

He said, "There are some questions that should not be asked or answered by the top man. The same questions can be answered at a working level, thrashed out, all the innuendos, all the technicalities, all the problems considered, and if the answer is no, you can say no, and then you can go tell General Azhari or General Toufanian that through your channels, the answer comes out no, and I don't have my nose out of joint. But if I ask President Nixon and he says, 'No,' then just diplomatically, I have to say, 'Why?' And a lot of times I don't care why."  
(Laughs) He says, "If the answer is no, it's all right."

So the communication between the Shah and the United States was greatly enhanced by the fact that he could talk to me and it didn't have to go down as an official imperial decree. I could work it through the mill and come back. There are a lot of career Foreign Service diplomats that don't like me, because as somebody said of me one time, I don't look very good in striped pants. (Laughs) I never was trained to be a diplomat.

Q: Was your access to the Shah pretty much unrestricted? Did you see him when you thought it was necessary to see him?

Williamson: I was never refused one single time. I never went in unannounced, of course. I always went in by appointment, but when I got there to the palace, his chief of staff, Mr. Alam

Assadollah, he would take me to the waiting room, and there may be as many as a dozen other people waiting, four-star generals, I went in next, invariably. But I had total access to the Shah. During the entire time over there, I don't think I was ever in his office less than an hour and 45 minutes. He always said, "Let's have a cup of coffee."

Q: Would you usually meet alone?

Williamson: Always. I'd say of the dozens and dozens of meetings, I was completely by myself with him every time except maybe half a dozen.

Q: As Chief of Armish MAAG, where were you in the chain of command? Who did you report to, the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

Williamson: I reported, technically, to the Secretary of Defense. However, most every message that I sent back, by agreement, had on the address line the State Department. And if I thought it was of interest, it would go directly to the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. I was not restricted in that chain. I could also go to the military departments with a question, without going through the Secretary of Defense. However, I think, without exception, unless it was very, very routine, I put

the Secretary of Defense's information copy on there. But I exchanged message direct with the departments daily.

Q: Really?

Williamson: I'd say pretty close to daily, yes.

Q: What kind of decisions could you make on your own as Chief of Armish MAAG? What kinds would have to be coordinated with Washington or the embassy?

Williamson: I'm at somewhat of a loss as to how to answer that, because first of all, I was the commander of my people, I handled all of the administrative, the disciplinary, you name it, all that. Nobody asked me a question on that. That was my job. I did that on my own. But as far as "decision making," most every decision that I was called on to make--I had two fields, one was to make all the decisions and the other was the advice. The decisions I was called on to make, almost all of them involved committing U.S. assets or U.S. production, U.S. something. I don't recall my ever committing the United States to anything without clearing it. No one ever told me I couldn't, but it would have been most imprudent for me to say, "Oh, yes, you can have two batteries of Nike missiles." I wouldn't have dared make

a decision of that sort without, first of all, having to do what they called a P and A, a price and availability. That was if the Iranians wanted to buy so and so, give me a P and A. And if they came back with a P and A, that, of course, meant the sale was approved or would probably be approved.

They'd come back and say, "The price includes the end item, one-year supplies of technical manuals and technical training and what have you. So the price comes to this, and the availability can be eighteen months from now." That would be my P and A. Then the Iranians would take the P and A and sign a letter of intent which said, "Yes, I accept the P and A. I want to buy that 19, 20 months from now at that price." Then that was the signal for the U.S.--and this was always done back in the U.S.--to write up a contract.

Their signing a letter of intent meant that Iran wanted to make that purchase to such an extent that if they decided not to make the purchase, they would pay all of the U.S. expenditure of funds that they had made in preparation of the contract. In other words, the U.S. would have to go out to the producer and say, "We have this request. Can you do it?" There would be travel involved, telephone calls, administrative expenses, things of that sort. They'd come up with a contract that looked reasonable to the U.S. and the producer, and Iran would sign a contract with the U.S. Government. It sounds complicated, but

this is the way it worked. Not with the commercial producer, but they signed a contract with the U.S. Government. The U.S. Government then was bound to get that item within 10 percent of the agreed price or go back to the country and say, "Can't do it." They had a 10 percent, plus or minus, leeway. If it came in less than 10 percent, they could go back and say, "We can get these for 70 percent. Do you want this number or would you like to add a few more to get up closer to 100 percent?" So it was a rather long, drawn-out thing, but we had a system worked out that it could be expeditiously handled if something really was necessary.

I still want to repeat, I never advised them to buy anything, and I very, very often suggested that maybe it would be better if they buy less at a slower rate. A few things I told them, "I just don't think you ought to buy this." We were working under a very, very stringent system, that when President Nixon came over, and he and the Shah talked, before they even started the discussions, they had excluded nuclear weapons. So we had no involvement at all in that. President Nixon said, "If we are producing it and you want it, we'll sell it to you." And basically, that's about how it went, which really made life hard for me, because there was such a strong element back here in the United States saying that Iran was developing too rapidly and

were constantly telling me to slow down, slow down, slow down. I frequently was successful in slowing them down.

There were a few, very few, extremely sensitive things to such an extent that I don't care to name them now, but I can say that they were the type of things that if they got in the wrong hands could be very dangerous, a few sensitive things that were non-nuclear, that we didn't want them to have.

Q: They didn't?

Williamson: I finessed it, you might say, and delayed it to such an extent that they lost interest. But that was a narrow line to travel at times.

[End of interview]

DDR

Interviewee: General Ellis Williamson, USA (Ret.)      Session #2

Interviewer: William Burr      Arlington, Virginia

Date: March 11, 1988

[Please note: The volume level of both tapes is extremely low]

Q: When you were appointed Chief of Armish MAAG in 1971, before you left for Iran, were you given briefings on American policy by State Department or other officials? Did you get policy briefings?

Williamson: Yes. To some extent, we were rather fortunate. I was appointed to the position, and then the situation that didn't apply to me at all caused a delay in my going over there for some three months. I did a special study for the Secretary of Defense in the field of my previous job. So I was here in the States three months after I had finished the previous job that I was on, and had a fair amount of time.

During that period of time, I attended at the State Department, they called it a school, it was more of a seminar, as I recall it, for about four weeks for their Foreign Service officers. I found that extremely interesting and informative.

I had quite detailed briefings by the State Department, Secretary of Defense, each of the military services, and the CIA. So I think I went over reasonably well prepared for the new job.

My main thesis in working with you is trying to help us understand the Persian culture and the Persian mind set, I call it. In almost every briefing I had in Washington, the subject of the intelligence of the Shah came up, because the Shah was the kingpin. He personified everything that happened in Iran. I was invariably told what a smart, brilliant man he was. So I went over almost with a chip on my shoulder. My thought was, "Good God, he ought to look smart! He's been King for 35 years. If anybody talks on a subject he doesn't understand, all he has to do is change the subject." So I went over, feeling that this man could at least calm the waters. He can't be as intelligent, he can't be as smart as the entire population seemed to believe over there.

I hadn't been over there too long before I was a total convert. I was thoroughly convinced that that man probably had the most comprehensive mind that I've ever dealt with. You could tell him something, he could understand, he could remember, he could recall any time he wanted to, in almost any language that he wanted to. I met with him on a one-to-one basis, time and time again, and he could recall dates, he could recall just what we'd said without any hesitation at all, more so than any individual I've ever dealt with. So I want us to think a good bit on the Persian mind, how it works, a little bit. We'll get to that.



Q: When you were given these briefings back in '71, the people you met with, did they talk about the importance of Iran to America at that time? Was that defined in some way, why Iran was important to America? Economic or strategic interests?

Williamson: Oh, yes.

Q: How were these interests defined or characterized?

Williamson: Quite a few people had briefed me and gave me the history of that part of the world, and I found it quite involved. There's no question in my mind that that part of the world was critical--at least our people felt it was critical--to our security, principally for oil and just plain location, the land mass. You recall in World War II, the territory, the land of Iran, was essential to the prosecution of World War II; it became the supply line right into the southern portions of Europe. You recall when the Communists got going in Iran and Suez, the route taken, the land route, there was no question in anybody's mind about Iran being of great importance to us.

There was a debate going on at that time that continued for several years, as to the feasibility of Iran's armed forces being modernized and developed and enlarged as rapidly as they were. I could find a new answer almost anywhere I stopped; most everybody had a personal opinion on it. About like making martinis-- everybody knows the answer, but other people don't agree with it.

So I got quite a few different viewpoints with respect to what we, as a nation, should do to assist Iran in their approach to the armed forces. I got a very good comprehensive set of briefings.

Q: At this time, the U.S. had listening posts that were located in northern Iran, to monitor the Soviet Union. How important were they considered to be?

Williamson: They were completely outside of my official responsibilities. I had knowledge that they were there. I had the administrative support requirements for the individuals that were there. They were well into the mountains, out of my geographical area most of the time. But as they came down from the hills, as we called it, they would come to our area, and we would give them administrative support. We even exchanged doctors with them. I had a little hospital over there. They had, I think, three of their own doctors, and they had to rotate in and out of the mountainous area. So when their doctors were back on so-called rotation, they worked in my hospital. So I did have a good many contacts with them, but nothing as far as subject matter. I never saw a message that they received or dispatched. It was a hard and fast rule that I got when I left this country: "Your mission is not intelligence. You will not initiate, you will not participate in any intelligence-gathering activities."

The subject came up time and time again. I adhered to my guidance at all times. I was invited and many supported a strong movement to use my personnel at times as cover. In other words, they wanted to take an agent and assign him to one of my positions and let him operate in intelligence. I turned that down every time, because my guidance was to stay out of that field. To the best of my knowledge, no agent of any intelligence activity was ever assigned to my command. That was my hard and fast rule. I had to stay out of it.

As I mentioned before we turned the machine on, there was no question but what I was an American first. If anything came up that I thought my government should know, it went right back. That developed into a routine that was somewhat upsetting as it went on, in that quite frequently, if the Shah wanted something known in the United States, he recognized that if he put it through sovereign government to sovereign government, direct communication, it would cause problems. Sometimes if he had a question, he couldn't very well personally ask that question of President Nixon; he couldn't put it on that level. If he talked with the ambassador, it was the equivalent of sovereign government to sovereign government. But he could talk to me as chief of the military mission. In addition to that assignment, along with that assignment, I was the personal advisor to the Shah, so he could talk to me, he could tell me things, knowing full well that I was going to report it.

Remember the three little islands right at the strait, right at the Hormuz Strait? Those little islands [Tunbs Islands] became a bone of contention. I think it was in late '71 or early '72, along in there. Iran decided, "We're going to settle this. We're just going to go occupy them, and that'll be the end of it." The Shah told me personally the day before the operation was started. I reported it within the hour of the time I left the palace. I went right back to my headquarters, got the radioman, and it was in the United States in nothing flat. So the U.S. knew that the next morning at daylight, the landings were going to be made on the three little islands. He didn't want to handle that through government-to-government top-level basis, because he didn't want our government to feel obligated to take a position.

It was a very interesting operation, too. It was carried on with a few ships standing off for gun support if it was needed, but the landings were made with these hydrofoil vehicles. They informed the local people the afternoon before they were coming. An hour before the landing, they flew airplanes over with loudspeakers, saying, "We are coming in. We hope we're welcome." There was one casualty. One Iranian Army lieutenant was shot and killed by a policeman that hadn't gotten the word, but other than that, that was the only casualty. The mayor of the little town on the biggest island had had his people prepare breakfast for them. So that's the way the operation went off. There was not a public announcement in advance, but our government knew it about

24 hours before they landed. It was handled through that channel.

Q: Those things happened quite a bit in Iran, that kind of use of channels?

Williamson: Not too often, and not on that magnitude. Most of the things that came up were outside the military. In other words, he would very frequently discuss agriculture down in Khuzistan, how he wanted to figure out a way to increase production. One of the real examples of success was how they magnified their production of vegetables down there terrifically. But he would discuss it with me. I'm not a farmer, I'm not a country boy, but just living in an industrialized country exposed me, just through osmosis, to a lot of things. So I could help him think. I could ask him questions. We talked about agriculture, in Khuzistan, we talked about fisheries up around Kasuin, we talked about electrical engines for water supply. All kinds of subjects that he could ask me, I could go back to the embassy or I could send a message back to the U.S. and get an informal informational set of facts that were priceless to him, but if it had to go through the mechanism, it would have to get cleared through a bunch of the layers, several layers of the organization here and there. But he used me just literally as a bounceboard.

Q: When you became Armish MAAG toward the end of the first term of the Nixon Administration, how would you characterize the administration's general approach towards Iran at that time?

Williamson: When I first went over there, my briefings in the States had told me that some individuals questioned what we were doing in Iran, but in general, my view was that we were 100 percent behind Iran. We were friends, Iranians were friends of ours, and I saw that at every turn. If I had any criticism, it would have been that the Iranians trusted us--I thought too much. I studied my lesson very hard, because I knew darn well that everything I told them, they would take at face value, 100 percent. So I had to be quite careful not to give them an off-the-cuff answer to something that I thought maybe was right, because they trusted particularly the military much more so than the embassy. They would ask us questions, and if we told them the answer, there was never the slightest question whether it was right or not. It was somewhat embarrassing.

As time went on, as you recall, President Nixon visited over there. The President--oh it was a very interesting experience. There's lots of little anecdotes, but I won't bore you with all that. It was quite an affair. They were delighted to have him come.

Q: That was only a few months after you arrived, actually.

Williamson: About. Maybe a little later. I'm not sure.

Q: May of '72.

Williamson: May of '72. Yes. So there was quite an entourage set up for that visit. As you recall, they had been in Moscow, arrived from Moscow to Iran. We had just had an ambassador retire. A new ambassador rushed over to see that everything was set up. The hospital was practically completely renovated. They called it a hospital. Actually, it was a dispensary, a very small hospital with an operating room. We got a great amount of new equipment just because the president was coming.

The Russian ambassador was what they called the dean of the diplomatic corps. He had been there, I think, sixteen years, so he was by far the senior ambassador in the country. I associated with him a couple of times a month, all socially. As a rule, I can tell if someone can understand English even a little bit, just by looking at their eyes, but this man had a blank stare, and until his interpreter translated my English, he showed no response. When the group was assembling for the President's arrival, we were assembling in the airport VIP lounge and had a reception there at the airport. The Russian ambassador initially wasn't invited, but he insisted on being invited. He came rushing up to me and in perfect English said, "Oh, good morning, General Williamson. We must be friends."

And I said, "Do you know of any reason why we shouldn't be friends?" From then on, he spoke English, but before that, he never spoke a single word of English.

The President came over and everything went well. They had an entourage set up so that he would drive from the airport, not directly to the palace, but all through the city. I don't recall--I believe the crowd was estimated at two million, two and a half million, along the streets, but it was a mob. I was in the car right behind the Shah and our President. People were stacked up at least twelve deep. When it started off, they were at the curb, but as the convoy started moving, they came up in an orderly manner, leaving room just for the cars to go through. There wasn't a policeman. I'm sure there were plain clothesmen, but there were no armed guards, no kinds of military. The convoy went through, and the President was waving at the crowd, the President would stick his hand out and shake hands with the people. I talked to Dr. Kissinger a few minutes afterwards, and he said, "You will never, never know what a lift this is to the President." He said, "In Moscow, there were crowds but they were kept blocks away. There was no sign of a disciplinary problem in Iran.

Q: When Nixon came over to Iran, did you meet with him?

Williamson: Yes, but the meetings with the Shah and the President were private. The Shah liked to do business on a



one-to-one basis, and when he told President Nixon he wanted to talk to him alone, President Nixon insisted that Kissinger come. The Shah said, "I want to talk with you."

Nixon said, "I'd like to bring Dr. Kissinger with me, if you don't mind."

The Shah said, "All right, let him come in and take notes." (Laughs) So Kissinger went in, and to the best of my knowledge, it was just the three of them.

After the meeting, I got a run-down by the President and Kissinger. The next day by the Shah. To the best of my knowledge, all three of them used the same words in explaining the discussion.

Q: Can you give a summary of what you were told?

Williamson: I guess the best way to say it is it was one of these top-level, very, very friendly, very, very general discussions. In the discussion of the military, right off the bat, the understanding between them, no question but that nuclear weapons were out. They weren't even going to bring up the subject for discussion. In the final analysis, there was a general understanding that anything the Shah wanted to buy and was willing to pay for, if we were producing it, he could have it. In other words, Nixon let him know, "I'm not holding anything back from you. I'm willing to support you 100 percent in anything that you want." Let me digress just a little bit. At that time--I think I'm right--we were handling some kind of

military contact with about 140 different countries throughout the world, very widespread. We had MAAGs in a good many countries, and we had military attaches in others, the full spectrum of our co-equal association with the British and their scientific deals, down to the least developed countries, where we had to give them everything that they got on a grant basis. So a real broad spectrum of military-type contacts between the U.S. and other countries.

There was a feeling among the military assistance people--and I had previously had a pretty good tour in the Secretary of Defense in the military assistance business--among those people, the operators here in the United States, there was a strong feeling that we tell these other countries what they can have. If we think it's appropriate for them, then okay, we'll try to work out something either on a grant basis or a sale basis or somewhere in between. In Iran, the Shah, when he had his 1971 coming-out party, said, "We pay for everything. We don't ask for anything free." "But because we will pay for it, we will pay full price for it." He, I believe rightfully, felt that he could select what he wanted to buy. There was a large element back in the United States that did not want to give up its power of selection. They just could not accept the fact that the Shah was running his own program.

Q: People in the Pentagon felt this way?

Williamson: The State Department. The State Department was intervening at least as much as military--Secretary of Defense. Nixon said, "If we are producing it, and you want it and are willing to pay for it, you can have it." That went over like a lead balloon, to such an extent that I had to come back to the States and had a meeting with people here. Finally, I said, "Now, look. This is what our President says. This is the guidance that I have. If anyone wants to go to the President and get it changed, do so. But please cooperate with me and support me, instead of throwing all these roadblocks in the way."

Q: What kind of people did you talk to when you returned to Washington?

Williamson: As you remember, the guy in charge of all the military assistance programs was Tarr. The Assistant Secretary of State-- We had the top people of each of the military assistance programs in the military departments, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, representatives from the CIA and so on. Our military sales program in Iran alone was bigger than all the rest of the world put together. You can take all those 140, or whatever it was, you can take all of those countries and put their entire purchases in a pot, and we still were bigger than all of them. So we were a little different, and we were vastly different in that none of it was grants; all of it was sales. So it was a different picture. But the people back here didn't want

to give up that influence. They felt that if we don't tell them what we're giving them, if we don't select the school or the courses they take then we are losing some of our influence. It was a running battle.

Q: When you met with them at the meeting, did anyone explain to you why the decision had been made?

Williamson: I don't think the President looked on it as a decision. The President looked on it as just a continuation of what we had been doing all along. He didn't feel that he was changing anything. But to show you how we worked, right at the time they were really going into a massive buildup, particularly in the army, and they wanted a lot more instruction. They wanted the number of military assistants increased. Our Congress had a worldwide ceiling on the number of military people to be assigned to the overall military assistance groups. So that meant that if ARMISH/MAAG Iran was increased some other countries had to be decreased. The Congress had decided we would put a cap on the military assistance program. There was a lot of validity to that, but they put a ceiling, as I recall, of just over 2,200 worldwide. Our government had been releasing personnel in twos and threes all around the world. There was no way that we could even approach responding to the Iranian desires without wrecking the program everywhere else. It wouldn't work under the congressional mandate. Well, the Iranians wanted 3,000

additional new military active duty advisors. I'm not sure the President was talking about people; he might have been talking about hardware then. But anyway, we looked at their want list, their shopping list of 3,000 people, and very quickly cut it down to 2,000. They didn't need a commissary advisor, they didn't need a post exchange advisor, etc.

Q: This was your recommendation?

Williamson: Well, I hadn't recommended. We worked it down from 3,000 to 2,000, with the Iranian's concurrence. The Iranians' nose wasn't out of joint at all; they were satisfied. This was basically what they wanted to do.

I made a statement at that time that I felt that we could get the number down to 1000 and not offend Iran, not let them feel that we had pulled the rug out from under them. They would feel a little pinch, but would not be too upset. That was just a guess on my part at that time. So when the party left, they went with the idea that we could cut it down, and that number was bounced around quite a bit. Then, as I say, I had to come back and argue my points in the U.S. It came down to a figure of about 1,000.

Then, finally, Secretary Laird informed me that that was as far as they could stretch it. He put a ceiling of 600 military and said any over that figure would have to be civilians. So that really put us into a flat spin. The only way we got around

that--incidentally, all these people that were coming over to Iran, the Iranians would pay all of their expenses, transportation over, all their household goods, pay for the education of their children, paid for their houses, even paid into the military fund for the pension of military and civilian personnel. I remember that for a major, they were paying \$360 a month into a pension fund so that the United States Government would not be out any money at all in this process. They paid that. Nothing was free. The Iranians insisted--they paid for everything.

The only way we got down below 1,000--we never actually got below 1,000, but we were working in that direction--we took one major segment out of the training requirements. All of the Army aviation program was taken out and put into a civilian contract with Bell Helicopter. So in that way, the Army aviation program was set aside, and it went well above the figures visualized, but it was set over to one side. Iran paid civilian people and hired some U.S. military committees to oversee what they were doing. The 600 were just about in-country, but the idea of President Nixon saying, "If you want it, you can have it," really stirred up a hornet's nest.

Q: Did you see a big change?

Williamson: No. It wasn't a change. It wasn't a decision; it was pure and simply saying, "We are going to actually do what we've been saying."

As we went on, there were a few exceptions that, for security reasons, I can't talk too much about, but there are some things that were non-nuclear that we were producing, that we were extremely uncomfortable to let them get out of the U.S., because they were the terrorist-type weapons, small antiaircraft weapons. You could hold Dulles airfield completely hostage if you had two of those things. There are some things that we just don't want anybody else to have; we want to keep them under our control. But by and large, we had told the Shah, "If you want the latest airplanes, the best tanks, the best pieces of munition, you may have it if you're willing to pay for it. Of course, you have to wait for your turn in the production line, the production schedule, but if you want it, you can have it."

Q: Did they [Kissinger and Nixon] explain to you why they thought that was important, in terms of the buildup in Iran, what the general purpose was?

Williamson: They apparently went along 100 percent with the Shah's evaluation of the military requirements. I think I went through this before, if he fought with a local country, a small war, he wanted to be sure that the cease-fire line was not on his

side of the national boundary. The Shah explained his philosophy of the military requirements.

As you recall, he started what they called the white revolution in 1960, and he had twelve major elements that he was going to have his country advance--land reform, education, medical science, sanitation, industrialization, a lot of things. The military was not one of them. The military, as he saw it, was the protection element that permits all of these other things to advance without outside interference. So the military was not one of his major advancements; it was a catalyst for the stability that permitted the others to work. So he felt the military had to be strong enough to do two basic things. He said, "If I have to fight with a neighbor, I know [inaudible], but if I have to fight with a neighbor, I know the great powers will stop it. I want my armed forces to be strong enough that it will absolutely assure me that the cease-fire line will not be on my side of the border. I will not cede any Iranian territory to a nation anywhere near my side." I'll get back to that point.

The other point was, "If Russia decides to invade my country, I know I will never be able to stop them. Therefore, I must have a scorched earth policy." He said, "If Russia comes in, they will get nothing of value." He convinced his people. They knew he meant it.

Why did he feel that he might have to fight? Almost 100 years ago, a Britisher was drawing a map, and he drew the boundary between Iraq and Iran. Usually, if there is a mountain



range or a river or something like that, a boundary, the line is drawn so that both can use the facility.

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

Williamson: The Shatt'l-al-arab River that divides Iran and Iraq is the only way to get to the major sea port of both countries. Therefore, there's the debate about who owns the river. Iranians say the river must be available to both, obviously. Iraqis say, "Well, the boundary is drawn on your side of the river, so the river is ours." So they've been fussing about that for years.

But then as you get on farther north, the boundary is very ill-defined, a mountainous, wooded area. There was no debate. No one cared until they started drilling oil wells up in there. No one cares who drills a well or where they drill it until one comes in with oil, and as soon as one country discovers oil, the other country says, "Oh, but you're on our side." Plus they have the Kurds up in there. It's an ethnic group that spills over into Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. The Kurds are an indigent kind of people and just play hell on everybody's house. "We don't want anybody to tell us what to do." They're pretty hard to get along with. So there's always a debate along the Iraqi border.

Over on the other side, they have the Baluchis. The Baluchis extend over the eastern part of Iran, western Pakistan and southern Afghanistan. The Communist world has been

encroaching for over 50 years, little pamphlets and papers saying there should be a separate nation called Baluchistan. If the Communists get control of what they claim the territory of Baluchistan should be, that means they have a warm-water port that they've been looking for to the open sea for years. So the Shah, his personal evaluation here is that, "I've got to be prepared to fight my neighbors if I have to. I don't want to, but if I have to, all right."

Then when he looks to the north, to Russia, he's very upset, because the great port of Baku, along the Caspian Sea, used to be Persian territory. About 150 years ago, the Russians just decided, "We want a little more territory," and they came down the western and the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea and just, by military force, took it away from Iran. So the Iranians don't trust the Russians anymore.

Then after World War II, when they had the Big Three meeting, the decision was made to withdraw from Iran, Russia said, "We're not going to get out." So they stayed up around Tabriz and up in that part of the country for a long, long time, until 1947, when President Truman said, "We've got the atomic bomb, and you don't. Get out." The Russians then withdrew. So the Iranians feel very beholden to the United States for having "kicked the Russians out." But they don't trust the Russians at all, and that came up time and time and time again, their distrust for the Russians.

He felt he had to have an armed force that was strong, and to answer your question, President Nixon apparently agreed with him.

Q: I've read an account of the meeting between Nixon and the Shah, that allegedly Nixon asked the Shah to protect the American interests in the Persian Gulf region. The word "protection" was apparently used. Did you hear anything to that extent, in that way?

Williamson: I never heard this expressed in those lines, but there was never even the slightest question but what we in the United States were dependent on Iran to be the major stability factor in that part of the world, down into the Indian Ocean to about the tenth parallel. Based on that, we agreed to sell him P-5 reconnaissance airplanes, big planes, that could go up and stay for hours and hours and hours. We agreed to sell a good many things that would allow him to project more than just internal defense of Iran. Yes, we were dependent on him. When you say "protect our interests," it might be a little bit of an overstatement.

Q: I was paraphrasing a little.

Williamson: It would be a major factor in our stabilizing that part of the world. No question.

Q: You said a little bit ago that there were a lot of anecdotes that you had recalled about this visit. Could you relate some of those?

Williamson: I don't know of anything of interest from the standpoint of the historical importance. As I recall, there were thirty or more large cargo-type planes sending over supplies and equipment, but they didn't feel at that time that there was a security problem. The Iranians set up a state dinner at the palace, where everyone would be expected to have on tuxedos. We were told from the U.S. that logistically it was not feasible for them to bring formal attire, and our ambassador sent a message, "I don't have the heart to send this message to the Iranians. Please come over and bring your tuxedos with you," which they did. They gave in on that one. Our ambassador said in all these cargo planes with all these heavy, heavy loads, and he said they couldn't afford to bring tuxedos.

There was one little thing that our State Department didn't want me to attend, the State dinner. So that developed into a kind of hassle for a while. But then when the formalities began, as you know, it's always appropriate to have toasts. Later a friend said, "I can't understand what you mean. The television cameras had you all displayed out there, so beautiful, and then all of a sudden, they showed us the chandeliers. We got so cotton-picking tired of looking at chandeliers. We couldn't

understand. Everything was going fine, and then all of a sudden, we're looking at chandeliers."

And I said, "Don't you realize that at that time we were drinking toasts, and they didn't want to offend the Moslem religion, because they don't drink? We say the Baptists don't dance." [Laughs] But every time we'd start drinking toasts, the cameras were all lifted to the ceiling.

That's all I can recall right now. I'm sure there are several others. Oh, one thing. My wife and Dr. Kissinger were dinner partners, and when the President got up to talk, it turned out the light was right in his face, and his notes were right down there, and he couldn't see them. [Laughs] He couldn't read them at all. So he just gave a little extemporaneous conversational-type thing. It went over very nicely and was very sincere and all that, but Dr. Kissinger turned to my wife and said, "We worked for hours and hours writing that speech for him, and he hasn't used a single word of it yet." [Laughs]

Q: Getting back to the arm sales question again, I guess up through '71 or so, the U.S. had an annual review to provide Iranian weapon requests to the U.S., by the embassy and the MAAG. Were you involved in that at all?

Williamson: In the military assistance program, I think they were quarterly reviews, but then the biggie comes as the annual review, to get ready for the congressional presentations, where

we have to tell the Congress, "This is what we've done, and this is what we want to do here." That comes at about the half-year approach. In other words, when one year is about six months old, we go to the Congress and say, "We plan to finish out the year doing this, and this is what we want to do the following year." That's probably what you are referring to, the annual review.

Q: From what I've been told in other interviews, the U.S. had some kind of a \_\_\_\_\_ role, in which it would determine what would be sold and what would not be sold to Iran. It involved U.S. intervention, in terms of what the Shah could buy every year. This was in the mid-sixties and early seventies.

Williamson: That would have been very appropriate in the sixties, when we were still, partially, at least, in the grant business. See, immediately after the war in the fifties, most everything was grant. Then it was picking up a little bit. I was on a special study group to get this thing started in 1954, '55, and '56, in the Secretary of Defense's office. But we looked at every country we could to see how we could reduce the U.S. taxpayers' expenses.

In a vast majority of countries where we were having the grant aid program, we had an agreement that, "We won't give you anything that you can't support or won't support. In other words, if we give you this truck, you then have to, out of your pocket, buy all the spare parts for it and buy all the gasoline,