

John D. Jernegan Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 03/12/1969
Administrative Information

Creator: John D. Jernegan
Interviewer: Dennis O'Brien
Date of Interview: March 12, 1969
Place of Interview: Norfolk, Virginia
Length: 34 pages

Biographical Note

Jernegan was the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, 1958–1962, and to Algeria, 1965–1967. In this interview Jernegan discusses John F. Kennedy's 1957 speech on Algeria; working as the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq; the transition between Administrations in the State Department, 1960; Abd al-Karim Qasim and Iraqi politics; Soviet involvement and influence in Iraq; the Kuwait problem; the Iraqi government and Israel; U.S. policy in regard to oil-bearing countries; oil company negotiations with foreign countries; U.S. foreign aid programs in Iraq; Yemen affairs in the State Department, 1963; Middle East affairs in the Kennedy Administration; changes in Jernegan's long-range views for Near East problems, 1941–1969; and the influence of pro-Israel and pro-Arab groups on U.S. policy, among other issues.

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John D. Jernegan, recorded interview by Dennis O'Brien, March 12, 1969, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

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Oral History Interview

with

JOHN JERNEGAN

March 12, 1969
Norfolk, Virginia

By Dennis O'Brien

For the John F. Kennedy Library

O'BRIEN: Today is March 12. We are in the office of Ambassador John Jernegan, former Ambassador to Iraq, 1958 to 1962. I am Dennis O'Brien. I think the logical place to begin is to simply ask you when was the first time that you met President Kennedy.

JERNEGAN: I met him for the first and only time in 1962 after I had been thrown out of Iraq, after my service as Ambassador to Iraq. I called on him at the White House and we had a short talk about the situation in Iraq and the circumstances that had caused me to be requested to leave that country. Those circumstances were nothing that I could have controlled or that the President should have been concerned about, that is concerned to do anything differently from the way things had been handled.

O'BRIEN: Did you have any contact with any of the aides or any of his personal staff prior to his assumption of the presidency?

JERNEGAN: No, no. I was abroad during all that time. I was appointed to Iraq in the first place by President [Dwight D.] Eisenhower in 1958 and I was in the country through '59. I came back to the United States in August of 1960 for home leave and was in this country with my family during the first part of the presidential campaign. Therefore I watched the famous television debates and followed the campaign but I didn't have any direct contact with people who were involved in it. And then I returned to Baghdad where I was at the time of the election and the time of the inauguration of President Kennedy.

O'BRIEN: Did you have any reactions to his speech on Algeria in 1957?

JERNEGAN: I was surprised about it, surprised that any U. S. senator

would feel strongly enough and feel that it was important enough from his point of view to speak out on the subject. I was favorably impressed, because as an old time worker in the field of U.S.-Arab relations I had been considerably troubled by the policy we had been following of, not exactly supporting, but at least not opposing the French efforts to put down the Algerian rebellion. Otherwise the speech had no particular effect on me. But in later life, I must say, when I became Ambassador to Algeria from '65 to '67, one of the few pluses on the American side in dealing with the Algerians was the fact that Senator Kennedy had made this statement, this speech. During my stay in Algeria I was called upon to officiate three times at the dedication of a street or a square to John F. Kennedy, unveiling a plaque or something like that. Twice, three times this happened.

O'BRIEN: Was this a typical kind of reaction of people who were in the State Department in the late fifties that dealt with Arab affairs and Middle East affairs? Were your colleagues favorably impressed?

JERNEGAN: I think so. I think so, but unfortunately at that particular period I was out of Near Eastern-Arab affairs altogether, being stationed in Rome where I was not in contact with the people dealing with these things in Washington.

O'BRIEN: How about after you became Ambassador to Iraq? Did you sense that there was an awareness on the part of the Iraqi leaders that you came into contact with of the Algerian speech?

JERNEGAN: No, I don't remember any. Few of the Iraqi government leaders were very well informed about things that went on outside of their own immediate area, and almost all of them were very strongly prejudiced against the United States. I don't think that a speech by a senator would have made much difference to them even if they had really been aware of it.

O'BRIEN: In 1958 when you became Ambassador to Iraq, did you know why or the reasoning behind your appointment to that particular post?

JERNEGAN: I've always assumed that it was because I had had a good deal of experience in Near Eastern affairs. Before that time I had served for three years and something as deputy Assistant Secretary in the State Department, in the Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs. At the time, '58, Iraq had just gone through a very traumatic revolution in which the King and the Prime Minister and most of the royal family were killed and the form of government changed from monarchy to a nominal republic, with a dictator put in power who was very anti-Western and particularly anti-American. The place was a mess. Our previous ambassador wanted to get out, and the Department was obviously

looking around for someone to go there. It was not a post that anyone would have sought as a plum, a political reward or anything of that sort. I made the mistake of telling a friend of mine who was passing through Rome that I wouldn't mind going to Baghdad. One month later I was informed that I was to go there.

O'BRIEN: Who suggested it? Do you know?

JERNEGAN: Who suggested my name?

O'BRIEN: Yes.

JERNEGAN: I think it was the friend I mentioned, who is Parker T. Hart, the man who has recently been Assistant Secretary of State for NEA and is now Director of the Foreign Service Institute. He was going to a senior job in the Near Eastern Bureau and I had known him for a long time. Just in casual conversation I said, "By the way, if anybody should want me to go to Iraq tell them I wouldn't mind."

O'BRIEN: Who contacted you in regard to the appointment?

JERNEGAN: I got a telegram from Loy Henderson, Loy W. Henderson, who was then deputy Under Secretary for Administration, asking me if I would be willing to accept the appointment. I wired back yes.

O'BRIEN: Was there any opposition to it that you know, within the Department or . . .

JERNEGAN: I didn't hear of any.

O'BRIEN: . . . in the Congress?

JERNEGAN: No, no. Congress didn't even ask me to appear for hearings. It was not in session at the time. It was between sessions, in November, November of '58. And even when they came back into session in January they didn't ask for me to appear.

O'BRIEN: When did you realize that you were going to be asked to stay on as Ambassador when the Kennedy Administration came in?

JERNEGAN: I can't remember really whether I had any specific notice to that effect, or whether time just went by and nothing happened. Of course, I had turned in my resignation in the usual routine fashion but I didn't really expect to have it accepted because I still didn't think anybody else would want the job. It was distinctly no picnic.

O'BRIEN: Did you sense any opposition in the Kennedy Administration to your continuing that appointment?

JERNEGAN: No.

O'BRIEN: No.

JERNEGAN: I was in Baghdad, let's see, I was there for about a year and a half after the Kennedy Administration came in, and during that time I never heard any suggestion that anyone wanted to replace me. I had sent word to the Department that I would be willing to stay an extra year, I mean beyond the three and a half years that I did stay. Most people don't usually care to stay in a place like Baghdad that long, but I sent word that I wouldn't mind an extra year. This was accepted as all right. So it was only because the Iraqis didn't want me to stay that I left when I did.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever hear of any talent lists or appointment lists that were kept by members of the Department--or not members of the Department, excuse me--people in the incoming Administration?

JERNEGAN: Yes, I think I have heard about this sort of thing but you must remember that I was out of the country, and you don't even get much rumor in Baghdad because so few people come there. Paris and Rome are different. You get a lot of visitors who sometimes bring you the latest scoop from Washington. But in Baghdad you don't get that.

O'BRIEN: When you were back in the country, did you have an opportunity to talk to Chester Bowles or Sargent Shriver?

JERNEGAN: Let's see, I think Bowles had already--no, he was no longer Under Secretary. I talked to a few people I had known before, in the Department, that is--George McGhee who was then the second Under Secretary, and I saw the Secretary of State, Mr. [Dean] Rusk. I had been associated with him long years back. And a few other people like that. I don't believe I met anybody in the White House at that time, except the President. Later on, when I returned to the State Department to work--this was in '63--I became in very close contact with Robert Komer, currently Ambassador to Turkey, recently of Vietnam. At that time he was on McGeorge Bundy's staff and was a specialist in the Middle East and Africa. We were in--the Assistant Secretary and I and others in our office were in constant contact with him.

O'BRIEN: Did you attend any ad hoc or high level conferences on Middle East problems when you were back?

JERNEGAN: After I came back permanently from Iraq you mean?

O'BRIEN: No, in the period of time you were home on leave, late '60?

JERNEGAN: No, I don't recall that I was asked to attend any and I wouldn't have sought out such opportunity because I was on leave.

O'BRIEN: Oh. Did you brief anybody in the State Department?

JERNEGAN: Yes, yes, yes.

O'BRIEN: Do you remember who the people were?

JERNEGAN: Well, it's hard for me to remember. There have been a couple of returns since then that sort of overlay that particular period in my mind. I did go to Washington. I was in Washington for, maybe, a week during this home leave, that is, and I talked to people in the NEA [Near Eastern Affairs] Bureau. I must have-- every time I went in there was always a demand for me to talk to a group or groups representing various parts of the Department, not high level people usually, and over at CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] too. I had a session over there. But I really can't remember anything particular about this 1960 episode.

O'BRIEN: Did anyone brief you on the new Administration and their attitudes towards Iraq and the Near East?

JERNEGAN: Not much, no.

O'BRIEN: Did you find any conflicting views in the new Administration between, let's say, CIA and the State Department on attitudes towards Iraq or the Middle East?

JERNEGAN: That question reminds me of something. I should correct my previous answer because in 1959--this isn't yet the Kennedy Administration--but in 1959 I was called back for a special consultation. The question before the house then was: Is there any hope for this new Iraqi regime from our point of view and shouldn't we start gathering up our assets and seeing if we can't get rid of it? To which my answer was that I thought it wasn't too bad and it wasn't going to go communist (which was what everybody else was worried about) and therefore we shouldn't undertake anything drastic. This view was adopted. But in 1960 I don't think there was any particular issue. There was no proposal that I can remember to change the sort of waiting and hoping policy that we had been following.

O'BRIEN: Did you see any difference in the policy or the style of operation of the Eisenhower Administration and the Kennedy Administration in that transition period?

JERNEGAN: The principal difference that I noticed at long range was that the general operation was less bureaucratic, less fixed in its forms and procedures. Previously so much had been

done through the rigid structure of the National Security Council and its subordinate bodies, in particular the--what was it called? The Operations Control. . . .

O'BRIEN: Coordination Board?

JERNEGAN: Operations Coordination Board, yes, OCB, which always impressed me with an awful feeling of weariness and futility. I had had occasion to deal with it directly quite a few times before I went out to the field, before I went to Rome and from Rome to Baghdad.

O'BRIEN: Well, in 1961 on your return--it was in 1961, wasn't it?

JERNEGAN: No, '62, my final return. Or do you mean . . .

O'BRIEN: No, return from the U.S. to Iraq.

JERNEGAN: Oh, no, this was the fall of '60.

O'BRIEN: The fall of '60. On your return back to Iraq, what did you find in the way of major problems in regard to U.S.-Iraq relations at that point, the last of the Eisenhower Administration and the first of the Kennedy Administration, any effects?

JERNEGAN: Pretty much the same problems that we had been facing ever since '58, and which we continued to face, well, right down to the break in diplomatic relations in 1967. The basic trouble with our relations was then, and I think continues to be, that the Iraqis, like many Arabs, have a deep distrust of Western power, and because the United States is by far the greatest representative of Western power they therefore have the greatest distrust of the United States. They are very difficult to convince that the U.S. has good intentions, that its motives are strictly honorable, that we are not trying to overthrow the government, conspiring with its enemies internal or external. During my tour there, from the beginning, and especially in '58, '59--it got a little bit easier after '59 but it was still pretty bad--they were always suspicious that we were in some way intriguing with the Kurds, their dissident minority, or with the Iranians, with whom Iraq is almost always on bad terms for one reason or another, or with the Turks or with the British. They felt that they simply couldn't rely on the United States to be completely objective, disinterested and hold out the hand of friendship. The result of this lack of confidence was that we didn't have very good relations. But on top of this they were floundering around, the Iraqi government I mean, a new regime. They didn't really know very much about how to run a government. They had--particularly the Prime Minister Abdal-Karim Kassim--had very little background on international affairs and his approach to foreign policy was very narrow. There was nothing very new at the time that President Kennedy came in, and because of their provincial attitude, frame of mind, I don't think

the Iraqis were much impressed one way or the other by the advent of a new American president. The only thing that would have impressed them-- and it was, of course, something quite out of the question--would have been if the President had come out and enunciated an anti-Israel policy. If he had followed up his Algerian foray with a statement that henceforth the United States was going to be anti-Israel, or that the Arabs ought to be given back their lost territories in Palestine, this would have vastly changed the whole situation. But it was not something that anybody I know in the government would have advocated and certainly I wouldn't have. It was quite out of the question.

O'BRIEN: Was Kassim an easy person to get along with?

JERNEGAN: No, but not too difficult either. He was polite, almost friendly sometimes, but very reserved, basically a little bit shy and a little bit mentally unbalanced I think--not much. He wasn't really crazy but he had certain peculiarities and attitudes which developed into certain delusions of grandeur and invincibility, invulnerability. One time during my stay there was an assassination attempt made in which somebody emptied a submachine gun at his car which was driving down the main street of town and was an easy target, a sitting duck. They put something like sixty-three bullets into the car but only two of them hit Kassim, one in the hand and one in the arm, as I recall. Anyhow they were not serious wounds and he recovered quite promptly. But he adopted the position that this was a miraculous escape, as indeed it was, and that it showed that he was protected by God and invulnerable, that no one could harm him. His attitudes got a little more difficult after that. He put up the car itself in which he had been riding, with all its bullet holes, on a platform outside his headquarters, the Ministry of Defense building, right by the street. And in his office he had a showcase set up with the bloody clothes, the ones he had been wearing at the time he was shot, displayed. All visitors were carefully shown this case.

O'BRIEN: Was there ever any attempt to involve yourself or the Embassy or any part of American agencies or missions in palace politics in Iraq?

JERNEGAN: No, except that because of the pervading suspicion of the U.S. there were many attempts by the police to subvert our local employees, to make them informers. In the earlier days at least of the Kassim regime, there were many arrests of our local employees made on just general suspicion. They were never charged with anything specific, legally at any rate. They were never tried; they were never brought into court. But they were arrested and held for anywhere from a week to five or six months in jail. And virtually all of them were released, and most of them came back to work for us. But this was an unpleasant business and there were attempts to find out what we were up to and whether we were plotting or not--that sort of thing. We didn't have any problems about getting involved in internal factions really. Even if

we have wanted to we wouldn't have, I think, been welcomed by any of the elements because all of them would have been afraid that the mere fact of association with the Americans would have been a kiss of death to them. They would have been discredited in the eyes of their own followers, their own friends.

O'BRIEN: Well, military expenditures in Iraq in those years were quite high. Did you at any time attempt to advise or discourage this to Kassim?

JERNEGAN: No. I don't think I did because I'm sure it would have done no good. I didn't feel that it would have done any good. My own opinion in that case and in others has been that it's quite counter-productive to work with a government against military expenditures if they have the cash themselves to pay for things. You can do something with them if they're asking to borrow money or have it given to them. But if they have the money, and they've decided that they need arms, they're going to go buy arms. And I think it's a waste of time for us to go around telling them they shouldn't. Oh, for the record, I suppose, yes, we always should express ourselves as to whether they're putting their money to the best use for the country. But once we've said that then I don't think there's much point to going on.

O'BRIEN: Did you see much conflict between the Soviet Union and the U.S. here in regard to particularly military aid to Iraq in those years?

JERNEGAN: I wouldn't put it as conflict because we certainly--our policy certainly would not have been to help Iraq in any military way, and the Iraqis didn't ask for it either. They did keep asking for and getting more and more arms from the Soviet Union and a little bit from some of the Soviet satellites. We never knew how much they paid for it. I'm sure that they paid something. They probably got it at very cheap prices. This is the normal pattern of Soviet arms deals in the Middle East. And they never seemed to be hurting particularly because of the money that they laid out. They did get a certain amount of credit--again I don't know the terms--but they must have had at least two or three years for payment.

O'BRIEN: Were you ever instructed to make any formal representations on matters of Soviet aid?

JERNEGAN: No, no. I suppose it was because people in Washington realized that this would have been a pretty futile exercise. The Iraqis were determined to get aid, both economic and military. They had decided that the best source for them was Russia. They were very much on record as not liking, not trusting, either Britain or the United States. Early in the new regime they had thrown out our own military mission which had been in Iraq helping the former

monarchist government. Similarly, various British elements that had been there were, if not thrown out, at least subject to grave attrition and really didn't function to any extent after July, 1958. So that remonstrating with the Iraqis about their close ties with Russia and their getting aid from Russia would have been just a waste of time, a waste of breath.

O'BRIEN: Was the Department concerned about the People's Courts, the reign of terror that was going on?

JERNEGAN: Yes, the Department was concerned in the sense that they didn't like it and they were afraid that these developments might impinge on some American interests or rights. But there again there wasn't much we could do about it and, in fact, I don't recall that they ever did have any Americans before the court. They tried and sentenced to death the former Foreign Minister named Fadhil Jamali [Mohammed Fadhil al Jamali], who had been in a sense rather a friend of ours for an Arab, for an Iraqi. He was more friendly than most. Again, there was nothing that we could do about his trial and sentencing. I mean, he was not an American, not entitled to American protection in any way. About all that there was to be done was to sit back and wring your hands from time to time about the travesties on court procedure and justice. In the end the results of these trials were not so bad as one would have expected, because a lot of people were sentenced to death but very few people were executed. Most of them eventually were released one way or another, including Jamali.

O'BRIEN: What did you advise the Department in regard to that, to the People's Court in those years? Do you recall?

JERNEGAN: We just kept them informed of what was happening. But every so often if I saw a chance when I was talking to Kassim I would say something to him about how the court didn't make a very good impression on world opinion and so on and did he really have to permit and encourage this sort of thing? One difficulty was that the head of the court was his cousin, Mahdawi, who was really the most detestable man I think I've ever seen. He looked detestable; he had a nasty face. And his actions as president of the court sometimes were almost incredible. But Kassim would just listen politely when I made remarks to him and say, "Oh well, you know really he's not so bad. Mahdawi's not so bad as you think. The people demand that we have trials of people who have betrayed their trust," and so on. I never got anywhere.

O'BRIEN: There were several attempted rebellions in 1959, one in Mosul and the other in Kirkuk I believe.

JERNEGAN: Kirkuk.

O'BRIEN: Kirkuk.

JERNEGAN: No, these were all the same one. There was an attempt at rebellion which was originated, led by a man named Abdul-Wahab. He was a brigadier in the army and he started a revolt.

O'BRIEN: Shawwaf?

JERNEGAN: Shawwaf. That's the name. Abdul-Wahab Shawwaf. He started an uprising in Mosul which was followed by an uprising in Kirkuk. But it lasted only a few days; it never really got off the ground. I think they flew a few airplanes down to Baghdad from Mosul and tried to bomb the town but with very little effect, with no effect really.

O'BRIEN: This had no impact on U.S.-Iraq relations at all?

JERNEGAN: Yes it did, unfortunately. This set off the first wave of arrests of our local employees. It occasioned the arrest of the Arabic teacher who had been teaching the language to Americans and British generally, and in particular the British Ambassador and me. He was arrested for no reason we could ever discover except that he had been teaching the British Ambassador and me. The whole atmosphere became somewhat worse as a result of this abortive coup, because the inevitable suspicions arose that we had had something to do with it, we were behind it. I think perhaps eventually this idea was discarded because I don't think they could ever--well, I'm sure they could never have found any evidence to support the thought. And as time went by it faded into the background. But initially it was another blow to our attempts at establishing decent relations.

At the same time the Kirkuk episode, the Kirkuk part of the episode, really was a blow to the Communists also, because they overreached themselves. The Communists in Kirkuk massacred people right and left, not necessarily because they were supporting the Shawwaf uprising, but simply because they were people the Communists didn't like. This made quite a deep impression on the Iraqis. It shook them. And it shook Kassim. And it was from that time on that he began to apply the brakes to the Iraqi Communists. Before that he had been counting on their cooperation and operating with them and allowing them great freedom of action, which was what really disturbed people in Washington at the time. But after Kirkuk --in other words beginning in the spring of 1959, there was considerably greater control exercised by the Iraqi authorities over the domestic Communists. This didn't have any particular noticeable effect on their relations with Russia or with other Communist nations on a government to government basis. But the internal Communist Party was outlawed--no it wasn't outlawed but it was kept under very strict restraints.

O'BRIEN: Was the CIA carrying on any kind of operations, functions that you knew of or perhaps did not know of. . . ?

JERNEGAN: I think I knew of everything they were doing. No, nothing in the way of operations. They were strictly confined to intelligence gathering to the extent that they could, and they were reasonably successful at that. But there was no attempt made at any time while I was in Iraq to mount any sort of operation.

O'BRIEN: They they kept out of domestic Iraqi politics as much as possible?

JERNEGAN: Yes, yes. I don't say that this might not have been considered if we had had the assets, but we didn't have any assets.

O'BRIEN: Well, you were talking a while ago about the attempted assassination of Kassim, and also, as part of that, you had the anti-tax riots that took place in Baghdad. How did these impact U.S.-Iraq relations, or perhaps relations between Iraq and the Soviet Union?

JERNEGAN: You've got me. I don't remember any anti-tax riots.

O'BRIEN: Some anti-tax. . . . in Baghdad.

JERNEGAN: In Baghdad. Do you remember the approximate date?

O'BRIEN: No, it was in early '61, maybe late '60.

JERNEGAN: '61.

O'BRIEN: There was some Kurdish involvement. I'm probably mistaken.

JERNEGAN: No. It can't have been anything that we took very seriously or I'm sure I would remember it. Of course, in '61 the Kurds did begin another of their periodic uprisings. It was dragged on until maybe '67. I guess they reached some sort of understanding which, however, is not holding very well. But I don't remember any particular riots in Baghdad. Every so often there would be some sort of demonstration but it was almost always a demonstration put on by the government, sponsored, promoted by the government.

O'BRIEN: Did you see any deep ideological commitments in any of the people around Kassim and in his government to Communism or to the Soviet Union?

JERNEGAN: No. Well, there may have been one or two. I think probably this Mahdawi man was pretty heavily committed and a few others. But basically the regime was not committed to Communism ideologically, or even practically I think. Most of them, including Kassim, were Arab nationalists, Iraqi nationalists, who felt that some form of socialist arrangement--they were not too clear what--would be best for this poor country where the poor people were so very poor and

had so little opportunity. They were out to get help from the people they thought would give it to them, namely the Russians. But I don't think they ever really thought seriously of putting themselves in Russian hands, converting the country into a Russian satellite or anything of that sort.

O'BRIEN: You kept the Department pretty well advised as to this.

JERNEGAN: Yes, this was the burden of my reporting, that while the country was in poor shape, and the government was anti-American, that they were not in my opinion either under the Russian thumb or likely to become so, that they were nationalists rather than Communists and that they probably would stay that way.

O'BRIEN: Did you find any anxiety on the other end in the Department along the lines of the theme that Iraq was going Communist?

JERNEGAN: Oh yes, there were people in the Department all along who were always worried about this.

O'BRIEN: Who were they? Do you remember particularly?

JERNEGAN: No. I don't remember that they were--I don't think that they included--at least I didn't know that they included any of the top people. The people I'm thinking of were somewhat farther down the line than the Under Secretary or even Assistant Secretary level. But, of course, it was only natural for people to wonder when the Iraqis continued to have such close relations with the Russians, get so much help from the Russians, and maintain such an anti-Western and anti-American posture.

O'BRIEN: Could you group-classify them? I understand there were some . . .

JERNEGAN: In the Department?

O'BRIEN: Yes. . . . groupings in the Department on Middle East affairs at this time, the so-called Arabists. . . .

JERNEGAN: Well, the Arabists, the professionals in NEA, I think generally shared my views. I don't think they were among the real worriers over impending Communism. I think most people who have dealt with the Arabs a good deal at first hand share my view, which I still have, that it's most unlikely that any of the independent Arab governments would knowingly or wittingly put itself under the control of Russians or any other foreigners for that matter.

O'BRIEN: Getting back to Kassim's turn against the Communists, you would place the point that he begins this as in the uprisings of '59. Did you see any other signs of this in later years?

JERNEGAN: Well, his attitude toward them continued pretty much in the same arm's length posture that he adopted in 1959. It didn't happen overnight--I mean this wasn't something sensationally announced: "Now we're going to clamp down on the Communists." This was something that we discovered by observing, not by being told. The facts showed that the Communists were knocked down whenever they stuck their heads up too far. And he maintained this, as far as I can remember, all the way through my tour there, until June of '62 when I left. Of course, Kassim himself was overthrown in November or December of '62, after I left.

O'BRIEN: Getting on to the Kuwait problem, did you advise the Department on a course of action after Kassim, or Iraq, made the claims on Kuwait?

JERNEGAN: On Kuwait? Not really. I didn't think it was necessary. In the first place, the Department decided for itself and I had no reason to argue about it. The Iraqi claim to Kuwait was not very well-founded in international law and, of course, certainly was not well-founded in realities of practical international politics. So there was no real hesitation on the part of the Department to go ahead with its policy of recognizing and establishing relations with Kuwait. I would not have recommended that they should hesitate; there was no percentage that I could see in the United States backing down on a matter like that just to placate a slightly addled, petty dictator in Iraq who wasn't doing us any good anyway. So I merely tried to give the Department an occasional estimate as to whether this was going to affect our relations with Iraq or not, because it dragged on for quite a long time. Kassim made his policy statement in October, November '61, somewhere in there, in which he said that he would reconsider Iraq's diplomatic relations with any country which established diplomatic relations with Kuwait.

It very quickly became apparent that what this meant was simply that he would recall the Iraqi ambassador and would expel the ambassador of that country in Iraq but he didn't expel anybody else. He permitted the embassies to go on with the same staffs as before and doing the same things as before. It just meant that instead of having an ambassador you had a charge d'affairs. This happened to several countries. I think the Japanese ambassador was the first one to be hit by it when Japan sent a diplomatic representative to Kuwait. We had one. We were among the first to have diplomats in Kuwait, open what was called an embassy. But the exchange wasn't complete because they didn't send anybody to Washington for a long time from Kuwait, and therefore the Iraqis let it pass. In the meantime various others went ahead. The Iranians established relations and their ambassador returned to Iran where he became Foreign Minister, Jordan established relations with Kuwait and its ambassador returned to

Jordan where he became Prime Minister. And a few others, I've forgotten what they were. And then finally on the thirty-first of May of '62 the first Kuwaiti Ambassador to the United States presented his credentials to President Kennedy. I was called down the next day by the Foreign Minister and told that, although he was very sorry, I would have to leave.

O'BRIEN: Did you sense any division on policy towards Kuwait in the Department at all?

JERNEGAN: No, no, I don't think that this was a matter of any debate. I suppose somebody must have sat down and said, "Well, now should we disregard the Iraqi claims altogether?" But I think the answer to that probably came very quickly and without much hesitation.

O'BRIEN: How did you handle the problem of Kuwait in your dealings with Kassim and with the government?

JERNEGAN: In general it didn't come up. This was not something that they talked to me about or, I think, to other diplomatic representatives. They made public announcements of what the policy was and then it stopped there. Of course, once or twice at least I talked to the Foreign Minister about their policy and pointed out that we didn't agree with it, we didn't think that their claim was justified and that we couldn't change our own policy to meet theirs. They accepted the fact that we didn't agree with them but they didn't say anything about changing their own views.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever try to discourage them from this position or from using force at all?

JERNEGAN: Well, from using force, no, I didn't try to do anything because that was done very effectively by the British, not by words but by having British troops move into Kuwait very quickly, so that Kassim saw that if he did use force he would have to fight the British. This he was quite wisely not willing to do. The American and British military attaches in Baghdad had a very lively and happy little period of about two weeks or so when they spent all their time patrolling the streets of Baghdad to see whether there was any movement of tanks. The point was that if the Iraqis wanted to move into Kuwait in the face of the troops that had been moved in there from the British side, they would have to do it with tanks, and they didn't have any tanks stationed down in the southern part of the country. Therefore the tanks would have to come from Baghdad. The only way they could get there from Baghdad was by railroad and there was only one place where they could be loaded on the railroad. So the attaches just patrolled the streets between the railroad yards and the camp where they were located to see if any tanks were moving.

- O'BRIEN: Were you in close contact with the British Embassy and the Ambassador with regard to this?
- JERNEGAN: Oh yes, yes, very close. We had very close contact about most things but particularly anything military of this sort.
- O'BRIEN: Was the U.S. prepared to do anything in regard to supporting the British in case of an attempt on the part of the Iraqis to use military action in Kuwait?
- JERNEGAN: Not that I know of. For all I know, somebody here in CINCLANT [Commander in Chief Atlantic] may have been drawing up contingency plans. After all, we did have a couple of destroyers, as we do now, in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea area. There may have been plans drawn to intervene on the side of Kuwait if necessary, but I assumed, and I think most people assumed, that the British were capable of handling it by themselves if the Iraqis should be sufficiently stupid to try an armed. . . .
- O'BRIEN: Where were the Russians in all of this? What were they attempting to do?
- JERNEGAN: They seemed to be sitting on the sidelines. They didn't appear to take any hand in it.
- O'BRIEN: No propaganda efforts or. . . .
- JERNEGAN: Not that I can remember, no. I must caution that my memory is not very good in many things.
- O'BRIEN: In regard to the Kurdish problems, and then of course the Kurdish revolts in '61, did the U.S. ever get involved in any way with any of the Kurd problems here in Iraq, or Iran or Turkey?
- JERNEGAN: We've always tried to stay away from that thing because any intervention on our part would have been viewed very dimly by the three governments concerned. And, of course, two of them at least, the Turks and the Iranians, are friends of ours. In Iraq, we had no reason to love the Iraqi government but we never did intervene. I'm pretty sure this was true of all parts of the U.S. government, but certainly it was true of the Near Eastern Bureau of the State Department and of my own feeling that there was no percentage in trying to support the Kurds against the Iraqis because in the first place the Kurds probably couldn't win, and in the second place it could have all kinds of unfortunate repercussions on the Kurdish situations in the territories of our two friends. And the prospects of creating a fine, free, prosperous Kurdistan --independent Kurdistan--were so remote no matter what happened that even a humanitarian who wanted to crusade for Kurdish liberty couldn't have many hopes about it. The Kurds themselves had hopes, but there was no

reason for the United States to share such wild ideas. So we were strictly hands off even though the Iraqi government didn't believe it. They were largely convinced that we were up to something by the fact that several of our foreign correspondents, newspapermen, managed to smuggle themselves into Iraqi Kurdistan, traveling over by way of Turkey and Iran, and to spend a few days or weeks over there. And then they came back and wrote stories, of course, in the American press, which got a lot of attention, about the brave Kurds and how they were. . . .

O'BRIEN: There was a rather long series of articles, as I recall someplace, in The New York Times--was it The New York Times?

JERNEGAN: Yes, Dana Adams Schmidt was one of those who got over there. I think he may have been the first. And he wrote a series, yes, generally sympathetic to the Kurds.

O'BRIEN: In regard to Israel, Iraq, and U.S. relations in those years, did the Iraqis ever involve themselves in Arab refugee problems?

JERNEGAN: No, except in propaganda to demand that the refugees be allowed to return to their original homes. They never accepted any substantial number of refugees. There were proposals made at different times to move some of the refugees to Iraq, and originally the proposals were to move them there and resettle them in Iraq, which was considered to have considerable areas of vacant land that could have been brought under cultivation and given employment to the refugees. But the Iraqi government never would agree to this, insisting that Iraq needed all its resources and all its lands for its own people. There were, however, about five or six thousand refugees in Iraq who were on relief. This presented no particular problems but neither did it contribute much to the solution of the overall problem.

Iraq's position and attitude toward the Palestine question was one of uncompromising opposition to Israel and to the Western powers, particularly the United States for having brought about the creation of Israel, and much denunciation of anything connected with Israel. For example, Iraq was one of the countries where Israel was not shown on the map. It appears as just a black area on the map. When it's referred to it's referred to as "occupied Palestine," but not as Israel.

O'BRIEN: Were you informed of the sale of the Hawk missiles to Israel before it became public?

JERNEGAN: Yes, I learned about it at a meeting--well in fact it was after, just after, I left Iraq for good. I left the country on the 11th of June, 1962, and for months I had been scheduled to attend a meeting of our ambassadors in the Middle East in Athens, which started on the 12th or 13th of June. So I flew over to Athens and

attended the meeting where the news of the proposed sale was broken to us by the then Assistant Secretary, Phillips Talbot. We had a long debate at this meeting as to whether this sale should be made, of the Hawks. The eventual conclusion of the meeting was a reluctant agreement that it was all right, it should be done. The ambassadors to most of the Arab countries were very dubious, very nervous about it, but on the basis that it was a strictly defensive weapon and that the Israelis in fact appeared to be falling behind at that time in the arms balance and needed some support, and that this was probably the least offensive type of arms that we could furnish--the least offensive to the Arabs--that we should go ahead with the proposed sale of Hawks.

O'BRIEN: Did you then contact Kassim before--and tell him of this--before it became public?

JERNEGAN: No, no. I never went back to Baghdad. Our charge d'affairs, the man who stayed behind when I left Baghdad, may have been authorized to tell Kassim or tell the Foreign Minister about it but I doubt it. If so, it was not more than a day or two before the public announcement was made.

O'BRIEN: Did you get in on any of the events, or in any way did you advise Kassim or were you contacted by him in regard to the Pan-Arab Conference that was called in early 1962?

JERNEGAN: No, we didn't have that kind of relationship. There was never any sort of consultation and discussion of things. It was a case of my having to ask to see him when I had things that I had to talk to him about and then waiting anywhere from a few days to a few weeks to get an appointment with him. While he was, as I said, polite enough and never excited in our conversations, the results were not very encouraging. He was a very stiff, stubborn man. Most of the things I had to talk to him about, in effect, were complaints on our part, and of course this didn't make for too chummy a discussion. He certainly, as I can recall, never in any way asked for an American view of anything or volunteered information about what he planned to do or what his policy was. Everything had to be pried out of him, anything you could get.

O'BRIEN: Passing on to the problem of oil, were relations between the consortium, the Iraq Petroleum Company, and the Kassim regime fairly good?

JERNEGAN: Oh, they were endurable for the first couple of years. The company had a lot of trouble with the new regime, which distrusted it and which kept pressing the company for changes in the concession arrangements whereby the government would get much more money and would get back most of the concession territory. These negotiations went on, off and on, all through the period from '58 until '62, I think it was '62, with the company progressively making concessions which

were, however, contingent on general agreement. They didn't actually give the Iraqis anything but they kept saying, "Well, we would be willing to do this or that." I think the last company proposal was that it would give back about, oh something like 94 or 5 per cent of the total concession. Well, the concession was the whole country, and most of that area the company didn't think was very good anyway from an oil point of view. So they were willing to compromise on holding on to about 5 or 6 per cent of the total territory, which 5 or 6 per cent of course they would choose and which would contain the known or believed-to-exist big deposits.

O'BRIEN: Was the Iraqi government interested, as some of the other governments were at that point, in providing some kind of a proration scheme with the oil interests so that the oil companies would not be able to, in a sense, pick and choose countries as they sometimes did in regard to oil?

JERNEGAN: Yes. Well, I don't think they tried to make any specific deal with the IPC [Iraq Petroleum Company] but they did support the OPEC [Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries], the organization of the producing states, and they certainly gave lip service, at least, to the concept of a prorating scheme. I'm not quite sure whether they really would have done it if the occasion had arisen because most of those governments, if not all of them, in my opinion are out for their own specific interests first. If they saw a chance to profit by Kuwait's or Saudi Arabia's misfortune in having their oil revenues cut down, I'm sure they would take the opportunity.

O'BRIEN: What was the reaction to the Soviet proposal for providing aid for oil producing nations--it was a U.N. [United Nations] proposal--to develop their own petroleum resources? It must have come along about late '58.

JERNEGAN: Was that something that the Soviets put forward in the U.N.?

O'BRIEN: In the U.N. Did you ever get any feedback or reaction to that on the part of the Iraqis, the State Department, or any of the other countries?

JERNEGAN: I don't remember that. If it was in '58 then that was while I was still in Rome. I wouldn't have heard so much about it or been so much interested in it as I would have been later. But basically, yes, the Iraqis developed the idea that they wanted to develop their own oil and they created eventually this controversy with the company. It came to the point where the government passed a law which in effect expropriated everything but the area which the IPC was then actually exploiting, pulling oil out of. Even areas which they had explored and determined had oil in them were expropriated. They didn't even leave the company those areas. And at the same time the law set up a national

Iraqi oil company which was to handle in the future all the area that was taken back from the IPC concession and to enter into agreements with any companies that it chose for the exploration and exploitation of the area. This has been emphasized since then particularly. INOC, it's called. Iraqi National Oil Company, I-N-O-C.

O'BRIEN: Did you see any evidence of Soviet interest and attempts to move into the transportation and the marketing of oil products?

JERNEGAN: Not at that time.

O'BRIEN: At that point.

JERNEGAN: No. I believe that there has been some indication of that since but certainly not while I was there. The Soviets were not involving or attempting to involve themselves in the oil business in Iraq. This was not part of the. . . .

O'BRIEN: No evidence of them contacting the Iraqi government at all in perhaps regard to. . . .

JERNEGAN: I don't think so. They were trying to get some sort of concession, I believe, to a big sulfur deposit in northern Iraq in which American companies were also interested, but I don't think they tried to get into the oil picture at that time.

O'BRIEN: There's a charge that's sometimes made by critics of the American oil industry and also of U.S. policy, particularly in places like Iraq and Iran, that the State Department is committed to a policy of, well, Robert Engler in the Politics of Oil, a study that's been done in recent years, says the State Department is committed to pipelines and profits. Do you think this a fair evaluation of U.S. policy in regard to oil-bearing countries like Iraq and Iran?

JERNEGAN: Iraq? It depends on how you interpret that. It is committed almost automatically by its duty to protect the interests of American citizens to do what it can to protect an American investment and this certainly includes trying to protect or uphold the validity of contracts, including oil concessions. But I don't know of any instance in which the U.S. government has tried to go beyond normal diplomatic representations in protection of an American company. We have--the Department had long since accepted as a fact of life that the concessionary countries in the Middle East and elsewhere were going to keep up the pressure to get better terms, to change their original concessions and to get more money and more say-so in affairs out of the companies. Neither we as a government nor the companies could hold out indefinitely against these pressures. The companies also recognize this fact of life, and while they bargain hard, argue and try to delay things as much as possible, all of them have accepted the principle that concessions can be and must

be changed even though they, the concessions, say on their face that they're good for ninety-nine years without change. And the Department doesn't therefore feel that it's obliged to call out the battleships every time somebody changes the terms of a concession or even in the case of an expropriation, as long as there's some effort made to pay compensation. Most of us, certainly, don't get too wrought up about the sufferings of the oil companies because they really aren't suffering all that much even if they do have to give up, say, 20 per cent of their former profits. They're still making damn good profits. There's a close working relationship, true, between the State Department and the American oil companies because there's a hell of a lot of money involved, big investments and big returns which are a benefit, of course, to the U.S. balance of payments and the U.S. taxpayer. Therefore we try to support the American interests. But it's not something that is overriding. That is, I don't think that we would make an oil question the touchstone of whether or not we continued on reasonably friendly relations with some country.

O'BRIEN: Were you ever called upon to play a part in any of the negotiations between the Iraq government and the Iraq Petroleum Company on some of this, for Socony. . . . [Standard Oil Company of New York]?

JERNEGAN: Only once.

O'BRIEN: For Jersey [Standard Oil Company of New Jersey]?

JERNEGAN: Let me see. There were two American companies involved in the IPC.

O'BRIEN: Right. Socony and Jersey.

JERNEGAN: Jersey and Socony Mobil. Once near the end of my tour in Baghdad I was instructed, and so was the British Ambassador, to deliver a communication, a message, orally to the Foreign Minister remonstrating with them--yes, asking the Iraqi government in accordance with the terms of the IPC concession that they refer to the dispute to arbitration as had been proposed by the company. There's a clause in the concession that said that arbitration should be resorted to if the company and government could not agree. An impasse had in fact been reached and the company had said, "All right, we invoke that clause." I was instructed to go in and say that in the view of the U.S. government this clause should be honored and the dispute taken to arbitration. And I did. I made the demarche and so did the British Ambassador, separately. But it had no effect. The Iraqi government took the position that being a sovereign nation it was not bound by that kind of clause and could not bind itself to abide by arbitration. Otherwise I don't believe that I ever did anything more than express pious hopes to the government that it would be reasonable, try to keep an open mind in dealing with the company. This was just on my own, remarks in passing. The company did not want us

closely involved. This is usually the case, not only with that particular company but in other instances in other places. The companies usually would rather try to handle their own problems and call for U.S. government intervention only as a sort of last resort. I think very often it's largely for the record, to show that they have done everything they could.

O'BRIEN: They almost have their own State Department anyway, don't they?

JERNEGAN: Yes, oh yes, particularly ARAMCO [Arabian American Oil Company] of Saudi Arabia. They have a government relations division, one of the most important.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever feel any pressures at all from the oil interests in regard to making negotiations or representations, either direct or indirect?

JERNEGAN: No. They were pretty good, usually, about keeping us informed if they sent out negotiators. In fact, the permanent representative of the IPC in Baghdad usually was quite willing to give us reports on the latest developments, what the state of affairs was, but no, never any pressures.

O'BRIEN: Well, passing on to aid problems in regard to Iraq, did the Iraq government or did the U.S. government attempt to negotiate anything in the way of foreign aid projects during your tenure as Ambassador?

JERNEGAN: Not that I can recall. When I arrived there in January of '59 we had still a fairly large technical assistance mission in place in Baghdad and it was still trying to work. Some of them in fact were working, but most of them were at best only half-employed because the Iraqis were no longer giving them the chance to work, no longer consulting them or permitting them to travel around and do things that they were supposed to do. It was a curious situation whereby the Iraqis didn't say, "We don't want your AID [Agency for International Development] mission," but they just froze it out by disregarding it. The people, some of them, had offices in the government buildings and they were still going to those offices but they just sat there in most cases, nobody to talk to, nothing to do. And the only clear indication the Iraqis gave was that when any of the AID personnel wanted to go on leave, for example, or make a trip outside the country, usually they wouldn't be allowed to come back. After two or three months--I've forgotten how long--it became apparent that this attitude was not going to change and so we gradually disbanded the mission. As AID developed a need for the personnel in other places they were shipped off all over the world. After that I don't think that there were ever any proposals for an AID program--let me see, we did have a few AID people left in the country.

- O'BRIEN: It seems to me that you had--I think I looked at the Foreign Service List and there were four or five people still attached in 1961, 1960.
- JERNEGAN: There were, that's right, and I'm trying to remember what the hell they did. [laughter] Let me see. Well, yes, we kept up a small flow of trainees, people who were sent to the United States for special training under AID auspices.
- O'BRIEN: Was there an education program that ran through those years for secondary teachers and agriculture teachers?
- JERNEGAN: In, you mean. . . Not in Iraq?
- O'BRIEN: Yes, in Iraq.
- JERNEGAN: No.
- O'BRIEN: There wasn't?
- JERNEGAN: No, there was no teaching program in Iraq. We did have some professors, a team of professors under contract to AID--well to AID and, jointly, the University of Baghdad--who came to the University of Baghdad to teach at the University. Let's see, one group taught petroleum engineering and there were some others in other fields, economics I guess. That was part of the work of the AID team, making those arrangements, taking care of the visitors. But there was no separate training, especially no separate training of teachers. Yes, I think that was the extent of it. We had this small residual unit which kept up with some difficulty a flow of Iraqi students--or they weren't all students; some of them were fully adults--to the United States for training usually in agriculture or engineering and this small group of American professors. That's about it.
- O'BRIEN: Did we ever attempt to get the Peace Corps into Iraq?
- JERNEGAN: I don't think so. If it was ever mentioned, it was probably just for the record. It was painfully apparent, to me at least, that the Iraqis would look upon the Peace Corps as a highly dangerous, subversive outfit.
- O'BRIEN: How about PL 480? Were there any attempts to negotiate any PL 480 agreements with. . . .
- JERNEGAN: There were. I mean, this was done later, '64 I guess, but I don't remember any during my time.
- O'BRIEN: Did the U.S. ever consider getting involved in that five-year development plan that Iraq initiated in 1961? It was

about a billion and a half dollar development program. The Czechs, I believe, and the Russians became somewhat involved.

JERNEGAN: Yes. I don't think there was ever any disposition to contribute in money. There was some talk about contributing technical assistance and encouraging American companies in certain instances to get in but on a private basis of investment if they could get the right kind of terms. And there were some American companies. But generally speaking the companies wanted only to come in on a contract basis to do a job, construct something, and get out. There were few, very few, who toyed with the idea of making a capital investment in Iraq. And I didn't blame them for hesitating. I think it was a pretty risky sort of thing politically speaking to put any heavy money into Iraq.

O'BRIEN: Did Iraq attempt to go to the World Bank in those years for financing?

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

JERNEGAN: I just don't remember. I think they did. I think they did, yes, I think they did because although their oil revenues were quite substantial and were increasing, and are still increasing now for that matter, they never had enough to do all the things that they thought they could do or wanted to do and so they were always looking for additional money. But I can't remember whether they made formal application and, if so, what happened. It's not up in my head.

O'BRIEN: Well, pass over to a few administrative things and perhaps discuss these for awhile. You were mentioning a regional meeting of the ambassadors in June of 1962 in which Phillips Talbot came out and informed you about the Hawk missiles. Was that the major subject of that particular regional meeting?

JERNEGAN: It was that year, yes. We spent most of our time discussing that. These meetings are more or less customary every year. Normally each ambassador makes some report on the particular problems and situation in the country to which he's accredited and the Assistant Secretary brings the ambassadors up to date on the latest policies and plans and everything in Washington. We did talk about other things certainly at that '62 meeting, notably the situation about Egypt, our relations with Egypt, Egypt's attitude toward Israel and so on, but this is normal. This is what happens every year.

O'BRIEN: Were there yearly meetings?

JERNEGAN: Yes. Once in a while we'd miss a year but ordinarily NEA has held these meetings on a yearly basis for quite a long time.

- O'BRIEN: Do you remember what happened at the '61 meeting?
- JERNEGAN: That was a special type meeting which was held in Nicosia, Cyprus. It was the first meeting after the new Administration came in and in fact it was planned as a means of informing the field, people in the field, of the new thoughts and policies and expectations in Washington.
- O'BRIEN: Who came out from Washington?
- JERNEGAN: Chester Bowles. He was the principal man who came out from Washington. Mennen Williams, "Soapy" Williams, also came for part of the meeting. But Bowles was then Under Secretary and was the leader and the moving spirit and he brought three or four people with him. I don't remember who they were now. But they spent quite a lot of time, Bowles and his assistants, in going over with us different aspects of policy as laid down by the new Administration. And then there was some, naturally there was some discussion of this. That meeting had representatives not only from the Middle East but also North Africa. It was quite a large gathering, too large as a matter of fact.
- O'BRIEN: You don't happen to remember the major guidelines or any major points they made about policy in the new Administration, or lines of the new Administration, do you, at that meeting?
- JERNEGAN: I remember only one item, and I'd better say frankly, I suppose, that in my experience new Administrations--and I don't think the Kennedy Administration was any great exception either--don't really bring all that new policies in with them. They talk about new policies but usually they're the same policies under different names, with maybe slight variation and nuance, but not a great deal. I certainly didn't feel at that meeting in 1961 that I had heard anything very new that altered the basic facts of U.S. policy in the Middle East. The one thing that I remember, that stuck in my mind, was that we were told that in military affairs we were no longer going to rely very much on overseas bases. Instead we were going to use the improved means of transportation, longer range aircraft and all of that, to meet situations requiring military action--mostly by airborne, or at any rate by operations based in the United States or in Europe. The most universal reaction of those of us who were in the Arab area, at least, was that this didn't sound very practical because we didn't know how we were going to get the overflight rights for these forces to get there.
- O'BRIEN: Then you missed the 1963 meeting.
- JERNEGAN: No, I was also at the '63 meeting.

O'BRIEN: Who came out from Washington that time?

JERNEGAN: I did, for one. I was then stationed in Washington. But it was Talbot again, Phillips Talbot, and I think Rodger Davies was there and one or two others at least, [William S.] Bill Gaud. Gaud had also been present at the Athens meeting too, in '62.

O'BRIEN: What was the major line of discussion that time?

JERNEGAN: There wasn't anything in particular like the Hawk missile business that I can recall. What did we talk about?

O'BRIEN: I think at that point Jordan had just gone--or when was that?

JERNEGAN: The meeting was in October, October of '63.

O'BRIEN: Well, the Jordan thing would have cooled off by then.

JERNEGAN: Yes. Let's see was that--no, this was before we got into the terrible hassle about supplying arms to Jordan and then to Israel. That came later.

O'BRIEN: Yemen had cooled down by then too, hadn't it?

JERNEGAN: Yemen was, yes, it was rocking along. It was still in a mess, of course it still is in a mess. I don't believe the U.N. effort had entirely ended. It was still a fairly hot subject within the Bureau at least. It wasn't of such great interest to people outside I guess by that time. But those first months back in the Department I spent a great deal of my time on Yemen affairs. They were certainly discussed at Istanbul. We had our charge d'affaires from Yemen present at the meeting, and he gave us quite a long and enlightening lecture on the true nature of Yemeni society and politics.

O'BRIEN: Well, did you work closely with Robert Komer in regard to Yemen. . .

JERNEGAN: Very much so, yes.

O'BRIEN: . . . when that was beginning to develop?

JERNEGAN: Well, I wasn't in on the beginning of it, because I had an interlude of about one year between Baghdad and my return to the State Department, when I was down at Maxwell Air Force Base and was pretty well out of the operating picture. I found it very difficult even to keep up with what was happening, much less, of course, doing anything about it. When I did return the first of September of '63 to Washington, I was immediately caught up with Komer. He was on the

telephone three or four times a day at least, usually with either an inquiry or a suggestion. He was full of ideas.

O'BRIEN: How did you feel, at that point, about the recognition of Yemen in December of '62. Was it a wise decision?

JERNEGAN: My own feeling then was that it was a proper decision because the old regime under the Imam [Ahmad] had been so backward, so anachronistic, that it just didn't make sense to encourage it in any way to continue any farther into the twentieth century. When they set up a republic, while I didn't have any great hopes for republican government in Yemen, at least it was an advance over the old regime. It seemed to me that this was one opportunity we had-- we don't often have these opportunities--to place ourselves on the side of Arab progress, political progress, I mean. Ordinarily we find that the Arab regimes that are friendly to us tend to be not so progressive or at least not progressive enough to satisfy the Arab radicals. And the regimes that the Arabs consider really progressive are too radical for us to get along with, and besides they're usually hostile to us. But here we had a case of a change of government which we could not only accept but even commend. The fact that they spent the next five or six years in a civil war was not something that really could have been foreseen or, if it had been foreseen, would have made, it seems to me, any great difference. We either had to recognize the republic or declare ourselves for the monarchy.

O'BRIEN: Did you have any discussions at that October meeting with Ambassadors [William B.] Macomber and [Parker Thompson] Hart in regard to that?

JERNEGAN: Yes, well, they of course, were in on the discussions.

O'BRIEN: Well, what I was thinking here is that Jordan and Saudi Arabia both felt. . . .

JERNEGAN: Yes, I know. By that time, Jordan had pulled itself out of the picture. The King had seen his mistake in over-extending himself with regard to Yemen and had pulled back. Saudi Arabia, of course, was still very active and very concerned. Most of our concern was the threat of Egypt to Saudi Arabia, which arose primarily over the Yemeni question because of the Egyptian troops in Yemen. Now that you mention it, I think that was probably the biggest single topic that we discussed, the question of Yemen and the Egyptian-Saudi involvement in it, on the opposite sides. We didn't, that I remember, come to any great conclusion except we should go on working to get a cease-fire, get a withdrawal of the Egyptian troops and persuade King Faisal [Crown Prince Faisal Ibn Abdul Aziz al Sa'ud] to lay off his aid to the royalists and promote a sort of national reconciliation among the Yemenis. Let them form their own government without either Egyptian or Saudi intervention.

O'BRIEN: Did you put the country team program into effect in your embassy when that directive came out in 1961? Did you have any reactions or response?

JERNEGAN: You mean the President's letter telling ambassadors what they were supposed to do and what their authority was? Well, I had been operating an informal country team long before that. And I didn't take that letter as calling for any change in method of operation. I've always felt that the country team idea is simply a natural one which should come to any ambassador without his having to be told. It's simply a sort of committee which he calls together to advise him and a means of keeping the members of the embassy staff informed of what's going on and giving them the word as to what they ought to be doing. I think the armed services have tended to over-formalize and attach too great importance to the name and the form. It doesn't matter whether it's called the country team or the ambassador's personal committee or whatever you like. In fact, it is simply an advisory body, if properly understood anyway. It is not a body that takes decisions by majority vote or that can override the ambassador's responsibility. He's got to make the decision regardless. The only purpose of the country team is to be sure that he's gotten the best advice available and has taken into consideration the interests of all the different agencies of the U.S. government who might be represented in the country.

O'BRIEN: Did you feel your memos and your reporting was getting a fair hearing within the Department?

JERNEGAN: Oh yes.

O'BRIEN: Did you have a good desk officer?

JERNEGAN: Let's see, who was he at that time? He changed. Yes, we had a good desk officer. I never had any worries about that sort of thing when I was working for NEA because particularly in the NE area, that is, the Arab area, those concerned with the Arab area, they've always had--for the last fifteen years anyway--very high calibre people. They're among the best in the whole Department.

O'BRIEN: Did you get along pretty well with Phillips Talbot?

JERNEGAN: Very well, yes, excellently.

O'BRIEN: How about Robert Strong?

JERNEGAN: Bob? We got along well. He's a very competent officer and when he was chief of the Near Eastern office we got good service, good attention.

O'BRIEN: How about Middleton?

- JERNEGAN: Adrian Middleton?
- O'BRIEN: Were there any philosophical splits, or policy splits, between these people and their attitudes toward the Near East area that you detected?
- JERNEGAN: I don't think so, no. Well, between what people? Strong, Talbot. . . .
- O'BRIEN: Strong, Middleton, Talbot, Komer, and perhaps Gaud as well.
- JERNEGAN: Middleton really didn't figure in it because he was an administrative officer and he had nothing to do with policy. Gaud? No, I don't recall anything. Of course, perennially and inevitably the geographic bureau and the ambassador tend to carry on an argument with the corresponding AID office because the AID man usually is unwilling to satisfy all the requests the country team or the geographic bureau may make, and increasingly he doesn't have the money to do it anyway. Also the AID people tend to be a bit more sceptical, and rightly so I think, of the abilities of the local governments to utilize various forms of aid or of the real value of certain things that the countries want that are not likely to do them so much good as something else.
- O'BRIEN: At any time, was there any time that conditions in Iraq, the relations between the United States and Iraq, reached that so-called crisis stage in which you came into direct contact with White House people like McGeorge Bundy or Walt Rostow?
- JERNEGAN: No.
- O'BRIEN: Did you ever have any dealings with them at all?
- JERNEGAN: Not while I was in Iraq, no. I told you I was called back in the spring of '59 but that was before the Kennedy Administration and then not again. I came back in '60 for my home leave, as I said, but there was no particular crisis on then, nothing that brought me into contact with Bundy. I don't remember meeting anybody in the White House in '60. That was before the change of Administration anyway. And in '61 I did not come home at all. So July '62 was the next time that I was in Washington.
- O'BRIEN: So you never assumed direct contact with them from Baghdad.
- JERNEGAN: No, no, I had no direct contact with them from Baghdad at all.
- O'BRIEN: Well, would you care to--or have we pretty much covered the circumstances that lead up to--well, I think we have--your departing from Iraq?

JERNEGAN: Yes, I think so. It had no particular effect, except on me, it was a nuisance for me. But our relations with Iraq continued, after I left, on the unsatisfactory but still endurable basis that they had been before I left. And just a year later, after they had been through a couple of changes of government over there, they took the initiative--not to restore relations but to exchange ambassadors again. Bob Strong went out as ambassador and carried on until '67 when the long standing distrust and animosity toward the U.S. flared up, and they threw everybody out.

O'BRIEN: Did this have any effect on your career?

JERNEGAN: My having been thrown out?

O'BRIEN: You became a career minister soon after that, didn't you?

JERNEGAN: Before I even got back to Washington.

O'BRIEN: Oh, was that related at all to this?

JERNEGAN: I don't think so. I think this was coincidental. It was that time of year when they normally make career minister appointments and I was eligible for the first time, I guess, because it was the first year that I was past fifty. They had a rule about not promoting anyone to career minister who wasn't fifty. I don't think that being thrown out of Iraq had anything to do with it one way or the other. The only effect it had as far as I can see on my career is that since I had to leave Iraq in this semi-unexpected way, there was no job waiting for me at home or anywhere else. So eventually I wound up going down to Maxwell, the Air Force Air War College, which was a sabbatical year. In a sense I almost think it was a boondoggle because there wasn't very much work to do. It was interesting for me and a pleasant interim but that was all. Of course, I wound up back in the Department in the same old job that I had left about seven years before, eight years before I guess, yes eight years before. It was just as hard as it had been the previous time, the same amount of work to do if not more. If I had stayed on in Iraq until the change came in the eventual course of events maybe I would have gone direct to some other post abroad, which I would have preferred. At that time I had had ten years of service in the Department and I had decided that that was enough. That was all I really wanted of service in the Department so I didn't welcome the additional two years that followed but it turned out all right.

O'BRIEN: Do you remember anything of your meeting with President Kennedy in July 1963?

JERNEGAN: '62.

O'BRIEN: Oh, '62, right.

JERNEGAN: It was when I came back from Iraq. I went to pay a courtesy call on him. It was short. I had the impression that the President wasn't very much interested and that he really wasn't too well informed about the circumstances that brought me to Washington on that occasion. Though obviously, he must have approved the policy and he had obviously received the Kuwaiti ambassador not long before. He seemed to have--he clearly had other things on his mind, which was quite understandable in the circumstances.

O'BRIEN: Did those of you that were involved in, as ambassadors in the Middle East or on the Near East Desk, feel that the Middle East was of a lower priority than other areas of the world as far as the President's attention was concerned?

JERNEGAN: I don't know how to answer that as regards President Kennedy. We had been accustomed over the years to the fact that usually it is of a lower priority than events in Europe and of course more recently in the Far East, except when there's some special crisis as the 1948 business, the fight between the Israelis and the Arabs then, and then again in '56 and again in '67. In those periods naturally it always comes up to high priority and I must say I have the impression now that in the recent two or three months it's been put on a much higher priority than is normal in the White House. But in the period of President Kennedy's Administration I didn't have any particular feeling. I had a distinct feeling that Iraq was not very high priority and I didn't regard it as very high priority myself. But certainly President Kennedy gave it as much attention, or the White House gave the area as much attention as anybody before, possibly even more than before in a time of non-crisis. One reason may have been because Bob Komer is such a live wire and was strategically placed in the White House staff with easy access to Mac Bundy and relatively easy access to the President personally. This was my experience during the last two years that I was in Washington. While some people complained about this arrangement (claiming the White House staff under Bundy was duplicating or overriding the State Department), our experience in the Near Eastern Bureau was not bad. We found it at least as useful as it was troublesome to us, if not more useful I would say, because Komer was very knowledgeable, very bright, as I said, full of ideas, full of energy, and usually could get the ear of Bundy and/or the President at least to put a problem or something requiring decision before them quickly. This was something that was extremely valuable to the State Department. It hadn't mattered so much in the Eisenhower days because Eisenhower didn't concern himself so much with these things and many more decisions were made right in the State Department.

O'BRIEN: So you liked these--well what's sometimes been called the Bundy-Rostow reforms or the setting up of the crisis managers.

JERNEGAN: Well, I don't know about crisis managers, but I found the day to day arrangements were not bad. There was a man, and a

good man, in the White House who followed our operations and was available to convey things and to take soundings. I could call Komer and say, "We're thinking of replying to such and such a message in such and such a fashion. Do you think the President will buy it? Will you ask Bundy if he thinks the President will buy it?" This was very helpful to know.

O'BRIEN: You were in NEA when the transition took place from the Kennedy Administration to the Johnson Administration.

JERNEGAN: Yes.

O'BRIEN: Did you see any changes in policy in that transition?

JERNEGAN: No.

O'BRIEN: For over a period of a year let's say.

JERNEGAN: No, I didn't notice anything really significant.

O'BRIEN: Except Komer became more involved in Southeast Asia.

JERNEGAN: Yes, he naturally--but it was about the time that I left Washington that he began to move into Southeast Asian affairs.

O'BRIEN: Well, in retrospect, did your long-range views from 1958 to '63 involved with Near East problems, did they change?

JERNEGAN: I became more pessimistic and have become still more pessimistic since then. '58 was by no means my beginning in dealing with Near East problems. That dates back to 1941.

O'BRIEN: Well, from '41, let's say, to 1969.

JERNEGAN: In '41 I believed that we should get more involved in Near Eastern affairs and that we could do a lot of things to improve the position of the United States. Then after the Palestine question had grown to a really acute problem, in '52 when I was back in the Department for the third time, I was hopeful that we could find a solution to it. There were various things being batted around, discussed, including resettlement of the Arab refugees outside of Palestine in the various peripheral countries; the U.N. was working on it; money was available; and even the Arab governments themselves had given some indication that they would agree to go along with this resettlement. We had schemes for the development of the Jordan River, the Eric Johnston mission on the Jordan Valley, and so on. Looking back, all of those hopes and expectations were dashed. The refugees never got resettled, none of them. The Jordan Valley plan was rejected by the Arabs.

To a large extent it's coming into being now, just through the actions of the individual countries themselves acting on their own without agreement among themselves. It was coming into being, I should have said, until 1967. Now, of course, the Israeli occupation of a large part of the Valley has changed the situation. But the whole situation, the whole Near Eastern mess, has gone backwards unfortunately. Looking back I don't really know what we could have done in practice that would have helped matters anymore than what we did try to do.

Maybe, I think probably it would have been wiser and we might have come out a little better if we had spent less time worrying about the defense of the Middle East and putting forward the plans like Middle East Defense--called MEDO--and supporting the Baghdad Pact, CENTO [Central Treaty Organization], because those things didn't produce, in fact, improved security and they did agitate the Arabs and create suspicions in them of our motives and so on. And on top of that the Eisenhower Doctrine was very definitely a blunder. I had no doubt about that in my mind. I was dubious about it at the time, but then I was not in Washington when it was promulgated, so at least it's not on my conscience. The only connection I had with the Eisenhower Doctrine was very much against my will. Kicking and screaming, I was dragged back by the Department in 1957, just after the Doctrine was proclaimed, and sent out on a mission with [James P.] Dick Richards, the former Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, to sell the thing to Middle Eastern countries. I spent six weeks as Richards' chief assistant while, going around from capital to capital, he explained what the Doctrine was and when the various governments said what they needed in the way of economic or military aid to strengthen their situations and so on. We visited a lot of countries, most of whom expressed themselves in favor of the Doctrine, but most of these were really converted anyway. We were preaching to the converted. They were willing to be friends without the Doctrine. And the countries which we didn't convert--some of them we never even got into--were only alienated by the whole proceedings. And this still lingers. The Eisenhower Doctrine is still brought up by Arab governments as one of the imperialist tricks of the United States.

O'BRIEN: Was the Kennedy Administration ever able to escape that kind of. . . .

JERNEGAN: Well, the Kennedy Administration, I believe, simply swept it under the rug and forgot about it, which was about all you could do. I don't think that they were able to do anything affirmative to erase the bad impression, which really always stems back to the fact that we are friends of Israel in the Arab mind. This is the essential problem.

O'BRIEN: One last point in regard to Israel and Arab and the United States relations. Do you see a disproportionate influence of pro-Israel groups in America on. . . .

JERNEGAN: U.S. policy?

O'BRIEN: U.S. policy and more importantly in your experience with, let's say, Iraq, do you see the Iraqis convinced of that?

JERNEGAN: The Iraqis, and I think all Arabs, are convinced of it. There's no doubt about that. The Arab states of North Africa, particularly French North Africa, may not think of it in those terms so much as the eastern Arabs do but all of them are sure that the Jewish influence in the United States is preponderant and that it is the basic reason for our Middle Eastern--or the basis of our Middle Eastern policies. As to whether it really is, I would have to say yes and no, that is, there is a very strong Jewish influence that affects almost any Administration. The Republicans seem to be a little less susceptible to it than Democrats but there isn't an awful lot of difference. In the Department you feel these pressures from time to time.

O'BRIEN: In the Department--can you identify a pro-Israel element in the Department?

JERNEGAN: No, not ordinarily.

O'BRIEN: It's mainly in the Executive and Congress?

JERNEGAN: The White House sometimes has a minority specialist, Mike [Myer] Feldman was one of the more recent ones, who usually is quite a lobbyist for the Jewish point of view. It's part of his job. And of course in Congress there are a number of Congressmen who very strongly support the Israeli cause, the Zionist cause and the cause of the Jews generally. People like [Leonard] Farbstein are obvious but there are a lot of members of Congress who are not Jews who do the same either because they have been convinced or because they have a lot of Jewish constituents. We had a very amusing talk in NEA one time. A group of us got together with a Congressman from Florida and we told him our troubles with the Arabs and Jews and he told us about what it was like to be a congressman, what his difficulties were in dealing with his constituents and so on. He seemed to understand the Palestine problem pretty well. Somebody asked him whether he would vote in a certain way on a certain question, where the Department's interest was not the same as the interests of the American Jewish community. He said, "I have thirty thousand Jews and about two Arabs in my district. Now what do you expect?"

O'BRIEN: Well, on the other hand, the charge is sometimes made that the State Department is too pro-Arab.

JERNEGAN: It is indeed. I mean, the charge is made. It's not true, I think. People believe that because normally they hear only the Jewish side. The American press clearly tends to be pro-Jewish and it presents the news in a way that tends to favor the

Jews, which is not by any means to say that Americans would necessarily be fond of the Arabs if they heard the Arab side, because the Arabs are not perfect either. Bob Strong once said and put it the best way I've ever heard it, that the people in the Near Eastern Division, dealing with the Palestine question, were absolutely neutral; they didn't like either side. [laughter] That's about my feeling too, and I think this is true of most of the professionals who struggle with the problem for a long time.

I think the reason the Department gives the impression to many people that it tends to favor the Arabs is that, of necessity, it deals with the whole suite of the Arab world and is conscious of the many American interests that are at stake in those countries. This naturally leads to an attempt to balance our position rather than, as American Jews would naturally prefer, going all out for Israel every time an issue arises. An effort to be fair or neutral between two contending parties rarely satisfies either one.

O'BRIEN: Well, I'm at the end of my questions. Is there anything else that you can think of that should be added?

JERNEGAN: Oh no, I don't think so. There's no point in my rambling on about things. The problem that confronted us in Iraq, confronted me in Iraq, still goes on, and it's not confined to Iraq of course. It is to find a means of reconciling our support for Israel (which I don't advocate at all that we should change; I don't see how we could), with the Arab feeling that their national existence is threatened by the existence of Israel and that they cannot progress until they have eliminated Israel. The only hope is perhaps that one day the Arabs will decide to give up the profitless effort to eliminate Israel and concentrate on their own development and improvement and that this will, over a period of time, lead to peace, but it's a gloomy prospect.

O'BRIEN: Well, thank you, Ambassador Jernegan.