopters stationed at the British sovereign base areas and they were going over three or four times a week, flying over to Lebanon to take people in, supplies in, bring people out, bring out whatever needed to be brought out.

Q: And they had been moved to the British base at Akrotiri, presumably because of security concerns?

NIX: Yes. That did not take place while I was there, but I understand there were some threats which were perceived as serious enough to get the British and the Cypriot

government to agree to let the helicopters be stationed on the British bases.

Q: I assume that before too long, you got a political officer and a consular officer and an admin. officer?

NIX: You'd be surprised. It took a year. The admin. officer came after two months, but the political officer didn't come until the next assignment cycle the next summer, and neither did the consular officer.

Q: And the ambassador?

NIX: The ambassador didn't either. He came a year later.

Q: When he was finally confirmed.

NIX: It took him a year to get confirmed. He arrived, in June of 1988.

Q: Of course, there was an election coming up.

NIX: The election in Cyprus was an exciting period. That was in November of '87. When I arrived, I found the political situation intriguing. It had changed so much since I had left four years earlier, but in another respect, so little. Cyprus is small enough so that a person, just based on his personal stature, has the potential to rise in national politics quickly. Nowhere was this proven in a better way than in George Vassiliou, who quickly seemed to have become the favorite in the race for President of Cyprus. I had known George very well in my previous tour. He was always a very cogent commentator on politics and very disparaging, let's say, of the current political situation in Cyprus. But I never discerned his political aspirations at that time.

Q: Because at that time, that earlier period, he was not involved in politics at all. He was a businessman.

NIX: He was a businessman. I'll say a word about his background, which I think is really interesting. George's parents were both communist doctors who were on the Greek communist side during the civil war in Greece. They were Cypriots, but they were there to fight with the communists. When the communists were defeated and withdrew into Yugoslavia, George eventually was brought back to Cyprus by a very circuitous route through Rhodes and Turkey. He grew up in Limassol. He was actually expelled from school in Limassol because he refused to swear the standard oath of allegiance to Greece because of the Enosis connotations. That was back in the '50s, when the rebellion against the British was taking place. So, George left Cyprus to study abroad. He went to secondary school in Budapest and to this day speaks fluent Hungarian. He also studied in Switzerland, at university. I mention this to raise the question, how could a person like this, with this type of background, appeal to a westernized community like the Greek Cypriots? The way he did it, I think, was that he came back and became a huge success.

He became a millionaire businessman. He became a pollster, a public opinion consultant. He had a lot of business contracts throughout the Middle East. He became very wealthy. He built one of the most beautiful modern office buildings in Nicosia. He was a local legend. But again, what was interesting in the Cypriot political context is, even though he became a successful businessman and apparently left behind his leftist youth, the first thing that happened that launched him on the path to the presidency was that AKEL, the Communist Party of Cyprus, announced that they were choosing him as their political candidate.

Q: Even though he was not a member of AKEL.

NIX: As far as I know, he was not a member, but I guess just because of his family lineage and so forth. AKEL had always supported Kyprianou, but they had broken and become very distant in the latter stages of this Kyprianou administration.

Q: AKEL also had always, I think, supported a negotiated settlement of the Cyprus question, certainly didn't want to see either Greek Cyprus come in closer to Greece or a partition arrangement (Cyprus somehow becoming part of NATO).

NIX: That's true, but another interesting thing about AKEL was that they had always made concerted efforts to be on the winning side. They had always supported Makarios and they supported Kyprianou. Now, suddenly, we found them supporting a candidate out of left field. Even today, I still think that was a great risk on their part. I don't think there is any way... You could go back to those days and just like trying to find someone who predicted the Wall would fall. But I don't think many would have predicted that George Vassiliou was going to win that election when he originally signed up with AKEL.

Q: How did he manage to do that? AKEL doesn't have that many votes.

NIX: No, they don't have that many. It was a narrow thing. Cyprus has the “two Sunday” electoral system. On the first Sunday, all of the recognized candidates run, and on the second Sunday, a week later, the two leading candidates, the two who achieved the highest percentages in the first round, have runoff election. The big task is to get into the runoff. The magic number, is about 32-33% of the vote. If you can get that many...

Q: To finish either first or second.

NIX: Yes. The major contenders again were the well-known names of Glafkos Clerides, Vassos Lyssarides, Spyros Kyprianou, and now George Vassiliou. During that period, Kyprianou had a heart attack. He couldn't campaign. Basically, he came back-

Q: He was then the incumbent President.

NIX: He was the incumbent President. Basically, he came back just in time to make a speech at a major rally in Nicosia just before the election. But there were some doubts

about his health. I think that had an impact. Another thing was, I have to say, maybe I had a small impact. George Vassiliou did not have a good reputation here in the United States because of the fact that AKEL was supporting him. I arranged a trip for him to the United States at his request. I managed to get some appointments for him in the State Department and at the NSC. He also called on influential Senators and Congressmen.

Q: This was before the-

NIX: Before the election. Towny Friedman helped me out a lot on this because he was the Office Director in EUR/SE at the time. The point was, we just felt that George was looking for a negotiated settlement to the Cyprus problem. We weren't taking sides in the election. But we felt it was unfair to rule him out just because he was being supported by AKEL. He was being criticized unfairly at the time by his opponents as a person who, if he were elected with AKEL support, would not be able to deal with the United States, would not be able to deal with the West, would not have good relations with the EU. So, we proved that this was not true. I also ensured that whenever we had visitors from the United States (Congressmen and so forth), and a lot of them came in that brief two month period, I always managed to convince them to go see Vassiliou. A lot of them didn't want to do it. One, because they hadn't heard of him. Two, if they had heard of him, they had heard he was a communist stooge. He was a very good communicator. I think when he met with these people, he convinced everybody he met with that he was a serious, middle of the road politician.

Q: I remember one of the last things I did when I left Cyprus in 1984 was to go with him to tour his not yet finished office building. I certainly also could see in him a good friend and a person that I felt at the time was interested in a practical approach and realized that cooperation in some way with the Turkish community had to be part of Cyprus' future if it was ever to come back together in some way. But I also share your view of that period. I would not have predicted that he would be in politics or certainly an elected President of Cyprus. You mentioned this two round system. Who was the other one who came out of the first round?

NIX: The first round was very, very close. Clerides always makes it into the second round because he has stable conservative support. It was a given that he was going to get in. The battle was really between Vassiliou and Kyprianou. Vassiliou just edged out Kyprianou by the narrowest of margins. It was a tremendous upset that he did make it into the second round.

Q: And then did Kyprianou support him or did Kyprianou's voters support him in the second round?

NIX: Kyprianou maintained that he was not taking a position. But we don't know what went on behind the scenes. The way the percentages broke down in the runoff, it appeared that most of Kyprianou's voters went to Vassiliou. As I've told you before, the real battle in the first round is to get into the second round. Vassiliou knew that he wasn't running

against Clerides. He couldn't get any votes from Clerides. He ran against Kyprianou. His criticisms, his, if you will, denigrating comments and so forth throughout the campaign were all directed at Kyprianou. Most of his critical comments were directed at the point that "Kyprianou has been President for all these years and how much progress do we have toward resolving the Cyprus problem? None. I will do it." He promised the people of Cyprus that "I will have a new approach. I will establish a new relationship with Denktash." I had confidence in Vassiliou. The British High Commission felt the same way. I thought that the best hope for negotiating a settlement to the Cyprus problem would have to come from Vassiliou. It's not that I ruled out Clerides. I just didn't think Clerides had a chance to win.

Q: Kyprianou had been President for about 10 years since succeeding Makarios in '77.

NIX: Yes, he had been President then until '87.

Q: Were there any former Kyprianou supporters, significant figures, who supported Vassiliou in the second round?

NIX: A distinguished politician named Christodoulos Veniamin, who had been the Minister of Interior and Defense for Kyprianou, swung over to Vassiliou. He had already broken with Kyprianou and left the Ministry. Vassiliou laughingly told me many times, "My little troika, we meet every morning to plan strategy. It's me, Veniamin, and the leader of AKEL (Papaioanou at the time)." But many other distinguished people rallied to him, like Nikos Rolandis, who I mentioned earlier had been the Foreign Minister of Cyprus.

Q: Who had broken with Kyprianou some years before.

NIX: Yes, he had broken with Kyprianou in '83.

Q: What about the business community?

NIX: The business community, I think, pretty much supported whomever they had supported before. I don't think they saw a great difference from the business standpoint in Kyprianou, Vassiliou, and Clerides. They had nothing against Vassiliou. They saw him as a successful member of their community. I think they gave him a fair shake. He made overtures to the business community. He promised that he would do more to help the business community.

Q: So, George Vassiliou was elected.

NIX: He was elected, very narrowly. Let me just mention that between the two Sundays, Vassiliou made a deal with Lyssarides, an adamant rejectionist of a negotiated settlement, in order to get the support that he needed to win the runoff. They signed a document which basically committed Vassiliou to what I would say was a continuation of the

Kyprianou policy, more or less, on the Cyprus question. I had managed to get the State Department to give me a pre-approved letter of communications from the President to Vassiliou. At about midnight, I went down to his modest home in Nicosia, and knocked on his door. He answered the door personally, and I gave him the congratulatory letter from President Reagan.

Q: So, what happened? He didn't solve the Cyprus problem because of this agreement with Lyssarides?

NIX: I can't really say. He certainly got off on a bad footing because of that. Denktash-

Q: At what point was that known, before the second round?

NIX: It was in the paper. Lyssarides made it clear. He made sure that it would be published. It got Vassiliou off on the wrong foot with Mr. Denktash, the Turkish Cypriot community leader. I just think the chemistry was bad between the two of them from the beginning.

Q: Unlike Kyprianou or even more so, Clerides, Denktash, the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, had never known George Vassiliou before. He was probably as surprised by his emergence as ruler.

NIX: I think you're right. He was certainly expecting either to continue to deal with Kyprianou or to deal with Clerides, not with an unknown quantity, as it were. He was probably a little cautious in the first few meetings because he didn't know what to expect from Vassiliou.

Q: They were of different generations, of different orientations in the sense that Vassiliou was not a barrister, a lawyer, as some others are.

NIX: Clerides, Kyprianou and Denktash are all lawyers who studied in England. Denktash was a Queen’s Councilor (QC) under the British.

Q: So, you continued to be chargé d'affaires for some period of time.

NIX: For that year, yes.

Q: After the election.

NIX: That's right. We tried to take advantage of the atmosphere surrounding the election to help promote some progress toward a Cyprus settlement. But I have to say that it didn't get anywhere. There were a couple of times when we thought we were on the verge. The UN had a series of proposals, I remember once, which Denktash's closest advisor told me they would accept. Then when Denktash saw them on the table, he turned them down.

Q: The proposals were actually presented to both sides by the United Nations representatives?

NIX: Both sides. The Greek Cypriots accepted them, but Mr. Denktash turned them down. But some other exciting things happened these times. We got involved heavily in those days in counterterrorism and counternarcotics activities in the embassy. We were handling a lot of regional activities. During this period, the terrorist Fawaz Younis was lured out of Lebanon into Cyprus and thence onto a yacht which carried him outside of Cypriot territorial waters. Another yacht was there with U.S. FBI agents on it. They arrested Younis and then delivered him to a U.S. aircraft carrier. He was put on a U.S. plane, flown back to the United States through international air space, tried in the United States, convicted, and is still in jail here today. That was a groundbreaking case in those days. I think he was the first terrorist that we were able actually to seize abroad and get back to the United States without on the way coming afoul of some kind of diplomatic or evidentiary problems. It took an awful lot of planning.

Then, of course, the drug problem was really hitting the Eastern Mediterranean in those days. We had some regional responsibility- (end of tape)

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Q: Today is the fifth of March. I'm Ray Ewing. John, we were just starting to talk a little bit about the anti-narcotics work of the embassy in Nicosia.

NIX: Through the Chief of the DEA office in the Embassy, we managed to get exceedingly close cooperation going with the Cypriot police force in this area. As a matter of fact, the person who at that time was his counterpart in Counternarcotics is now the chief of police in Cyprus. I'm glad to see we didn't hurt his career! At any rate, we tried to use Cyprus as a hub to try to interdict the narcotics traffic in the eastern Mediterranean.

We found that a lot of interesting things were going on in those days. For example, in Northern Cyprus, a narcotics pipeline had been set up leading from Pakistan to London. DEA managed to get a trafficker who was using that pipeline rather regularly to come from Pakistan to Northern Cyprus. Then, his contact, who was in fact an agent for the Embassy DEA chief, invited him out to dinner. The British Forces took away the signs which warned in the North that you were leaving the Turkish Cypriot section and going into the British bases. The DEA agent brought the trafficker into the British base to an officers' club near Famagusta. They had dinner. After leaving, they parted company. Our contact said to the trafficker, "You can find your way back all right, right?" "I'll take a taxi." By the time he got back to the road, the warning signs were back up and he was arrested and tried by the British, since he was also wanted in Britain and those bases are considered sovereign British territory.

Q: Let me come back to President Vassiliou for a minute. I seem to recall that I attended

an event here in Washington (I don't remember exactly when it was.). It was in conjunction with his first official visit here. Do you remember when that was? You didn't come back yourself for that?

NIX: No, I didn't come back.

Q: But you had access to him, not just immediately after the election?

NIX: Oh, yes. As you well know, the Cypriot government is a fairly informal organization. A lot of people do have access to the President. I always felt I had good access, even before I was chargé, if I needed it. It's not the kind of place where you have to go through many, many barriers before you reach the President. Any time I had a visitor or anyone of that nature that would like to see the President, I can never remember being turned down. Whenever I wanted to go see him after he had had a National Council meeting or something of that nature to find out what the latest situation was, he always made time for me. He was very open.

Q: Eventually, Ambassador Perrin did get confirmed and came to Nicosia. That was when?

NIX: That was summer of '88. I would just mentioned parenthetically, before that happened, we had several visits by our Special Cyprus Coordinator. Nelson Ledsky had taken that job over. Jim Wilkinson made one visit, maybe two, in his capacity as Special Cyprus Coordinator when I first arrived. Then Nelson took it over. Nelson was the engine driving us as we supported the UN proposals that I mentioned. When he came, of course, that was a major production. I remember one night, they were arriving late, so Vassiliou invited Nelson, Towny Friedman and myself to a private dinner with his Foreign Minister, George Iacovu. The five of us sat there for about three or four hours, having dinner and just talking about what could be done. He was very informal. You could sit and talk with him for hours about the Cyprus question.

Q: But the bottom line was...

NIX: The bottom line was that political realities won out in the end. Vassiliou tried to build consensus. He was not able to build consensus, but he was able to convince Kyprianou and Lyssarides.

Q: What sort of relationship in the time that you were there did President Vassiliou have with Glafkos Clerides, his opponent in the '87 election and then the man who would eventually succeed him?

NIX: In the beginning, they were very close. Both of them told me so. Vassiliou wouldn't consider approving something that had to do with the Cyprus question without first vetting it with Clerides, who was at the palace on a regular basis. Vassiliou would bounce ideas off Clerides and Glafkos would tell him what his opinions were. It was no secret.

Glafkos did this even though he still was smarting a little bit at having been defeated by a "young upstart" like him in the election. In the sense that the man is the President, I'm a loyal Cypriot, I'll do what I can, he went down and gave him his advice freely and tried to help in a positive way, at least during my period there. Of course, that all changed when they got into the next electoral campaign.

Q: You were there about three years and left in December of 1990. Ambassador Perrin was there for not very long.

NIX: He was there for one year. He was already in bad health when he arrived. He was suffering from kidney failure. That had, of course, occasioned a host of other problems. He seemed to rally for a while after he arrived. He did get involved very, very deeply in the Cyprus problem. He figured, I think rightly, that if he could make a contribution, it would be in trying to help solve the Cyprus problem. That's the way he saw his mission. So, he developed a very close relationship with Vassiliou. He really worked hard on developing a close relationship with Denktash and did. They were on very good terms by the time he left. The other leaders, I think, all the ministers, he worked very closely with them and tried to help promote a Cyprus settlement. For whatever progress we made in that year, I'm sure he was a major contributor. He admitted up front when he talked to these people that he didn't know a lot about the eastern Mediterranean, he didn't know a lot about Cyprus, but that he would listen and give everyone a fair hearing. Denktash said right away, "Well, that's all I want, somebody who will listen and give me a fair hearing." And he did.

Q: As you say, he did leave after about a year, which would have been the summer of '89.

NIX: He stayed there almost exactly a year.

Q: Did another ambassador come right away?

NIX: No, unfortunately, Ambassador Lamb had a problem getting confirmed also. So, I was there then until the end of my tour as chargé.

Q: You were there the rest of your time in Cyprus?

NIX: Yes.

Q: What else is there to say about that period?

NIX: The only thing that really stands out in my mind is, in the last year, the Lebanon support issue. We had to evacuate and close the embassy in Beirut.

Q: (Inaudible) before.

NIX: Not in my experience. This was a hasty evacuation. Our mission was to get the

helicopters in without any advance notice, no warning whatsoever. As a matter of fact, the military didn't even want us to request approval from the Cypriot government because they were so afraid that that would leak.

Q: Where were the helicopters coming from at that time?

NIX: The helicopters were on the British base. Everybody was extracted from the embassy, the entire staff, in one flight. Not a shot was fired. They were all brought directly back to the British bases and then quickly shuffled over to Larnaca and put on planes back to the United States. Well, most of them, not all. Some of them remained in Cyprus, which I'll mention in a minute.

Q: So, at that point, the embassy in Beirut was essentially closed down?

NIX: As a matter of fact, they left it in the charge of one of the senior local employees. They established a Beirut embassy in exile in our embassy in Cyprus. From that time until the time I left, we had a very significant presence in the embassy from the embassy in Beirut. The security conditions did not allow them to return during the time I was there.

Q: Not including the ambassador?

NIX: No, the ambassador stayed for a week or two and then he eventually was moved back to the United States. The DCM, the admin. officer, communicators, a secretary, and a support officer stayed in Nicosia.

Q: But they were under your authority or your responsibility?

NIX: More or less. We tried to be gentlemanly about it. They never caused me any problems. I knew what my mission was. My mission was to support Beirut. We didn't get a lot of credit from EUR for doing that. But in the broader sense, I thought the embassy had a very important mission to support Beirut.

Q: Their interest in the embassy of Nicosia was solely to keep in touch with (inaudible) to take care of...

NIX: Yes, they had to keep in touch. They got regular reports. They had cellular telephones. They did a lot of work from there. For a long time, we had one of their political officers in our embassy. He used the phone to call people in Beirut, the cellular telephone. Everybody in Beirut had cellular phones. You have to remember, the point was, "We're only out temporarily." The idea of keeping people in Cyprus and finding out on a day to day basis what the situation was in Lebanon was to go back in as soon as possible. It was not a situation where we were just sitting back here relaxed, waiting to see what happened. They wanted to know in detail what the situation was so that the people in Washington could decide "Yes" or "No." The decision was a very close call, but they finally decided not to reopen. The State Department, I'm sure, was in favor of

reopening.

Q: Although we did reopen later on.

NIX: Eventually, after my time, yes. But even during those days, if it had been up to the State Department, we would have been reopened by Christmas.

Q: Let me ask you one other question about Cyprus, coming back away from Beirut for a minute. I know, since the time I left, which was 1983, the economy of Greek Cyprus has developed continually in areas of particular interest to American business. Was there a lot of that going on at the time you were there?

NIX: There was a lot of tourism development. I think it actually got overdeveloped, frankly. I really do. It's a very competitive industry, as we all know. The Cypriot product, if you will, has certain attractions, but in certain areas, it can't compete with the many other islands that are available in the Mediterranean. So, I think what happened is, it did get overdeveloped. There has been a little slump.

Q: What about banking?

NIX: Banking was developing very rapidly while I was there. There was a real boom in offshore company formation. There were whole law firms in Cyprus which specialized in nothing but forming offshore corporations. As we learn now, there has been a lot of money flowing out of the former Yugoslavia and Russia into Cypriot banks. I don't know if that was already happening in those days. Probably to a certain extent, but not to the extent it is today. They would like to make themselves a banking center. They have an excellent communications system. Cyprus has one of the best telephone systems, one of the best international communications systems, of any country in the Mediterranean. So, they have a lot of things going for them. Several U.S. companies have set up regional operations there. Pepsico, for example, had a big operation there. They covered the Middle East out of there. The advantage, as I said, was the communications system, the fact that from Cyprus, you could fly direct to almost any Middle East country. That's a rare thing, very rare. So, there are a lot of business advantages to Cyprus. I think they've made the most of it. They are very prosperous. They have one of the highest GNPs in the Mediterranean, one of the highest per capita incomes - much higher than Greece, for example.

Q: In short, of the three years that you were in Nicosia, from '87 to '90, you were the chief of mission about 2/3 of the time.

NIX: Two years, yes.

Q: You were there at a period when a lot of interesting things were going on both in terms of Cyprus politics...

NIX: I never got bored. There was always plenty of work and interesting work.

Q: The embassy was very shorthanded.

NIX: The first year, it was very shorthanded. I'll never forget that year. It had had a wonderful staff up until that summer and they just left. Everybody left and there was no one there. There were a lot of vacuums to be filled.

Q: You could be spread very thin.

NIX: Yes. But that's one of those times when your adrenaline level is pumping high and you don't really mind. I never left Cyprus for that year, not even for a day. I was in the embassy, I think, every day for that year.

Q: Cyprus can be a small place.

NIX: Yes, it can.

Q: In 1990, I believe, you went to Berlin.

NIX: That's right. I was planning to be DCM in Athens, but eventually I decided to take the job in Berlin, as it turned out, during a very exciting time. I got there just at the time of German reunification.

Q: The Wall had come down?

NIX: The Wall had come down, but the official process of reunification, the Two Plus Four Talks, had not been completed yet. We actually supported the final stages of the Two Plus Four Talks after I arrived in Berlin. I took part in the final reunification ceremonies in the fall of 1990 in which the United States, Britain, and France turned over control of West Berlin to Germany for the first time since we began the occupation of Berlin after World War II.

Q: Was it at that point that the American embassy to the German Democratic Republic in East Berlin closed?

NIX: It ceased to exist officially at midnight on October 3, 1990. The ambassador and all the staff gathered in the basement of the embassy in their club and counted it down to the time when their status officially ended. I know the ambassador left the embassy at midnight and did not return. It was officially part of the Bonn embassy from that time.

Q: What was, the former...

NIX: Our former embassy in the GDR.

Q: But you were at the U.S. Mission?

NIX: Yes. I came in as part of the Occupation forces. I was the "political advisor" or POLAD in the U.S. mission in West Berlin. We knew at the time, of course, that we were going to reunify Berlin, we were going to unify the diplomatic presences there in the East and West. The decision was made by the ambassador that I would become the deputy to the principal officer after the combined missions were put together. Harry Gilmore, was the Minister in West Berlin at the time, and I was his deputy. He would take over and become what was called an "assistant chief of mission" to the ambassador in Bonn, not a deputy chief of mission, but an assistant chief of mission. I would become the deputy assistant chief of mission, the only one in the world. At any rate, that was to be the organizational side. The ambassador in East Berlin, Dick Barkley, was withdrawn. He stayed on physically a week or two, but he never came back to the embassy. The DCM over there stayed on temporarily just to help us transition in and then he departed. On the morning of October 4, Harry and I got in our limousines in West Berlin with our briefcases and drove over and took charge. It was kind of funny in retrospect that we got caught in a traffic jam about three blocks from the former embassy. It just wasn't moving. You can imagine these crossing points over the old Wall were just like bottlenecks. They really backed up and there was no way you could hack your way through, so we got out and walked. We showed up at the door of the embassy and nobody knew us, of course. We had to introduce ourselves to the Marine guards and say "We are now in charge here."

Q: The old East Berlin embassy was not a property that the U.S. government owned.

NIX: We had a long-term lease on it. It is a very nice building. Before the war, it was owned by the Handworkers Guild, the artisans and handicrafts guild of Germany. It's only two blocks down Unter den Linden and one block over from the Brandenburg Gate. Harry and I walked over there and introduced ourselves to the staff and started briefing everybody on what the new procedures would be.

Q: That office eventually was closed down completely?

NIX: No, the Embassy Office is still in that building. For symbolic reasons, the decision was made to close down the office in West Berlin and move all of our remaining staff over to East Berlin to that building. This was a very controversial decision. You can still start fistfights about it to this day in Berlin about whether that was a good idea or not. But what's done is done.

The challenge for Harry and me was to come up with a way to combine the two diplomatic establishments and to keep morale from sinking. You had two proud organizations which had both served the U.S. government with distinction, but both of them were going out of business. Basically, we were coming up with a new organization which, while it would still have a large degree of importance, it would be a large mission, it would have a broad mandate, still it would have nowhere near the significance and the type of mandate that either of the two previous organizations had had. Plus, it would be

much smaller. So, that involved letting a lot of people go.

Q: I guess the main responsibility of the new entity and the reason that it would continue to be special, that it would be a mission headed by an assistant chief of mission rather than a consulate general, was because the capital of unified Germany was in Bonn, but also in Berlin, and was going to be even more in Berlin as time went by.

NIX: The German constitution had always designated Berlin as the capital, but Bonn had become the seat of government. Now, this of course became a really emotional issue in Germany. It took a lengthy parliamentary debate and finally a very close vote before final determination was made that the government would move to Berlin. In other words, that the seat of government would also be in Berlin. There are a lot of regional rivalries in Germany. Many people still do not feel that the decision was the correct one.

Q: Yes, but of course Berlin during the Cold War was under four power responsibility, was a divided city, was somewhat vulnerable, certainly in particular periods.

NIX: This is true, but I think that a lot of people in West Germany felt that the West Berliners were coddled, if you will. They weren't subject to the draft. They got special salaries. They got special tax breaks. That money came out of the tax money of the West Germans. So, there were a lot of rivalries, plus the historic rivalry that the Rhineland is basically a Catholic region and Berlin is basically a Protestant region. Here in the United States, we tend to forget a lot of times how strong those kind of rivalries can be and how long-lasting they can be. But believe me, I've talked to really sophisticated people in Berlin. When the Bonn government started taking over Berlin, all the time people would shake their heads and look at me and say, "They're sending too many Catholics up there." That really is an interesting aspect of German society that's not known, I guess, a lot unless you talk to people behind the scenes. They don't talk about it a lot, but there is an intense rivalry.

The decision was finally made that the seat of government was going to be Berlin. Then the problem became, how do we do it? When do we do it? How do we pay for it? What will be the mechanisms? The Bundestag came up with a sort of split decision. They were going to keep about half of the ministries in Bonn and were going to move half of the ministries to Berlin, to avoid upsetting the economy in Bonn and to avoid having to throw millions of people out of work. German workers are not as mobile as American workers. They won't move. They can't just say to the Defense Ministry "Move to Berlin" and expect the workers to move. Many will stay in Bonn anyway, even without a job.

Q: In terms of the U.S. government representation in Germany then, eventually the ambassador to Germany will be in Berlin presumably. There is a plan to build a new embassy building on property which, I guess, we've had for a long time, since before the war. Were you involved with that?

NIX: Yes, I think we all were. This was one of the major projects we had right after we

got our new diplomatic representation up and running over there. The United States government owns the prime piece of undeveloped real estate in Europe. Why is it undeveloped? Well, as luck would have it, it sat within the dead zone of the Wall for the entire period of the Cold War. Even before the Wall was built in 1961, the area where our embassy had been before the war was so close to the Occupation dividing line that the Russians would never have allowed anything to be built there. It is directly beside Brandenburg Gate. We never gave up title to it. We were never asked to give up title to it. Nobody ever asked, so there it was. We still owned it. So, the question was, what do we want to do with it? Various delegations from FBO and others came out and looked at it and trudged around it and measured it and speculated about what could be built there.

Q: Was there a building there?

NIX: Nothing. There was absolutely nothing there. As a matter of fact, what we did was plant grass on it and put a little chain fence around it and put a plaque on it just so that people wouldn't think it was just a vacant lot: "The once and future home of the U.S. embassy in Berlin." Ambassador Kimmitt was there, the President of Germany, and the Mayor of Berlin, of course. It was quite a significant ceremony because, for one thing, I think, the Germans wanted to see us- That was before, by the way, the vote was taken on moving the seat of government. The Berliners really loved it because they wanted to see us commit to putting an embassy in Berlin. At any rate, now the plans have gone forward. A contract has been let for an architect. There were a lot of security considerations originally because the site is definitely not large enough to meet "Inman standards," that it have set back and so forth. But apparently, those are going out the window anyway because of lack of funding. So, I think a way has been found, at any rate, to build a very, very nice building there. I don't think it will be big enough to enclose our entire representation in Berlin, but it should be very impressive and you can't beat the location.

Q: One of the other things, of course, that happened in this period that you were there was that your office assumed responsibility for Eastern Germany in terms of political, economic reporting, is that right? How did you go about that?

NIX: That's right. One of our first jobs was to reach out, as that old American song goes, to the unknown citizens of Eastern Germany. We had very ample staffing, as you can imagine, because we were still combining two diplomatic establishments. Virtually everyone had his or her assignment extended to the following summer, so we had lots of people. So, we broke down Eastern Germany into various areas. We assigned people to every area and just put them on the road. We went out and started meeting people, started calling on people. A lot of people were very surprised to see an American. Communications were terrible. You couldn't make appointments in advance. You just went. If you couldn't meet anybody, you came back and wrote about what you saw. But it was tremendously interesting for these young people. Some of the best young officers I've ever seen we had in the embassy at that time. They were just enthralled by this challenge. They went out and did a fantastic job of writing up contact reports, reports about the state of the East German industry. Initially, the political situation was almost impossible to

write about because it was so amorphous. It was just being made up as people went along. We did such a good job that we actually won the Director of Central Intelligence's award on a worldwide competition basis for our reporting that year, which was a very big shot in the arm for all these young political and economic officers. They all got a thousand dollars, each of them, and a very nice certificate.

Q: Your primary responsibility as the Deputy Assistant Chief of Mission during this period was pretty much managing or coordinating?

NIX: There were about three or four things I really focused on. Number one was our U.S. military establishment. I had direct responsibility for maintaining contacts with them. They were still occupying West Berlin.

Q: You continued to be the political advisor?

NIX: I continued to be their political advisor. We met regularly. I was their intermediary, if you will, with the German authorities. I even maintained an office in the military headquarters, my former office. I had two offices for a year, in other words. I had an office there with the military headquarters and I had an office in the old embassy to East Germany. That was a major part of my function. I also had to downsize the two missions. That was another thing I was assigned. I had to set up a system whereby we could fairly assess the qualifications of the employees we had and decide which ones would be put into the positions we had remaining and which ones would have to be let go.

Q: You're talking mostly at this point of German employees?

NIX: German employees, yes. The decision on the Americans had basically been made. But there were hundreds and hundreds of Germans. The mission in West Berlin was fat, to say the least. Obviously, all the costs were being paid by Occupation funds. They weren't being paid out of the U.S. budget.

Q: Did that cost sharing out of Occupation funds continue?

NIX: It continued on a limited basis. For example, my position continued to be funded by Occupation costs until the end of 1991. At that time, they took away my chauffeured Mercedes.

Q: And your house?

NIX: No, I kept my house, but the U.S. government started having to pay rent. The third task was basically organizing this outreach into Eastern Germany, which we described already. The fourth, which I think sort of comes out of the second one, was the terrible problem of addressing the many morale questions we had. This was a very, very difficult marriage. You were bringing people from West Berlin who had been concerned with nothing but the Occupation for years, their entire careers. Most of them had never been

into East Germany or East Berlin. We had to put them to work in East Germany with people who had been living in what they considered a hardship post. Take, for example, housing alone. I had American staff like myself who were still living in the very, very plush housing of Western Berlin. I had American staff in the East who were living in rundown, beat up, bedraggled apartments which had been allocated to them by the East German authorities. You may say that that you would just close them down, but you can't do those kind of things overnight. I think it's great that we had this focused task, to send our people out to meet people in the hinterlands and so forth. I, for example, visited virtually every town in Eastern Germany during my four years. That kept us busy and provided a real task to focus on during that first year. Eventually, just before I left, I managed to get all of the old housing closed down and to get everybody on the American side moved into decent housing over in the West.

Q: But the office continued to be in the old East Berlin embassy?

NIX: Yes. I imagine it will stay there until the new embassy is up and running because the way the budget is these days, it costs a lot to move an embassy. I just don't see us doing it until the new embassy is ready.

Q: What happened to the residence of the ambassador to the German Democratic Republic?

NIX: Initially, we kept that. It was vacant for a year because Harry Gilmore didn't move over. When his replacement came in, he occupied it. Dick Miles went in there. I'm sure he would have stayed there, because he was quite happy out there. It was a huge place far out in Pankow, which is one of the remote districts of Berlin. But when he left suddenly to go take up a new post as ambassador to Azerbaijan, the new Principal Officer got approval from the ambassador to move over to the West. The long and short of it is, when we finally negotiated with the German government an exchange of properties so that we could get the properties that we need in West Berlin for the future of our diplomatic establishment, we included that residence in the package that we turned over to the Germans, along with a list of properties in Bonn, Frankfurt, Dusseldorf, Hamburg, and other sites in Germany. A mega swap was worked out. We didn't actually get down to figuring out dollar values because I don't think we would ever have come to the end of the negotiation. We gave them what we thought our minimum requirements were. We offered what we could possibly give up. The Germans were, I guess, grateful enough for our support since the second world war to accept it.

Q: Because we basically had two establishments in Berlin, we certainly could give up some properties without difficulty.

NIX: We owned virtually nothing in Berlin, only the Embassy site, the Ambassador's residence and the R.I.A.S. [Radio in the American Sector] antenna field.

Q: You were certainly there at a very important time in the history of Germany, probably

one that many people had not anticipated was going to happen in their lifetime.

NIX: Absolutely. I was in Berlin twice during the Army. I actually happened to be there in the Army when the Wall was built in 1961. Over those years, since my wife is a Berliner, we have often gone back to Berlin, but I never could have predicted anything like this happening.

By the way, before we leave Berlin, I just want to mention the sort of culmination of the whole tour there was President Clinton's visit in 1994, which of course was the first visit by a U.S. president to a reunified Berlin. We arranged an itinerary so that he met with Chancellor Kohl in the Reichstag. Then they walked across and came through the Brandenburg Gate together, which again was a historical event because it was the first time an American president had walked through the Brandenburg Gate since the second world war. Then we had the major ceremony in Pariser Platz, which is just beyond the Brandenburg Gate. The German people rightly saw this as a recommittment of the U.S. government to Europe and to a united Germany, after the Cold War.

Q: And to Berlin, too, in a sense?

NIX: Yes. Berlin as the capital and center of united Germany.

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Q: Today is the 15th of August 2001. There has been a long interval since our last conversation. John, when we finished before, we were talking about your final overseas assignment to Berlin, and you recalled that you left immediately after President Clinton's visit. Why don't you recall what year that was, and then let's talk about where you went from there.

NIX: That was July 1994. As I said previously, that was an historic occasion in the long-term context of our relationship with the City of Berlin, because not only was it the first time an American President had walked through the Brandenburg gate into Eastern Berlin since World War II, but it was also the end of our military involvement in Berlin, which had been a city under occupation since 1945. While President Clinton was there, he took the salute at the last official U.S. military parade in Berlin. It was a very emotional occasion and one that was obviously laden with historic implications. The Germans then moved on and have now established a fully reunited city and a reunited country.

Q: Were special arrangements made for you to stay for the Presidential visit, or did that just happen to coincide with your transfer date?

NIX: I was scheduled to transfer in the summer but, as normally happens in a high level visit like this, everyone's transfer date is automatically postponed until after the end of the visit. It was no major adjustment, nor inconvenience, and worked out perfectly.

Q: At that time the Mission in Berlin was called the embassy?

NIX: It was called the Berlin Embassy office. It had been set up in 1990 on the presupposition, one can't say on certain knowledge, but on the presupposition that the government would eventually move from Bonn to Berlin, and the embassy would move to Berlin. So missions, as they were then represented in Berlin in 1990, at the time of reunification, were offered the option of establishing embassy offices or consulates. We felt, organizationally speaking, that it would be better to establish an embassy office because it would be administratively easier, we wouldn't have to establish a consulate then disestablish a consulate, and go through all the paper work. About 50% of the missions went one way and about 50% went the other way. It worked out well because we were directly under the supervision of the embassy in Bonn, but we were what was called a separate reporting office. I think the other two at that time that had the same status were Hong Kong and Jerusalem.

Q: Again, your title there was what?

NIX: My title was something they created especially for the post and was called "Deputy Assistant Chief of Missions," because the office was an embassy office and was not headed by a consul general. It was headed by an assistant chief of mission. That was another title that was created especially for that post.

Q: Okay, anything else that we should say? Was that a three year assignment?

NIX: That was a four year assignment. I would say, for me it was an emotional culmination of my career because, as you can see from the rest of this Oral History, I started in Berlin as a young army officer, I married a lady from Berlin, who is still my wife, and of course to be there and go through the whole reunification process, and to be one of the first diplomats to travel extensively in Eastern Germany after 1990, was something I'll never forget.

Q: Okay, I think we have covered some of the observations about Eastern Germany, as well as the process that has taken place in Berlin, in previous conversations. It may have been an emotional culmination of your foreign service career, but in fact you did have another assignment or two. Where did you go from Berlin?

NIX: I had one more assignment before retirement. I returned to Washington and joined the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs as the Director of the Office of Program Management in that bureau.

Q: As Director of the Office of Program Management, were you particularly involved with anti-narcotics programs or other aspects of law enforcement?

NIX: I was almost 100% involved in narcotics. At that time, the bureau was divided into two broad divisions. One was working on international crime control, crime that affected

the United States and affected our interests. The other involved trying to stem the flow of narcotics to the United States by working closely with governments that had been designated as narcotics producing or transit countries.

Q: Was it primarily Columbia at that particular time?

NIX: In priority order, of course, it evolved primarily around Columbia, Peru, and Bolivia. I also had responsibility the first year for Asia and Africa, even though we didn't have a lot of resources to devote to those areas. We were engaged in diplomatic activities to try to create an effective counter-narcotics force in the key countries. Also, to do whatever we could at the diplomatic level, and with the limited amount of funds we had, to stimulate a more aggressive approach in each country toward stopping the narcotics traffic.

Q: I suppose one of the efforts that we did undertake was some training?

NIX: There was lots of training. We cooperated with drug enforcement administration, with customs, with commerce, and with the FBI. We were the focal point because, on an international level, all of the training initiatives have to go through the State Department. You have to approach the host government, you have to sign agreements, so even though we were not in all cases the providers of training, or even the funders of the training, we were involved in stimulating and supporting diplomatically, and suggesting, let's say, possible approaches to the training of host country security forces.

Q: Did this job involve a lot of travel or were you pretty much Washington-based?

NIX: There was considerable travel involved, but it was not all done by me personally. Under my control, I had various sections that dealt with different parts of the world, and we tried to get the chief of the section out to his countries of responsibility at least once a year, to review the programs in those countries. It was his or her job to agree with the embassy on the most obtainable objectives we could pursue in the next two to five year period. I traveled to Peru, Bolivia, Pakistan, India, the Caribbean, and Mexico for high level meetings. Mostly, my job was to stay in Washington and supervise and coordinate the efforts of others.

Q: Was (inaudible) narcotics a high priority at this point for the U.S. Government in terms of foreign policy, or did that come a little later?

NIX: I think it was extremely high priority. The only problem was, as so often happens in our government, there was a question of dwindling resources. There really wasn't enough money to tap into every effort. The Office of National Drug Control Policy, for example, had been cut back significantly during that administration and had a limited capability, primarily because of lack of personnel and resources to coordinate the government-wide drug effort. The DEA was very strong, the FBI was very strong, and all these agencies had plenty of money and resources. We were not always able to do things directly, but

had to forge an alliance or liaison with another government agency and try to get a coordinated approach with their support. The U.S. military was heavily involved in trying to stem the flow of narcotics, especially in Latin America. At that time we still had SOUTHCOM (Southern Command) in Panama - very heavily involved. I would go so far as to say it was their number one mission during the years I was associated with the bureau.

Q: How about high-level interest and support within the State Department, and also in terms of ambassadors and regional bureaus? Was this an uphill fight to give attention to this subject or was it recognized as a major problem?

NIX: Well, it's always a sensitive subject. Anytime you are in a so-called regional bureau, there is bound to be some conflict with the functional bureau. That is inevitable. Our objectives did not always coincide with the objectives of the regional bureau. However, I will say that I never met an ambassador in one of these countries that didn't feel this was a top priority. Whatever he could do within his resources, and within the context of the local political environment, he was always willing to do.

Q: Was there another office besides program management that was more involved in policy questions or multi-lateral activities in the anti-narcotics area?

NIX: We had a very small policy office that worked directly for the assistant secretary. Their function was more coordination with the Congress, coordination with the National Security Council, coordination on a very confidential and high level with the regional bureaus. They didn't really get involved with the nuts and bolts of managing programs in the countries that I've mentioned. We also had a training office that did all the nuts and bolts coordination of the many training programs that we were conducting in the United States. My office would get involved in the beginning. We would suggest the design of the training program, coordinate the activities in the country concerned, do the initial work on producing trainers in the United States, and then once we had an agreement in place, e.g., that 40 policemen from Colombia will come to the United States for an eight week course at DEA, then we turned it over to the training office and they took care of the funding to these people, picking them up at the airport and taking them to the training site and liaisoning with them while they were in the United States, and then getting them back home. They had another operation which overlapped into my area; the training office also had what was known as the air wing, which is located at Patrick Air Force Base in Florida, and has overseas operations in many Latin American countries.

Q: Were you involved with that?

NIX: I was involved with it in a policy sense, because the terms under which the aircraft could be deployed and operated in those countries were coordinated by my office through the narcotics coordinator at the embassy. All the narcotics coordinators in the various embassies basically reported to my office for functional guidance. Obviously, they worked for the ambassador in the country, but I provided their funds and policy support.

They got policy guidance from me, but the technical aspect of providing the aircraft and supporting the aircraft within the country was handled by the office of training.

Q: How about when we would put on a two-or three-week course in-country? This happened when I was in Ghana, I believe; the customs people came out and instead of doing it in the United States, it was done in-country. You would be involved in the concept and coordinating it and setting it up but then somebody else would actually do the training.

NIX: We would get involved in something like that from the very beginning, because there were budgetary implications, and if there were any funds to come from the State Department they had to come from my office. The way I would envision something like that occurring would be that the narcotics coordinator at the post would come up with the concept, clear it with the ambassador, and send it back to us. The regional bureau, let's say it was Latin America, and our bureau would look at it, if it would fit into the budget we would fund it, and then we would turn it over, e.g., to the Drug Enforcement Administration, and from that point on the Drug Enforcement Administration is free to coordinate directly with the embassy. The ambassador and the narcotics coordinator would then be their points of contact. They might keep us informed, but it would turn into a situation where the ambassador would be the one most directly concerned in making sure that the training was conducted in the country in a manner that was consistent with the overall objectives of that country.

Q: Who was the assistant secretary?

NIX: That was Bob Gelbard. I was going to mention that earlier, when you asked the priority accorded to narcotics, because obviously Ambassador Gelbard was one of our higher-ranking officers and most respected. He was glad to take this job, I think, because it offered a lot of scope for diplomatic activities. It needed a person who was very aggressive and who could push our objectives through the bureaucracy here in Washington, in order to counteract the inertia that sometimes forms when you don't have funds and you don't have a lot of centralized coordination at the inter-agency level.

Q: I'm sure that pushed people in the bureau hard, too.

NIX: Very hard. He's a taskmaster and we got a lot done because of him. He, of course, had been ambassador in Bolivia and knew Latin America very well. He was personally acquainted with many of the leaders in Latin America; spoke fluent Spanish and Portugese; was able to go to one of these countries or receive a visitor in the United States and communicate perfectly with them. I would say he was the ideal person to handle this job at that time.

Q: Now you came into the bureau in the summer of 1994 - how long did you stay there?

NIX: Two years. It was a two -year assignment. In those days, we were reducing strength

in the senior ranks, so it became obvious after one year that I was destined for retirement in '96, and there was no question of my moving on. I was just intent on doing my best in this assignment and then retiring.

Q: Is there anything else you want to say about this last two-year assignment?

NIX: Well, I would just say that a lot of things happened during those years that will have long-term implications for U.S. foreign policy. For example, since we are doing this interview at this rather far-removed date, I can say that during those years we started this program to shoot down narcotics carrying aircraft over Peru, and we see the tragic consequences that occurred recently when a missionary and her child were killed because of sloppy and inefficient practices that have crept into the program. The program was very controversial in the beginning. Many in the office were against it, but it had strong support in Congress and at the national level, so it went through. It would have worked fine if there had been closer day-to-day supervision of the practices that have obviously drifted astray, and I would doubt that it will ever be started again, and let's hope it's not.

Q: Were you involved in setting up the program?

NIX: Yes, yes, very much so, at a policy level. But this is one for which the main work was done by the policy office that we talked about earlier. What we had to do, in order to set up that program, was to make sure that it met the legal requirements of U.S. support for a program of that kind. There was a lot of work done in Congress, the National Security Council, and the Department of Justice to make sure that the terms under which we signed that agreement would meet legal requirements in the United States. I have no doubt that they do. What happened is - sloppy execution of those terms resulted in a real tragedy. I don't know if you have ever flown over Peru or not, but there is a lot of territory out there where planes can be shot down and lost forever.

Q: Okay, anything else from those two years?

NIX: That was one thing I thought was worth mentioning. The other thing that is still developing, which had its genesis in those years, is the big interest and obviously a national interest from the point of view of the United States, is trying to do something about international crime. That started basically in those years. FBI Director Freeh started traveling abroad, he and Ambassador Gelbard coordinated very closely in setting up law enforcement sections in many embassies, including Moscow. They would have an officer from our bureau - at least nominally from our bureau - an FBI agent, and other security people, and I just think it is interesting and a sign of the times that now this is one of the major foreign policy concerns and it basically dates from 1990, when the wall fell.

Q: In terms of coordination with the FBI and other law enforcement agencies of the federal government, certainly one of the things that happened with the FBI that you mentioned, generally, is the decision under Director Freeh to be much more on the ground, to have many more offices and embassies around the world. Were you involved

in that in those days?

NIX: Going back to one of our earlier conversations, I've forgotten if we covered this or not, but briefly, even if we did, in 1992, Director Freeh came to Berlin. I think it was his first major overseas trip after he was appointed. Ambassador Holbrook was our ambassador to Germany at the time. We established a forum for Director Freeh in Berlin, to speak about this new policy. In his seminal speech he outlined his concept for establishing this world-wide system of cooperation. Basically, he wanted to forge links with all the key countries, if possible or if necessary, put an FBI agent in those countries and start cooperating on a world-wide basis, because it was obviously an international problem to stop international crime. He came to Berlin, and went from Berlin to Moscow. Ambassador Gelbard and Director Freeh cooperated very closely on the establishment of law enforcement sections in embassies.

Q: Let me ask you about two countries that continue to be important in terms of things we are talking about. One is Colombia and the other is Pakistan. Do you have any observations or comments about either?

NIX: These are the horns of two major dilemmas that we have. Most of the cocaine that comes into the United States comes from Latin America. The coca is produced in Bolivia and Peru and processed in the jungle, then transported to Colombia, and from there through various routes to the United States. Most of the heroin that comes into the United States is produced in Northern Burma. It eventually passes, after being processed, through Pakistan (some comes from Afghanistan, as well), then by sea on a circuitous route to the United States, or through Iran, which is having a major problem with stopping heroine flow. In Colombia, we have had a major problem on many levels. Colombia is a corrupt environment. There is so much money involved the drug cartels have great power over many geographic sections of Colombia and over many segments of the population. We tried to address the problem in Colombia on different levels. We have had, over the course of the last ten years, a police director in Colombia who, we are absolutely confident, is honest, hardworking and determined to resolve the problem. We have thrown lots of resources in there. It is by far the biggest budget item we have in the counternarcotics environment. To be honest, we have not been able to make a major impact because the character of the country is so forbidding, and at the same time Colombia has undergone a civil war. Many parts of the country are not under government control. Eradication is ongoing there. Aerial eradication, spraying from the air to destroy the cocaine or the coca-growing plant, and to destroy the heroin-growing plant. They do have a poppy industry there now. That has had a somewhat limited success, and I really believe the only long-term solution in Colombia is to find a political solution so the government will be able to gain control of all these areas that are now under the control of the rebel armies and are pretty much wide open for the drug cartels to operate in. As far as Pakistan goes, we have had good cooperation. Pakistan has been a strong right arm for the United States in many areas, particularly in security cooperation. It's a question for Pakistan of geography. They just happen to be located exactly on the transmission route for the heroin that is produced in Afghanistan and Burma. Resources - it is a very poor

country and the geography again is forbidding. The infrastructure isn't there. I believe Pakistan will continue to try to cooperate with us, and the best way to try to solve this problem is to solve it at the source. The problems in the diplomatic area are bad; we have no relations with Afghanistan, and very poor diplomatic relations with Burma.

Q: Okay. Anything else we should [add]? Was there a bureau called LER?

NIX: No, INL. International Narcotics and Law Enforcement. It had been called INM before I arrived but after they established the Law Enforcement Section they called it INL. I think that covers it by-and-large. I think it remains a very important functional bureau in the State Department. Its budget has greatly increased since I left; I know the program in Colombia has been greatly expanded. I'm not in close enough touch to be able to evaluate whether it has a better chance of success now than it did in the days when I was there, but I'm sure we are not going to give up.

Q: So you retired in 1996 after how many years in the foreign service?

NIX: I had 25 years in the foreign service at that time.

Q: How many years in the military?

NIX: Fifteen years in the military. According to my retired ID card, total service is 41 years.

Q: You are wearing a shirt today from the American Embassy in Berlin?

NIX: Yes. The American Embassy is now located in Berlin.

Q: In your retirement years, besides playing golf, I know you go to Berlin.

NIX: I did work part-time for one year, after I left the State Department, with the Counter Terrorism Office, doing a project which involved the designation of terrorist organizations. Another law was passed to try to help us in our fight against international terrorism; basically, organizations designated by the Secretary of State supporting or engaging in terrorist activities have certain legal measures taken against their operations in the United States. Once organizations are so designated, the U.S. can control travel, prohibit fund-raising, impound funds, and take other measures. That was an interesting year, but since then I decided to devote myself to golf, travel, and my grandchildren.

Q: Those three priorities, I think, are reasonable ones. All right, lets stop here then, John. Thank you very much.

End of interview