

UZBEKISTAN

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MARY A WRIGHT Political Officer Tashkent (1991)

Ms. Wright was born in Durant, Oklahoma in 1946 and graduated from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. She has served in numerous posts including Managua, St. George's, Tashkent, Bishkek, Freetown, Palikir, Kabul and Ulaanbaatar. She was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

Q: Did you feel that personnel, as you were getting ready to leave, was a little more obliging by this time to what to do with you?

WRIGHT: No, the State Department personnel system wasn't obliging at all. When it came time for me to bid on my next assignment after Newport it was difficult. Anytime you're not in Washington, bidding is difficult. Washington is the best place to lobby. The next best place, I guess, are major embassies rather than smaller embassies. But being on one of these educational tours or on tours with other agencies, it's very hard to manage your career. Despite phone calls and trips to Washington, bidding was hard. I ended up assigned to the Bureau of Political and Military Affairs. On one level this assignment made sense because I was just coming from a military school. On the other hand, the job was in arms control and I had no background or interest in arms control.

So I ultimately got to Washington but in a roundabout way. Other things were happening in the world that diverted my arrival in Washington. With the breakup of the Soviet Union fifteen new countries emerged as former republics of the old Soviet Union. The State Department was starting embassies in all of these countries beginning in January or February of '91. I was in Newport when I heard that the embassies were opening up. I was so frustrated in Newport. I wanted to help open one of those embassies. So I started calling everybody that I knew in Washington to find out who was assigning people to these embassies. Miraculously, one of the key people in assigning personnel was our former general services officer in Managua, Nicaragua. John Sherbourn and I had numerous conversations about where I could fit into the staffing patterns. Initially John was looking for Russian speakers to go out as there was no time

to train anyone. The first teams were chosen generally based on language ability. So I said, “Well, John, you’re going to run out of the Russian language speakers real quickly, aren’t you?” and he said, “Well, we probably will.” I said, “Please put my name in the pot for once you run out of the Russian speakers. I want to be involved in this.” So John kept looking out for me and as I came out of the war college our new embassy in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, needed replacement officers and they were ready to take anyone – even Ann Wright who didn’t speak a word of Russian.

So I, a political officer, ended up going to Uzbekistan as an administrative officer. John said, “The political officer has to speak Russian. The admin officer doesn’t,” I said, “I’ve never been an admin officer,” and he said, “Well, it would do you good.” [laughs] And indeed it did me good because seeing how an embassy operates from the administrative side is critical. It’s a position that every Foreign Service officer ought to have to serve in. Just like you have to do a year of consular work, I firmly believe every Foreign Service officer should do at least one assignment in the administrative field. Then you know the complexities of embassy operations and the problems. Then you, as a political officer later on, won’t be causing needless problems for the admin section. [laughs] I got to go Uzbekistan, one of the most interesting and intriguing places of Central Asia, and a place that has been very important for the support of U.S. operations in Afghanistan.

Q: You were there from when to when?

WRIGHT: I was in Uzbekistan from July to October of ’91. I helped finalize the lease agreement for the chancery itself, helped lease the first housing that we had for embassy staff. I was involved in all the things that you have to do to set up an embassy. We trained the new FSN staff which was fascinating because you were training people that had never seen things U.S. and western equipment. We knew that the people we were interviewing for jobs were being sent to us by the Uzbek government. They were people that the Uzbeks wanted to be working in the embassy so they could report back to the government on what we were doing. Recognizing that reality and making sure that we had them trained in the way that we wanted them and have access to the information that we wanted them to have and not what others wanted them to have was challenging.

Security was a nightmare because none of the facilities for any of those embassies in the early days – at least the first six months – had any form of real security. We had to have our officers sleep in the embassies because we had no secure areas for classified materials. None had Marine guards. We had one little safe with very limited classified documents so you had to have somebody sleeping with the safe. Each day you watched the embassy grow. Day by day, there was a little more security, a little more finesse on the administrative issues. The political and economic officers were getting out and talking to Uzbek people. I got to go on several trips with our political officer as we wanted two officers when there was an opportunity to travel outside of Tashkent.

Q: What was Uzbekistan like in those days?

WRIGHT: It’s one of the most Muslim of all of the countries from the former Soviet Union.

Other countries of Central Asia are not as Muslim as Uzbekistan. For example, many of the people of Kyrgyzstan, a neighbor of Uzbekistan, are not Muslim. To be able to see the great mosques in Samarkand and the beautiful ikat materials, costumes and embroidered skullcaps of men with the skullcaps and ladies wearing the beautiful silk jackets was thrilling. Uzbekistan is a starkly beautiful country. Most of it is desert. However, even in the summer, the mornings were cool but by 10:00 AM, the heat would build up and by early afternoon, the sun was oppressive. Under the Soviets, Uzbekistan was used as the cotton producing republic. There was no concern for the environmental impact of turning the country into a cotton plantation. Huge rivers were diverted to irrigate the cotton crop. As a result the rivers that fed the Aral Sea were diverted and the Aral Sea has become an environmental nightmare.

Q: It's essentially dried up.

WRIGHT: It's dried up because of the irrigation that's come from it and the damming of the Amu Daria River, the two major rivers, to support the huge Soviet cotton industry. Still, there was a lot of agricultural production going along – fruits and melons that are famed throughout Central Asia that come from Uzbekistan. The government itself, though, was heavy-handed and has gotten more heavy-handed as political opposition developed. From the very early days of the embassy, we had difficulty with the government concerning movement of our own people around the country and of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) that wanted to come in and work. Representatives of the National Democratic Institute wanted to political development work in Uzbekistan. The government of Uzbekistan did not want to any seminars on political development, grassroots democracy. The first NDI representative was sent packing very quickly because of the strong “threats” of security thugs.

Q: Did you find, on the part of the people, interest in the United States?

WRIGHT: Yes, Uzbeks were fascinated to meet Americans. Most Uzbeks had never met Americans. Americans had not traveled in any great numbers through Central Asia during the Soviet era as you had to have special permission. But citizens of other western countries, European countries, had traveled through the region. When we as embassy staff would travel to other cities, we were welcomed with great Uzbek hospitality—a sheep, rice pilaf and lots of cups of hot tea.

RICHARD STOCKMAN
Retired Annuitant
Tashkent (1992)

Richard Stockman was born in 1940 in Kansas City, Missouri. He went to seminary at Cape Girardeau in Missouri, and was then drafted into the U.S. Army in 1963, where he spent most of his tour in Germany. Mr. Stockman entered the Foreign Service in 1966 as a communications specialist. He served in Brazil, Honduras, Singapore, Togo, Switzerland, Ireland, Saudi Arabia, Canada, and the Soviet Union. Mr. Stockman was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: Well, as long as I have you here, tell me a little about Tashkent. What was your impression? The Soviet Union has basically collapsed and some of its component parts have become independent states. What was your impression of Tashkent which was the capital of Uzbekistan and what you saw there and also how our very new embassy was operating there?

STOCKMAN: Well, as you can appreciate, for someone who had never worked or traveled behind the Iron Curtain, almost anything you do or see is an adventure. You arrive knowing very little about the assignment other than a few simple briefings that advanced teams can give you. You might pick up an atlas or some other type of informational guide to give you a clue before you pack or do anything else. But at any rate the initial reactions for me were very, very profound and unforgettable experiences. Tashkent was supposed to have been the fourth largest city in the Soviet Union. I really have my doubts after seeing Tashkent for ten weeks...June, July and August of 1992...I seriously have my doubts about its superpower status...the Soviet Union and Tashkent's role in it...judging by what I saw.

You arrive there after a very long trip, having overnights in Moscow. In those days all of us entered through Moscow and fanned out to the various independent states by way of Aeroflot. Well, of course, it is quite a shock to fly on Aeroflot. I don't care how experienced you are traveling, that is a unique experience.

Q: What's it like?

STOCKMAN: Oh, it is like no other airline in the world. I really think the kindest description you can give of Aeroflot is simply a wide bodied cattle car. They are not designed with comfort in mind or any of the amenities of life that we are accustomed to, as Westerners, as Americans. They are simply devices for getting huge numbers of people point to point at the cheapest possible cost. Some of the impressions I you got will last with me forever. It is a very impersonal experience. You find a seat and somehow as Westerners you seem to get the last remaining seats on this huge plane. They are not very clean, to put it mildly. They are not very comfortable. And I wonder how well they are maintained as far as safety goes. The tires, for example, looked very bald. The ride is okay. You are not about to be entertained on these flights in any form and you are not going to receive any kind of food or drink that you might expect on a normal airline. Consequently you are quite happy when you get there.

Eventually you get there. The only arrangement for housing was the Intourist Hotel where we stayed for ten solid weeks. Again the same type of experience that the former Soviet Union offered foreigners. The all over city of Tashkent, itself, is kind of unique. They had a major earthquake there in the late '60s. Apparently the entire city had to be completely rebuilt. It took the Soviets, they say, ten years to do that. Judging from the looks of things today, I don't think that they ever went back and remodeled anything. Soviet construction is quite a joke. A US seismologist passed through and took a few days look of the overall city and quickly reached the conclusion that if they were to have another major earthquake of the same proportions, 6 or 7 on the Richter scale, the same thing would happen all over again. In other words they didn't learn much from the previous experience.

Soviet construction per se is crude, it functions, it is not particularly esthetically pleasing and I really don't have much to say for it. An Intourist hotel might be a classic example of how not to do it. It works, more or less, but certainly is not comfortable. It is monotonous. It is just not a very pleasant experience. Food, drink, culture, customs...Tashkent is described as a moderate Moslem city. People are very sober. They dress very modestly. Nothing is flashy or stylish in their clothing. The food that is available is again pretty much the same type, very basic. You don't see very many over weight people there, which I think speaks for itself. I would expect that the diet is not exceptionally nutritious based upon what we were served in the Intourist hotel day after day. It is not very plentiful either. Meats and dairy products are almost nonexistent.

The city, itself, is kind of nondescript in the sense that it is not alive. You see huge, huge avenues laid out in typical Soviet style that would dwarf any US city. We would not be able to afford the luxury of taking such huge spaces for large avenues and underpasses for pedestrians. Many and most of these things were designed for two reasons. I think one to psychologically give the people a sense of openness because they were living in such congested, disagreeable apartments and when they got out into the open people had a sense of freedom. They typically have theaters, a building dedicated to annual circus visits, things of this nature that were all very socialist in design and intent.

You didn't really see what you see so commonly in America. For example, obviously you didn't see churches, because of the prohibition on religion. You didn't see building easily identified as schools. You didn't see hospitals as such. Yes you would see ambulances from time to time. You saw police and civil guards. Tashkent had more than its share of those. They were more readily visible in the government building area grounds for obvious reasons. But likewise they were very apt to stop motorists frequently and randomly one suspects more for bribes than anything else. Or maybe it was their only source of income. Who knows.

Tashkent, not unlike some other cities I have seen, are very dark at night. They are poorly lighted. It is very dangerous from a physical point of view to walk on their sidewalks at night because they have so many open holes and dangerous debris lying around. There is not the cleanliness and the upkeep of the buildings. There would be debris everywhere. Tashkent in its own right was far better and cleaner than other places that I have seen for whatever reason I don't understand. Maybe because there were the vehicles and crews to do these kinds of chores of maintaining some standard of living and hygiene.

You would go to open markets where the farming community would sell the products to the local community which was quite an interesting sight. The conclusion that I reached very quickly was that what was produced today is consumed today. Not much technology in terms of preservation which must obviously create great problems in the winter time. How do you survive in the winter? Some very basic questions from which you can draw obvious conclusions just by observing and watching and seeing what goes on. Everywhere you go in this part of the world, also there must be concern about the availability of fuel, whether it is for the few cars that are around or the planes in which you can get in and out of these places. It's becoming a real serious problem for all purposes...government, transportation, industrial production...the lack of vehicles, the maintenance of roads, the availability of fuel. The railroads that you do see, and I have noticed this now in two of the three countries I have been in, look poorly maintained. The equipment is

old, it is rusty, it is dilapidated. I don't think you could find anything similar to this anywhere in the US today, other than in a museum, perhaps. It is incredible.

Q: What was your impression of our embassy in Tashkent?

STOCKMAN: Well, this was my first experience in this program, working out here in these new CIS countries.

Q: CIS stands for?

STOCKMAN: At this point of time we used Commonwealth of Independent States.

Q: These are sort of the central Asian states including up through Georgia, too.

STOCKMAN: Yes, I think there is a total of 15.

Q: Really former Soviet states not including Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.

STOCKMAN: Right. In all probability we will only serve on this program for maybe three or four years total, five perhaps. Maybe they will eventually designate a permanent party. But, anyway, getting back to your point. This particular embassy superficially appeared to be a beautiful building, an ideal selected spot. It was obviously going to be an area in which the Uzbek government wanted the diplomatic missions who were coming to stay in. We were given a building which was originally supposed to be used for say a chamber of commerce or exhibition hall. As it turned out it was anything but functional. It actually had a fully furnished discotheque with refrigerators and everything in the basement of it. We had no real protective security means to cordon off that area. For security reasons in the beginning it was a nightmare. We didn't know who was down there, who would use it. We couldn't use it freely even for a luncheon facility. That is just one of the anomalies of this whole thing.

As you went into the building there was an atrium running up through 60 percent of the building from the main floor up to the ceiling with non-usable space. We were left with 40 percent of the building to use as an embassy which was just unworkable. No matter what operation you are talking about. Whether it was consular operations or GSO or communications, or USIS, or administration, it really didn't matter. The offices were tiny. In addition, from a physical standpoint of view, the building used the typical aluminum wiring, nothing worked. It was dangerous and easily set on fire. The engineering of it was very poor. The Brazilians have an expression that pretty well sizes it up. They say bonito mas ordinario , "cute but ordinary," and that was really it in a nutshell.

Q: What was the spirit of the embassy? Here was a brand new state and we were setting up things. Could you describe the feeling?

STOCKMAN: That is a very interesting question because you could ask the same question, of course, in each and every embassy in the 15 newly established places. I actually arrived there after it had been opened for about two and a half months. I was starting from scratch building

communications. Even the equipment had not arrived when I was first there. What did come in came in on support flights. But getting to your point and question, initially, of course, there was a tremendous problem in staffing these embassies. You can imagine being tasked with opening 15 embassies at one time. How do you start? Who do you choose? Language skills. Who is available? So somehow you get a team together, brief them and assure them that you will hold their hand and support them. So spirits are high. Volunteers are in some cases ambitious, some are just simply romantic, some are well prepared, and some are not prepared to even do the task that has to be accomplished.

I would say initially the personal relationships are really key to getting something going effectively. In this particular case, Tashkent, had such a high number in turnover, rotation of TDYers, that it was really painful to those few who were permanent party. They were tired of this constant turnover. They had no assurances that others would volunteer and become permanent party and quite honestly I don't think their expectations were very high. What they did see or were able to predict was not something that you really wanted to think about too long. In other words, we raised the flag, we opened the doors, a few of us knew what we were supposed to do and how to get it started. We have a cadre of FSNs who didn't even understand what an FSN was.

Q: FSN being Foreign Service National, local employees.

STOCKMAN: How these people were selected, cleared and hired god only knows. Obviously mistakes were made. Some of the wrong people may have been hired, some overqualified and unhappy in their jobs as well. They are looking to us for guidance and instruction as to what they are supposed to do not having the faintest idea what GSO stands for...

Q: General Services Officer.

STOCKMAN: You can appreciate this situation. In the case of Tashkent there were a few extra demands made upon us there, which eventually started to tax everyone's perseverance and patience. That was security requirements. The building was not in any shape or form whereby we could walk off in the evening and leave it unattended. We literally had to become Marine Security Guards there after hours. So we set up rosters. Everyone took their fair share. In other words from six in the evening until six in the morning we had American presence on the property. You did your fair share and there were only seven or eight of us there so your duty came up pretty regularly.

There was another problem, the roof was leaking on this new building and it had to be repaired. Well, from a security point of view you can not let a lot of foreign workers on the top of the embassy unattended or unaccompanied. So we had to climb up the side of the building in the hot sun, sit up there and roast with them and do duty on the roof. But not everybody could do this. Some had fear of heights and were afraid to go on the roof. So it seemed like you could not find enough time to do your real job, the job you were sent out there for.

And then too, I think, older, more experienced people realized that they would have to do a little bit more than they were sent out there to do. They have to be leaders. They have to show a little

bit of initiative, motivation and all of those things you would expect of older people. Younger people, if they were not well prepared before coming out there, had to be baby sat. Then there was the language problem. Not everybody could speak Russian. So that became a problem. There were just many logistical problems. You would run out of this or that. Something as simple as a stapler, or paper for a laser jet printer. Something you would take for granted anywhere else. Or the fuses or lights would go and you couldn't find any replacements. This or that wouldn't work. Or the drivers would go off and disappear and leave you stranded at night. What do you do? Hitchhike, take the subway, or what? It was always something new. Or you would go to the airport to pick up some diplomatic pouches. No one had ever done this, so how do we do this? Or how do we pay for these pouches? No one knew how to do it. There was no form. They didn't know how much to charge you for excess baggage. Every time you turned there was a new problem or new question that nobody could answer and therefore nothing happened. And on and on it went.

I would say that most could enjoy the challenge for about six weeks and then a combination of things would start to set in and you would say, "Well, how many more days do I have to go?" And maybe the next person who came in would have a few more answers. But you kept looking for continuity, but you wouldn't always find it. I think it was painful in the administrative cone. The other officers...there was usually only one officer for each responsibility and some officers had to double up doing political/econ reporting. Those who were qualified in languages had extra duties because they had to help be interpreters all the time and their patience would get thin some times.

But I think overall most people seriously enjoyed the challenge, but they knew that the only way to get this off the ground eventually was to get a permanent party cadre established there, and that was not easy to do.

HENRY L. CLARKE
Ambassador
Uzbekistan (1992-1995)

Ambassador Clarke was born in Georgia in 1941. He attended Dartmouth College and enlisted in the US Army. He later entered Harvard University and then entered the Foreign Service. His career included positions in Germany, Nigeria, Romania, the USSR, and Israel. He was later appointed Ambassador to Uzbekistan. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: *Uzbekistan and Tashkent. You were there from '92 to when?*

CLARKE: To '95.

Q: *How about Senatorial agreement? Any problems there?*

CLARKE: That was the [most pleasant] experience I had in Washington actually. Getting

through the personnel system and out to post through the Department can be extremely frustrating and irritating. Especially if you've got a new post, you're trying to get things organized. It's not always supportive. Amazingly, the hearing was a piece of cake. It was organized.

They decided, under some pressure from State, to get us out there. We had, as I recall, nine ambassadors-designate, all five for central Asia plus four more for Moldova and Georgia and Azerbaijan and Belarus.

Harry Gilmore was summoned for Armenia at the last minute and his name did not get up on the hill and he lost the best part of a year. It was a good example of the unresponsiveness of our good constitutional government to appointing an ambassador when you need one. But the rest of us went through in more or less record time. All of these other guys had been at post as Chargé, which is very unusual for U.S. government practice. I had not. I thought probably I was going to be at a bit of a disadvantage, but it didn't turn out that way at all. It was very easy to anticipate the kinds of problems that had come to the attention of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and to be briefed on those. But the average amount of diplomatic service among our group was over 20 years.

Every candidate spoke at least one language of the country he was going to, and every country had two languages, Russian and whatever was the language of the majority ethnic population. Most of us were Russian speakers, but there was one who came speaking Romania for Moldova, and Dari or something for Tajikistan.

Q: *Farsi.*

CLARKE: Farsi. Stan Escudero was a Farsi speaker. He had served in Iran before the hostage period and was able to get by in Tajik pretty well with that. Consequently the Senators were really kind to us. I was asked, of course, about human rights in Uzbekistan, even by my old former roommate Senator Larry Pressler, who asked me a few questions. He'd been in Uzbekistan during that summer and seen one of the dissidents who'd been beaten up within a few yards of the general prosecutor's office, which was a real scandal. Even he was not as hard on me as he might reasonably have been. So I felt that we were given an opportunity to say a few useful things for the record. We got a speech by Senator Biden at the end about the coming importance of drugs in Central Asia. We met as a panel of five for Central Asia and then there was a separate session for the other four. On Central Asia, Biden really held forth on drugs and very effectively.

I have often since had occasion to think this is the way senators do play a role. They have one shot at you before you even go out, in which they can say for the record an awful lot of what's important to them. Surprisingly, considering the number of other hearings I've been to for ambassadors, they don't always take that approach. They don't come with an agenda. They come with a few sorry questions prepared by their staffs, some of them petty, some of them serious. But Biden came with a speech, and it turns out he was before his time. The extent of drug trafficking then was nothing like what it is now. We have not found the mechanism to stop drug trafficking. Maybe nowhere, but certainly not there.

So that went relatively smoothly. We were sworn in promptly thereafter. I went out to post a little faster than the others because the others wanted to take a bit of a break since they had already been out there. Whereas the government of Uzbekistan had been complaining that we had been changing Chargés every 40 days or so for the past six months, suddenly they found that the first full fledged ambassador in the region to show up was me. They took that as flattery whereas in fact it was pure coincidence.

Q: Could we talk first about opening up these posts, because it's important? Talk about the housekeeping arrangements and then talk about policy.

CLARKE: I'm delighted because never at any post is the administrative function so important as at a brand new one. Inevitably I had to get involved in that. I benefited a lot from some of the work done by the TDY people that had been out there before. Maybe I should mention one of those housekeeping things that we had started out with 100 percent TDY staff. Temporary Duty people were dispatched from Moscow or from Washington or from wherever they could find a Russian speaker and sent them out there. This included the entire staff.

They set up a model Embassy which they rubber stamped across the map of the former Soviet Union. You were going to get something like five Foreign Service officers and a communicator and then the other agencies varied from zero to one in the people they provided. I was told right from the start, we know this won't work in Tashkent. We understand that Uzbekistan is bigger than that. It's not going to work in Kazakhstan either. You know we're going to have to expand, but we put this package together to get the process started. So, much of what I did for three years there was to manage the development of the post, to build up those things that were really essential and to keep out the foolishness to the extent possible so that we wouldn't be hampered by underemployed people.

I tried to tailor the staffing to the overall U.S. government objectives there. This concept met with a resounding thud in Washington, which is just not accustomed to running staffing on the basis of U.S. objectives at all. We had a whole process of policy analysis that's supposed to be matched by logistical support, personnel and budget and all that. But it hasn't worked in the past, and it certainly didn't work during the three years I was there. But I had a certain amount of control as Chief of Mission, over who didn't come to post. Even if I couldn't really reach out and get who I wanted every time, I could at least stop the foolishness, and I could plead for the resources that I needed.

Q: When you say stop the foolishness, can you give some ideas of agencies or organizations that wanted to put people in place there that seemed inappropriate?

CLARKE: Yes. The United States has a number of different intelligence agencies that operate at different levels of secrecy. I'm not going to go into a discussion of who did what to whom because it would still be classified and justifiably so. All I want to do is make a few generalizations that I think are fair and shouldn't be classified.

One is that despite the end of the Cold War, intelligence agencies still had vastly greater

resources for staffing people overseas than did the non-intelligence agencies such as State, USIA, or Commerce. So there was pressure to put people out there representing different agencies and in some cases, it's not clear what they would usefully do. I was even concerned there were things they would be doing that I didn't even want them doing. I can give one example because it's really changed now and it doesn't hurt, I think, to mention the background.

Just as State Department had a cookie-cutter approach to establishing these posts, so did the Defense Department. They had an idea of a package DAO (Defense Attaché's Office) for nearly every post, which would consist of two officers and an NCO (non-commissioned officer), and five vehicles, and six refrigerators and on and on and on and on and on. There were even rumors that they had bought all this household equipment and had it stored in a warehouse waiting for housing to become available to move it in. I took a quick look around at my ability to support other agencies. We had to be in a position to support other agencies. DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency) does not supply people to find housing or to equip them or to move people in and out. It doesn't do any of this stuff. It depends entirely on State. We only had a couple of resident defense attachés in Tashkent. They had no access and practically nothing to do.

The Turkish defense attaché told me as he was leaving after two years that it was probably the worst couple of years he'd spent in his career because there was nobody to talk to. He was the defense attaché whose embassy had been designated as the spokesman for NATO in Uzbekistan. So it was not clear to me on the diplomatic side what our defense attaché would do. It seemed from the traffic we were getting from that agency that what they were hoping people would do is continue more or less the role they played from Moscow and Leningrad during the Soviet period. Mainly going out, doing traditional intelligence functions, taking pictures of the local military, trying to put them on our payroll. So I told them no.

We had a defense attache in Moscow. An assistant defense attaché up there was accredited as defense attaché in Tashkent. He would come down and have a couple of relatively superficial meetings. We never managed to get senior officers from the military to come to a dinner party for these guys. Often they did not see anybody at, for example, the level of defense minister. I couldn't get to see the defense minister. So my conclusion was Uzbekistan might or might not want to have an American defense attaché, but they certainly weren't going to let him do any work. I didn't want an underemployed, field-grade officer coming into my office every day with nothing better to do than express his frustration, because I had other things that I needed to do. We needed to set up the usual range of diplomatic relations so that we had contacts with agencies across the board and throughout the government.

Instead, we had a full fledged USIA operation there. For the first time since relations with the Soviet Union began, we had an opportunity to run a press information program. So I was anxious to build up the USIA function and all these open, outreach type functions of the Embassy. I was not anxious to build up the snoop and poop staff, especially not to a level where they outnumbered legitimate diplomats. I'm not going to describe any further agency attempts to expand their staff. This was the most high profile one and ultimately this got turned around. In 1994 I had a meeting with President Karimov when he criticized the U.S. for not supporting Uzbekistan's independence sufficiently. I said, "Well sir, I don't even have access to your defense minister. I can't get to see anybody on security issues. How do you expect me to be able

to support you?" I told him why there was no Defense attache. I told him we did support Uzbekistan's independence, but I did not see that it had any practical importance to Uzbekistan.

He looked a little shocked. It later turned out that somebody on his staff felt as a matter of policy that the Americans should not be allowed to meet with all these people and that was the policy. After that, I had access to the defense minister, and he confirmed that the Presidential staff had blocked our contacts. We began having visits with Pentagon officials who came over. We got access to a few of their bases for more or less ceremonial and introductory purposes. The situation began to turn around. By the spring of '95 when Defense Secretary Perry made a quick stop in Tashkent, I was ready to agree to a defense attaché. They got one out on a TDY basis right away. By that time we had some content in our military-to-military relationship. So there was something for this guy to do besides try to see how close he could get to a training area and count tanks. That's what I was looking for. I felt I was quite successful there, although I'm sure there are people over in DIA who will never understand this. Nevertheless, that was the right thing to do.

At the same time, I couldn't get USIA to fill a position they'd already established in Tashkent. We had one officer, and I wanted a second one, and it was all a battle. They didn't feel Uzbekistan ought to have the level of priority that it should have a second officer. That was a major mistake, and it involved some real missed opportunities.

Q: What about the embassy staff itself and their living quarters? How were these?

CLARKE: Actually this varied from post to post in the former Soviet Union. We lucked out in that we were offered a building that was allegedly a young businessman's club. In fact, it was built to be a young communist club, but then communism went out and so it got renamed. It still was not finished, but when the deadline of mid-March came up and the building was agreeable to the U.S. government, before I got there assuredly, they rushed it to completion and turned it over. So we were the first occupants in that building.

Over the period of my three years there, I tried to set everything in motion so that we could buy that building as opposed to renting it, because it needed major improvements and I wanted to improve property we owned rather than property we leased and then just have to pay higher rent for it. That was my approach. I felt we were going to be in Tashkent for a long time. With rapidly inflating real estate prices but which had started at a very low base, we should have been buying property, because there was no chance that we would get any smaller. So that was one of the housekeeping projects that I and my administrative officer had to push more or less the whole time I was there. The work that we set in motion resulted in buying the embassy and the house that I found for the Chief of Mission residence and some other houses as well.

But when we first got there, we didn't have any housing. Tashkent, more than almost any other major city in the Soviet Union, had a lot of small individual houses that were similar to village style farmhouse construction by Uzbek standards. But they had been upgraded with running water and electricity and so forth. Most of them had little courtyards so they provided us a modest-sized house, but with a yard.

One of my decisions, which I think most of the staff really supported, was that we should try to find enough housing of that sort, individual houses out in the community – the residential communities – in Tashkent, to house most of our people. I wasn't opposed to finding some apartments, but I had had so much unfortunate familiarity with Soviet apartments in Moscow that I just could not believe that was ever going to be a profitable route. Maybe for a TDY apartment or if a single person moved into a first class apartment, something could be worked out there. Some people would maybe prefer the greater security of an apartment if they were single.

So my preference was for family housing in these individual houses, which I knew many of the other new posts just didn't have enough of. Because of that, I did not encourage the Department to build anything in the way of housing where we were.

The main problem we had was finding houses in such a condition that Americans would be willing and able to live in them. We got a WAE – While Actually Employed former GSO to come over and screen houses. He saw about 40 houses. Out of that ratio he found about two that were usable. But TDY people had found some already before I got there. Most of those houses turned out to be very useable and as far as I know, are still in the housing inventory, on either a purchased or leased basis. Since we often had to upgrade the electrical and other basic facilities, it paid to own the houses. There is no danger we will lose if we ever have to sell.

I initially stayed in a Dacha area and so did several others on the staff. It was really a kind of a VIP guest area on the outskirts of town. These had been for Communist party visitors during the Soviet period. They had individual houses that we moved into, but in a deteriorating condition. They were inevitably part of a Socialist organization and the power that had been there to make sure a VIP place was presentable was no longer effective. They were very expensive to rent, very expensive, so we set about trying to get out of them.

I was particularly pessimistic about finding a decent house in which an ambassador might entertain. I looked at a number of unsatisfactory possibilities. Some of them were expensive, some not so expensive. But, luckily, my administrative officer found, and I agreed to, a house that was under construction and almost finished. It hadn't been lived in yet. It was being built privately. It was a two-story house, which was very unusual for those days in Tashkent. Now it's very common. They're building more and more. But in the Communist period, a second story was considered ostentatious so it didn't usually happen. When I got it, it was probably the only residence any foreigner had that had two bathrooms on the second floor. It had space for a family or in my case since the family was not there, visitors, to sleep upstairs and then a downstairs that was really usable for entertaining, if not huge groups of people. People asked me about it and said what a wonderful house, it must be fantastic and so forth. I said, "Yes, it's just about as good as the house I had as DCM in Bucharest, Romania a few years ago." That was indeed a very good house, the DCM house, yet this was similar to that. I could have a reception. I could have a fairly substantial dinner. I could meet with a few people in a smaller room.

It had 25 amp circuits. Most of the circuits in the other houses we were finding were nine amps. Nine amps means that if your refrigerator motor goes on while you're trying to vacuum the floor, chances are you blow the fuse. Thus many houses had to be rewired if we decided we wanted to

keep them. But not this house. It was extremely well constructed. We had a lease-purchase arrangement on that which the owner was very glad to sell and it just took us years to get through the bureaucracy in Washington to the point where we could actually put up the money and buy it. I believe that's been done now. That's probably more than you wanted to hear on housing, but these were all very time consuming tasks.

Q: In '92 to '95 what was the government of Uzbekistan?

CLARKE: The government throughout that period and still today is headed by Islam Karimov, who had been the Communist party first secretary prior to independence and who got himself reelected before I arrived with an 86 percent majority. When I first arrived, they were in the process of working out and publishing a draft constitution which later became the constitution and provided for a parliament. So a number of forms of democracy were being put into place. But the content was often missing. It was still a top-down directed organization. The Communist party was gone. Karimov ruled his country through the government apparatus, not through the Communist party apparatus.

The distinction was important to Soviet specialists maybe, but it was a distinction which unfortunately I could never get the Department to make in the human rights report. That constantly talked about Karimov running the country through his private party, but nobody even knew what that was. The party was relatively unimportant in management. But he did run the country through the governmental organizations. So it was a post- communist but not yet a reformed government. The economy likewise. There had been some moves toward – I think important steps – toward reducing government control in the economy, but that was an issue as well for me throughout the three years there.

Q: What were American interests there at that time?

CLARKE: I think our overwhelming interest, and the reason probably that Baker said we had to have an embassy in every one of those countries, was that we cared about where the former Soviet Union went and what would happen to it. Would it remain a group of independent countries or would it somehow be reunited as a new empire? So from the very beginning, an important feature of our interest was what were the Russians doing in Central Asia? The Russians were, of course, doing a lot because they had been running the place and it was a hard habit to give up. So I think that was very important to us. The core idea was that we really did feel that the independence of these countries would ultimately be more stabilizing and more positive in terms of the development of a new world order than unwilling forcible reunification or collapse or who knows what else. So we did support the independence of these countries even though there was lots to be desired in the specifics.

As a general approach we were very consistent, and we did support their independence. We felt their independence would probably not last unless they developed relatively effective economies. For us this means a free market economy and some sort of democratic system that would enable them to go through governmental changes without collapse.

Our European colleagues and others would sometimes chide us a bit on this. “What do you mean,

you are bringing democracy to Central Asia. Come on! You know, you've got two traditions going against that. Both the Soviet tradition and the tradition that existed before that. It was not hospitable to democracy."

Be that as it may, nobody has come up with a better long run answer. So even today, we are still pushing those same goals.

Q: During this period I spent three weeks in Kyrgyzstan and there it was very obvious that the Kyrgyz had been essentially net beneficiaries of Soviet rule. The Soviet-Russians had put more into Kyrgyzstan than they had taken out, but they left a lot of white elephants – helicopter factories, and other things and the Russians were beginning to move out. Economically, where did Uzbekistan stand vis-à-vis the Russians when you saw it?

CLARKE: First of all, what you say was probably true of Kyrgyzstan. It would also be true of what the Russians thought of Uzbekistan. Nevertheless it is an issue. Was more put into Uzbekistan than was taken out? It's not an issue I would find easy to analyze. The numbers are not available. The prices are all wrong. It's just tough to say. It is probably true that all of Central Asia was surprised by the collapse of the Soviet Union. A bunch of the world was surprised, and Central Asians thought the Soviet Union was a pretty powerful entity. Nevertheless, the Uzbeks, at least, were very much in favor of independence. Economic factors were certainly not least in that. Uzbeks really did feel they had been ripped off a lot. They had had a long running battle with the Russians from the Brezhnev period through the Gorbachev period over corruption, the cotton crop, and other economic issues which had lined up Moscow against the majority of people in positions of power in Uzbekistan.

This had started with a cotton scandal in which the Soviet Union was reporting that six million tons of cotton were being produced in Uzbekistan whereas the actual number was not over four. There was a 50 percent phony increase in the output. I do not know where everybody thought these other two million tons were. This is not something that you can slip under the rug. But inflation of the statistics was built in throughout the system, from the field throughout the entire production and transportation system to the top totals for the country. All the errors aggregated to the point where it was 50 percent off. Amazing. That's a world class scandal. I've never heard of anybody being fooled to that extent before. When the scandal broke, everybody began trying to find out where the money was going that was paying for this cotton crop. It really was a long, drawn out issue through the '80s. I had seen signs of it beginning during my assignment in Moscow in the early '80s. But the bitter parts of it occurred after that and during the Gorbachev period. So Uzbek relations with Russia in the late Soviet period were not all that positive.

The economy was seriously misoriented, distorted, by the central planning system. This happened elsewhere in the former Soviet Union but probably nowhere more dramatically than Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan was supposed to produce cotton. It was under the kind of pressure to produce cotton that meant you couldn't even rotate the crops. By the eleventh year of growing cotton in the same irrigated field, the production was far below what they were reporting it to be. It couldn't be greatly improved. The methods used involved enormous amounts of water from the mountains of the Eastern part of Central Asia, channeled into irrigation through the Central part of Central Asia. What water was left, which was increasingly bad quality, went into the Aral

Sea, which had no outlet and which was busy drying up. Central planning of Uzbekistan produced a lot of cotton, but it was ruining the fields, the water, and started ruining the climate and health around the Aral Sea.

Another major product, gold, is one of the reasons that people like President Karimov considered the Russians were ripping them off: the gold was taken out of Uzbekistan. Karimov said when he was Finance Minister of Uzbekistan during the Soviet period, he did not know how much gold, by value or by quantity, was being taken from Uzbekistan. He was not allowed to know. It was secret from the world and from Uzbeks. Uzbekistan has the world's largest open pit gold mine in Zaravshan. The whole town was a closed area, as well as the pit.

You had an economy developed mainly on certain primary production in mining and in agriculture. They did produce fruits and vegetables that were shipped off in refrigerator cars to Russia. There were other things being produced. But those were the major items.

Q: One hears about this cotton crop, how with the use of fertilizer and overproduction and lack of maintenance of the soil that it turned the place into almost a polluted desert.

CLARKE: In some cases the desert did get polluted. In other cases they just used increasing quantities of water to try and flush out the soils. The water was then used over and over again on its way to the Aral Sea and the runoff became increasingly concentrated with the excess fertilizer they were using and herbicides they were using in the picking process and even defoliants and pesticides as well. So it was a pretty unholy mess that was reaching the Aral Sea.

Q: While you were there, was this a problem that we felt we had to help work on?

CLARKE: Yes, it was. But with some modesty I would say that, because it's pretty clear that this whole question of irrigation is an integrated issue for the whole Central Asia watershed. There are two major rivers, both of which wind up in the Aral Sea and both of which go partly through Uzbekistan, but the rivers either originate in, or pass through all five of the Central Asian countries. So without a cooperative solution among all five, no solution is really conceivable.

We realized that the whole land-use issue, the agricultural technology and so forth were wrapped up together and had to be addressed together. It wasn't originally my idea, but I certainly warmly endorsed it, that the World Bank was the one institution in the whole world with the most expertise on how to manage river basins and combine questions of agriculture and health and all in a multi-disciplinary way. In other words, this was a terribly difficult problem of misplanning. This was not something that depended just on market forces. There was a limited amount of water. It was already all in use. The question was what could you do about it.

First, there was the question, should you try to save the Aral Sea? Was that an objective? Why do you need clean water going into the Aral Sea if you need this water to support this huge population? We took the approach that the World Bank should take the lead on the larger problem. But I felt that the United States should have at least a modest program to alleviate the most damaging human effects of this disaster in the Aral Sea region. It was a test of our humanitarian policy. If we wanted to have a humanitarian policy, and we only had limited

resources, we should probably try to address a piece of one of the fundamental problems and see if we could make a difference there. AID agreed with that, but they were somehow also hung up in viewing this in a big global way and were not prepared to turn that function over to the World Bank entirely. We supported several conferences, and I'm not sure that our very limited funds were always used in the most effective way. But we did start very modest health and water treatment programs in the Aral Sea region. The Germans also were involved and helped with medical equipment in the region. I think the presence of these two countries trying to do something was very valuable in helping remind the Uzbeks that we were interested in their general welfare.

These were not big aid programs. They were technical assistance. How to run existing water treatment plants so that they actually did produce water that was drinkable, for example. To some extent that was by upgrading their laboratory apparatus so they could tell what quality water was coming out. They had a system there based on Soviet analytical equipment; it took so many days to finish the analysis that by the time the test results came back, it was a quite different bit of water that was going down the pipes. The water did change from seasonal variation and whatnot. By varying the treatment technique, you could definitely improve the quality, if you knew what the water needed. You had to do that on more of a real time basis. So we got into that.

I made a special trip up to the Aral Sea just to make sure it got a little more public attention than it would have otherwise. I don't know if that was the world's best conceived trip. I was amazed. That experience and many, many others in Uzbekistan made me a believer that we are not as adept as we should be in public diplomacy. People don't know what in the world we are up to overseas half of the time, so what we do is not always effective. It was hard to get it started in Uzbekistan. It may be that in other Third World countries where we were long and well established, we managed to solve this public diplomacy problem better. Despite having important resources left over from the Cold War for public diplomacy, we're not really getting the best mileage out of it. The rest of our assistance, whether in the form of exchanges or in technical assistance, we directed toward the reform process as much as we could.

Q: When you say the reform process, what do you mean?

CLARKE: By attempting to introduce market economy and democratic practices, often through exchanges. Exchanges were the most effective method in many ways, often by taking officials in key positions and sending them to the United States to see how what they were doing in Uzbekistan could be done in a free market situation. Or by stationing advisors in Tashkent to work with these guys there. In many cases, I feel the exchanges were more important because the person coming back from the exchange could see how to apply what he learned. First of all, we're good at exchanges in the U.S. The people coming back could develop their own ideas on how to adapt techniques to their local situations, whereas advisors coming in to Uzbekistan were often hard to take seriously and very easy to overrule politically. But we felt we needed both. In an ideal situation, we would have a few people benefiting from exchanges and then other people in advisory positions.

Q: I got the feeling from talking to people there, and I saw just a little bit of it in Kyrgyzstan, but

the people who have been there, that the whole former Soviet Union, including the Russian part, was deluged with people from Harvard, from Slippery Rock State teachers. I mean all these advisors coming. If they were cheese advisors, all of a sudden they would arrive in a place with no cows, but you got wonderful ideas about how to set up cheese producers. Did you find that there was a problem with a lot of superfluous advice?

CLARKE: No, I didn't. That's partly because our experience was very different from Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan was viewed in Washington as the bright star. Every time I reflected on what sort of a person President Akayev was, I couldn't fit him into my view of Central Asia. That a person of his qualities existed in Central Asia was no surprise to me. The surprise was that he was president of a country. It was as if he had stepped off of a spaceship or something. How did this guy get to where he was? The other thing is that Kyrgyzstan is really small compared to Uzbekistan.

Q: Four million.

CLARKE: And we had 20. The economic strength of Uzbekistan contrasts sharply with the relative weakness of the mountain countries of Central Asia, like Kyrgyzstan.

Q: They had a lot of water and that's it.

CLARKE: I didn't mention it earlier when we were talking mainly about primary production, but during World War II, a number of industries were moved to Tashkent, especially the city of Tashkent, but also elsewhere in Central Asia and reassembled there, with their same machinery and same work force hauled from Central Russia. These had become part of the Soviet production system and were therefore constantly modernized and over the years expanded. So we had a full fledged aircraft factory covering several square miles of territory in Tashkent, producing aircraft.

Back to your question about advisors running all over the place. Because Kyrgyzstan was viewed as inspired and undergoing rapid reform, it was at the top of the list of priorities for every advisory body that might be available and the Kyrgyz were apparently inclined to accept most of these offers. They were really trying to build up the U.S. relationship. So they were pouring in. I did hear, before I left Tashkent, that we were beginning to question whether these guys were falling all over each other in Kyrgyzstan.

Kazakhstan was second priority, I would say. And Kazakhstan was arguably of greater strategic importance for a variety of reasons. We could pour our resources into Kazakhstan, and you might never notice because with 16 million or so people and a huge territory, they could be spread out.

Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan were generally viewed in Washington as recalcitrant Communist countries where it was difficult to do anything and therefore undesirable to try. So every program we had was to encourage reform, but getting started was pulling teeth. I made the argument over and over again, these people were not going to reform unless they had an idea of where they were going and why. They did not come into independence with a home grown body

of scholars who knew anything about the outside world. Any such scholars they had tended to gravitate to Moscow where they were available to Gorbachev but not to Tashkent.

If we wanted to have a reform impact, we had to have programs or activities that would educate the government. It was true enough they were committing human rights violations. But some Uzbek leaders did realize that there was a need for changes; they just didn't know basically what to do.

Fortunately, although USIA funding for exchanges was declining, AID basically accepted the idea that exchanges could work in Uzbekistan. So that was probably our most important, as well as maybe our most effective, influence on the reform effort. But that took people out of Uzbekistan for significant periods of time. We couldn't always get exactly the people we wanted but AID and USIA, I think, were both very satisfied with the quality of people that were being made available for these exchange programs. Often well educated, younger people, but of course educated in the Soviet system. The numbers of people they could identify and that we could send were significant.

But we were not so successful in placing advisors. My effort to find a personal economic advisor for Islam Karimov when he asked for one went on for months, and in the end I think we have to conclude that Karimov changed his mind. When we finally got a really good guy to come to Tashkent, he did not have access to the president, and he really did not have the kind of impact that we had all imagined he could have. That was really too bad. But it was an example, I think, of how I saw our job there, which was we don't know what's going to work there. We don't know very much about Uzbeks. We know the role they played in the Soviet Union but we don't really know, if left to themselves, who they really are or what they are about or how to relate to them effectively. So we've got to try different things. If they ask for an advisor, we ought to try to see if we can find one that will somehow connect. Then if it doesn't work, ok. You know we'll try it for a while and try something else next time. So we were in a trial-and-error effort.

I felt, and I still feel, that we had a window of opportunity, including my period there, in the first few years of independence of Uzbekistan, in which we could expect the Uzbeks to take an experimental approach and try some things and see if they worked. We had to promote reform then. If we were going to wait for the Uzbeks to reform themselves, to the point where we felt easy dealing with them, as happy clients as opposed to difficult clients – if we were to wait for that, it would probably never come. By then they would have lost all confidence that we had anything to offer. So we kept trying different things, and some of them worked. Some of them didn't. Some of them worked despite odds against them, we later discovered, simply because personalities on the Uzbek side wanted them to work. Some of them failed despite having every apparent reason for success, simply because we put them in an organization or working with a group of people that were just totally resistant to what they had to say.

Unfortunately, for example, there was a deputy prime minister who was put in charge of privatization. We got some very good advisors on privatization to come to Uzbekistan to teach based on experiences in Poland, and Czechoslovakia and elsewhere, how this might be done in Uzbekistan. They had some modest success. They were not a total failure, but in the end, it became clear that this deputy prime minister was not going to allow very much real privatization

to happen. We also had a fear that if he did come through, that it would not be a transparent process. It might suffer from corruption, as has happened with a lot of privatization in other parts of the former USSR.

Q: It ended up being basically in the hands of colleagues of the people in power.

CLARKE: We felt that was a major risk. I did too after dealing with this guy. I felt that he was a representative of the old school, in which candor and honesty were just not part of the transaction.

Q: When you think of Tashkent and Samarkand, major centers of commerce, you think of Middle Eastern bazaar type entrepreneurs. Was there any of that entrepreneurial spirit left?

CLARKE: Yes, there was. One of the smart things that the government did, which was hardly noticed in Washington, was to start privatization by simply turning over a lot of the little retail or small producing operations in the economy to the people who were working there. In some cases where the people who were working there were one family, the result was, a little private business got started.

In others, where there was a workers collective, what you got was something like the Yugoslav model where the workers could get together and vote on who should be in the management and that sort of thing – a model which does not generally follow market principles very well. But, it is still probably better than a state-owned company, especially in small-scale production, because at least they would know something about their business and how to make it prosper. There was always the possibility these would gradually approach the free market model as managers were allowed to run them more intelligently.

The other thing that they did early on, they privatized apartments. They did it in a very strange way and with a certain amount of hesitation. For a while, they wouldn't allow you to sell your apartment because they were embarrassed that you could sell it for so much more than you paid for it. There was a sort of socialist reluctance there, but they committed themselves, and the result was an awful lot of additional housing became really private in Uzbekistan. The makings for a real estate market were there.

The small businesses would be really booming except for the fact that like Russia, there were still too many government agencies around without a role to play except harassing these newly private organizations. The number of bribes they had to pay, the amount of taxes they had to pay were in many cases, really crushing. So they have not been able to grow in the way small business tended to grow in Europe and America in the 19th and 20th centuries. In some places, governments recognized this and local governments did their best to scrap the old control commissions and other groups of people who preyed on these vulnerable small businesses. But that also meant reforming the tax system and recognizing how large the problem was, transforming central planning and central control of finance into a decentralized economic system with taxation.

That was a long and sad story which I hope someday will be described in detail by those who took part in it and who knew the blow-by-blow better than I did. I generally felt that once we had

a seemingly competent group in town doing their job, we went on and did other things at the embassy and didn't spend all our time tracking everything that was going on. But basically these tax reform people, headed by a former Turkish finance minister, went all over the country and came up with a whole series of recommendations as to how to reform and simplify the tax code, how to write a tax code, and basically their recommendations were not accepted. Some were undoubtedly implemented, but I was not there when this final result came in. I was there while they were still hopeful and still working on it and still dealing with the financial powers in Uzbekistan. We really were hoping that this would make a difference. But the assumption that has been passed on to me by others, is that in the end, the system they were recommending was just too transparent. It just did not offer the opportunities for graft that the system in Uzbekistan expected it to have.

Q: What about human rights? You know, the government working with the citizens.

CLARKE: I was the embassy's chief human rights officer because this was basically a high level problem. This was not just a low-level problem. By the time I got to Uzbekistan, there had already been this outrageous beating of one of the Pulatov brothers that Senator Larry Pressler, who was then the Republican Chairman of the Foreign Relations Subcommittee for Europe and covered our area, had just been visiting Uzbekistan and saw the poor man with his bandaged head in the hospital. So we started off with a human rights policy and if we hadn't, we would have gotten one soon. Because I had worked a lot on human rights issues in Romania in the Ceausescu days, I felt pretty much at home with this set of issues. I felt I knew how to balance this with all the other things we wanted to do, including the reform objectives and so on. But I spent a lot of time personally pitching human rights, issues, complaints, and recommendations.

Q: What were the problems? Was it just the old type government – if somebody raised their heads, they beat it down or was there a different thrust? Who was getting picked on?

CLARKE: It certainly represented an unbroken continuity from the Soviet period in terms of harsh treatment of citizens whenever they were deemed to be out of line. The definition of what was out of line was somewhat changed. The harshness may have been somewhat mitigated but basically it was the same. If you were identified on the list of dissidents that was causing displeasure to any number of security officials from the president on down, anticipating you might oppose him in the future, your life could be pretty miserable. Arrests of people without serious or reasonable charges, falsification of evidence, all kinds of things, show trials, the whole routine leftover from the Soviet period was still very much in place. It's not to say that there weren't some cases where people got a fair shake, but not over political issues. Courts could not handle political issues. Most of the people who were opponents of President Karimov were run out of business during the time I was there.

Q: You'd hear about something. What would you do and what was the effect?

CLARKE: Although I considered myself the chief human rights officer, we did have a political officer, Daria Fane, who was particularly working the human rights issues. She stayed in very close touch with lots of people. She was a remarkably able political officer in the classic sense of getting to know a very wide range of contacts.

Q: *What was her name?*

CLARKE: Daria Fane. F-A-N-E. She loved to work in the field, and she loved to be in touch and talk with people and she would hear as quickly as anybody of the latest outrage. As soon as I heard about it, if it was important and we had enough information on which to lodge a complaint or to raise the issue, it was my practice to make the complaint or raise the question myself or to have someone else do it if it were less important, right away, without waiting for instructions from Washington. I felt we had our instructions on human rights. We had our instructions on reform. On those occasions when we waited for Washington to react, it was often, I think, a bit inappropriate. But when we went ahead and took the action, we could help manage the issue in a useful way.

Q: *Why weren't they saying, "What business is it of yours?"*

CLARKE: They did at first. We said, simply, "This is the kind of folks we are. If you want to deal with the United States, you have to listen to us when we have complaints. You will ultimately decide for yourselves what you are going to do about it. But if you want to tell us that you are seeking a democracy, that you look forward to the time in which your citizens will feel greater personal dignity, you need to listen to us, because we can't deal with you without telling you." I didn't try to gild the lily too much on this. I just said, "This is important to the American political system. You want to talk to us? You've got to listen to this stuff."

Is what you're implying how do we get a channel established if they don't want to talk to us? Establishing an effective channel to them was difficult early on in my assignment. I spent a lot of time on that issue. During the time I was there, there were four different foreign ministers. Two excellent, one tried hard, and the fourth, a disaster. During the period that the disaster was the foreign minister, I had practically no access to the president, and my access to the foreign minister was often very discouraging because he really was not taking us seriously. But that said, I worked with all four of them as my principal point of contact on human rights issues. I made sure that this was an important part of my dialogue with the president whenever I had a chance to meet with him.

Q: *What about your fellow ambassadors? I'm thinking those from the OSCE (Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe) states, all of whom were signed on to the Helsinki Accords, and human rights was a major part of the basket. Was there much cooperation or were you pretty much the point man?*

CLARKE: I was pretty much the point man, but there were other ambassadors who were interested. I tried to include them in the loop over these human rights issues to the extent I could. I do feel that some of them felt this was really a waste of time in Central Asia, that the history of the region and of the Soviet Union was such that we couldn't expect to have any useful effect. Some of them probably said, "Well you know, Henry argues forcefully, but he's doing this because he has to, not because it's going to work." So they may have respected me for representing my government but not necessarily for having a brilliant policy. Others were certainly interested to the extent that their government was participating in OSCE and issues

would come up. Really, much of Europe was getting on board. They were slow but they were getting on board. So you would have parliamentarians coming out from places like Holland or Germany who were considerably more radical on this subject than I was. I had some sense of the context in which I was working, and I hoped that I was asking them to do things they could actually do. That limitation was not there for many of the visiting parliamentarians; indeed some of our own parliamentarians were a little extreme in what they wanted.

But that's the way it was. It wasn't just Larry Pressler. There were other visitors out there who came out from our congress and high, high, high on their list, all the time, were human rights questions. The whole visit of Arlen Specter from Pennsylvania was not intended to be human rights, but when we tried to organize a breakfast for him with some dissidents, and several got arrested so they couldn't go to his breakfast, he took this very personally and made an issue with every Uzbek he met from then on. This was really a major component of our policy.

Q: What about the influence of Iran or Afghanistan? Both of these places by this time had very solid, radical fundamentalist Islamic governments. Was that a concern of ours in Uzbekistan?

CLARKE: The Taliban really came into power after 1995, after I left. I followed that subject at the National War College along with others. It was fun to speculate on its chances of coming to power. But the Taliban was not really a potential threat from Uzbekistan's point of view during the time I was there. Iran was initially. The Uzbeks came to the conclusion that because of what Iran was trying to do in Tajikistan, they needed to keep the Iranians at arm's length. Although the Iranians were allowed to open an embassy, they were more carefully watched than most other foreigners. The Uzbeks were very suspicious of Iranian activities in Tajikistan, partly because of the linguistic affinity. But the Tajiks were mostly not Shiites. There was only one part of Tajikistan that was Shiite, so the religious affinity question was not so clear. But the Uzbeks thought there was some evidence of gun running and military support for the opposition. Iran did offer a haven for some of the more religious opposition in Tajikistan, when they left the country.

Afghanistan was a major problem for the Uzbeks the whole time I was there. Even though the Taliban had not arrived, the fighting between various other groups was going on all the time. It could not help but concern the Uzbeks that radical movements, especially Tajik nationalists, might somehow combine with those in Tajikistan and be destabilizing to Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan's largest minority are Tajiks. They used to say the largest minority was Russian, but I believe that if it was ever true, it isn't now. But the Tajik minority was of that scale: a million or two, at least, and concentrated in areas which were awkward for Uzbekistan, such as along the border, in Samarkand and Bukhara. So there was great concern about what might happen, and at the same time, a desire to stay out of Afghanistan. Not to become so wrapped up by involvement with General Dostum, who was the leader of the Uzbek ethnic group in Afghanistan, or other players, that somehow Uzbekistan would be drawn in. So there was, on the one hand, nervousness or concern, and on the other hand a sense that somehow Uzbek involvement should be at best limited, and if possible not at all.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover about Uzbekistan, do you think?

CLARKE: There's a lot more that could be said about its relationship with the other countries in Central Asia. There are some myths out there that I would love to get a chance to put to rest.

Q: Before we leave Uzbekistan, let's talk about its relations with the other countries in Central Asia. How were they? Let's start with Uzbekistan. Who are its neighbors and what is its role in Central Asia?

CLARKE: One of the funniest introductory speeches I've ever heard somebody give was when they were addressing an audience here in the United States and said, "Of course a few of you here might not know where Uzbekistan is, and so let me clarify that. It's south of Kazakhstan and it's west of Kyrgyzstan and it's north of Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. So now you know exactly where it is."

It's the center of Central Asia. The Soviets did not really consider Kazakhstan to be Central Asia. They thought of it as a separate case, which given the fact that half its population is European, is understandable. Of the remaining members, if not Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan is by far the dominant country. That's obvious from its size, economy, population, and central location. Tashkent was one of the four biggest cities of the former Soviet Union, with over two million people. It was really the administrative capital of the whole region. The Uzbeks got in the habit of being the capital, the most important ethnic group who outnumbered the other ethnic groups. Several times larger than any other ethnic group in Central Asia, the Uzbeks are an important minority in all the other countries. This creates a great deal of friction with the surrounding countries, just by the fact of that dominance. The smaller ethnic groups assume from the outset that the Uzbeks are trying to do them in. Many Western observers who come to the region think the Uzbeks are the natural imperialists or the bully of the region, including some highly regarded American analysts on Central Asia.

I was there during a period of great tension over the civil war in Tajikistan, which did have some foreign involvement from Afghanistan, and also from Iran. The Russians, not the Soviets any more, were also playing a key role in trying to stabilize the situation. But it was a kind of Soviet concept anyway that the Russians needed to worry about Tajikistan's borders with Afghanistan. The Uzbeks were terribly nervous because they saw this conflict as potentially spreading throughout Central Asia and they were next in line. Nor did they want the Russians to use Tajikistan as an excuse to resume control in Uzbekistan.

You did see my article in [Central Asian Survey](#). I won't go into all the details about that because that's written down someplace else, but I became convinced that given their relative size, the kind of status quo role they were playing was not at all surprising, and was in fact somewhat restrained. I gather that since I've left, they have continued occasionally to do things that we would consider interventionist in neighboring countries.

On the very critical question of boundaries, these were rather arbitrary and were established during the Stalin period. Even if Stalin had been well-intentioned, no matter how you do the borders, they would have left ethnic groups on both sides of the border. It is interesting that the borders have basically helped keep the peace and that politically at least, the countries have resisted the idea of taking territory from one another. The degree of cooperation leaves a lot to be

desired between the countries and that, I suppose is natural. Cooperation before was imposed from Moscow and now with greater freedom, it doesn't come as easily or naturally as it did before.

That said, the Central Asians are all more aware than we how dependent they are on the limited water supplies in the region. Those are based on the two river systems that flow through all the countries. So in this way they are all interdependent, whether they like it or not, because they must cooperate on the management of the water flow or there will be real disasters. Threats by Turkmenistan, one of the down river countries, to divert substantial amounts of water from one of the rivers, was the kind of thing which could lead to real warfare if the diversion were done without some sort of mutual agreement.

So the Uzbeks feel they should be in a leadership position, but as they look around, they see the region as concentric circles. Although they are actually surrounded by weak countries, just outside are a series of very large, powerful countries, first of all Russia, but also China and Iran and Pakistan, all of whom either are nuclear powers or potentially so. Sorting out their security situation is a continuing concern to them.

Q: Did you as ambassador ever have geopolitical discussions with them to figure out their role? They are new to this and we don't really know their role either.

CLARKE: Yes. I can't say that we were in any way the leaders on this. I would try to talk to them, and initially they were rather cautious about sharing their views. They became more interested in doing so as they began to realize that they needed a strategy. We developed a political dialogue with them by bringing people in from the States while I was there. We started the practice of having a political dialogue led by the foreign minister on their side. When they got a good foreign minister, Kamilov, they were able to conduct this on a pretty decent level of sophistication. I think it was very helpful to them. They also started the practice of trying to consult with their neighbors by having conferences in Tashkent to talk about regional security issues. I certainly participated in that and in some cases we were not able to get senior people from Washington, so I was the leader of the delegation. We did have good exchanges with them, I got to know their perspective on things quite well, and I think they are a conservative, status-quo tending power, in the region. That's actually in our interest to encourage.

Q: Sticking to the foreign affairs side, were you concerned about the Iranians mucking around there? You know, trying to turn them into a fundamentalist Islamic regime.

CLARKE: Yes, and soon after I got there, there were accusations that the Iranians were doing just that with one side of the Tajikistan civil war and that they were supplying weapons. They were certainly providing moral support, of that I'm sure. The weapons will doubtless be covered some other way. Iran was providing support to the opposition to the installed government, which was basically holdovers from the Soviet period. It scared the Uzbeks a great deal more than it scared us, in fact. That was their fear. They had reason to be particularly concerned if the Tajik minority in Uzbekistan were somehow to become involved or that the crisis would develop into a Tajik versus Uzbek ethnic war. In that case Uzbeks might start getting involved very deeply.

Early in the time I was there, it probably was President Karimov himself who decided it was better to be in touch with the Iranians than not, so he allowed them to open an embassy and visited Iran and came back very unimpressed. Negatively impressed is the right word. He decided that the Iranians were folks that needed watching. Whether he had those suspicions before he went, I don't know, but he certainly did when he came back. They were very concerned even about cultural offices being set up by the Iranians, or bookstores. This, despite the fact that the Iranians are basically Shiites and the Uzbeks and most of their neighbors are Sunnis. Despite the fact that Uzbek is a Turkic language and Farsi is certainly not. There wasn't a lot of affinity there, but there was certainly a great deal of worry. In fact, the Uzbeks used to berate us for not being more worried about fundamentalism spreading.

I don't believe the Uzbeks did the right thing. Their reaction was to become more and more strict with Muslim revivalist movements. In so doing, they alienated people who were by no means pro-Iranian. I think that was a fundamental, strategic error, probably caused by their basic Soviet and authoritarian Uzbek traditions. They didn't know how to build bridges to the Muslim revival and instead tried to control it and then sit on it and repress it. That may really cost them some day.

But I think that Iran was not in a position to be an across-the-board challenger of Russia in those days, and probably not now either. What the Iranians and the Turks and to some extent, the Afghans did succeed in doing, was developing their commercial ties with Uzbekistan, and indeed with all of the Central Asian countries, through Uzbekistan in the middle of all the others. So the development of commercial ties basically depended on whether they could trust one another but, certainly during my three years, there was a huge increase in trade coming up from the Persian Gulf right across Iran. Part of this was because the time and expense to import things all the way across Russia or somehow from the Black Sea was so great that other people could get into the act. I would not say that there were more Iranian trucking companies involved than Turkish because the Turks really pushed hard into this region and I admire their entrepreneurship. It was not always as profitable as they hoped it would be. But those two countries became really alternative transport routes for the whole region, and alternative sources of foreign trade. Afghanistan also. Even though there was often fighting going on, amazingly, whenever there were breaks in the fighting, no doubt with lives paid along the way and whatnot, trucks would come, originating from ports in Pakistan, I presume.

Q: One of the elements that has prepared a fertile ground for fundamentalism is unemployment or underemployment. Young people with nothing to do seem to be the prime target of the Mullahs. Did you see this at work at all?

CLARKE: Absolutely. Unfortunately it was in one place. The part of Uzbekistan with the highest potential for unemployment is the Fergana Valley. Uzbekistan sits in the center of the valley and is surrounded by Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The ground is very intensively used in agriculture, but the population is very much larger than could possibly be employed in agriculture. There was some industrialization in the Soviet period, but they need to build factories almost every week or every month to employ the new entrants into the labor force. The population growth rates in Central Asia were always higher than in European parts of the Soviet Union, and they did not slow down after independence, at least not initially. Large families were

the norm, and culturally there was no greater reward than to have a large family and be seen as the head of a large family. So there was definitely a push in that direction.

We tried, with some success among the professional medical people, to develop birth control programs through AID in Central Asia and in Uzbekistan. This was one of our programs that was most enthusiastically supported by the Health Ministry and by the medical profession in general. In Muslim countries, at that level of traditional culture, nobody expected this would be an easy job. They got off to a rather strong start in the three years that I was there, largely because they were getting a lot of help from the medical profession. But the problem was unresolved. Your question is unresolved because the Fergana Valley is also the home in all of the former Soviet Union of continued Islamic practice during the Soviet period and therefore unquestionably the leader in the Muslim revival after the Soviet period. The clash there is great between government oppression and a strong Muslim background, certainly stronger than anything in the Caucasus. In Central Asia, the Fergana Valley was certainly one of the strongest areas of Muslim practice and belief. That's not to say they are highly sophisticated Muslims, because with great limitations on their practice and study during the Soviet period, they're not always as well informed about exactly what this religion calls for. In terms of loyalty to Islam, I think this is perhaps the most sensitive area.

Q: Because Tashkent was the central point of Central Asia, the major city, did Uzbekistan traditionally act as the university center and does it still today? This is where young Central Asians went to go to school and this always has quite an influence.

CLARKE: Yes. There are a lot of tendencies going in opposite directions at this point. Certainly the other countries would like to build up their own higher education, but Tashkent certainly was the center. They even had, for example, a Mongolian consulate in Tashkent when I arrived. Its main function, according to the consulate, was looking after all the Mongolian students in the various universities. They had an economic university. They had a sort of general university of Tashkent. They had a technical institute, a whole range of higher education.

Q: Were we doing things with these various universities?

CLARKE: Yes. AID feels some interest in that, as does USIA, so we had pretty good contacts with these folks. We were trying to develop programs that would enlighten people about democracy and the market economies, and there was a lot of interest in doing that. I'm probably not the best source on how well that was really going because the other very negative tendency was that they weren't really paying their professors. I paid my Russian tutor a ridiculously low sum, I'm embarrassed to mention. She was delighted because it meant that just about every session with me was worth a month's pay as a professor at the university where she went. She could not survive on that. The result was that students were paying their professors for their grades and for their graduation. Not all students under those circumstances are willing to study, having already paid for their grades and graduation. So there was a really deep need for educational reform, probably at all levels, but certainly at the highest level.

Q: This may be a bit of repetition, but you were mentioning on human rights. Could you talk about how you dealt with the human rights situation?

CLARKE: Since we've gone through such a long part of my career in the Foreign Service, I should mention that I learned about human rights from my tours in Bucharest, Romania, where I went to a country famous, under Ceausescu, for poor human rights. Again in Moscow, I was on the country team and heard about our policies, how we pursued them, sometimes made pitches myself on human rights issues when I was acting DCM. Then again we had human rights problems to cope with in the West Bank and Gaza in dealing with Israel, which were very sensitive issues, because in that case we were dealing with a democracy, not with a Communist country.

So I came with this rather large background. Even though I was an economic officer I had been constantly confronted with human rights issues. I quickly learned in Tashkent that some of the habits of the Cold War had not died in Washington. There was a tendency to react with extreme shrillness over incidents that came to their attention even if those incidents were, let's say, less important than some incidents that didn't come to their attention, or even if they were not typical of what was going on. In an effort to provide Washington with a balanced perspective, my policy was we had to stay out in front. Chances are, if there was some kind of human rights incident, we would hear of it rather quickly. We had a very good political officer during my first tour there, who stayed in touch with everybody, everywhere.

Q: *Who was that?*

CLARKE: Daria Fane. She was already an old Central Asia hand even though we hadn't had offices there. She had been a journalist in the region before joining the Foreign Service. She was a marvelous field person, in touch not only with the Uzbeks, but also with outsiders and meeting people in Moscow who watched Uzbek affairs. The chances were we could find out what was going on from dissidents or from the victims rather quickly, or learn about the accusations from outside. Often people from Moscow who heard some rumors would phone us to try to see if they could confirm them, and that got us into a dialogue with them so that we had connections to their sources.

My preference was to seek clarification, from the government if necessary, on the same day, but in any case as quickly as possible, so that we could attempt to report two sides of the story and get some kind of rational recommendation to Washington. Most of the time what we reported was sufficient to cause Washington to feel that we had the situation in hand and we didn't get off the wall instructions that were difficult to execute. Unfortunately, it meant we had to devote what was a substantial part of our reporting effort to this one issue. But because that issue is of such importance in the development of democracy and some of our other objectives in Uzbekistan, it was a price we simply had to pay.

My view of an embassy abroad is that – forgive the jargon – it's an adaptive organism. It may not be strictly analogous to a living thing, but this organization should be able to respond and react on the scene. This was very important in the early days of our managing foreign policy toward the former Soviet Union. We tried to open posts in all 15 new capitals almost at once. We tried to staff them rather thinly. Nevertheless we had more talent in the field than we could possibly have assembled in Washington. Not for Russia, but for these other countries. There

wasn't really a great deal of knowledge in Washington, but there was even less labor available to work these issues. If we didn't work them well in the field and report them, as to some extent finished or semi-finished product, we weren't serving Washington well. It's my view, not just on human rights but on a lot of other issues as well, that embassies should not, when they hear something, just pick up the phone and start gabbing to Washington about it. They should try to develop the situation intelligently on the spot.

Q: Did you find that your instant reaction to these human rights problems ended up with the Uzbeks saying, "Let's modify our behavior because this just means more trouble"?

CLARKE: I wasn't sure how they reacted in practice. I mentioned that we had four different foreign ministers when I was there and I got four different reactions to my approaches. The two best foreign ministers were clearly prepared to see me based on my telling them that this was important to the United States. They didn't decide just on the basis of this that observing rights was the latest thing they would like to do. They did not like my objections. The two best of them, but not, I think, one of the others, tended to report what I was saying to the president. That was important. We weren't always sure whether these various depredations on dissidents were really being authorized at a high level or if this was just low level harassment designed to keep these people in their places and save trouble for the security services. We even had a feeling that in many cases the situation of the dissidents was being exaggerated by the security services for their own reasons.

For nothing else than improving communication to the policy makers, I felt it was important to go in quickly and to try to compare our facts, as we could best determine them, with what they thought were the facts. My very first meeting with President Karimov, in our initial *tete-a-tete*, he related a situation involving one of the embassy officers and a human rights case, a very important human rights case, if I remember correctly, involving a former Vice President. He had the facts wrong and related them in a totally exaggerated way. I don't think he would have done that in his own mind. I suspect it had been reported to him that way. So we were constantly working with that dimension. In any case I could make sure they knew it was important to the United States. As a minimum, I had that. There were interlocutors who would do everything they could to avoid me under such circumstances. The president himself told me one time, "I'm tired of this." That was not the subject he wanted to discuss with me. I'm sure he didn't want to talk about it with his subordinates either. I'm convinced now, this was his style, this was his intent. I do believe he knew more or less what was going on, and events proved it. He could certainly have stopped many of the violations. We certainly kept him informed.

I think in the end, the Uzbeks did not moderate their behavior much. Because in the end, I believe they felt that using strong measures against the population was necessary for Karimov to stay in power. I don't happen to share that assessment. I think he was quite popular without doing that and might conceivably have been more popular and certainly a greater developer of his country, a greater leader, if he had taken the more humane approach to his opponents and dissidents. I think he just preferred being tough.

Q: Did you feel that you and say your German and French and British and Japanese and maybe Scandinavia counterparts were singing out of the same hymnal on human rights or were you

singing solo?

CLARKE: When I got there, I was a soloist. Nobody else had the idea that this was a good way to start off their relationship with a new country. There's something to be said for that. We paid a price. This sometimes cost us access. It sometimes cost us a negative attitude on the part of some of the officials. Too bad. It was our policy. I got more instructions on human rights than I got on any other issue, even though I was trying to keep those minimized to cases that were important.

But I remembered pretty well from Bucharest, that at the beginning of my tour as DCM, none of the other diplomats had been interested in our story and by the time I left, some of them were more zealous than we were. Not because we had changed. It was because they had changed. Not only personalities, but policies.

The Germans were certainly supportive. The Germans had cases they had to deal with that came to their attention either through their staff or through the immigration of Germans back to Germany. The Germans could not really avoid these issues and therefore addressed them. I'm sure they were not as loud as we were. My style was not to be shrill. My style was to be probing to try and seek out the facts and tell them the bottom line, but also do it in a civilized way so as to maintain my access and develop a dialogue. The Germans did the same. For the other countries, the idea that you could bring democracy or human rights to Central Asia seemed so quixotic that they just couldn't bring themselves to get into it. The British came late and with only one or two people, they were not really able to have the kinds of contacts that we or the Germans had.

Q: One of the things that permeates foreign policy, particularly in dealing with the newer nations, is that the Europeans have an awful lot of sophistication and they've seen it, and done it, which tends to make them rather world weary so they watch but don't do much. Americans go at this with a can-do attitude. Both these attitudes can come a cropper. As a general rule, particularly in human rights, the United States has been in the forefront and can do something about it and our representatives have to whereas the Europeans are dragged into it kicking and screaming.

CLARKE: Right, but fortunately I found that I could invite a half dozen people to lunch and talk about these issues, especially if I were offering the lunch. I tried to spread the burden, by educating them on our policy at least. I think that's part of the job too, getting more people on board. That being said, if you're a dissident in one of these countries, and you suddenly find you have no place to turn, you're more likely to pick up and call somebody that's with the American embassy than anybody else. There's nothing I can do to change that or that I would have wanted to do to change that.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover, do you think? You may notice a hole because of time, but you can fill that in yourself.

CLARKE: Yes. I think one comment I'd like to make is that especially from Washington, there's a perception which never really bothered me very much in Tashkent, but which is an issue for American foreign policy. That is the extent to which our policy should focus on Russia and the extent to which it should give attention to all the other former Soviet Republics. This didn't

trouble me a lot in Tashkent. I got virtually no instructions on this subject. For a variety of reasons telephone communications with Washington were very difficult during that period. I basically used the front-channel reporting, official and formal communications with the desk for 95 to 99 percent of policy-related work. There weren't a lot of secure phone calls because I never could get anybody at the time that I wanted to keep my communications setup open. I had to shut down every night because we had no Marines, no security. We had to close everything down. Later we were ordered to shut down on Saturday too, to save overtime pay for communicators.

So the issue didn't seem great to me out there. I instinctively understood that Russia was more important than any of the others. That being said, I felt our policy should very much be in parallel with what we were doing with Russia. I was not comfortable that we were distributing our resources evenly. I felt some of those decisions were not going well. We talked a little about agency representation and all, because that was a sticky issue for me. But did we care about the independence of these countries and would we do something to help support them in their independence? By something, I mean in the diplomatic realm. I didn't envision any kind of military support. I think, by our presence, even by our rather limited programs, by our attitude, we conveyed that pretty well. It's a natural thing to assume that a country is a sovereign and just by being there, and by dealing with them on that basis, I think we conveyed that.

Looking at it from Washington, I sometimes feel we overdid the Russian angle. In terms of resources, we often underdid what we might have done in Uzbekistan. In Tashkent, we always had plenty to do, and even if we didn't get all the resources we wanted, we always had something to work on. I have to confess in the three years I was there, we always had challenging work to do.

End of reader