

essentially the director of the SCS. The commanders of the services usually met separately with the Shah and received their orders from him.

Q: Was the Shah receptive to the idea of having a joint command outlook? Was he receptive to that notion?

Twitchell: Yes. But again there was a question of the extent to which he was prepared to really delegate authority.

Q: To these people? Yes.

Twitchell: I think we discussed this the last time. You have to go back to the conditions under which he evolved when he became the head of state during World War II, his concern about external influence in the country, whom he could trust. Later he saw what happened when Khomeini came. Some of the people the Shah went to school with weren't loyal to him and defected.

Q: How would you evaluate Rassai?

Twitchell: Considering the fact that he had only two frigates until 1962, I consider that he did as well as one could expect. He had brought along a series of very capable younger officers. The Army had some good division commanders. For example they had Khosrowdad, who was a Brigadier General when I was there. He

headed the Special Forces. The Air Force used to provide the commander of the helicopter forces for the Army, and it became very clear that the head of the Air Force was not going to send his best colonels over to command the helicopter force in the Army. I seldom dealt with personalities with the Iranians, but I did suggest to the Shah that it would be desirable for the Shah to choose an outstanding Iranian army general to head the helicopter force which he was trying to build up. I suggested someone such as Khosrowdad. He was sent to the United States for advanced helicopter training, not only to become knowledgeable in the handling of a force, but also spend a year, go to maintenance, to learn all about the ins and outs of maintaining a helicopter force. He later became a very important figure in the Iranian military.

So in general terms I would say that I was impressed with the fact that there were plenty of capable people who were being brought along and also that the Iranian soldiers that I observed would be very good in combat. They were hardy and could get along on a minimum amount of logistical support.

Q: Now you mentioned earlier some of the SCS commanders.
Aryana?

Twitchell: Yes.

Q: How would you evaluate him? As you did some of the other

people. Was he more of the old school?

Twitchell: Yes, he was of the old school. Djam was anxious to create a modern force and he was popular with the younger officers. He was better equipped to deal with the problems of the forces, and with the types of equipment that were coming in.

Q: Jam. But then Azhari took over?

Twitchell: Azhari took over from Djam, when Djam went to Spain as the ambassador. He was a capable chief of staff to the Shah. He later became Prime Minister for a short period.

Q: That's right. During the revolution.

Twitchell: He wasn't as colorful a person, but he was a very competent man. But again, as Chief SCS, his role was very circumscribed, as was Djam's. Djam was more restive.

Q: Do you think that was why he was sent over as ambassador, because he had more of a following? Is that possible?

Twitchell: No, I think that was because of something that developed-- an incident that developed, and he spoke his mind to the Shah about it.

Q: Do you recall the circumstances?

Twitchell: The only information that I have is second-hand. It evolved from an incident where there was a shooting on the road to Karaj, and I understand the gendarmes killed a worker for not obeying the instructions of the gendarmes. This became a very tense issue within the military and the Shah was displeased with the way the affair was handled. Djam had a meeting with the Shah about the matter. I don't know what Djam said to the Shah or vice-versa, but as a result Djam was later named ambassador to Spain. They were classmates in Switzerland and had been very close.

Q: That's interesting. Now many writers on modern Iran have noted that the Shah was surrounded by yes-men, who seldom presented him with dissenting views or criticism. You gave one example where a person actually reportedly did dissent, did disagree with the Shah on an issue. But from your observation, how true was that of the military leaders, whether there were many so-called yes-men among them or did some of them actually give the Shah their opinions freely?

Twitchell: I think Khatami gave him his opinions freely. But he was in a different situation. I think probably Toufanian also gave his views. I just don't know how the others dealt with the problem. I guess the real question is the extent to which the

Shah asked for opinions or whether he made a decision and said, this is it.

I found that he was receptive to ideas and that he was very interested.

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BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO.

Q: Did you want to continue with that point?

Twitchell: No. I've heard this criticism many times and I've talked with some of his civilian advisors, and I think they felt that, yes, perhaps they should have spoken up more frequently.

Q: Now you mentioned General Toufanian earlier. Now over the years it's been argued-- there's been debate over his role in arms sales, whether he personally profited from arms sales that he negotiated himself. When you were in Iran, did you learn anything that substantiated these charges or discredited these charges?

Twitchell: I've heard lots of people make those allegations. I've never heard anybody substantiate them. In my discussions with him, he maintained that that was not the case. As I mentioned, he preferred to go through the Pentagon to avoid that problem. He did indicate that there were people who were agents,

and that particularly in the Grumman case he tried to have it written in the contract that there be no agent fees.

Q; That's right. Did you ever hear any criticism of the Shah from the military leaders in your conversations with them? Did you have the sense that they were basically loyal to the Shah, or did they ever show misgivings about him?

Twitchell: They never expressed those views to me. From time to time they would suggest that during my audience that I might bring something up which would support their point of view. If I agreed with it.

I have no reason to doubt their basic loyalty to the Shah.

Q: Can you give any instances of that?

Twitchell: No. I just don't remember. Again I think it goes back to the extent to which the Shah sought their views or the extent to which he asked them questions and they answered them.

Q: How much interaction was there between the Armish-MAAG staff and the civilian population of Iran? Was there much interaction, or was the interaction more or less confined to the Iranian military people?

Twitchell: Well, I think I'd put it in a-- first of all, within

the Iranian society, the Iranian military was pretty much removed from the civilian population. There was a completely separate chain of command. In most cases the Shah dealt directly with the chiefs of the services or the chief SCS and not through the Prime Minister. Although there were certain things that the Prime Minister was involved, similarly with the Minister of War. The Minister of War was not primarily concerned with the direction of the forces, except in terms of budget and personnel. The Shah dealt primarily with these issues.

Now most of the officers lived-- and some of the married NCOs-- lived in the civilian community, and there was interaction between the civilians and military, particularly at the officer level.

Q: You're talking about Armish-MAAG?

Twitchell: No. The MAAG officers and married NCOs lived in the civilian community. In my own case, I-- and they also-- was free to do so. I made a point of trying to deal with the civilians that I thought were appropriate, to more or less indicate that in the United States that we were not a separate environment.

Q: Not a caste system?

Twitchell: Not a caste system, and not an isolated environment. If you're living on a military post, you're not always-- you

don't deal with civilians as much as if you are living off-post. I've spent most of my time away from the military posts.

In general the American community revolved around relationships between the Armish-MAAG and the American civilians. In some cases, Americans had close relations with Iranians, but that was the exception. They had their own American school. The churches that they attended were Western churches. However, it was very difficult for the wives to get around Teheran on their own. Because there were problems of becoming involved in an accident, they weren't encouraged to drive cars themselves.

Q: The Armish-MAAG wives?

Twitchell: Yes. There were tensions and difficulties for the wives.

Q: I guess Armish-MAAG had social functions, receptions and so forth, from time to time?

Twitchell: Yes.

Q: Were they mostly military people invited, or any military people invited, or was it sort of a mixture?

Twitchell: A mixture. For example, once a year, the Chief of Armish-MAAG would host a reception, say, New Year's Day, to which

the international community-- ambassadors and so on-- the American civilians, the Iranian key civilians, and also the key Iranian military were invited. Iranians were also invited to Iranian parties--

Q: You said there were some staff officers who lived in civilian districts?

Twitchell: Well, I lived in a civilian district. All of us did.

Q: You didn't have a compound?

Twitchell: No, not an American compound. We had a billet for the enlisted men. I said earlier that the TAFT were involved on the bases, the Air Force bases. The bulk of the MAAG enlisted personnel lived in two houses that were joined together. They were right in the middle of a civilian population.

The biggest problem in terms of dealing and living and socializing with the Iranians was the language problem.

Q: How many on your staff spoke Farsi? How many of the officers?

Twitchell: I would say that not more than five or six could speak fluently.

Q: Yes. Who had language training back in the States?

Twitchell: Very few, mostly those in intelligence. Maybe three or four. That was, I think, one of the biggest mistakes that the U.S. made, in both the embassy and in the MAAG.

Q: In not requiring some kind of language training?

Twitchell: Yes. Not only requiring, but not making it feasible. I think I mentioned to you that I felt that it was as important for some of the key people, or certainly selected people, in the MAAG to go to language school just as the attaches do. In the case of the senior officers they should be there for three years. It was a year before one had any real grasp about the problems, what the environment was like, etc.

Q: So the officers had to depend upon the Iranians who understand English for day-to-day work?

Twitchell: Yes. Most of their contacts did understand. When an officer is assigned to the infantry school, the artillery school and so on-- or to a field team, even if you can speak the language, there are the cultural differences. You don't always communicate. Even though you talk with each other, you may not communicate. If you're an American adviser and I'm an Iranian, I may be hesitant to tell you that I don't really understand what

you're trying to tell me, how to do this or how to do that.

I always felt that what we needed were advisers who had the ability to recognize that somewhere between the Iranian culture and the American culture there was a major problem of how you communicated in providing advice. This takes a certain amount of training and experience. You just don't send somebody who had been a battalion commander in Vietnam, and send him out to Iran for a tour. There needed to be a better orientation program.

Q: Now in one chapter in James Bill's book that I have looked at pretty thoroughly, he suggests that one aspect of the U.S. government presence in Iran was the existence of a certain amount of rivalry between the various official U.S. organizations that were based there. For example, he suggests that there was a lack of coordination or cooperation between USIA and the embassy, or that there was some tension between the embassy and Armish-MAAG, and that lack of cooperation or rivalry made it difficult for officials to do their jobs in Iran. Now he argues that, of course, that you met with the ambassador. He mentions that you met with the ambassador, the Armish-MAAG chief generally met with the ambassador, and there was cooperation at that level, at the policy-making level, at the top level of both organizations. But he suggests that relations between the diplomats and military men generally were sometimes tense, that there was a certain amount of distrust.

How did you see the relationship between Armish-MAAG and the

embassy yourself?

Twitchell: It was a matter of personalities. I don't think that there was an institutional problem, at least while I was there, between the ambassador and myself. I consider that I had good relations with the two Ambassadors.

Q: The diplomats?

Twitchell: The diplomats. Again a matter of personalities. There was one assignment in the Embassy where there was a military-political officer duties included military considerations.

Q: Political military affairs?

Twitchell: Yes. And depending on who was in that job, he could become overly involved in trying to deal with MAAG problems.

Q: Do you recall who that was at the time, when the embassy handled that--

Twitchell: Yes, but I don't know what point that serves in trying to bring in the name.

Q: No. Just for the-- yes, okay.

Twitchell: There were two or three people there. From time to time there were problems, but they were worked out amicably. I had colonels that dealt with the political military affairs officer. If need be, I would talk with the individual myself. I don't recall having to take an issue up with the ambassador. As far as I was concerned, both of the ambassadors that I worked for supported our role to the hilt. It wasn't a problem of my not getting support out of the embassy or anybody else.

I've read that from time to time relations were strained.

Q: Maybe later in the seventies perhaps?

Twitchell: Yes, but again I would say, as a generalization I don't think it's correct. It could be right in terms of specific individuals.

Q; I've read that there was one element of disagreement that occurred during the seventies, was that from time to time the embassy would ask the Armish-MAAG chief to write information or intelligence on the various Iranian military officers that he and his subordinates would deal with. Get information on their backgrounds, their views, their abilities, sort of military intelligence information, and the embassy would make these requests from Armish-MAAG for information. And that very often Armish-MAAG was reluctant to provide such information to the State Department. Or I guess CIA for that matter. Were you

asked for this kind of information when you were with Armish-MAAG? Information on the various military leaders in Iran? You know, on the officers in the various branches of the armed services?

Twitchell: Not that I recall. The army attache or the defense attache used to come over and talk with me from time to time about something, but I think there was a clear understanding that we were not there as an intelligence agency and that there were limits to the extent to which we really should become involved in intelligence matters. They met with some of the Iranian military.

Q: The embassy people?

Twitchell: Yes. And particularly the attaches. Normally the problems that you're referring to would be things that would be the responsibility of the Army, Navy or Air Force attache or the Defense attache.

And I guess, you know, in general you might say that any government would suspect that such a situation existed, that there would be that exchange of information even if there weren't.

Q: As a routine thing?

Twitchell: Yes. I'm not talking necessarily about the Iranian government. I'm talking about any foreign government. Even, I suppose, the same way we would look upon it, if somebody had advisers here.

Q: But in general you were cooperative? When information was requested, you generally--

Twitchell: Yes. There were very few instances where they felt it was necessary to come to me for information.

Q: Did Armish-MAAG have its own intelligence, people who worked on intelligence issues? Did you have a staff or a division or a bureau that worked on intelligence?

Twitchell: We had a staff that provided advisory assistance to the J-2 regarding how to perform intelligence functions.

Q: The J-2 was--

Twitchell: The head of the SCS Intelligence Division.

Q: Okay. Now you said that Armish-MAAG had individuals who worked with Iran in developing its own intelligence programs?

Twitchell: In other words, advising the J-2 personnel how to

carry out an intelligence function.

Q: In terms of military intelligence?

Twitchell: Yes. Just as we trained members of the logistical staff-- J-4. Our J-4 was the counterpart to the J-4 of the SCS staff, and we assisted in training them about logistics and the staff functions of the J-4.

Q: More organizational? How to organize?

Twitchell: Yes. Functional-- how to carry out their logistical duties and responsibilities.

Q: Now when did you leave Iran? When did you leave the country?

Twitchell: Around the end of September 1971.

Q: Did you retire from the military at that point?

Twitchell: I retired en route home.

Q: Now you told me a few weeks ago that when you retired, you started to do work for the Stanford Research Institute, for the SRI, as it's called. What did this work involve?

Twitchell: I became a consultant to SRI in the spring of '72, to the Strategic Studies Center, which was primarily concerned with strategic and political military issues worldwide.

Q: They're based in Washington?

Twitchell: Yes. That center continued until three or four years ago. I have remained at SRI even to the present. The last three or four years I've been working particularly on problems concerning the political, military, and strategic environment as it affects U.S. forces.

(machine off)

Q: Now in your work that you did for the SRI in the seventies, did you do any work that involved the Persian Gulf or Iran specifically?

Twitchell: I was involved in a number of projects that involved U.S. interests in the Middle East. These were strategic studies, political military studies, which were being done primarily for either in-house research or for U.S. government agencies.

Q: The Pentagon, for example?

Twitchell: The Pentagon primarily, which dealt with U.S. global

interests particularly in the Middle East, NATO, and the Far East. The studies involved issues dealing with nuclear as well as conventional weapons and trends in technology.

Q: So some of the work you were doing was continuing from your NATO work that you were doing in the fifties and early sixties?

Twitchell: Yes.

Q: Just drawing up on that kind of background. In terms of the studies in the Middle East, in the Persian Gulf area, who did you work with during these studies?

Twitchell: Who do you mean, who did I work with?

Q: Did you do it on your own or were you working as part of a committee or a study group?

Twitchell: Primarily as part of a study group. There were various people from SRI and several consultants. The head of the office was Richard Foster, who was the Director of the SRI Strategic Studies Center. The two individuals I worked closely with were Dr. Stephen Gibert and Captain William Carpenter, USN.

Q: I think you mentioned earlier that some of the issues that you dealt with at SRI included what kind of a national interest

the U. S. had in the Middle East?

Twitchell: Yes.

Q: How did the question of Iranian oil fit into the conceptualization issue? How did the question of Iranian oil fit into the ideas of national interest that you were defining?

Twitchell: I think it fit in with the generally accepted view that we are, and likely to be, dependent on Gulf oil, and that the Gulf as one of the major producers is an important factor.

Q: To what extent did your studies assume that Iran was also sort of a buffer between I guess the Soviet Union and the oil in Saudi Arabia as well?

Twitchell: The studies generally indicated the importance of Iran geographically, and because of its size, location, population, oil and other critical raw materials, was an important strategic factor.

Q: But essentially when you worked on Iran, it was always in the context of the region as a whole? You didn't do specific studies on Iran as such?

Twitchell: I did one study for SRI-- an in-house study for SRI,

on Iran in the nineteen-eighties. We looked at the issues that might affect U.S.-Iranian relations and U.S. national interests. I don't remember being involved in any other particular study relating solely to Iran. The rest of the studies were in the context of the Middle East.

Q: This conference you did on Iran in the nineteen-eighties, did you help organize it?

Twitchell: Yes. On behalf of SRI I worked with the person that headed the Iranian Institute for International Economic and Political Affairs. His name was Abbas Amire.

Q: What kind of issues did this conference center on?

Twitchell: It dealt with all of the major factors which we thought would affect Iran's development goals and programs during the 1980s, its foreign and defense policies, and U.S.-Iranian relations. These subjects were discussed within the framework of the changing international environment.

Q: Who were some of the speakers at the conference?

Twitchell: Many of them were top government people.

Q: U.S. and Iran?

Twitchell: There were fourteen Iranian and nineteen American speakers. The principal Iranian speakers included: Ambassador Zahedi, Ambassador Jahangir Amouzegar, and Minister of State Manuchehr Agah. The Americans included: Under-Secretary of Treasury Anthony Solomon, Deputy Assistant-Secretary of State Sidney Sober, Professor Eugene Rostow, and Professor George Lenczowski. James Bill was a discussant on the panel dealing with social and political affairs.

Q: That was when he was still in Teheran?

Twitchell: No, he was living in Texas.

Q: The conference itself though, it was held in Washington?

Twitchell: Yes. It was here. In October of '77.

Q: Just as things were starting to break out in Iran. Have you traveled to Iran any other time since you left in '71?

Twitchell: I went back there very briefly in early '72. I also went to a conference in Iran that their institute I mentioned held in 1975, which was primarily dealing with the Persian Gulf. They had Americans, French and British and so on.

Q: I think when we first talked over the phone about an

interview, you mentioned that the government at one point had requested that you return as an adviser on military--

Twitchell: Specifically the head of the Plan Organization asked me if I would be willing to come back. I explained that under our laws a regular officer could not work directly for a foreign government. Then the issue also arose whether or not I could if I worked for a private institution. Then the next question was whether or not the fact that I had just left Iran would present complications. My position was that I did not want to take the job unless it was agreed by all concerned in the U.S. government that it was to the interest of the U.S. government as well as to the Iranian government, and also that my presence would not interfere with the role of my successor.

In the end, because of all the complications, I decided that I did not want to pursue it.

Q: What did they have in mind for you to do in terms of the Plan Organization's work?

Twitchell: Primarily in connection with the integrated communications program, which involved dealing with a consortium of Americans, Italians, Germans and Japanese, and with the Iranian government-- principally the Plan Organization, and the Ministry of PT&T.

Q: PT&T standing for?

Twitchell: Postal Telephone & Telegraph.

Q: In his recent book, James Bill makes an interesting analysis. He concludes by arguing that the U.S. had sort of a two-fold failure in Iran. There was a failure of intelligence in the sense that American officials did not really understand-- did not perceive what was going on among the political and social movements that were opposed to the Shah. There was a failure of policy in the sense that the U.S. policy makers based their approach to Iran on the assumption that the Shah's position was more or less impregnable. To what extent would you disagree or agree with that overall assessment?

Twitchell: In my opinion, the assessment is overstated. Although these were failures in the collection and analysis of intelligence, I do not consider that there was an overall failure of intelligence. The gaps and deficiencies in the collection of political analysis, particularly the latter, stemmed from a number of factors, especially the lack of in-depth knowledge of Iranian culture and religion. Another factor was the Embassy had difficulty developing information about opposition groups because of the Iranian government's disapproval of foreign contacts with such groups. For about a decade before the revolution, U.S. contacts with Iranians were primarily limited to government

officials, the Western-educated elite, and to official relations with members of the military and security organizations. There were few contacts with the bazaaris and practically none with the clergy. The most serious U.S. intelligence failure was probably our difficulty in understanding the potential of religion as a political force. Another failure was the belated awareness of the seriousness of the Shah's illness and its complications on his ability to govern the country, especially his willingness to use force against the opposition.

With regard to the last point that the policymakers assumed the Shah was more or less impregnable; although some policymakers held that view, I question whether all did.

Insofar as my own views are concerned, I consider that there was no credible internal threat to the Shah's regime until 1977-78 when the secular opposition groups joined forces with the radical clergy in a mass opposition movement which later brought about the fall of the Shah.

Q: General Twitchell, thanks very much for your time.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

