of who would call on whom. So having worked frenetically in a terrible atmosphere-- crowds and mobs-- and just getting around from one to the other part of the city was almost impossible and dangerous. So the meeting was not held at that particular time.

But finally individuals did meet, and I think General Qarabaghi met with some of the individuals. Exactly who met during a couple of these sessions, I don't recall. But then the whole thing fell apart, you know, on February tenth and eleventh, and so the effort that we had hoped to be helpful in sort of this transition sort of collapsed with it. One thing I can say about that effort is that, to me, it was always a highly intelligent effort. We really had very little to work with. It was a recognition on our part that the revolutionaries were most likely to be triumphant and that we did not, certainly at this point, want another blood bath. And had the military, which was essentially-- I hate to use these phrases, pro-American. I never permitted them, So-and-So is pro-American. Like hell he is. You may get along well with him, but I think he's pro-whatever country he's from.

But the military were very close with us for obvious reasons. We did not want to see it shattered. And again, continuing in our mind obviously was concern over the neighbor to the north. And as I say, so keeping the military intact as a stabilizing force, cutting back or reducing bloodshed, and recognizing the realities, what the ambassador was doing made high good sense.

Q: Was the State Department apprised of this effort or was it sort of like--

Naas: Yes, they were apprised of the effort. And I must admit, I keep reading about different versions of all this, and I have a hard time remembering-- it was ten years ago-- without reviewing the files myself, how much we asked permission and how much we just went ahead and did it in the absence of clear guidance and reported what we were doing. I don't quite remember who took the first step in all this.

Q: Now as you said earlier, during the weekend of February tenth, eleventh and twelfth, a military rebellion took place and brought down the Bakhtiar government, bringing Bazardan and Khomeini more or less into power. How would you describe the atmosphere at the embassy-- and Tehran, I guess, generally-- during that period?

Naas: Well, from our viewpoint the worst was happening. The very thing that we had hoped to avoid, as I just mentioned to you, was occurring. The military was falling apart. Their leaders were going into hiding. Some of the leaders were killed, and there was open fighting between various units of the military, and, of course, between various units of the military and the civilian revolutionaries. So one looked frankly upon this pretty much in a terribly discouraged, almost apocalyptic fashion. The worst that could have-- had happened, and we became, as I said before, greatly concerned about our own security. And we started on February eleventh in burning as much material as we could in the embassy, and telling people, as many people as possible, to stay home, because-- just a little private story. My wife was evacuated the very end of January-- I forget whether it was the twenty-ninth or thirtieth that she left the country. And I won't go into the full story now. But I said to her, "When they come across the wall, I hope-- " And then I went

on with a rather involved sentence. So it wasn't "If," they come over the wall. Both the ambassador and I were aware that the embassy itself-- you know, this huge compound-- was terribly vulnerable, and that since we had been so close to the government and had been sort of taking the brunt even then of the attack-- at that particular period we had not become the devil incarnate-- but it was clear that we had much too central a role in Iranian eyes not to be attacked.

And as I say, after the attack we didn't really move back into the embassy until well into March. We were operating out of my residence and the ambassador's residence in evacuating people.

Q: Now the embassy was occupied on February fourteenth, I think? Is that the right date?

Naas: We were occupied for a few hours. About ten-thirty, ten-twenty, something like that, very, very heavy firing came into the embassy compound and into the chancellery itself. All of us, most of us, fairly quickly were down on our hands and knees for the rest of the day. The people on the second floor immediately-- the secretaries and people who didn't have any particular function at that time-- immediately crept down the hallways to the communications center and sat there. People from the first floor, who were able to, also came up the stairway. That was a dangerous flight, because there was a window in the stairway and somebody across the street kept shooting into the stairwell area. But they came up and we had a very-- a little steel door, about an eighth of an inch thick, and the bullets went through that like nothing at all. And people came up, crept down the hallway.

A lot of people from the administrative staff and the security officers stayed on the first floor to help direct the Marines, and to carry out the orders in terms of eventually flooding the place with tear gas.

Then they, just before the people-- the invaders finally turned to the chancellery itself, they all came upstairs as well. It was a peculiar invasion, if you will, or intrusion, because after the first fusillade of shots into the embassy, which put us all on our hands and knees, but the heavy firing into the chancellery itself stopped fairly quickly. We had the odd shot here and there when movement of a door or person could be seen by the snipers.

They went towards the ambassador's house and my house and the other outbuildings. There were a lot of different buildings in the compound. And once, from the intruders' point of view, these were more or less securethe turned to the chancellery. The Marines, most of the Marines had surrendered, under the ambassador's instructions, one by one. They would call the ambassador by radio, he was sitting in my office-- his office had become too unsafe, had big French doors, whereas mine had just the regular windows. So he sat on the floor there and he kept ordering, as some Marine would be surrounded by heavy fire-- and the Marines were not supposed to have death-dealing ammunition. Some of them may have disobeyed orders, I don't know. I've heard many rumors that they did. But the ambassador would say, all right, if it's possible to save yourself, surrender, and one by one, most of them pretty much they surrendered. Some of the intruders finally got into the chancellery, fought their way through the tear gas, up to the second floor, and started pounding on the door, at which point one of our local employees-- a guy who just happened to be in the embassy, had come over with the consul-general that morning-- went down and interpreted and said that we would surrender, if the guy just didn't blow down

the door.

And so we all went into the ambassadorial suite with our hands up and were held there. It's hard to remember how long it was, but almost at the very time that we were being held, a counter-force directed from afar, at the beginning by Yazdi, came into the compound. There was more shooting. Not a great deal. There was no pitched battle, but there was a fair amount of shooting. And the people who had intruded agreed to leave the compound.

Q: Did you find out who the groups were that were occupying the embassy?

Q: You know, I never did find out precisely. The assumption was that it was a mixed--this was not just one group. Certainly some of the people who came into the Embassy grounds were Mujahdidin-i Khalq people. Some of them were the Fidayan and the Fidayan-i Khalq people. Several of them had had training in the Middle East. They came in with their kafyas on their head and looking particularly ferocious. So I think it was a mixed bag, and I think once people got over the wall, a whole horde of people just followed. It was pretty well planned. They knew where everything was in the compound. They were pretty smart. They had obviously been listening to some of our communications at some place along the line. They'd got hold of a radio and walkie-talkies, because the Marines used to joke at times, because we assumed that they were listening to us and the Marines used to joke, be careful of the claymore mines now. They said, well, when we come by your post, be very careful, the claymore mines, you know the field that's set up in the trees there. And the other Marine would say, yeah, I understand, I'll be very careful.

So when these guys came over the wall, they were extremely careful and cautious as they advanced towards the ambassador's residence, because they were looking around for all the claymore mines that were supposed to be up in the trees.

Q: Some of the accounts have suggested that the people who cooperated initially wanted to serve notice to the U. S. that there would be no coup allowed. Or no counter-coup or no counter-revolution or something to that effect.

Naas: You'd have to talk to the people who went over the fence. You know, the days before they came over, the rumor, of course, was sweeping Tehran that a very substantial number of SAVAK people had taken refuge, that military officers and other people whom they dearly wanted to get their hands on had taken refuge in the embassy.

But I think the basic reason is what you said, is that having gone through the Mussadiq period, they wanted to make sure that the American embassy was in no position-- which we certainly weren't, but they didn't know that-- in no position to bring about a counter-revolution. I think it also was a locus for the beginning of the struggle within the revolutionary groups. A couple of them were trying to sort of get one up on Bazargan and, if you want to call them, the moderates. And one up really on Khomeini. So we were the locus at that time of an internal struggle as well as the points that I just made.

Q: How would you describe the administration's stance, the Carter administration's stance, towards the new regime?

Naas: I came home in March of 1979 for a couple weeks rest and to be reunited with my wife. The main thing was rest. And I received instructions. The understanding was that I would come home for a couple of weeks rest and recuperation, then go back as chargé, so that Bill [Sullivan] could come out. Very informally he was taking leave too, but full understanding that when he came back, I would take over, and then a new ambassador would in due course be named.

So I met with Warren Christopher and then I had a long session with Dave Newsom and with Harold Saunders. Newsom and Saunders are both personal friends and career people, and therefore I assume that they were speaking for the administration. But I was told to go back to Iran and to emphasize that the American government felt that there was a sufficient basis of mutual interest, so that a relationship-- much different than the previous one, but a mutually beneficial useful relationship could be established. I was told to emphasize our common interest in the territorial integrity of Iran, in the common interest of political stability, economic development of Iran, and that historically the reasons for our importance to Iran were clear, that this was sufficient basis, we thought, for the future. That we could build a respectful relationship.

Q: Work out a modus vivendi, basically?

Naas: Yes.

Q: Were there any discussions of a public statement by Vance or Carter to that effect, that the U. S. would accept the new regime?

Naas: Certainly when I was chargé I requested a clearer statement than we had seemed to be getting. My own suggestion was lower key than, say, Vance or Carter, was that Hal Saunders, who is highly respected throughout the Middle East, go on VOA and make a small speech. A question and answer kind, in which he would bring out strongly the very points that 1) we accepted the fact that the Iranian people had revolted and we wanted a respectful relationship with the new government and the people of Iran. Our ties were with the people of Iran as well.

I don't know whatever happened to that suggestion, because the speech was never made. There were-- I think if you go-- had the time to research the State Department spokesmen's statements and probably White House spokesman stuff, I'm sure at some point they said, yeah, we accept the revolution. The fact is, of course, that the success of the revolution was a hell of a shock to the administration.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE; BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE:

Naas: Not to become personal in this, but I was surprised when I came home in March. I had a meeting with Warren Christopher. That meeting did not go particularly well. And with Newsom and with Saunders. At my own initiative, I had lunch with Gary Sick, who was on the NSC staff, as you know, at the time. But no effort was made by Brzezinski or

anybody else at a senior policy level-- you know, outside regular state or the NSC structure to sit down and talk with me of what my views were, to get the first-hand thoughts from the guy who was going to go back-- reluctantly, I must say-- to be chargé for a while.

But there was sort of a strange mood among many people in town. There was lots of shock and distress. And then people are always swayed more by hope than analysis. Something I point out at a lecture I give at the Foreign Service Institute. And there was great hope that somehow-- we had lost a lot-- we can do business with the government. And some people sort of blithely tended-- and I found this very difficult in the next few months--tended to ignore the fact that our hopes were resting on very thin ice.

Q: You said that the meeting with Christopher didn't go too well. Was he less considering accommodation?

Naas: No. It didn't go particularly well on personality.

Q: Oh, personality. Okay.

Naas: I also felt that he-- I told him some things I'm sure he did not want to hear. I was not physically in the best shape at the time. I hadn't slept really much for weeks and weeks. And had flown directly in from Tehran, had one night's sleep and saw him the next day. So I was pretty weary. The bags were down to my jowls. I guess I was very somber and very gloomy about the future and felt that people didn't quite understand what a major blow U. S. interests had suffered in the area. It was the kind of talk that people

at a political level very rarely want to hear, and he showed no more reception to my views than that really. Again, I'm sure part of it was my own appearance probably put him off. In fact, he did use the phrase later on that I was a burned-out case. I'll never forgive Mr. Christopher for his behavior.

Q: Were there any groups in the State Department or elsewhere that were less inclined in favor of a more hostile approach?

Naas: I never had anything come to my attention whatsoever. I think there was at least a realization on the part of most professionals that the worst had happened. The optimists hoped that somehow the new government could be dealt with. And everybody else felt the situation was basically hopeless, in terms of U. S. initiative. You know, a strong U. S. initiative. There was no opportunity, or no room for it. No inclination whatsoever.

Q: How much of a grasp did you and the embassy political officers have of the workings of a political system that was emerging during the first months of revolution?

Naas: I think we had a very good understanding of it, in the sense that there was no system. I mean, the way we would like to look at a hierarchical system. But that power was regional and, if you want to call it, ward by ward. Each town was broken up into different sections, with the committees, the khomitehs, based around the local mosque usually. They ran the government in their area. And we reported very, very extensively on this kind of thing. You know, we were aware of this every single day. In fact, we were

trying to recover household effects, for example, of people who had been evacuated, and a small band of our military people would go into these areas, in civilian clothes, of course, and in each different area had to work out a separate modus vivendi with the khomiteh. And some of the khomiteh leaders were rabidly anti-American and we could not get into their area at all. Others were quite accommodating and helpful. Others were venal. You know, we'd get into a house if we gave up the fridge and the adding machine and the TV. I mean, you found all levels. But day by day, we were terribly aware of the fact that power was very, very divided-- in small units throughout, and that the central government itself had practically no power whatsoever.

Q: There was a revolutionary council that tried to sort of coordinate. How much was known about it and its membership?

Naas: About the membership practically nothing. One of our key objectives was to try to find out who they were. Simply because if one knows who they are, and if you know them or know a way to them, you can talk about your problems. You can talk about the larger policy issues, on which I really didn't have an awful lot to say, except what I mentioned to you. And our willingness to cooperate with them on military supply in the future, et cetera. I know I talked to people who I later found out were in-- some of whom I suspected at the time-- the revolutionary council. And I would very casually say, oh, by the way, who are the members? And I'd always get sort of a sly grin and-- well, that's secret. So we had very little hard knowledge of who was in the council. And to this day I'm still not sure who all the members were. You know, time had gone by on that now, so

we didn't spend a lot of time researching it.

But it was one of the things that made our test difficult. As I said, we were by diplomatic necessity dealing with the government. A very decent group of people, by and large. But we knew that actual day-to-day power was in the khomitehs and that real power, to the extent that anybody had real power at the center, was in the hands of the revolutionary council in a sense, but most prominently with Khomeini himself.

Q: You sort of alluded to this earlier, I think, but to what extent did you see factional divisions among the revolutionary leadership?

Naas: Within the people who took over the government and held the cabinet posts, I didn't see any incident. There wasn't time. The issues were fundamental. They were trying to survive. So you had that group of people, who were essentially the old National Front leadership. In fact, I guess all of them-- except Yazdi and Entezam were probably a little too young to have been terribly active except as students in the National Front days. But all the rest of the people came out of the old National Front. One was perfectly aware, of course, that you had a whole host of people around the revolution, around the religious leaders, who had absolutely no faith in or desire that Bazargan could survive, nor did they want him to survive.

In terms of divisions within the religious element, it was very hard for us to get a handle on that. We had come to know slightly Beheshti. Shortly after the revolution was successful, we made some contact with

Ayatollah Talegani and his people, more in a humanitarian sense than a political sense.

But we did not have that deep detailed knowledge of the divisions. You know, "Who went to Qom?" "Who had the real strength in Tehran?" certainly, in terms of the key figures. And don't forget, we had evacuated our entire agency staff and we were down to just a couple political officers. Victor Tomseth came up from Isfahan after he closed the post. Mike Metrinko came down from Tabriz after he closed his post. So we had two first-rate linguists and people who knew Iran, and they were walking into a Tehran scene, in which they had to learn a little bit about that too.

Q: Now James Bill and others have discussed the extent to which a few CIA people-- I think Vernon Cassin-- were in contact with Bani Sadr and Entezam, among others, during early '79 and later '79, as part of some sort of an effort to post political contacts with the moderates among the revolutionaries. How much did you know about those efforts?

Naas: I think the Cassin thing occurred after I'd left the country.

Q: Okay. Well, according to Bill there were some contacts early in '79 that were reestablished later in the year.

Naas: As I recall Bill's writing, Cassin had met Bani Sadr in France.

Q: That's right, that's right.

Naas: And then reestablished the-- according to what Bill writes, and what he writes is based entirely upon documents, alleged documents that were seized at the Embassy, and interviews. I'm not knowledgable of that. And I personally felt at the time-- this was before-- because I think Bani Sadr had become president or was going to be-- or it was clear he would be one of the candidates. I could be wrong on the timing of that. One of the things I strongly recommended to Washington was that we withstand any pleas for special covert actions. This was different than covert acquisition of information. We simply didn't know enough of what was going on. And when people started to come up with wild ideas, that we resist them as strongly as we could.

Q: Now you mentioned earlier someone had contacts with Ayatollah Taleqani and Beheshti among others, of having a meeting or making an approach towards Khomeini?

Naas: Not much at that time. I think it was in that period-- I'm not quite sure of the date-- when Ambassador Sullivan sent that famous telegram that he didn't see the need of it, because he'd gone back and would be sort of like a Gandhi. There's more to the telegram than that, but that's the most famous phrase that has lasted.

So, no, we didn't-- to the best of my memory we did not propose, nor did the Department accept that contact be made at that particular time. I've already gone through, I believe, on the tape, my own efforts in May.

Q: Now you mentioned earlier your meetings with Bazargan and your impressions of Bazargan. You met with Yazdi also?

Naas: I met very, very frequently with Yazdi, yes, as deputy prime minister and then as foreign minister.

Q: What were your impressions of him?

Naas: Favorable in a couple of respects. He clearly was an intelligent man. I might have been naive, but I felt that when he and I talked and he agreed that something could be done, that he would, in fact, extend his best efforts to do so. So I felt quite comfortable with him in sort of day-to-day dealings. He clearly, of course, was of a totally different background and stripe than Bazargan and the National Front. A very religious man, a man who over the years-- I'm not sure I knew this in February when he came back, but by the time I became chargé I was aware of the fact, that he had been close to Khomeini for a long, long time. We had had contact, as you know, through our embassy in Paris, with Yazdi, when they were in Paris, and again, there he was a reasonable negotiator. So I thought he was a man that one could negotiate with, one could deal with.

But he was deeply committed to the revolution, deeply committed to Khomeini. The hatred they had for the previous regime was made clear to one at all times. I remember at one point pleading with him, if you will, for the lives of Khalatbary and Hoveyda. And I think he may have been somewhat sympathetic to these specific requests, but he made it very clear to me that the

revolutionaries were going to, in fact, take their share of blood, that the people had been pent up so long, had been so badly treated over the years, that it was politically impossible for the regime to curb at that time the excesses that were going on. In fact, I think, as I was talking to him, Khalatbari was shot. And with great emotion, when I was speaking, he went over to his desk and he pulled out a file, a fairly thick file, which he claimed had been seized in SAVAK headquarters, and I have no reason to disbelieve him. It showed a sort of-- must have been one sheet, in Farsi, so I couldn't read it that well, but it was the specifics of the charges and what happened to the particular prisoner. And there was sort of the Before picture and the After picture. And the After picture always showed the person dead, and it showed some of them clearly. I remember a terrible picture of a young lady naked from the waist up, there was a picture of her first, a sort of bright, attractive-- I say bright, she looked bright-- young lady. And the next picture of her was sort of on a slab, naked from the waist up, with burn marks all over her body.

And so Yazdi, with a considerable amount of passion in his voice, asked how could I expect mercy for the people who had committed such atrocities? That's the only time that I saw him really quite upset. I had walked in under instructions to plead for the life of a couple of individuals that he felt, in a sense, had no merit.

Yazdi was a clever person and, as fate proved, he was unable to make that bridge himself between the democrats, if you will, and the religious. As you know, he lost out on November fifth, and to the best of my knowledge has played very little role since then.

Q: What about Sadeq?

Naas: Sadeq Ghotbzadeh? I never met Ghotbzadeh. I had my public affairs officer put in a request for a meeting with him, but he never would meet with any American to the best of my knowledge. And I have a perfect understanding of that. I mean, association with Americans was hardly the most healthy thing a revolutionary could do. In many ways, he was that interesting combination of Iranians that were in the United States-- as you know, he had a great deal of trouble in the United States. I guess we kicked him out. So he had sort of a long-term

unhappiness, perhaps even hatred at times, for us. At the same time a certain admiration. He could get along easily in American society. But he was very smart. I mean, he did not wish to see any of us. And I must say very, very few of my Iranian friends that I'd known before the revolution wanted to see me. I did not take that personally, and I felt that they were just simply being smart. They were trying to survive.

I remember one very nice elderly man, whom I liked very much. He used to call me up, oh, about every week. He'd just give me his first name and he'd say, "How are you?" And I'd say, "I'm getting along fine, thank you." "I just wanted to know, make sure you're still okay." And hang up. But he was the only one that did.

Q: What about Bani Sadr? Were there any contacts with him after March, after you returned from home?

Naas: I had none. And to the best of my memory, no one from the embassy had any. Don't forget, Bani Sadr in those early days was primarily looked upon as one of those academics who was somehow trying to come up with a postulation of an Islamic economic

system. I had read in the newspapers and some of the articles he wrote, and frankly-- and perhaps this was error-- none of us took him terribly seriously. He did not appear to be a serious figure in the revolution.

Q: Now you mentioned a while ago your trip back to Washington in March, when you returned with the purpose of trying to develop some form of arrangement with the new regime. Now what kind of effort did you make after March to further a modus vivendi or an arrangement with the government?

Naas: Basically going out to meet all the people, all the new ministers. I purposely did not ask the Prime Minister right away for a meeting. I called on a number of ministers, some of whose names I've forgotten frankly at this point, and gave them my litany of our desire for a normal relationship, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Our common interests, et cetera. And with one or two ministers, where we had had previous programs-- the education minister-- and talking about the possibility of future educational-- our problems in the past and what could we do to prevent some of these kinds of problems in the future, in terms of Iranians coming to the United States. As I recall, the minister's name was Shariatmadari, with no relationship directly to the Ayatollah Shariatmadari.

It was that kind of slow process. I met with the minister of economic affairs and discussed with him a few issues that we had. Once I felt I had laid sufficient groundwork, so that the word would trickle up, I called the Prime Minister and I explained that I had not called him first, because I knew l) he was extra-ordinarily busy and that it would be presumptuous of me, in my early days as chargé, to call on him, but I had called on his

ministers and I hoped that he had received my message. And he said, yes, they had briefed him thoroughly on my talks. And so I repeated the same conversation to him.

And we talked about other matters. I remember one time I was asked to see him to get his reaction to the Shah coming to the United States, and he was quite emotional about this, because he was conscious of the fact that there would be a tremendous hue and cry within the country. And he said this in very moderate terms though. He just felt that it would be very difficult to have a relationship with us, if we did.

Q: Were you under instructions to bring this up?

Naas: Yes. And I asked about the Shah's children, did he hold the same feelings, the same concerns if the children came. Very human. He expressed concern about their security. That's the first thing he said. Will they be safe? And he made it clear that, you know, the same position would not be held. I specifically asked about the Shahbanu. If she came to the United States, what would the reaction be. He thought it would be an equally strong reaction, unless she came for one of her periodic medical visits and left.

He had the same kinds of concerns, of course, that I did. We had, to a degree, the United States had, a certain obligation to the Shah. It was a question of when we carried out that obligation. I know when I came home in March I felt very strongly that the Shah should not be permitted entry-- in fact, I was under instructions from Ambassador Sullivan to make that point very strongly. We thought we were hanging by our fingernails. The revolutionary government was also hanging by its fingernails. And it did not feel that it could handle the internal reaction to the Shah and Shahbanu coming to the United States.

And so therefore, if Bazargen didn't think his government-- which was, in a sense, the last hope for a relationship with us-- that he couldn't handle it, then it was very much in our interest, our national interest, that the Shah not come until a later point.

There was nothing personal in this, because personally, as I mentioned before, I have quite a high regard for the Shah, and certainly a very high regard for the Shahbanu, but it was a question of state policy and state interests, calling for delay in their arrival.

Q: How strongly was the State Department interested in the return of the Shah, to facilitate the interest of the Shah in the United States? Were they just curious to know what the reaction would be from the Iranian government? Were interested in actually--

Naas: Well, as you know, throughout the summer-- or perhaps even starting in the spring-- at the political level there was considerable pressure from Kissinger et al to-- you know, the famous-- what was Kissinger's famous phrase, I forget right now, a man without a country, that sort of thing. So there was a lot of pressure. The professionals at the Department felt exactly the way I did, that it would be calamitous for our interests, and therefore I did not have to persuade them. But-- if you have seen some of these captured documents-- Bruce Laingen was asked twice, while I was only asked once that I recall, but I was asked to raise it with the government. The State Department was simply looking for ammunition.

Q: In response to these pressures?

Naas: In response to these pressures, yes.

Q: When you carried on these discussions with various ministry officials, were there any efforts made to try to restore ordinary commercial relations, to pave the way for the return of U. S. firms in terms of trading and investing and so forth?

Naas: Not too much, no. I strongly was against the return of too many business people. I thought the situation was very unstable and that their lives could be in danger. In fact, very few came back. The remnants of some of the major firms stayed on through the revolution, and then like we did, they cleaned up. But very few people came back.

I remember at one period a former general from Bell Helicopter came back with a very sensible proposal of how the firm could assist the government, in a sense, in mothballing effectively a large number of the helicopters. You know, in that climate they needed some special treatment. And there was some interest in it, but we were appalled. We had recommended that he not come in the first place. He came anyway, and I saw him as an old friend. And he got out of town. We recommended that he not hang around very long. Make his proposal and leave a foreign address, if you will, where they could get in touch with him.

Q: I've read that some of the ministry officials complained that the U. S. government was undermining their position in some ways by refusing to repatriate government funds or not to deliver parts that were already paid for. Did you get those kinds of complaints when you were dealing with them?

Naas: I sure did. I had many complaints that we were holding up-- and, in fact, I guess we were. Many people were terribly uncertain of what was going on. But the major problem, in effect, had nothing to do with policy. I mean, the Pentagon and the State Department within reason would have been willing to send various spare parts and equipment, but within the American legal system, American companies all over the United States went to court to prevent the export of this equipment, in order to-- part of it was pressure, but mainly they hoped to be able to sell some of this stuff and get back some of their losses. Some companies lost rather heavily through the revolution. So, much of our inability to be forthcoming with the Iranians on arms and spare parts was the American court system, not policy.

In fact, I remember when Yazdi complained bitterly to me one time, and I explained as best I could my understanding of what was going on legally, and said I would get a more formal statement from our legal division. But I pointed out to him that he had been in the United States for a good part of his life and surely he understood somewhat our political and legal system, which is that one can go to a federal court or a local judge in each state and there's not a damn thing in the world the State Department or the U. S. government could do about it, except file sort of an appeal on behalf of the Iranian government.

And so I suggested to him, I said not in jest, that they hire a couple of the best law firms they could find, to get into these legal actions and to defend their position. And I was assured that in some instances the State Department would have been helpful in sort of amicus curaie. That's all we could have done in these cases.

So while some people in the Pentagon might have wanted to drag the feet, there was no real high policy of not shipping the stuff. Part of it was just people terribly busy trying to clean up the Iranian aid program, coming from the agreement between General Toufanian and Eric Van Morbod. That was a tremendous task. And then all the court cases. It was a mess.

Q: Now there was this period in the spring of '79 when you returned from Washington. Did you make any efforts to approach Khomeini at that stage?

Naas: I personally didn't. I think I quoted on tape earlier that I was asked whether I thought the time was ripe to see Khomeini.

Q: This was at that stage?

Naas: This was in May, early May. And as I told you before, Bazargan was enthusiastic, he'd make the arrangements, et cetera. And then the Javits Resolution was passed in the Senate. It was one of those sort of things-- it was a freebie for Senator Javits-- and it was hell for me. The day after the Javits Resolution, two or three days after it went through, we had hundreds of thousands of people screaming outside our embassy. We were under a real threat of being attacked again. The revolution prevented me seeing Khomeni. The government informed me that under those circumstances, after this expression, this criticism of Iran, this intervention into their internal affairs, that he did not wish to see me. And, of course, as we know, Walter Cutler was also denied entry, if you will.

Q: Was there any effort made by the State Department to convince Javits to withdraw the resolution or not carry it any further? Any effort made to convince Javits to drop the resolution?

Naas: The State Department to the best of my knowledge-- because I raised absolute hell about this, for not being forewarned at least-- knew nothing about it until it was just about-- in fact, I'm not even sure they had more than an hour or two notice of it. You know, these resolutions go through like, you know, you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. It didn't seem, I'm sure to Javits himself, to be harmful. In fact, it was extra-ordinarily harmful.

Q: You mentioned that at that stage Walter Cutler was withdrawn as ambassador designate. Did you have any role in that appointment? Were you consulted when they were planning a possible Ambassador to Iran? Did they ask for your opinion?

Naas: No. Not the sort of thing they would. Walter was an old friend. He and I went to the senior seminar together. I know him very well. I thought he was an excellent choice. But again I was looking at it from an American point of view.

Q: Now to what extent did the embassy provide assistance to the Pahlavi regime supporters who were trying to leave the country and escape to the United States? Was there much active help for these people?

Naas: We were not in a position really to help anybody. I mean, we gave visas to people. We only had one man in the Consular Section by this time. I must admit there probably was a certain amount of political favoritism, but we were giving out as many visas per day that the local employees, the Iranian employees, and this one American officer could handle. But we did not permit access to the Consular Section, as long as I was there.

Q: Now James Bill talks about the granting of visas that was used as a means to gather political intelligence from people getting the visas. How common was that practice?

Naas: These were awfully childish and misguided efforts by one or two people. It was certainly not embassy policy to do so. But, yes, there were some of the people there who were looking in a sense for work and looking to try to get more information and thought that this was one way to obtain it. I can't recall ever receiving useful information on that basis. I wasn't aware of how widespread was the effort of a couple of people. I later became aware of some of the problems-- I'll not go into this in detail-- of visas, and laid the law down of what would happen, et cetera, et cetera, tried to get some regulation as to the policy.

Q: Now when did you leave the country?

Naas: I should remember the date with great joy, but whether it was the twentieth, twenty-first, twenty-second or twenty-third of June, I don't really remember. But it was within

those four days. Certainly the day I left was one of the happiest in my life, so I should have it with a big red circle around it.

Q: What was your assessment of internal conditions in Iran around the time of your departure?

Naas: I felt that the revolution had a number of stages, undefined in my mind, to go through, and I wrote in this vein without being very specific. I felt that the government had the most tenuous hold on the situation, that Khomeini would call the shots, and that Americans were likely to be in considerable peril for many, many months to come. If you look up in those books, I think the telegrams I sent-- a couple of telegrams I sent to Vance prior to my departure just very-- in an almost summary form bringing my thoughts together, will be found. I was shocked to find them, because I didn't know any copies existed. But as I recall, I think I started out, I said I wanted to give him my thoughts on departure, and I said I must warn him in advance that they're terribly gloomy and that this might be the result of my experience. So it was only fair to the Secretary to take into account that I was in a somewhat depressed mood and had been for a long time.

I said I thought that the views that I wished to share with him would be largely concurred in by my colleagues and by other Western diplomats. And I think the first phrase was "the Iranian revolution is not over." So I felt-- I don't mean to say that I was prescient, but I fully expected another attack on the embassy. I didn't know why that going to be or by whom. My mind had not gone through all scenarios, but I felt that we were still too much a central factor. I didn't know if it was going to be the PLO come over the

fence with the support of the revolutionaries, whether it would be a small hit squad trying to assassinate us, or massive intrusion, but I knew it would happen again. I did not share these totally gloomy views with everybody, and when I wrote to the Secretary, I modulated my views to say that American would be in great danger or peril, I forget the exact words. I felt that if I said "and the American embassy is likely to be invaded again," I'd start to sound too frantic. So I left the country elated to be going and deeply gloomy about the future.

Q: Was there the period when the embassy staff was coming back to a larger size?

Naas: Yes. It was in and out. A number of people who had been in the embassy before came back on TDY. They came back to work for a few weeks or a few months, to get their own household and personal effects, if you will, in order and leave. I must say the State Department was extremely gracious and helpful and gave all of us options on what to do. My option they gave to me was a call by Henry Precht to ask me if I would be willing to take some leave in March and then go back and become chargé. But it was very clear, I didn't have to. And everybody else had an option to leave. In fact, I worked very hard in February with our staff to get people to hang on for another week or ten days, to get their affairs

straightened out to the extent they could, so that anybody who might come in the future wouldn't arrive and find a particular job in chaotic condition. And I must say the staff was extra-ordinary about that, because they asked-- basically the

administrative consular staff--

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE; BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO:

Naas: I was asked if I would meet with the staff at my house. As I said, the embassy was uninhabitable. And they came over and said basically that whenever possible they wanted out, that they'd had enough. I said I understood that, but I had hoped they would finish their current project before going.

So we worked it out very nicely so that people basically opted themselves when they would go. Now we immediately-- there was a request by the State Department for volunteers to fill in behind, and so we started to receive some volunteers certainly by March, I guess, probably, certainly on into April people came out really on TDY. That was the beginning. The TDY is important. Several of the people had been stationed at the embassy returned. A couple of them who were out of the country when things happened, came back, and felt again that they wanted to help for a period of time. Nobody, except two individuals, wanted to stay. And that was Mike Metrinko and Victor Tomseth. They opted to stay on. I urged them both to consider very strongly that desire, but they said yes, they'd like to stay on. They're big boys. That's your choice.

But all the rest of us, really by mid-late June, were out, those who had been there before the revolution. There was some of the military. Phil Gast for one, and one or two people on his staff who stayed longer. Phil stayed on until October, but again the Defense Department sent in TDY people to help out.

So we were operating really from hand to mouth. A few would come in for a month and go. It was really later-- it was with the expectation in May that Ambassador Cutler would be going out some time in June or July, that the State Department started to ask for people to go to Tehran on assignment. And so you started to get people to come out on a more permanent basis.

Q: As you were leaving?

Naas: As I was leaving, yes.

Q: Any agency people back at that stage?

Naas: Not on a permanent basis, no.

Q: Did you do any more work on Iran when you returned to Washington?

Naas: I did not. Well, that's not quite true. Henry Precht was exhausted, and after I'd been home for a few days he asked me if I would very informally sit in my old seat as director of Iranian Affairs for a couple of weeks, while he got some terribly well deserved leave. So I did that. It was basically sitting around and moping, keeping the papers running, but I have very little recollection of anything I did that was useful in that period, except meet with DOD people to impress upon them the need to be forthcoming on a minimal shipment of spare parts if that became possible. And I found out that somehow

I had been misled that there was-- I had misunderstood perhaps that there was this real block at the Pentagon. Found that was not true at all. The general in charge of that program had, I think it was five million or ten million dollars in shares, ready to ship the next day, if the proper financial and other arrangements could be made.

So in August I went off to Davidson College as diplomat-in-residence and that was the end of my direct experience with Iran.

Q: As sort of a wrap-up question I'll ask you to comment on a statement by James Bill. In his recent book Bill concludes-- and I think I'm simplifying his argument, but he concludes in general that U. S. policy was a failure, in the sense that the U. S. never really understood Iranian society, and probably it was a failure of policy in the sense that policymakers took it for granted or assumed that the Shah's position was invulnerable, and this assumption led to very serious problems. How would you assess James Bill's general argument that there was a policy failure?

Naas: There are certainly elements of accuracy, truth to it. I read James' book recently and I forget how much he gets into this, but U.S. policy has been driven from the Fulton, Missouri speech of Churchill with great concern about the Soviet Union, and the people who have run our foreign policy have approached the world in a fairly simple geopolitical fashion. I guess if I'm anything, I'm a geopolitician as well.

But this larger view, these larger interests with respect to the Soviet Union and China were the overwhelming drive to our policy with respect to Iran. And I think Jim is partly right. Because Iran was conceived by our leadership-- certainly from the sixties on, to a

degree in the fifties--that Iran was of such great importance to us-- that we did not pay as much attention as time went on, as we should have, to the fabric of Iranian society and its internal inconsistencies, if you will.

As a result, when the crisis hit us in 1978, we were really not, certainly in the early stages, terribly well informed. Also, as I started to say, as an intellectual failure, we didn't have a conceptual basis for sort of looking at the country. And certainly as Americans, we-- you-- tend to view revolutions as sort of progressive, leftist, et cetera. So there was a perception gap, because even then, as time went on, of what the revolution was really about.

Jim is correct in the sense that very few people have any real understanding of Shi'ite Islam. Almost everybody-- a substantial number of us at the Embassy had served many years in Islamic countries and had read a great deal about Islam, but did not have a real grasp of Shi'ite Islam, its history and its traditions. So there was an intellectual failure of all of us who were involved.

I think the key thing that probably Jim is driving at is that we had by the early sixties-- by the early seventies with enunciation of the Nixon doctrine and, in effect, the willing election of the Shah as the primary agent for the protection of our and Western interests in that area-- there was certainly not much of a willingness to go into heavy, even if we'd had the capability, the hard analysis of what the situation was in Iran. We should have learned something. I think we did learn something from that. We probably haven't learned enough. But there was a great unwillingness to even look at the facts until February 14th, when people suddenly realized what was going on, because we put so much of our hopes and our expectations, our policies in the Shah's basket.

I've told Iranians since that they never understood how much the Shah ran the relationship, contrary to us running it. And there was this total reliance on really one man, and he was a man who was a brilliant man in many ways, a man whose geopolitical views were very similar to ours, to Kissinger's, to Rusk's. So it was easy. We got a great deal out of that relationship. And here's where Jim-- he's right in one sense, because the relationship has ten bad years. But we also had twenty awfully good years. We had those important intelligence sites and cooperation. The Shah cooperated with us in helping Egypt, and many countries. So up until 1978 it was a very successful policy, and since '78 obviously our successes have come home to roost. Had we not helped-- and I say helped in a minor sort of way-- to overthrow Mussadiq, and had the relationship been a more natural one, as we have, say, with India; you know, good at time, bad at times-- would we have been better off in the thirty-some years since? That's a matter of personal judgment. I think the policy was highly successful for a while, but that its very success sowed the seeds of the present problems.

I don't know what's more valuable. You have to make so many assumptions of what might have occurred had we not intervened in the Mussadiq period, had we not selected the Shah as surrogate in the area, etc. It's the kind of speculation I find fairly fruitless.

I think one lesson we should learn, however, is that if we had too much reliance on one man-- we just saw yesterday our heavy reliance, our great concern over General Zia of Pakistan, his death-- a policy becomes terribly fragile and terribly-- vulnerable is the word I'm looking for-- when that much reliance is put on one individual.

And I suppose there may be other lessons to be learned in terms of relying upon a person, particularly if it's

authoritarian or dictatorial. As I said to you before, I don't believe really in too much fiddling around in the internal affairs of governments, unless it's a very clear, neat, attainable objective. But the people in this day and age-- in most countries the people are going to tolerate it so long, and so you are going to get your losses at the end of the game. And maybe that's a very bearable situation. And for a long-term planning by the United States government, that's two years, four years, eight years maximum-- and hardly anybody really looks ahead more than few months in our government. It's unfortunate. So you play the situation as you receive it when a new administration comes in. And the next administration will largely have to take geopolitical realities into account, play around with the world as we find it.

I think it was a great tragedy that we and the Iranian people suffered from this revolution, To the extent that we played a role in this tragedy, one can only be deeply regretful. I'm not one of the liberal breast-beaters who says it was all our fault. It wasn't. We contributed, but so did thousands and millions of other people. Contributed to the debacle.

Who knows, out of this ten years of horror-- and I do look upon it as horror-- maybe there will be in due course some sort of a synthesis by which the Iranian people will have a more stable and promising future. I'm dubious of that happy result, though I can hope so because I dearly enjoyed my association with that country and its people and I only wish them the very best in the next decade and in the next century.

If I had any more insight, I would certainly pass it on, but I really don't. I think the administration in its handling of Marcos and its handling of Papa Doc Duvalier, probably either consciously or unconsciously, drew some conclusions, some lessons. If so, that's

good. But I do despair at times that we are a people who are very slow to learn lessons from past experience.

By the way, I have enjoyed very much chatting with you.

Q: Thanks very much for your time, Mr. Naas.

[END OF INTERVIEW]