

observation at this time, how much did commercial objectives influence policy toward arm sales to countries like Iran?

Williamson: I didn't see it. I admit my vantage point was pretty well separated, but I didn't see it at all.

Q: More strategic reasons were a basic purpose.

Williamson: I do have one more little anecdote on it that might give you a little clue, though. Senator "Scoop" Jackson was--

Q: You told me that story about the Boeing contract.

Williamson: Yes. So the commercial interests did come in, but I wasn't in a position to see that that was influential.

Q: In terms of policy-making, generally. When you were with Armish MAAG, did any of the Rockefeller brothers visit Iran?

Williamson: No, not that I know of.

Q: In November of '72, I have seen a letter that Douglas Heck wrote to Jack Miklos, who was the country desk person at the State Department in Washington. In the letter, Heck notes that David Alne had visited Iran recently and made several points in a discussion with Heck. Alne said that because of the growing

volume of arm sales from the U.S. to Iran, that the MAAG mission was like no other MAAG mission in the world and had to be treated very differently from the rest. Specifically, he thought that the Armish MAAG in Iran should have a new structure and less constraints on it, on its activities, by Congress and by the Joint Chiefs. Did Alne talk about this question with you, of finding a new role for the MAAG or upgrading its status?

Williamson: Not insofar as a new role or changing status. Alne was one of the top salespeople here in Washington. Dave Alne headed the Department of Defense team that went over to negotiate the contract on the helicopters. So I know Dave Alne quite well, I associated with him a good bit, sat in lots of meetings with him, knew him personally.

What Doug Heck was saying was that we, at that time--still do, to some extent--think of the military advisory and assistance teams and we don't realize that they change in complexion. Immediately after World War II, those advisory teams were grant aid. They gave stuff away to help countries get started. And Doug was saying that Iran has outgrown that, Iran gets absolutely no grant aid, none whatsoever. They pay for everything they get.

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

Williamson: When you recognize that Iran was paying for everything it received, you had two major things to consider.

First of all, we were no longer in position to tell them what they would get. We couldn't tell them what courses their students would take when they came here to the United States. They selected the course that the student would go to. They selected the type equipment they would buy. They were making those decisions, and that really ran a few staff officers in the Washington area right up the wall, because it cut their influence down to zilch. It also cut our top level policy influence by quite a bit. So that was number one that was giving our MAAG a little bit of difference in its complexion.

But the main thing was the fact that our volume was bigger than all the rest of the world put together. A lot of people, a lot of staff officers, in particular, still wanted to think of Iran as just one of those 147 countries that we had agreements with and were working with, and they wanted to put us in a little slot, when we were no longer grant aid, we were all purchase, and we were bigger than all the rest of them put together. The cooperation that we were getting with the Iranian Government was considerably better than most any other place, certainly better than any other place we knew.

As an example, I mentioned that I got out of Tehran, made a trip twice a week, and my trip consisted of flying 100 miles, maybe 600 miles, way out, anywhere I wanted to go. I went over and visited the MAAG chief in Turkey, then visited the MAAG chief in Greece, and I was just horrified. The MAAG chief in Turkey had to submit a formal visitation schedule three or four months

in advance of the entire next year. He had to tell the Turkish Government exactly where he wanted to go on each visit during a complete 12-month period. The Turkish Government hashed it over, modified it, and then gave him his visiting schedule, and he couldn't modify it.

I had no restrictions whatsoever, and that permeated up and down the chain. But I had no restrictions as to where I went. As far as they were concerned, I could take off and change my mind in the air and go somewhere else. They let me have complete carte blanche. Now, that applied to many other things, other than just visits. I could go in and discuss anything I wanted to with any commander. As a rule, I limited it, certainly the substantive discussions, to military leaders. But I was always invited to go in to see the province chief or the mayor of the town or what have you. We didn't have limitations like other countries did, and that's what Doug Heck was saying. "Let's recognize the fact that they are different."

Q: Very interesting. In the same letter, Alne also told Heck that he thought that the U.S. should make sure that the Shah had a coherent plan for making his weapons purchases. Did he try to follow up on that idea or discuss that kind of an idea with you? Did other people discuss that?

Williamson: I have to laugh a little bit here, because the Shah did have an overall master plan for all of his armed services,

and as I mentioned, Ham Twitchell was one of the architects, one of the great assistants in getting that accomplished. They knew where they were going. They knew what they wanted to do. But one of the real problems was the fact that the Shah and many others read Aviation Weekly, the magazines coming out of France, Germany, U.S., England, all them. They were avid readers on anything that was advanced state of the art. As you know, these magazines always are dramatic. They, in effect, say things that are on the drawing board are already completed, and they overstate the capabilities, this, that, and the other.

The Shah would become mesmerized over most anything that was new, and he wanted it. So Dave Alne's comment about a master plan in his purchasing deal was fine, but the Shah was just like a kid in a candy store, and every time he saw something that looked pretty, he wanted some for his country.

So my major concern was not being a stumbling block, but at least holding him down until his personnel could properly absorb the equipment. I have mentioned that several times, but that was my one major talking point with him, the only thing he got a little disturbed with me about, because time and time again, I had to say, "I'm just not sure you have the horses to run this race. Why don't we wait a little bit?"

Q: In the same letter that Heck wrote, he mentioned something called an Operation Enhance Plus, which I guess was a U.S. and Iranian Air Force operation of some sort. Does that ring a bell?

Williamson: I don't recall that term at all.

Q: In the fall of '72.

Williamson: I don't recall it.

Q: After our last meeting, you mentioned the Shah discussed with you his illness. This was towards the end of your tour of duty in Iran. When and what did he tell you?

Williamson: As you recall, I had had a bunch of tumors removed from me. He just made a casual remark, "Well, we all get physical challenges every now and then." He said, "I've got the same problem. It's really not too bad. You just have them cut out and it's all right." He said, "When your time comes to die, you're going to die anyway, so don't bother." A casual remark. But he did, in making the remark, tell me that he knew he had a problem.

Q: Did you report this to Helms or to anybody else? Did you pass this on, this information?

Williamson: I usually passed just about everything I could remember.

Q: It's pretty likely.

Williamson: So if I had to guess, I would say yes, I did, but I don't recall specifically. Because it was made in such a casual way that it was sort of like, "Nice day." I could have missed it. I just don't know.

Q: Because later on, in the seventies, when his cancer became known, it was sort of a surprise to people.

Williamson: No, he didn't specifically say he had cancer. He said he had a problem. "They just cut it out." That was his comment. "Just cut it out. Let it go."

Williamson: I see. Around the same time that you were in Iran, oil prices were starting to rise, and Iran was starting to take steps to take over the operations of the consortium, the oil business in Iran. How much did the Shah talk to you about his oil policy, his goals in terms of petroleum, his policy, generally? Was this a subject of discussion between you and the Shah?

Williamson: Yes, he went into great detail on that several times. Did I mention the natural gas?

Q: No, I don't think so.

Williamson: As you recall, the Russians brought a pipeline down and siphoned off natural gas.

Q: That was a steel plant for the gas deal, right, in the sixties?

Williamson: Right. One time he mentioned that prices were disturbing him. He said prices were getting out of line and were disturbing him. He gave as an example the gas that he was pumping up to Russia. I remember the numbers. He said 17 rials, some cubic--I don't know how they measured the gas, but anyway, it was 17 rials for some measure that the Russians were paying, and that the Japanese had come in and offered him 80. He said, "We have something of a dilemma here. Many of my people are telling me that I'm not in a position to continue the contract with the Russians. I'd just like your view on it." We bounced things back and forth like that, a lot of things.

I asked him, "Wait a minute. You say you have a contract signed. How long is the contract?"

"Five years."

"When did you sign it?"

"A year ago."

"Did you sign it in good faith? Did the Russians sign it in good faith? Have they shown any indication of anything less than

good faith? Then you're sort of duty bound as an honorable person to carry out the contract."

He said, "That's my viewpoint, and a lot of people tell me I just can't afford to."

I said, "It's not a matter of what you can afford if you decide to do it." So he stuck to his contract.

The Japanese came in, started to building an alternate that would get gas other than what he was sending to Russia, because it worked all right. So far as I know, he stuck to that contract.

Then one time he called a meeting and tried his best to get a bunch of commercial people to tell him what the proper price for oil should be, the crude, and they wouldn't tell him. They said it would be against their best interest to give him any suggested price higher than what they were paying at the time. He said, "The price is going up, and if we just let it ride, ride, ride, ride, it'll keep right on going up. But if we have a target, together we may be able to manage and prevent its going right out the top." They still wouldn't do it. I'm getting this second-hand; I was not at this meeting. He said, "Well, can't someone just come up with a figure? Finally, one guy, I don't know whether it was an American or Frenchman, because I understand there were quite a few people there, Americans and some other nations, one guy said he thought maybe \$11 a barrel would be a place that they ought to stabilize. As you recall, they did stabilize on \$11 for some long while.

Q: That's right.

Williamson: But at that time, it was coming out of the ground at about 50 cents a barrel, their expense of getting it out.

Q: The cost production.

Williamson: They had wells that were coming out with gravity feed. We talk about the seven wonders of the world and all that, but there are wells in Iran that don't have pumps on them. They come out gravity feed, and it comes right down the pipeline, goes right to the island of Cargh, and all they have to do is pump it into ships. Just the most fantastic thing you ever heard of. That's not all of them, but a few of them run by themselves.

Q: Did the Shah talk to you, in general, about why he wanted to raise oil prices?

Williamson: No. I guess the only thing he discussed with me was that the price of oil going up was probably the most difficult dilemma he was involved in, because he said, "The last thing I want to do is hurt my friends." He said that time and time and time again. "We don't want to hurt our friends." Now, he got the international reputation of being the spark plug in raising the price, but at least from my observation, it was not

that way at all. He was certainly inclined to hold it at a manageable level. But again, I'm listening to him talk, because I didn't initiate any discussions in subjects other than military.

Q: Did he give you the impression that he wanted to raise prices, in part to finance his military purchases? Was there some connection there?

Williamson: No. He never indicated to me at all that he had any money problems of any kind, except a little bit of timing. Sometimes the cash flow was such that he had to come over. He had the Hanover Bank here that he worked with principally. He had to do a little jockeying back and forth from a timing standpoint, but as far as the amount of money was concerned, I never got the slightest indication that he was concerned, even a little bit. It just didn't bother him. He just thought he had all the money in the world. But he was dedicated to one thing: he was dedicated to having a broad-based, viable country when the oil gave out. As I remember it now, he was thinking, in 1972, of 17 more years. I believe that's the figure he used. He said, "I've got to have a completely viable country that does not depend on oil in about 17 years." That was his goal.

Q: Be an exporter of industrial products?

Williamson: That and agriculture. You name it, across the board. He called it nation building. He said, "I've got to build my nation, I've got to educate my people, I've got to experience my people. I've got to have the infrastructure. I've got to have it all in about 17 years, sufficiently advanced that we will not be dependant on oil."

Q: You alluded to the question of the base at Chah Bahar. What were some of the issues involved in that plan?

Williamson: Chah Bahar was a natural port area, completely underdeveloped--not developed, I should say--south of the entrance into the Persian Gulf. In other words, a base there would give an eye looking out, looking south to the Indian Ocean. So the Shah decided to develop a rather large base there, one that would support oceangoing ships, long-range surveillance-type aircraft, several squadrons of fighter-type aircraft, plus an armored ground forces unit for its defense.

As far as I know, it was an original idea from the Shah personally. He decided to do it, that he wanted to keep it secret, so he called in the commander of the Iranian Navy, Admiral Rassai, and gave him his instructions to begin planning and come up with ideas as to how it should be arranged. Admiral Rassai immediately called for me, and we had quite a long discussion. I was informed that his instructions were not even to inform the other services, the Air Force and the Army ground

forces that the plan was being visualized. So that left Admiral Rassai well out of his element, left him in a position to do something that was beyond his capabilities completely.

So I discussed it with my Navy section chief. We got him a few American Navy personnel, and we started, as best we could, drawing up just general ideas as to how we should go about principally the survey teams that would have to come in to find out just what kind of soil is here, how deep is the water, what kind of breakers are there, how could we arrange it. So we came up with certainly not a comprehensive plan by any means, but an overall sketch of how we should approach it.

The admiral took it in to see the Shah, and the Shah was somewhat pleased with what we had, told him to continue his refinements. I finally went to the Shah and told him that the admiral had gone as far as he could, that he just couldn't be productive in his efforts without the input from the Navy and the ground forces. Then the Shah decided to break it down and let the other people in on it.

So when I left, there was a great plan to build a relatively large base there. We had had several survey teams sent over from the U.S. to make some detailed plans. We had planning teams back here in the States coming up with a good many suggestions as to how they would approach it. But I left before there was much done.

You've got to realize Chah Bahar was way down on the southeastern edge of Iran, and basically, there was no road.

There was a little trail, but actually, buses got through sometimes, but it was always a surprise when they made it all the way. [Laughs]

The only way to really get into there--I think I probably hurt the Shah's feelings on that, as much as any little thing that I did was when he asked me to assist the admiral in his plans. I got in my little airplane and flew down, looked around to see what was there. Just to give you an idea of what they had, a little village. I went in. The mayor called in his council or whatever it was, and didn't even have chairs. They sat around on the floor. The mayor asked me if I'd like to share a Coca-Cola with him. That's exactly what he meant. For about ten of us in the room, one Coca-Cola was brought in. I was poured half of it, and the mayor got the other half, and the meeting continued. [Laughs] So it was really a primitive little area.

They had two diesel engines there that they used to pump fresh water. They were both pretty obsolete, so they had just turned one of them off completely and were stealing the parts from it to keep the other one going. But even at that, they were only running fresh water two hours a day. They were in trouble.

They had a few crops, dates, principally. They sold all their dates over in Pakistan. They felt that if they just had a way to get their fish to market, that they could set up a fishing industry down there, later a cannery.

In the final analysis, just to show you how destitute those people were, after the discussion was over, I asked the mayor to show me what he had there that he was most proud of. He took me out to his cemetery, and we stood there and looked at a bunch of gravestones. He was destitute. He had nothing. But the thing that amazed me is in discussing his situation there, he never asked me for anything. He never said, "I wish the Shah would do this for me, do that for me." He did say he needed an outlet for his fishing catch, but he never asked me to do anything.

So when I went back, I went in to see the Shah, and I told him I'd been down there, and he was quite amused--amazed, I guess, is a better word, because I had a little plane that had a reversible prop and extra-strong landing gear so I could go into most any type of a landing area. But I had gotten in there. He was quite interested. He didn't say, but I got the impression that the Shah had never been there either. I did later find out that the senator from that province had never been there, never in his life put foot in that little area.

So in discussion with the Shah, I told him about the requirement for a generator, for fresh water, I told him about their selling all their dates, the only thing they really had to sell, that they sold them over in Pakistan. I said, "Even when they listen to the radio, they listened to the Pakistani station. They can't get the Iranian stations down there." I made a remark that I shouldn't have made, because it hurt the Shah's feelings

very much. I said, "Actually, down there they hardly know that you exist up here in Tehran."

And he said, "There will be a change." There was a generator on the way down the next day, a new generator. There were some bulldozers put on ship, and they sailed for Chah Bahar within the week to build a runway sufficient to take in C-130 aircraft. He set up a schedule to go down once a week and get their fishing catch and bring it up to Tehran to sell. So he responded very quickly. But Chah Bahar built--I don't know how much of it was completed, but it was started, anyway--Chah Bahar started from nothing, absolutely nothing.

Q: When you were making the first study of this port in Armish MAAG, you relayed this information back to Washington?

Williamson: Sure.

Q: What was the feedback you got from Washington?

Williamson: I don't recall any reaction at all, because we didn't ask for anything out of Washington. I told them that the Shah was holding it very close to the cuff, and that he was making no request on the U.S. at that time, so they had no cause to respond.

Q: I have a general question to conclude with. Some students of U.S.-Iran relations have argued that between the 1960s and the 1970s, there was sort of a basic change in the relationship between America and Iran, and that by the early 1970s, the U.S. had less influence over the Shah, that instead, the Shah had more leverage with the U.S., in terms of petroleum and so forth, and the Shah could play a more independent role vis-a-vis the United States. But others have argued that the Shah remained psychologically and politically dependant on the U.S., that he needed the U.S. for advanced weapons, he needed the U.S. and NATO countries for markets for oil, and so forth.

From your experience on the scene in the 1970s, how would you evaluate those kinds of arguments, whether the Shah was still sort of dependant upon the U.S. in a sort of psychological and political sense, or was he actually becoming more independent in his ability to act freely?

Williamson: I initially said that the Iranians trusted and looked up to us to a fault. When they had their October '71 party, they started feeling their oats, feeling co-equal, and there's no question but what they felt more self-confident as the first years of the 1970s went on.

I wasn't there long enough to have the feeling that they were contesting our advice or resisting our advice or certainly not in any way failing to cooperate. They gave me the impression that they were still just as desirous to have our support, but

our support, as you well imagine, is now varying from "Give us this, give us that, give us something else," to "Let us buy." But it was very obvious to them that they were not in position to produce a lot of things they wanted. However, before I left, they were completely rebuilding the jet engines for the F-5s. They were manufacturing their own machine guns, their own rifles, their own artillery ammunition, up to and including the 155-millimeter Howitzer ammunition. They had a powder plant there that was as modernistic as anything we had at the time. They were coming along on their own. They were making their own decisions much more so than they had been.

So for someone to say our influence had diminished, that's exactly what we wanted. We wanted them to become independent. It wasn't a matter of our losing out; it was a matter of just like parents delighted to see their children develop. As far as I knew, except for a few small set of staff officers, we weren't unhappy a bit in the world to see them come in their own. As far as national policy was concerned, I saw no indication that we wanted to keep them subservient.

Q: That's interesting. After you left Iran in '73, did you do any more work on Iranian-related issues?

Williamson: No. I was medically evacuated from Iran and was quite ill for years. I was just, for all practical purposes, out of it completely. I did have the new MAAG chief come by the

hospital and visit with me a time or two, things of that sort.
No, I wasn't in operation at all.

Q: Are there any concluding comments that you'd like to make?
You sort of made a general statement towards the end, but
anything else you want to say in addition?

Williamson: No, other than I attended a party in an Iranian
home here in Washington just two weeks ago. At that party was an
assemblage of about thirty real top-level Iranians. I believe
all of them were ex-military. I would like to repeat that those
people, the top level of those people, are culturally refined,
they're nice, they're polite, they're intelligent. I think we
would be just happy to have them in our homes and in our churches
and our communities. They are nice, nice people, the ones that I
know now.

I hope the time will come when Iran will wake up and get on
its feet and sort of get out of its persecution complex. That's
what the Moslems are going through now. They are a devoutly
religious people, but they are really overcome by their own
persecution complex at present, so much so that they feel that
everybody is against them, and they've got to fight back on
everything, every touch. It's not going to come easy and it's
not going to come soon, but I hope the time will come one of
these days that we can get along with them.

Q: Thank you very much for the interview, General.

END OF INTERVIEW

WILLIAMSON, GENERAL ELLIS

NAME	PAGE
Alne, David,	181,184
Alam, Amir Asadollah,	62
Ata'i, Admiral 'Abbas Ramzi,	96
Atkins, James,	162
Azhari, General Gholam-Reza,	56,61,96,142,148
Connely, John,	107
Drewen,	56
Duncan, Samuel,	57
Eisenhower, Dwight D.,	115
Farland, Joseph,	60,110,112
Fox, Alonzo,	42
Gray, Gordon,	42
Hall,	57
Harwood,	56,131
Heck, Douglas,	116,180-185
Helms, Richard,	60,112-114,186
Hensel, H. Struve,	42
Hoveyda, Amir 'Abbas,	40,96
Jackson, Henry,	105,180
Jones, Thomas,	162
Kennedy, John F.,	46
Kennedy, Robert F.,	46
Khatami, General Mohammad,	96,142,149,150,168
Kissinger, Hnery,	77,85,91,102,151,152,158,174
Laird, Douglas,	83,104
Lord, Glen,	162
MacArthur, Douglas II,	27,60,107
Maroun, A.J.,	42
McNamara, Robert,	46-49
Miklos, Jack,	158,180
Minbashiyan, General Fathollah,	96
Nixon, Richard M.,	61,65,72,75,77,78,84, 85,88,94,102,151,152,155, 157-159,170,174
Pahlavi, Mohammad Reza Shah,	2-16,30-31,38,53-54,58-60, 62,65,68,71,72,77-79,84,85, 88,92,94,100-102,110,112,118, 122-126,139,146-159,168-177, 184-197
Patton,	56,131,140,141
Pollard,	164
Price,	56,131,141
Rasa'i, Admiral,	142,192,193
Rossevelt, Kermit,	163,178
Santon, Karl,	55
Silitoe, Barry,	162
Sisco, Joseph,	105
Sullivan, William,	105
Sylvester, Frank,	162
Tufaniyan, General Hasan,	58,61,94,142,149,161

WILLIMSON, GENERAL ELLIS

NAME	PAGE
Truman, Harry,	8,88
Twitchell, General Hamilton,	53-55,184
Westmoreland, General William,	53,54

