

Interview with Clarke McCurdy Brintnall

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

BRIGADIER GENERAL CLARKE MCCURDY BRINTNALL

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Q: Brintnall, what is the name from?

BRINTNALL: Brintnall is English. The family settled here about 1640 in Brookline, Massachusetts. It was rather a small family. There are a few Brintnalls scattered around the country, and we're all related in some way or another.

Q: Tell me a bit about when and where you were born and a bit about your parents.

BRINTNALL: I was born in Omaha, Nebraska. My father was a metallurgist and my mother was a housewife who later on went to work for the government. I had a rather uneventful childhood. I grew up in Omaha; attended public schools there.

Q: You were born when?

BRINTNALL: 1933. October 4, 1933. I developed any early interest in the military. I was active in High School in ROTC and the Civil Air Patrol. When I graduated from High School I really didn't know what I wanted to do. But I decided to go to a military Junior College...Wentworth Military Academy. I spent two years there and then transferred to the

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University of Nebraska. I did well in college but was not satisfied. After a semester at the University I decided that I would like to go to West Point.

Q: We're talking about now...trying to keep in mind that World War II is going strong, or was it?

BRINTNALL: No. The Korean War was going strong. World War II was well over. We're talking about 1953 at this point. I applied for an appointment to West Point and was fortunate enough to find a Senator to sponsor me. I took the examinations, received the appointment and was accepted. So, I was a late starter getting into West Point since I already had three years of college.

Q: What class were you in at West Point?

BRINTNALL: 1958.

Q: Now, the United States by this point had fought World War II, the Korean War...when you got out in 1958 we were landing in Lebanon. We had gone through the Suez and the Hungarian Crisis and all. How much of America's involvement in the world and sort of beyond the sort of guns and marching business did you get out of West Point? I mean as far as international affairs?

BRINTNALL: There really weren't a lot of guns...there was a lot of marching but that was really incidental. It was basically a university education with some military courses, mostly during the summers.

Q: Were you able to shape the courses you were taking to meet what you felt you would want as a major? I mean, obviously there were military courses to take. But what were you taking at West Point?

BRINTNALL: At that time we could shape very little. Now the Cadets can select their major. But at that time there were only a half dozen electives. While language was

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required, we could select the one we wanted to study. You could validate certain courses. For example, I validated American History and took Diplomatic History. But the electives were very few. We all graduated with a degree of Bachelor of Science with an emphasis in Engineering.

Q: What language did you take?

BRINTNALL: I studied Portuguese.

Q: Portuguese? Really that's kind of odd...what got you off on Portuguese? Usually it's French, Spanish or Russian or something like that.

BRINTNALL: Some may have considered it an unusual choice. In retrospect, it was a superb choice. More and more I think that there are certain things that one is supposed to do in life and one of those in my life was to study Portuguese. It shaped my military career and my subsequent career as a civilian. The small size of the department appealed to me. I had always had an interest in Brazil, possibly I was influenced by my father's stamp collection. One of his favorite acquisitions was a set of Brazilian "Bull's Eyes". I grew up liking Brazilian stamps and thinking a little bit about Brazil so I said, "Why not Portuguese?"

Q: I was just wondering whether...in the Foreign Service sometimes the calculation is made...OK, all my colleagues are going after Russian this or that, why don't I take Serbian. That gives me a leg up on a specific and I can hack out a little room...was this at all the feeling with those taking Portuguese at the time, or was this just a requirement?

BRINTNALL: I wish that I could say that this was a calculated decision and I weighed all those things. But I really didn't.

Q: Well, (laughs) I think this is true of all of us, but I like to ask the question. You graduated in 1958, is that correct?

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BRINTNALL: Yes. Then I was commissioned in the Signal Corps. We had our choice of first assignments. We couldn't pick an actual unit but we could pick a theater—we could pick Korea, Germany, or the US, and I picked Germany because I wanted to go overseas immediately. I had always enjoyed traveling. I was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Signal Corps and went to Darmstadt, Germany.

Q: Where were you stationed in Darmstadt? I was at the Cambrai-Frisch Kaserne...

BRINTNALL: I was too!

Q: I was in the Air Force Security Service. I used to sit and listen to the Soviets. This was back in 1953 or something like that.

BRINTNALL: The plumbing was probably even worse by the time I got there in 1960! It was interesting. It was a nice place to be stationed. Darmstadt was a delightful town.

Q: When one goes into the Signal Corps in the late 1950's, what does one do? What type of work?

BRINTNALL: I was assigned to the 32nd Signal Battalion. It supported V Corps with hi frequency and very high frequency radio, communications center, and wire communications. In those days, we were involved in a lot of maneuvers...a lot of exercises. We spent a great deal of time in the field. It was a great place to learn. The first assignment, first time out with one's own troops. And it was serious. We were looking at the Soviets across the border in our Corps area. We took our security very seriously. We took our communications very seriously. We felt that one of those alerts would be the real thing and that we would be off to war.

Q: What was the impression of the Soviet military threat at this time?

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BRINTNALL: We saw them as a very strong army...a very strong military threat. And, we saw ourselves as trying to contain a break-through if they decided to attack. But we probably gave them credit for being a little stronger than they were. I had very little contact with the Russians but one contact was interesting. We had been briefed by the Battalion Intelligence Officer on what to do if we encountered a Soviet Liaison Mission vehicle. The Soviets had teams in West Germany and we had teams in East Germany, each watching the other's military activities. These teams were allowed on the main roads but not in the maneuver areas. Well, the intelligence briefing did not make a distinction between main roads and maneuver areas. I saw a Soviet vehicle, gave chase, and was finally able to stop him. I then reported this by radio to my headquarters. While waiting for help, I tried to engage the Russian in conversation, but he didn't want to talk. Finally, an American Colonel arrived by helicopter. "What are you doing lieutenant?" he asked. I explained my instructions and what had happened and was sent on my way. Of course, the briefing had not been correct and I had no authority to stop the Russian on a main road. Subsequent briefings were more precise. The sad thing about this was that the Russians probably felt that this was something premeditated and one of our liaison mission people may have suffered as a consequence.

Q: I am sure...it was very much tit for tat.

BRINTNALL: I am very sorry about that. But at the time, it was great fun for a second lieutenant.

Q: How long were you with the V Corps?

BRINTNALL: For 2 # years but also during this period I was assigned on temporary duty to lead a mobile communications team to Iran. It was at the time of the Shah. I was there for four months.

Q: What were you doing there?

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BRINTNALL: I and two communications NCOs (non-commissioned officers). We were instructors to the Iranian Army on the operation and maintenance of an Air-Ground Forward Air Controllers Radio System.

Q: What was your impression of the Iranian Army at that time?

BRINTNALL: Well, that's difficult to answer. I had no contact with any Iranian combat forces and dealt only with communications personnel. Also, I found it very hard to get to know the Iranians. It's one of the few places I've been in the world where I've left no friends. It was difficult to penetrate beneath their skin , as much as I tried...I had acquaintances and we talked about this and that but I left no friends there. I did learn something about the military hierarchy and pleasing the boss, however. The Army liked its new radio system and decided it should be briefed to the Shah during his attendance at the Army's Military Academy graduation. I believed I would do the briefing, and to liven it up I contacted the Iranian Air Force who agreed to have a plane in the air for the Shah to communicate with using the new radio. Of course, they were more than happy to join this Army event. When the Iranian Army heard about my plans, they canceled the aircraft and an Army General made the presentation. At least, I was able to see the Shah as he passed.

Q: Well, my experience with bureaucracy is that as soon as that syndrome works...get higher...the less and less information gets imparted because it is usually the First or Second Lieutenant who knows what the system is about and as the translation gets up to the General, I mean they get a little bit foggy about what they are up to. After your time with the 5th Corps, where did you go?

BRINTNALL: Back to the United States. But I should say at this point that while at West Point, long before I graduated, I wanted to become involved in political-military affairs. I didn't know how I was going to do it but I decided that this was the sort of career direction I was going to take. While I was in Germany, I researched the regulations and I found a

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program, the Foreign Area Specialists Program, that would provide me an opportunity to alternate command and staff assignments with those in political-military affairs. I applied for the Program while I was still in Germany.

Q: What was the feeling...I know here at the Foreign Service Institute that when Foreign Service Officers come along there's always the scuttle-butt that this is the "good" career path...this is not...this path is too limited or something like that. What was the feeling about Military Attach#s at West Point?

BRINTNALL: Not a good career path. Definitely not. But it is what I wanted to do, and I was prepared to retire as a lieutenant colonel if need be. It was something I really wanted to do. I certainly didn't pick this path to become a general.

Q: I remember, I grew up in Annapolis and connected to the Navy and Naval Intelligence was always considered not a good...again, this was not the way to really move ahead. I mean, you had to fly or be in charge of guns or ships. One or the other.

BRINTNALL: That's as it should be. Sometimes we forget the reason we have an armed force...an Army, a Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps. The job of the armed forces is to defend our country, to keep peace and, when called on by the nation's duly constituted leadership, to fight....to break things and hurt people. It's not to be a social experiment. Those who become the Army's senior leaders should come from the combat arms. This is only proper.

Q: So what happened after you found out that there was a program?

BRINTNALL: Well, I applied... was very, very junior to apply, but I did. I returned to the States and attended the Signal Officer Advanced Course at Fort Mammoth, NJ and then received orders to report to the 82nd Airborne Division at Ft Bragg, NC. But before that happened I was diverted to new STRIKE Command (the newly forming unified command) at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. The STRIKE Command was formed to be the

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“fire brigade” for the United States. It was to be able to go anywhere, anytime and fight in any sort of a war. I was assigned to the Command's Communications Support Element.

Q: You were in the STRIKE Command from when to when?

BRINTNALL: From 1961-1962, for one-and-one-half years.

Q: Where was the STRIKE Command looking...where did you see as a potential place that they were going to dump you?

BRINTNALL: Well, we came very close to going into Cuba. I was married in October of 1962. My boss was very reluctant to give me the time off. I said, “I'd like two weeks of leave” and he told me to take a couple of days. I told him it was to be a very big wedding...it was in New York and the bride's parents were going to considerable expense and effort to provide a very nice wedding. It required planning and a fixed date. Finally, he said I could have the leave. On October 6, 1962 I was married to Janice Ellen O'Neill at a ceremony in Bronxville, New York.

We had a short honeymoon. On the way to Florida via Sea Island, Georgia I stopped at the Pentagon to ask about my assignment to the Foreign Area Specialist Program. The officer-in-charge of the program, a colonel, said, “What do you think about Africa?” I thought about my new bride out in the car and I said, “Africa is very nice, but I'd rather stick to my first three choices, China, the Soviet Union and Brazil.” Any way, I turned down Africa and continued south. When we arrive at MacDill Air Force Base, I took my new bride to my very, very small one-bedroom apartment...with one closet. She asked, “Where am I to hang my clothes?” Obviously, I hadn't thought of that as the only closet was full of uniforms. She was very understanding and we bought a clothes rack.

We had only been there for a week, and we had only been married two weeks, when I came home for lunch and I said, “I'm sorry...but I have to leave” and began packing my bag. My wife thought I was kidding. I wasn't. I left along with the men available from my

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unit — the majority was out on an exercise — and loaded up our equipment and drove to the unit's alternate command post in Cross City, Florida. I was the senior officer present. That night MacDill Air Force Base almost sank under the weight of the aircraft that were flown in from other bases. This was October 1962 and it looked like we were about to invade Cuba. I assumed that STRIKE Command would be the command element and that the Communications Support Element would provide the headquarters' communications. When we got to the alternate command post we watched the TV closely and hoped that if there were an invasion, we would go.

Q: But as a briefing, what would they tell you?

BRINTNALL: They weren't telling us very much. We were told that Cuba was the target and we were told the sort of communications we were to provide, but there were no detailed briefings, nor had we gotten the maps showing us where we would operate. Later we learned that the mission had been assigned to the XVIII Airborne Corps. Of course, no one went to Cuba.

Q: Well, then..where to after that?

BRINTNALL: At that point I received the word that I had been accepted into the Foreign Area Specialist Program for Brazil. It became obvious to me that the fact that I had studied Portuguese at West Point was the deciding factor of my being picked for the Brazilian program. I was very happy and very, very excited. Then it was off to the Army Language School for six months of language training.

Q: This was at Monterey?

BRINTNALL: Yes. Monterey.

Q: I was there too...in Russian...back in 1951.

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BRINTNALL: My class was the last graduating class of the Army Language School. That year it became the Defense Language Institute. I was there for six months and then sent to the University of Arizona for nine months for a Master's Degree. Finally, it was on to Brazil.

Q: What were you getting from your teachers at the Army Language School and also from your reading and all? In the first place, were you pointed toward Brazil? Or was it Portugal or Brazil or Africa?

BRINTNALL: Everyone in the class was pointed towards Brazil. We had an instructor from Portugal and two from Brazil.

Q: What were you getting...sort of scuttle-butt from Brazil at that time...1962, 1963? What were you hearing about Brazil?

BRINTNALL: We were there to learn Portuguese and we took it very seriously. The instructors were not comfortable talking about Brazilian politics and the unrest there, and we pretty much stuck to our language study.

Q: How about when you went to Arizona to study?

BRINTNALL: I was so involved in trying to complete a Master's Degree in nine months that I did not have much time to accompany the events in Brazil. But I did as much as possible. I was also watching the unrest in Panama. That's when the students tore down the American flags...in the Canal Zone. But the main focus was on completing the degree requirements.

Q: Did you go to Brazil after?

BRINTNALL: Yes. Brazil.

Q: You were in Brazil this time from when to when?

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BRINTNALL: July of 1964 until December of 1965.

Q: What was your job when you got there? I mean, what was an attach#...at your level?

BRINTNALL: I wasn't an attach#. My job was to learn as much about Brazil as I could in one year. It was a marvelous assignment. I had absolutely no responsibilities other than to travel and study. My new wife was happy to be there too. We had no children. One of the things I wanted to do was to attend the Brazilian Army Command and General Staff College, which my predecessors had done. But the Army, in its wisdom, decided that the program should be kept to one year only. And since I arrived in July, and the course began in January, I would not have been able to complete a full academic year. As a consequence, I spent my time in travel, study at two universities, and teaching English part time at the Command and General Staff College.

Q: Where were you living?

BRINTNALL: In Rio de Janeiro...and I had the great good fortune to have a boss, then Colonel Vernon Anthony Walters who was the Defense Attach#.

Q: We will come back to him obviously. But what were you finding in Brazil, as you traveled around in those days, of Brazilian society, the politics, the dynamics of the country?

BRINTNALL: I was busy trying to learn about so many Brazils. There was the Brazil of the Amazon. There was the northeast. There was the Brazil of the south. There was the political Brazil of Rio de Janeiro, and of course, there was the dynamic state of Sao Paulo. There was considerable unrest...this was just after the March 1964 revolution. I was enrolled in the Catholic University and the Federal University in Rio de Janeiro...two very different universities. I found a great deal of antipathy towards America and Americans at that time. This was July and the revolution had taken place only three months earlier. There was a lot of unrest. A lot of labor unrest. There was resentment from the left against

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the military government, but most Brazilians were relieved to have the military take over and end the disorder. I didn't feel so much of it at Catholic University which was pretty much business-as-usual. Classes went on uninterrupted. But at Federal University there were strikes. The professors would show up...they wouldn't show up...the students would show, they wouldn't show...I felt a great deal of resentment and anger towards me at that time.

Q: Did you get the feeling that there was an agreement or collusion of the United States with the military coup or not?

BRINTNALL: Sometimes. Some saw a heavy US involvement. And some didn't. But they didn't like me as an American. They particularly didn't like me as a military officer.

Q: Of course, this did come up. An American military officer was killed, wasn't he? On just such an assignment as yours?

BRINTNALL: Yes. In 1968. I believe his name was Chandler, Captain Chuck Chandler, an Olmstead Scholar studying in Sao Paulo. But it was interesting to take part in the university life and observe the students. One day I was present for the assumption of class officers at Catholic University. The President got up and gave an impassioned speech about what he was going to do, and the Vice President did the same. Finally, it was the secretary's turn, a freshman. But she didn't speak. She went to the front of the room and wrote on the blackboard..."and now let's go to the beach." (laughs) It was Friday. That was true of demonstrations, as well. The student demonstrators were serious about their marches down the broad avenues of Getulio Vargas and Rio Branco, during the week, but the gorgeous beaches of Rio de Janeiro called on the weekends. The demonstrations could be put off until Monday.

Q: How did you see the role of the United States at that time in Brazil?

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BRINTNALL: The United States had a very strong presence at that time. It exercised a great deal of influence. The military presence was really too strong. During World War II, we had established a joint military commission in Brazil. But even before that we had a Naval Mission that predated World War II...1922. In 1964, there were still three US general and flag rank officers in the Military Commission, representing the Army, Navy and Air Force. This was in addition to the military attach#s. Later on Colonel Walters would be promoted to brigadier general. So really the US military presence was overwhelming. We can get into this a little bit later, but we should have begun to down-size...reduce the presence as soon as World War II was over. I believe our hosts were beginning to resent our large presence. We occupied the top floor of the Brazilian Army Ministry for example. It was counterproductive to occupy the entire floor, the top floor of the Ministry.

Q: Did you deal with our Attach#s who were there at all?

BRINTNALL: The Army Attach# was responsible for overseeing our activities. I traveled a great deal to get to know the country. In fact, I traveled to every state and territory. General Walters loved to travel. We took a trip down the San Francisco River with Mrs. Lincoln Gordon — the Ambassador was in the US and could not go. We traveled from Brasilia to Belem when the road was only a clearing, just a cut in the Amazon jungle. It was an adventure that few Brazilians could understand our taking. Yes, there was a great deal of contact with our attach#s, particularly General Walters. We all learned a great deal from him.

Q: What about the...while you were doing this did you have much contact with the Brazilian military?

BRINTNALL: Yes, as much as possible. That was one of the principal reasons we were there. To learn about the Brazilian Armed Forces. I made it a point to get to know as many military officers as I could, and I developed friendships that I treasure to this day. One of my activities was to teach English at the Command and General Staff College. I made

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a number of friends through this. Selection for the Army Command and General Staff College was critical to one's army career. The graduates went on to positions of ever greater responsibility. I associated myself with the class which graduated in 1967. Many went on to four-star rank, and the current Minister of the Armed Forces is a member of that class. One of my best friends today was a Captain I knew at that time. Yes, I did have a lot of military friends...and still do.

Q: What did you think about the military government that had taken over and about the situation that had caused the military government to take over?

BRINTNALL: Most Brazilians were very much in favor of what had been done. They saw no other solution. They saw the chaos, the strikes, inflation which was reaching an annual rate of 64% per year-which seems pretty modest today. The military didn't go in by themselves. They were asked to come in. Generally when there is a military take-over, it is because the people in the country want them to come in. That was the case in Brazil. They were convinced that they had done the right thing.

Q: Was there...did we see sort of a Communist menace in the country?

BRINTNALL: Absolutely. There was a Communist menace in the eyes of the Brazilian Armed Forces and it was their duty to nip this in the bud and to do everything possible to see that didn't grow in strength.

Q: How were we looking at it? I mean, did we see...I mean there is always a difference between what you might call the Communist menace and to basic social unrest which would come from mal-distribution of wealth or what have you.

BRINTNALL: We must have gone along with the view of the Communist threat because as I recall we were the first government to recognize the new government.

Q: Who was the Ambassador during this?

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BRINTNALL: Lincoln Gordon.

Q: Obviously you weren't sitting at his right hand side, but did you have any contact with him or get any feel on how he ran the Embassy?

BRINTNALL: I was a very junior officer and had little contact with him other than an occasional exchange. He was very respected within the Embassy...for his seriousness, for his knowledge of Brazil, for his knowledge of economic affairs. He was well respected, I believe, both within and outside the embassy.

Q: How about our AID Program? This would be our Alliance for Progress, I guess.

BRINTNALL: AID was massive. In Recife, the AID mission occupied an entire building. The AID Mission was very big and controlled a lot of money. It was a very strong presence.

Q: From the students you were teaching or from the people at the University and all, what was their feeling towards this massive American presence?

BRINTNALL: There was resentment. I think it was seen as too large, too pervasive.

Q: One of the things being this junior sort of in a familiarization tour, you were sort of off from having to implement a program and all, were you feeling any disquiet about the size and pervasiveness at that time, of Americans?

BRINTNALL: No. Those feelings came later. At the time, I just accepted our presence without questioning its size or its mission. That's the way it was.

Q: In working with, I mean, accompanying as part of your familiarization time, accompanying Vernon Walters at that time, what can you tell me...can you tell me anything about how he operated or your impression of his work then?

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BRINTNALL: It was like following in the wake of a large ship. He filled the room. He was totally fluent in Portuguese. He knew everything about Brazil. He was also very, very kind, very thoughtful of his subordinates. For example, he called me one night and said, "Have you met President Castelo Branco?" I answered "No." He said, "Come over to my apartment. I'm having a party and he's here." He would think of his young captains and he would think of his secretaries and he would think of everybody else. He was a marvelous man to work for.

He loved to travel. We borrowed a three-quarter ton truck from the American Geodetic Survey and traveled from Brasilia to Belem. We'd change drivers every half hour because no one wanted to be in the middle since the road was awful and the passenger in the middle had nothing to hang onto. The driver had the steering wheel. General Walters took his turn just like the other two of us. He was simply a marvelous man to work for. And very good at explaining Brazil to others. I had the good fortune to be chosen as an escort officer for Senator Hugh Scott when he came down to the OAS Conference. Frank Church, Hugh Scott and some other Congressmen were there. Then Colonel Walters took them into his office and he began to talk about Brazil. At one point, he took a large map of South America from the wall, drew a heavy line around Brazil and then tipped the map on its side, making a vivid impression on the mind's of his guests of the size of the country. He never seemed to forget a fact or figure. He was a spellbinder.

Q: He of course, had served with the Brazilian Expeditionary Force including Castelo Branco who had been with that force.

BRINTNALL: He formed friendships in battle that have lasted to this day. He was particularly close to Castelo Branco then, and after the war.

Q: I was just wondering because he is almost a phenomenon. Did you find as you were traveling this road, did he absorb knowledge and ask questions of the people he would meet?

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BRINTNALL: Absolutely. And he had a tape recorder and every night he would lie on his bunk and record the impressions of the day. He would observe everything...everything military and everything civilian. He had a great interest in everything that was happening in Brazil. He loved to be with people. I was indeed fortunate to be able to study under him, to watch him and to learn from him. I tried, as he did, not to see Brazil in narrow military terms, but to understand its culture, its economy, its history, its society, its dreams and its aspirations.

Q: Did you get any feel...you weren't in the crucial position at this time, but did you get a feeling that there was a problem between General Walters and Lincoln Gordon? Because the Ambassador and then the somebody bigger than life like Vernon Walters there, I think there could be a problem?

BRINTNALL: He was always very careful to observe the proper protocol. Lincoln Gordon and General Walters had worked together in NATO years before. Lincoln Gordon had asked, the then Colonel Walters, to come to Brazil to be the Attach#. He said at their very first meeting, "Mr. Ambassador, I am your attach#, Colonel Walters." He put himself in the subordinate position immediately. I saw him do this at other times too. One time I introduced him to a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense. He had held positions higher, but referred very respectfully to the DASD as "Mr. Secretary." He was always a gentleman, always courteous.

Q: How did your wife find living here? Was she learning Portuguese and was she involved in things?

BRINTNALL: Absolutely. She enjoyed it thoroughly, was very active with the Brazilian Army wives. She too made friendships that have endured to this day. We were both learning and we learned together, and of, course, occasionally making mistakes along the way. I recall our first dinner party for some new Brazilian friends. We invited five couples from the Staff College to our very, very small apartment. We also invited Colonel Walters.

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He had another engagement but stopped by before dinner. We told him we were going to serve American coffee because the Brazilians might enjoy something different. He told us with utmost tact that was very nice but suggested we offer Brazilian coffee as well. We did (laughs) and no one took the American. We learned a lot in that year.

Q: You left there...I mean this assignment was 1 # years. Then what happened?

BRINTNALL: Then I was sent to Panama. I was assigned to the Headquarters of the United States Southern Command, first as a watch officer and intelligence briefer and then as an intelligence analyst.

Q: This was from when to when?

BRINTNALL: This was from December of 1966 to December of 1968.

Q: What was the situation in Panama as you saw it at that time? You mentioned earlier on there had been riots against some American students...?

BRINTNALL: The situation in Panama was of some, but not major concern. There were several demonstrations while we were there but without serious injury. At times, the gates to Quarry Heights where the headquarters was located had to be closed. Generally, there were no travel restrictions, however.

Did you get a feel for the Americans who lived in the Canal Zone?

BRINTNALL: Many were very isolated. This was generally more true of the civilians than the military. There were some Americans that entered Panama only rarely. It was a comfortable, isolated community. My wife and I enjoyed our Panamanian contacts, and we had Panamanian friends. We were fortunate in that our boss, Brigadier General Ken Skaer, was very active in promoting good US-Panamanian relations. We would go to dances, picnics, outings with Panamanians and thoroughly enjoyed the interaction.

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Q: Southern Command, was this what you had?

BRINTNALL: Southern Command, Headquarters.

Q: What did that cover?

BRINTNALL: It covered the land area of Central and South America. The Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean were under the Atlantic Command in Norfolk, VA. Mexican military relations were handled by the 5th Army in San Antonio, Texas.

Q: What was the Southern Command's major concern during this 1966-1968 period?

BRINTNALL: The major concerns were insurgency and terrorism. Cuba was very active at this time. As you recall Che Guevara turned up in Bolivia during this period. Cuba was actively fostering insurgency in the hemisphere. There were Cuban landings in Venezuela. There was a lot of unrest throughout the hemisphere and it was of considerable concern to the command.

Q: On the Che Guevara thing. Did you get involved at all in some of the teams we sent down to help wrinkle him out?

BRINTNALL: I did. Bolivia was one of my countries of responsibility. I was Bolivia desk officer when Che Guevara first surfaced. I traveled to Bolivia and made several recommendations, one of which was to accelerate the training of the Bolivian Second Ranger Battalion. This training was carried out by Special Forces units in Panama. It was that battalion that was eventually responsible for the capture of Che Guevara.

Q: What sort of training...did we have some American troops on the ground in Bolivia before he arrived?

BRINTNALL: No, but we did have a Military Group as we did in most other South American countries. The MILGP was providing training and equipment. The training by our

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Special Forces was in addition to that provided by the MILGP. The Bolivians decided that their Second Ranger Battalion would take the lead against the Cuban insurgency, and we helped by providing accelerated training.

Q: Did we send some specialists in?

BRINTNALL: Some specialist from Fort Gulick on the Atlantic side of the Isthmus. They were from the Special Forces group stationed there.

Q: What did they do there?

BRINTNALL: They provided Special Forces training for the Ranger Battalion. They didn't go out on patrols with them as far as I know but they provided the training.

Q: When you get these Special Forces and this training, in Latin America at that time, did we make much use of, you might say, the Hispanic cadre of the American Army or was it just "catch as catch can"?

BRINTNALL: The Army didn't have a "Hispanic Cadre" although it had many officers and NCOs with Latin American backgrounds. The Special Forces prided themselves on being language capable for the area in which they were operating. And, yes, we did rely on native Spanish speakers. Not everyone spoke Spanish, but many did.

Q: Was this a period of the Dominican Republic...?

BRINTNALL: Just after. 1964.

Q: Were you getting any reverberations from the Dominican Republic intervention...when we sent our troops in there? In other places was this cause for concern, or happiness...in other Latin American countries?

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BRINTNALL: The Brazilian military...the Brazilians have regretted their decision to go into the Dominican Republic, because this action was in contradiction to their traditional policy of non-intervention. Had they to do it over again I am certain that their decision would be not to participate.

Q: How did that come about? Were you familiar with how we got the Brazilians to go in?

BRINTNALL: No. I don't know who talked to whom or what was said. Our Ambassador was Lincoln Gordon. The Defense Attach# was General Walters and the President of Brazil was Castelo Branco. So, I assume there were some high level conversations involving the three but I don't know what was promised or what was said.

Q: How did we view the Cuban factor in say, Venezuela, where there had been some effort to land munitions and agitators and all? The relative immunity to Castro or lack there of in the area of Latin America at this time.

BRINTNALL: It was serious business. We were concerned. We were concerned as a country. Our foreign policy makers were concerned. And the Southern Command was very concerned and very much involved in helping to train and equip the armed forces of our Latin American friends so they could meet this threat.

Q: Was there any concern about some of the military or not necessarily military...but most of them were military governments in the Southern Command?

BRINTNALL: They were.

Q: Was there concern about this manifestation within Latin America at that time or was it just sort of "this is the way it is"?

BRINTNALL: No. There was concern. But the concern was over-ridden...you're talking about concern for Democracy?

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Q: Yes.

BRINTNALL: It was there and there was a strong concern for human rights, although not as much as we have today, but there was concern. But overriding this was what to do about the Cuban and Soviet threats.

Q: Were we seeing the Cubans as sort of Cuban Communists or were we seeing them as a tool of the Soviet Union?

BRINTNALL: We saw the Cubans as a tool of the Soviet Union. We didn't begin to look at the Cubans as having an independent foreign policy. They were a tool of the Soviets who maintained their influence until their departure. Then they began to become more independent. But we looked upon them very much as a tool of the Soviets.

Q: Were there any other sort of, at that time, that you all were looking to see weak spots? Not ones that necessarily turned out to be but were there countries that were of particular concern to the Southern Command?

BRINTNALL: Yes, Central America. And you recall, they were killing Americans at that time. The MILGP Commander in Guatemala, Colonel John Webber, was assassinated. There was a Navy commander, also assigned to the MILGP, who was killed in Guatemala. Our Ambassador, Gordon Mein was killed by terrorists. At the same time, Ambassador Elbrick in Brazil was kidnaped. So there was a very serious security concern. And with good reason.

Q: Was the Southern Command poised to do anything? You really didn't have enough...I mean you were just a command in being, weren't you?

BRINTNALL: That's right. It was a headquarters...but there was a brigade in Panama assigned to the Command. This brigade was prepared to help defend the Panama Canal if necessary, in case of a problem there. But the Southern Command's mission was

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principally to oversee the training and equipment of the Latin American Armed Forces so that our Latin American friends could better defend themselves.

Q: With the MILGP...how did you find...later I mentioned you got more involved, but at this time was there any feeling that it was hard to recruit more senior officers to go to MILGP because the Vietnam War was beginning to crank up and this was where you move ahead. And Latin America is off to one side and NATO is the big enchilada, you might say. Was there a problem in getting good officers to perform, to work in Latin America?

BRINTNALL: There was a problem, I believe, in getting good officers to volunteer to go to Latin America. Of course, you could always get a good officer to go by simply assigning him. The ones who were volunteering, the ones that wanted to come back, were the Foreign Area Specialists. These were the Captains, Majors, Lt. Colonel's...who had trained and studied so that they could continue to work in the region. These were the ones that wanted to come back and actively sought MILGP or attach# duty. But at the time, there were very few senior officers in this category. Generally, it was not a desirable assignment for most combat arms officers.

Q: Were you feeling, sort of was the Southern Command beginning to feel the pressure of the Vietnam involvement as far as equipment, attention, the whole thing?

BRINTNALL: Not so much because...it wasn't as bad as it was in Germany where they were taking the NCOs and captains and lieutenants from the units and sending them to Vietnam. Since there were very few military units, as such, in the Southern Command, we didn't feel the same pressures that they did in Europe.

Q: Again, during the 1966-1968 period, what were sort of the...where the MILGPs were, what were sort of the great examples of how it was working and the not so great examples:

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BRINTNALL: Well, Bolivia worked well. So did Venezuela. In fact, I believe that the Southern Command did well in most countries of the hemisphere. There was always a problem for SOUTHCOM in working with Brazil, however. The Brazilians believed that they should work directly with Washington. They never accepted the idea of working through an intermediary. Most of SOUTHCOM's Commanding Generals had a difficult time accepting this. It was nearly always a bone of contention. Also in Brazil, there were too many senior officers.

Q: Was it that they couldn't retire their officers, is that it?

BRINTNALL: No, I am referring to US senior officers. We should have pulled out our flag rank officers and reduced the size of the Military Commission long before. In Venezuela, they did very well in the training and equipping. The MILGPs in Central America, by and large, were doing a good job in training the host armies to fight the Cuban subversion that was so active at that time. One thing that didn't go well was often the relations between the attach# and the MILGP. They were separate entities. We really still haven't resolved this totally. In some cases we have consolidated so the senior defense representative handles both attach# and security assistance duties. The MILGP personnel saw themselves as the friends of the country. They were there to help train and equip. Some looked upon the attach#s as spies. That is patent nonsense. The attach# are not spies. They are military observers and report on military things, just as the economic and political counselors are observers and report on economic and political events. Both the MILGPs and attach#s are there to serve the interests of the United States and both take their direction from the US Ambassador. As for the reporting, I believe that the better we understand each others' capabilities and intentions, the better off we are. Had the Argentines and British done a better job of this, the Falklands war might have been avoided.

Q: This is an endemic problem, I think. Also, those that are sort of reporting and those that are really out there with the troops really working away I guess it's that split too.

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BRINTNALL: You'd have someone in the MILGP saying "I can't tell you that because you're an attach#! That is nonsense.

Q: Were there any countries where, not because of our military groups there but just because of the military structure where this is not a very good Army to work with or something like that. Were there ones that weren't very good?

BRINTNALL: Obviously, some were better than others. The Brazilian Army was far more professional than its smaller neighbors. But that was neither here nor there. The job was to do our best to assist in the training and equipping. We weren't there to make judgements on whether or not we should work with them. We were there to help them.

Q: How about Chile? The Armed Forces in Chile became quite important later on but what was the situation during this 1966-1968 period?

BRINTNALL: The Chilean Armed Forces have always been very professional. Relations were good. We had a good MILGP there. Very good military personnel.

Q: How about Argentina? Because Argentina has always looked more towards Europe than towards the States. Did we have a MILGP there?

BRINTNALL: We had a MILGP there. Argentina of course, today, is looking to the United States and not so much towards Europe. This has been true ever since the Falklands/Malvinas War. But that time it was looking more towards Europe.

Q: Were there any sort of incidents or problems that you can recall during this time?

BRINTNALL: Well, recall a 1968 on a trip around South America with General Porter, the Commander-in-Chief of the Southern Command. While we were on the trip there was a military coup Argentina, and there was a military coup in Bolivia. As the situation in Panama became ominous. General Porter said, "I think it's time to go home" (to Panama).

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Q: Were people beginning to chart his course and say "What is he doing?"

BRINTNALL: I recall he knew his capabilities and the limitations of what he could do and what he couldn't do. I was the intelligence watch officer one night and I received a message that there had been a military takeover in a South American country. It was about 10:00 p.m. I called General Porter at his quarters and said, "General, may I come over and see you. I have some news about a military coup." He said "Yes". He met me at the door in his bathrobe. When I told him what had happened, he looked at me and said, "There's not much we can do about it tonight, is there?" And I said, "No, sir", and he said "Goodnight." (laughs) He was a man who had his priorities straight.

Q: Did you find that you were ever getting involved with the Command between the Armed Forces where, you know, there is still a lot of unresolved border disputes?

BRINTNALL: Less and less but they are still there.

Q: They are still there and at that time did this ever cause any difficulties for us?

BRINTNALL: No. We tried to be very, very careful. Very even-handed. For example, if we were thinking of providing a weapons system for Venezuela we would weigh how it would effect Columbia. The same for Brazil, Argentina and Chile. We were always very careful to try not to exacerbate relations or to favor one side over another.

Q: Was this still the period where we were still trying to keep jet fighter aircraft out of Latin America?

BRINTNALL: It was. The F-5 was the first one and that was to go to Brazil. The policy was arrogant and very, very short sighted.

Q: It just didn't make much sense. But, could you explain the rationale?

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BRINTNALL: Well, the F-5 s produced principally for export. It was sub-sonic, relatively inexpensive, not difficult to maintain and it was not designed to fly long distances. It could achieve supersonic speed in level flight if the aircraft was completely stripped of external weapons and fuel tanks. But since it could reach supersonic speeds, although just barely, the US Congress determined that it was a “sophisticated weapons system” and could not be exported to Latin America. This decision was made in 1968. So here we have a relatively low-performance aircraft that the Brazilian Air Force wanted to buy. Their current inventory was very, very old and had to be replaced for safety's sake. Its range was limited so that it could not be used against any of Brazil's neighbors. It appeared to those of us working the issue to be an ideal aircraft for their purposes, and not one that would upset the weapons balance in the region. The Brazilian alternative was to buy the French Mirage, a far more formidable aircraft that could carry more weapons and fly greater distances.. We fought this battle and finally received approval to go ahead with the sale. They bought the planes, but then we told them that they couldn't have everything that was supposed to go with them. Instead of garnering good will, we sowed resentment and distrust. It was not a wise policy decision in my mind.

Q: Where was this coming out of? The State Department?

BRINTNALL: From the Congress.

Q: In 1968, where did you go?

BRINTNALL: In 1969 I returned to the US for a course at Ft. Holabird, MD and then was sent to Vietnam.

Q: Holabird being what?

BRINTNALL: The Intelligence US Army School.

Q: You were pretty well into the Intelligence side by that time.

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BRINTNALL: Yes. In fact, I transferred from the Signal Corps to the Intelligence branch because it seemed more compatible with what I wanted to do in Political Military Affairs.

Q: You were in Vietnam from when to when?

BRINTNALL: July of 1969 to July of 1970.

Q: Where were you serving?

BRINTNALL: I served with the First Cavalry Division. I was the Intelligence Company Commander for the Division.

Q: Where were they located?

BRINTNALL: At that time the headquarters was in Phouc Vinh, north of Saigon. It was positioned to block the approaches from Cambodia.

Q: When you got to Vietnam in 1969-1970, how did you see the military situation? What was your impression? The Tet Offensive had taken place in 1968 and so here you were in this particular period.

BRINTNALL: I was a little bit puzzled. I knew what our Division was trying to do, but I didn't really understand the overall objective, exactly what we were doing there. However, I was a new Major and I thought that maybe I wasn't supposed to understand. At any rate, I was too busy to spend much time in introspection. Half way through the tour I decided to resign from the Army, effective at the end of my tour in Vietnam. Later I withdrew the request, but I was still troubled.

Q: What type of work were you doing?

BRINTNALL: We provided the tactical intelligence for the First Cavalry Division and its three brigades. The Division had 345 helicopters and was a formidable fighting force, a

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superb unit. I had detachments stationed with the Division's three brigades. We provided tactical order of battle, imagery interpretation, counter intelligence and prisoner of war interrogation.

Q: What was your impression at that time of the enemy presence in Vietnam, of both regular line troops and the Viet Cong? How were we seeing the forces arrayed against you.?

BRINTNALL: Obviously, they were very tough and they were very good. We had respect for the units. Particularly the regular army units.

Q: Were you seeing at that time that the Viet Cong had pretty much shot its bolt?

BRINTNALL: No. I didn't see that it had shot its bolt. I saw it as a very active enemy that was continuing its efforts to defeat the South Vietnamese and American forces.

Q: How about the ARVN? The Army of the Republic of Vietnam? What were you getting both from your own views and also from the commanders who were dealing with the ARVAN?

BRINTNALL: I was a little disappointed. I had expected that after all those years of fighting they would be better than they were.

Q: This is a time when we were beginning to draw back as far as our participation...

BRINTNALL: The emphasis was on the "Vietnamization" of the war, something we probably should be doing since the beginning. This was President Nixon's plan to get us out of the war and turn it over to our Vietnamese allies.

Q: Did you find a change in the tempo of what the First Calvary was doing?

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BRINTNALL: Yes. I was told that it did not enjoy the high tempo of operations that it had when it was in the North, but it was still very active. At this time there was much greater emphasis on working with and training the South Vietnamese counterparts, but the patrolling, the fighting and the casualties continued.

Q: How about the American Troops? Were you beginning to see the problems that developed later on of moral and discipline?

BRINTNALL: There were problems, yes. For us, they were not overwhelming problems. The First Cavalry Division was an absolutely first-rate unit and did not have some of the problems that affected other units. But were there morale and disciplinary problems? Yes.

Q: Were you there during the bombing incursions into Cambodia at that time? Did you get involved in that?

BRINTNALL: I was there but was not involved, either directly or indirectly.

Q: You were fairly close to it weren't you?

BRINTNALL: Fairly close, yes, but I really was not aware of it.

Q: It wasn't discussed at the briefings?

BRINTNALL: No. I don't recall our actions in Cambodia ever being covered in the regular briefings.

Q: It, after Tet, it was another of those defining moments. I know. I was Consul General in Saigon at the time and I thought well, goodnight. I thought this might do something to break up North Vietnamese's bases of supply. But obviously it was too complex for us to go in and out in such a hurry. Well, you left Vietnam when in 1970?

BRINTNALL: July of 1970.

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Q: We left the same time. What did you think about whither Vietnam when you left?

BRINTNALL: I was uneasy. I didn't know whither Vietnam. I knew that things weren't going right militarily, politically or economically. I didn't know what to do about it but I had left Vietnam and began to think about other things.

Q: Had you already submitted a resignation? And how does this work in the Army...do they try to talk you out of it at the time?

BRINTNALL: No. They just..there was a lot of turmoil at the time with a lot of people coming and going. Just before my departure I thought better of it and said well, I'll continue on.

Q: Where did you go then?

BRINTNALL: I went to the Armed Forces Staff College.

Q: Where was this?

BRINTNALL: In Norfolk, VA. Following the six month course I was assigned to the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the Military Secretary to the US Delegation of the American Defense Board, the US Delegation to the Joint US-Brazil Defense Commission, and the Joint US-Mexico Military Commission.

Q: You were doing that from when to when?

BRINTNALL: 1971-1974.

Q: What were these two Brazilian and Mexican Missions?

BRINTNALL: They had been established during World War II. We have already discussed the counterpart military commission in Brazil. The Commissions gave the Brazilians and

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the Mexicans a direct line to the United States Government and our Armed Forces. They were established to oversee our military initiatives with these two key countries; Mexico because of its border and Brazil because of its resources, its industry and its relative proximity to Africa, the route from Recife in Brazil's Northeast and Dakar. Brazil was known as the springboard to Africa.

Q: Was the Mexican one just to make the Mexican feel happy as opposed to the Brazilian one which was much more of a working thing?

BRINTNALL: There was much more going on with Brazil, but the Mexican Commission was involved with the training equipping of the Mexican Air Force 202nd Squadron that went to the Pacific. By the time I arrived the two Washington Commissions were largely ceremonial.

Q: Did you get any feel for the Mexican military at this time? The Mexican military seems to be one that has maintained quite a low profile over the years as opposed to almost every other Latin American country.

BRINTNALL: That is true. There was never a military takeover. They were very modestly trained and equipped. We had good relations, but they were careful to maintain their distance. They wanted to maintain their independence. They would not accept a military mission in Mexico. In fact, the US trainers for the 202nd Squadron were sent to Mexico in civilian clothes at the request of Mexico.

Q: Since the Mexican were sort of sitting out there, were they getting military training anywhere else? Because I mean after all, they hadn't been fighting a war and yet a bunch of other countries had been fighting a war and this is how you acquire knowledge...by going out to people who have been doing that sort of thing.

BRINTNALL: No. Not really. Our relations were generally good, and we did provide training and equipment, but it was on Mexican terms. Again, they wished to maintain

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their distance from the US. The issue of sovereignty was always paramount. The level of cooperation did not come close that we had with the Brazilians.

Q: When you were working with the Brazilians at this particular time did you see any, did you sense any change in the relationship with the United States, that you were getting or was it pretty much the same?

BRINTNALL: It was cooling a little bit. My personal relationships were still very strong but the official relationships tended to be more "correct". They were not publicly embracing us at the time.

Q: Had Vietnam played any factor as you saw, in the Latin American equation with the United States?

BRINTNALL: No. They saw it as our war. The military were, very curious to know about the war, and they were respectful of those of us who had served in Vietnam. But they regarded it very much as our war. It was not something that effected them in any way, nor were they terribly concerned about the politics of the war.

Q: There weren't really much in the way of student government protests against what we were doing?

BRINTNALL: No. Not really. This didn't involve them. They had other things to worry about.

Q: When did you finish there?

BRINTNALL: 1974.

Q: Where to?

BRINTNALL: After that it was back to Brazil to be the Assistant Army Attach#.

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Q: You were in Brazil from when to when?

BRINTNALL: July of 1974 until July of 1977.

Q: So this was the first time you were there as a full fledged...

BRINTNALL: Full fledged assistant attach#.

Q: What was your, what did you see the role of a military attach# in a friendly country as?

BRINTNALL: Well, first I'd like to say that by then the Embassy had moved to Brasilia. I was in Rio de Janeiro sitting at the desk of General Walters overlooking Guanabara Bay on the seventh floor of the old American Embassy. My boss, the Army Attach# and the Ambassador, were a long way away in Brasilia. It was a marvelous job in one of the most beautiful cities in the world. My job was threefold: to serve as the representative of the Chief of Staff of the US Army; to inform the US Army what was happening militarily in the country; and to provide advice and assistance to the Ambassador, specifically in this case, the Consul general and his staff .

Q: What was the political situation in Brazil in 1974-1976 period?

BRINTNALL: Initially it was fairly quiet. But bubbling up was the Brazil-Federal Republic of Germany nuclear accord which came to a head with the US Administration in 1977. During this same time, Human Rights became a major issue in Brazil-US bilateral relations. We got a preview of the nuclear issue through President-elect Carter's Playboy interview on the subject. Ambassador Crimmins could sense the storm brewing.

Q: Could you explain what this was about?

BRINTNALL: Brazil needed new sources of power. It already was embarked on the largest hydro-electric facility in the world at Itaipu on the Paraguayan border, but it need additional energy to grow. To meet this demand it signed an agreement with the FRG valued at up

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to \$10 billion. You may recall, this was the time of the long gasoline lines. There was a shortage of petroleum and Brazil opted for nuclear power.

Q: We're talking of gas lines...of there being a shortage of gas.

BRINTNALL: And Brazil wanted its own independent source of power. It didn't want to be dependent upon anybody else and it didn't produce enough petroleum itself to provide for this independence. It wanted the source of power that the major powers were adopting at that time. But nuclear controls were about to become a cornerstone of US foreign policy, and the US was concerned with safeguards.

Q: Safeguards meaning what?

BRINTNALL: What would be done with the spent fuel? Would it provide Brazil with the means to manufacture nuclear weapons? How would the US be assured that this fuel would be properly stored? The US came out strongly, and publicly against the accord. First, we appealed to Germany and were rebuffed. Next, we appealed to Brazil and were turned down publicly, and in no uncertain terms. I recall that Warren Christopher came to Brasilia at that time to appeal to the Brazilian Government....am I jumping ahead?

Q: Go on:

BRINTNALL: Mr. Christopher came to town, to Brasilia to appeal to the Brazilians to give up this purchase from the Germans. He was very poorly received. As I recall he returned that same night after no agreement. The next thing that happened was an announcement by the Government of Brazil that our Military Accords signed in 1952 were no longer operative. They said that the US had unilaterally altered the terms of the accords by requiring a human rights report on all countries receiving security assistance.

Let me say here that a number of factors came into play. First, they were furious over our public attacks on the nuclear accord with the FRG. Next, the Government of Brazil,

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particularly the military, was unhappy with the Carter Administration's high visibility stance on human rights. Finally, there was the size and composition of the US military presence that had been bothering the military leadership for some time. But the abrogation of our military agreements came as quite a shock. The human rights reporting requirement and the nuclear issue provided the excuse to break the accords. I suspect that they had been looking for some time for a reason to do this.

Q: This happened in 1977. Were you there when it happened?

BRINTNALL: I was indeed.

Q: What did this mean? This must have been sort of like an earthquake in your specialty.

BRINTNALL: Oh, absolutely. It was a bombshell, a great surprise.

Q: What did this actually...did this stop American presence there?

BRINTNALL: It certainly pared it down to a bare minimum, and in a hurry. But in reality, by that time there was simply no justification for the size and high rank in the Military Mission. Military sales were way down, as was military training.

Q: How did this impact on your job?

BRINTNALL: It made it very interesting. I found that Brazilians, being Brazilian, my personal relationships didn't suffer at all. My relationships continued with my personal friends. But institutionally, I wasn't allowed to travel to places where heretofore I had traveled without restriction. I was even limited in my contacts at the Army Command and General Staff College and the Superior War School. So while the institution doors were nearly closed, my personal relationship continued.

Q: Sort of going back to the 1974-1977 when you got there, what type of work were you doing? Can you describe a typical month or week?

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BRINTNALL: I would visit as many military units and talk with as many officers as I could every day. I tried to find out...to inform myself what the Brazilians were thinking. What was the mood...how do they view the United States? How could we improve our relations? What initiatives could I suggest to further closer ties? For example I spent a lot of time promoting exchanges with the Superior War College, and finding speakers for the Command and General Staff College. So, it was really basically two things. What is going on in Brazil and what could be done to make things better?.

Q: One of the things that always seems to occur, often when there is a coup, sort of a Nasser or a Qadhafi or what have you, sort of catches us somewhat by surprise as well as the government where the coup takes place. Because it happens at the sort of Lt. Colonel or Major levels. Sometimes even lower down. And the normal thing is well, who can get out and talk to the Majors and Lt. Colonels. I mean, was this...not because of Brazil but was this part of the attach# thing...trying to get into the mind of the "coup-prone" officers?

BRINTNALL: Sure. Just like the political and economic counselors try to cover their areas of responsibility throughout a country, the attach# does the same in the military area. I attempted to know as many officers of all ranks that I could.

Q: But could you have frank discussions with mid-level officers?

BRINTNALL: Oh, absolutely. And frequently.

Q: Did you get any difference of feeling between them as to how they looked at the world and how the generals looked at the world?

BRINTNALL: Clearly there was a generational difference. There was also a difference in the altitudes of those who had been to the United States and those who had not. Less and less were coming to the United States for training and orientation. Just because someone knows you doesn't mean they are going to like you. but at least if they know you, they are going to understand you and they are less likely to do something antagonistic just based

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upon feelings. But there's a good chance that feelings will take over if they don't know you. The exchanges are important for both countries.

Q: When we were looking at the Brazilian Army during this period, was it pointed towards anywhere or was it more just an internal engine of stability?

BRINTNALL: It was always pointed to some degree to Argentina. There was always some concern about the Argentines. Less concern with it's other neighbors...but there were border concerns. There was also great concern over maintaining a presence in the Amazon...and in making sure the Amazon was kept for the Brazilians. There was concern that a vacuum there would be filled by foreign powers. But the bulk of the military force was located in the South.

Q: What was the concern with Argentina?

BRINTNALL: It has always been a concern. Political and economic rivalry over the years. No other neighbor was capable of mounting a military threat. This is not to say that the Brazilian and Argentine Armed Forces did not get along. They did.

Q: Were the Brazilians going for military equipment elsewhere at this point?

BRINTNALL: Yes. They were. They had French Mirage aircraft, for example. They were building frigates with the Germans. They were building submarines with the Germans. One, they didn't want to be totally dependent upon the United States and two, there was still a feeling that Brazilian interests lay more with Europe than they did with the United States by some officers.

Q: Who was the Ambassador?

BRINTNALL: John Crimmins.

Q: What was your, being down in Rio, did you have much to do with the Embassy?

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BRINTNALL: As little as possible. I think I spent one night in Brasilia during the three-year tour. I was quite happy not to go to Brasilia.

Q: Who was the Consul General in Rio?

BRINTNALL: First, William Miller and then John Dexter.

Q: What was your relationship with the Consul General?

BRINTNALL: It was very close with both Consuls General. I attended all the Consul General meetings. I talked several times a day with the principal staff. I was very welcome throughout the consulate, would use the Consulate General's facilities...its library, attend their receptions. They would use my guest lists. It was a very close relationship.

Q: Was there any concern about during this time, either ...it was still a military government, that there might be a coup within a coup? Or any sort of violent change in the form of government or a strong opposition from the civilian community?

BRINTNALL: No. There was not.

Q: How did you feel about your personal security? I mean, Ambassador Burke Elbrick had been kidnapped sometime before but it was still...

BRINTNALL: I was never concerned about my personal security and I felt, rightly or wrongly, someone, one of my Brazilian friends, would tell me if I or a member of my family was a target. In fact, one of my wife's friends called one day and told her not to send our daughter to school. We kept her home and later found that there had been student riots in the vicinity of her school that day..

Q: When you say that you were restricted in where you could go, how did this...?

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BRINTNALL: I couldn't just visit a military unit without advance written authority. My requests were not always granted. In 1977 the Army began to abide by the letter of the regulation as concerns foreign attach#s. Before, I had gone just about anywhere I wanted to with few restrictions.

Q: Were there other military attach#s in Rio at that time?

BRINTNALL: No foreign military attach#s. The United States was the only one. We also had an assistant Naval Attach#.

Q: Were there any other major developments during that period?

BRINTNALL: I think we covered them. The nuclear accord, the breaking of the military relations and human rights.

Q: Were you reporting on human rights...the things that you would see or was that beyond your scope?

BRINTNALL: Reporting in the sense that when I talked to the Consul general and his team, yes. Anything I would learn, we would discuss. We would talk about human rights. We would talk about economic matters and we would talk about military matters.

Q: What were the human rights concerns?

BRINTNALL: Principally, torture.

Q: Was this essentially a military function at that time? Like military police or would this be done by the equivalent of civilian police or who was doing the torture?

BRINTNALL: I don't know how much torture actually went on. It took place and there were abuses, I would say principally by the intelligence services. Torture of even one person is intolerable, but the incidence of abuse in Brazil during this period was rather small, I

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believe when compared with many other countries. For example, it paled in comparison to what was happening in Cuba.

Q: Did you find the intelligence services were sort of a service unto themselves as far as you're concern? Could you talk to the people there, the ones who were dealing with the internal security?

BRINTNALL: I could talk to them, though they tended to keep to themselves. They were a little bit different than the other members of the armed forces. They followed these things for years and years and they tended to be more concerned about what they viewed as the Communist threat, the terrorist threat. They saw themselves as the front line troops against the threat.

Q: This tends to happen.

BRINTNALL: And they lost some of their people too, since they were on the front lines. They took a stronger line than others because they were in the line of battle.

Q: Nobody was asking you to go in and say, "Ease up" or anything like that?

BRINTNALL: I didn't receive any specific instructions to go in and say, "Ease up". But I reflected the US Government views. The Brazilians, military of all stripes, were quite aware of the United States concern over human rights.

Q: It wasn't incumbent upon you to go and preach to the intelligence people?

BRINTNALL: No. But I did bring up human rights regularly and I told them that, if nothing else, it is counter-productive. It is a dumb way to behave, because for every one you torture, you make ten enemies, because you antagonize his friends and his family. So, I carried the message of the general human rights concerns but I didn't go in with specifics about specific acts.

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Q: Why don't we stop at this point and we'll pick it up at the next time...I like to put at the end, where did you go next?

BRINTNALL: I went to the Army War College.

Q: This is 1977.

BRINTNALL: Yes. I went to the Army War College and graduated in 1978. Then went to the Office of Secretary Defense from 1978-83 and following that, back to Brazil.

Q: OK. We will talk some about the War College and then about Secretary of Defense and Brazil.

Q: It is now the 16th of May 1996. You were at the War College from when to when?

BRINTNALL: From summer of 1977 to the summer of 1978.

Q: Did you feel when you went there...the War College is the place they sort of take a look at you and move you on to higher things. Have you felt that your specialty in sort of International Affairs was causing you problems or was going to be a limitation by the time you got to the War College?

BRINTNALL: No. When one is selected to attend the War College, he believes that he can take on any assignment. It is a marvelous experience. It is a year to take stock of oneself, as most Army schools are. It is a time to look inward. You have no responsibilities other than to yourself and your family and to go to school. I had a terrific class...a great class. Many of my classmates have gone on to fill the senior leadership in this country: John Shalikashvili is Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Gordon Sullivan, Army Chief of Staff; George Joulwan, NATO Commander; Garry Luck, Commander of UN Forces in Korea; and on and on. It was also the first class that had foreign fellows, thirteen in all.

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Q: Foreign fellows being what?

BRINTNALL: From Armed Forces from around the world...Japan, Germany, Australia. We had a Mexican fellow in our seminar.

The year at Carlisle Barracks is one that involves the entire family. It is a year of intense study, introspection and growth. There are few distractions in this serene Pennsylvania area. Each student brings some special experience with him, experience that complements that of his classmates. I did not feel at all hindered by my speciality.

Q: Did you find that your experience in Brazil and the South Command, did they draw on you to share your experiences which were not the typical ones?

BRINTNALL: We drew on each other. Everybody had something unique in his career to offer.

Q: You left there and went to ISA, which is the State Department of the Pentagon.

BRINTNALL: That is what some call it.

Q: It stands for (ISA) International Security Affairs. I remember getting involved in inspecting of Foreign Service Officer over there and I never paid much attention and I went over and was astounded to see how big it was and how many little desks there were and various things. What was your bailiwick?

BRINTNALL: I looked mostly at South America. Mostly at the Southern Cone countries, in fact. But was involved in other areas as well.

Q: You were there from when to when?

BRINTNALL: I was there until the beginning of 1983.

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Q: So, Latin America was all of a sudden very hot, wasn't it?

BRINTNALL: Very hot. We had Nicaragua. We had the Falklands. Drugs. A number of very, very difficult issues.

Q: Can we talk about...how were you and your fellows at the Pentagon looking at the situation in Nicaragua. We're talking about a time when you had a Communist Regime in Nicaragua-the Sandinistas. We had a President who was in a very confrontational mode as far as this goes and a nasty guerrilla war going on there and in El Salvador. How did you...?

BRINTNALL: Initially, we tried to give the Sandinistas the benefit of the doubt when they took over. We tried to establish military ties with them. We tried to cooperate. We did, I think, everything that we could to show that we would like to get along and get along well with them. It didn't work.

Q: Had you, on the military side, were we being-was this something we were being told to do and was our military acting sort of "dog-in-the-manger" will if you want us too or was it really an honest effort?

BRINTNALL: It was really an honest effort. David McGiffert was the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Affairs and I was new in the office but I recall in a couple of meetings that there was a very honest effort to try to get along and show them we could get along with them.

Q: What happened from your perspective?

BRINTNALL: Nothing. Our overtures were ignored or rebuffed and nothing came of it. They didn't want to get along with us.

Q: How did we see Cuba at that time?

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BRINTNALL: Cuba was still a major problem. Cuba was the “cats-paw” for the Soviets, although in some areas acting alone, but they were assisting the Soviets in training the Nicaraguans. Military training, medical training, intelligence training. Building things—barracks for them and they were very much involved and we were concerned about it.

Q: Well now, what would you do as being responsible for Latin American Affairs. What types of issues, where would you report and how would you be looking at things there?

BRINTNALL: We had a lot of freedom at ISA. The joint staff was very hierarchical but in ISA we could step back and think and develop initiatives for the Pentagon and coordinate them with inter-agency groups. One example, was very interesting. I made a trip to South America with the Deputy Assistant Secretary who at that time was Michael Armacost. In Brazil we were still concerned about our bilateral military relations... the fact that we could do very little together because they refused to accept security assistance because that would trigger a human rights report. The law was enacted with good intentions but it had some undesirable, unforeseen consequences. The result was that we were making report cards on our friends; while the major abusers, the Soviets, the Chinese, the Albanians, the Cubans got off free. It was not a good law, as written.

Mike Armacost mused after the trip, “I wonder what would happen if there were a universal human rights report?” I took that as guidance. I didn't ask him anything more about it. I don't believe he was suggesting that I do anything but I thought it was a pretty good idea. I went to work. First, I found a guide who was familiar with the Congress and who could guide me, since I had never worked on the Hill. I found a person in the Defense Security Assistance Agency, and I said, “Al, here's what I'd like to do.” I didn't clear this with anybody, frankly. We talked to several staff members and then found potential sponsors in Senators Hayakawa and Helms. I drafted legislation, gave it to the staff, and bingo, it was introduced and passed. I recall Senator Kennedy, discussing it on the floor of the Senate before passage. He said something like, “They are up to something. I don't know what it is but it seems like a pretty good idea.” The thing was that everybody thought it was a pretty

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good idea. It wasn't a partisan issue, and it made a bad law actually a pretty good law. And today everybody expects the human rights report and it is a very useful tool.

Q: It is a very important thing of American policy. It is one of the fascinating things of looking at American policy of how this thing grew and this is an interesting aspect of it.

BRINTNALL: I had no sponsorship of it what-so-ever. No administration sponsorship. I just wrote the legislation and did it. But it appealed to Democrat and Republican alike.

Q: I find it difficult to think that somebody from the Pentagon can run up to the Hill and mess around without somebody who is a rank higher or two ranks higher..."Who the hell is this guy?"...

BRINTNALL: Somebody surely would have said, "Who the hell is this guy?" if there had been any controversy, but everybody like the idea. Nobody questioned it because it seemed like such a good idea. Had that or the previous Administration proposed it, it may have failed. Someone would have taken exception. I didn't feel that I was doing anything that I shouldn't have done. Of course, neither did I tell anybody that I was doing it. It just seemed like the right thing to do.

Q: On to Nicaragua. Did your office sit down and figure out well, "If we have to invade the place...". Is that the type of thing you would look at or was it really acting as an analysis of what the situation was?

BRINTNALL: We were the coordinating agency for political military policy for the Pentagon. It wasn't ISA's job to plan an invasion. War plans are the responsibility of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Invasion plans are an operational matter. On the policy issues, ISA worked with the State Department and the NSC in developing and coordinating US policy. It was not something the Pentagon was doing by itself.

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Q: Reagan Administration came on. Right at the very beginning you had Jesse Helms, who was a true believer in sort of benevolent dictatorships in Latin America and also his staffs. And then you had others who were completely opposed to this. This was very tricky ground for which anybody who was trying to look sort of objectively at the military situation and all this to play around. Particularly early on in the administration, Latin America was “the” place where the Reagan Revolution or sort of the “right wing” of the Republican Party was allowed to have full sway. Where as our European, Asian and Middle Eastern policy was pretty much the same as we had for years. Was this a problem for you?

BRINTNALL: Not in the beginning. Because the Sandinistas, by their outrageous behavior, made it fairly simple. The Soviets were building air bases. The Sandinistas were providing training to the insurgents and terrorists throughout Central America and were receiving training from the Cubans and so the questions regarding our policy were fairly clear. What should we do to stop the Cuban and Nicaraguan export of revolution in Central America? How should we help the other Central American countries protect themselves?

Q: What about elsewhere in Latin America where little by little sort of democratic governments were replacing “Caudillos” or whatever, the rule of military dictatorships and all. Did we take, did your office get involved in looking at these things in any particular way and seeing what was happening?

BRINTNALL: Oh, absolutely. Our policy was to foster democracy throughout the world and this was just at the top of everyone's list, whether at the State Department or the Pentagon. Human Rights and Democracy were two cornerstones of our policy which we all supported and worked for. Had there been democracy in Argentina, they would not have invaded the Falklands. That act showed the military dictatorship for what it was.

It was a sad page in history but I must say that we tried to maintain, at first, some neutrality. But it soon became obvious that the Argentine behavior was such that we couldn't remain neutral. We supported the British very strongly. But it made it difficult to

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have any sort of meaningful bilateral military relations with Argentina for years and years to come.

Q: Did you feel any of the, where you were, sort of a major battle within the administration, I think, Jeane Kirkpatrick who had a very strong voice in early Reagan program was our Ambassador to the United Nations, was strongly in support of the Argentinean side whereas at a certain point, Alexander Haig and almost anybody, a great majority of Americans outside of political life, knew that when the chips were down you couldn't stand for an invasion of what was British soil. But, did you get caught up in this push and pull? As a Latin American expert, I mean, at a certain point you are saying, "This Malvinas thing is going to really screw us up".

BRINTNALL: Initially, yes. But only briefly. It soon became apparent that the Argentines were clearly the aggressors and that we couldn't stay out of it. Our support went to the British. There was no other choice.

Q: What were you getting from our Military Attach#s in Argentina and other places? What sort of reports were you getting?

BRINTNALL: The attach#s were just one source of reporting. We were getting coverage from many sources. It is really too bad that reporting had not been better before hostilities, particularly by the Argentine and British attach#s. Had they done a better job in evaluating each other's capabilities and intentions, the war might never have happened.

Q: And this one sort of blew up in a hurry, didn't it?

BRINTNALL: This one came in a big hurry. It was a great misjudgment on the Argentine part and on the British part as well. I don't recall that there was enough warning or time to mount a strong effort to diffuse this and try to keep this from happening. I don't recall any.

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Q: How did the Pentagon look at this as a military operation. I mean, at the time it was going on, it was really a much closer, the lines of communication were so long.

BRINTNALL: Well, we were surprised at the lack of preparation and capabilities on the part of the Argentines. No winter clothing, poor training of the recruits, and woefully inadequate logistics.

Q: No air fields.

BRINTNALL: No air fields. It was not a good performance. And it really showed how important logistics were. They simply could not sustain their efforts because of poor logistics.

Q: Were you getting anything from the Brazilians, who, as you say, their main military is sort of "within call" to the Argentine border, isn't it?

BRINTNALL: Yes.

Q: A certain amount of feeling that this is not a very good army? Were you getting any of that?

BRINTNALL: Well, yes. And it made a lot of armies take a good look at their logistics capabilities. I think a lot of armies at that point looked at themselves and asked, "What could we do?"

Q: Did this cause an increase in looking to the United States to help?

BRINTNALL: Not that I am aware of.

Q: What did they do about it?

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BRINTNALL: Well, they looked at themselves, principally. Brazil could not look to the United States. Remember at that time, we still could not provide security assistance because of restrictions imposed by human rights and nuclear proliferation legislation. We were also beginning to have problems with space launch vehicle technology. So, even if they wanted to look to us, there's not a lot we could have done at that time. We were barred by law from doing very much.

Q: Did you feel the hand of Richard Perle? Was he there at that time?

BRINTNALL: He was there at that time.

Q: Because he is, I've heard him labeled "the Prince of Darkness". I mean he is a very strong and has very strong ideas-he'd been a Congressional staff person and had come in and did you feel that he was a force of direction? Anyway, did you feel his hand?

BRINTNALL: Yes, we felt his "hand", particularly in the area of the Space Launch Vehicle Technology. Richard Perle didn't want anything to...

Q: Could you explain what that is?

BRINTNALL: Well, Brazil considers itself a major, sovereign nation with a need to have its own space program and launch its own satellites with its own technology. It doesn't believe that it should have to justify this to anyone. In order to launch a satellite, one must have rockets capable of doing so. You must also be able to guide this rocket into orbit. What is the difference between a civilian and a military rocket? Basically it is where it is aimed and what it carries. The US Government was therefore concerned not only with space technology, but nuclear technology as well. The US did not want to see Brazil develop a nuclear weapon and also have the capability to launch it. Our problem was to find ways to work with Brazil and find ways to introduce safeguards so that we could cooperate in these areas. Richard Perle and his team were properly concerned about nuclear and missile proliferation throughout the world. The problem was that Brazil was

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going forward in both areas. Just saying “no” wouldn't put the genie back in the bottle. I saw the problem as how could we work together with Brazil and develop such safeguards.

Q: His position at this time in the Department of Defense was...what was he?

BRINTNALL: There had been a reorganization that split ISA, or International Security Affairs, into two parts, ISA and ISP (International Security Policy). ISP was responsible for NATO and global issues to include nuclear non-proliferation and missile technology.

Q: Was the thrust of Pearl and his supporters that we are not going to give anything to Brazil because Brazil might cause trouble there or because somehow Brazil might tie into the Soviet Union?

BRINTNALL: He didn't want to see any new countries acquire or develop these technologies. If we just said “no” long enough we could keep it from happening. Of course, that isn't true. Saying no may slow things down, but it won't stop them. Eventually, they will acquire the technology.

Q: You find, as we were doing this that the French were pushing very hard their rocket technology. Were they kind of filling in behind it?

BRINTNALL: We were concerned that this might be happening but it turned out that Brazil was getting it's guidance components from various parts of the world. The French were supplying some, the Germans some. But not in a major way. But we were concerned about them developing these weapons and then selling them to pariah countries-Iraq, countries such as this.

Q: Well now, how did we look at Brazil at this time? Obviously you had to keep a very long watch on Brazil in one form or another. At this time, during the early 1980's-early Reagan, what was our attitude towards Brazil?

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BRINTNALL: It was that Brazil was very important, and we should try to work with them. But we were blocked from doing very much because of space launch vehicle technology and nuclear issues. We commissioned an ISA study and divided Latin America into geographic areas: the Andean Region, Central America and the Caribbean, and the South Atlantic. When you say the South Atlantic this brings in a NATO emphasis to the area. NATO was interested in the Atlantic Narrows because of the Soviet submarine threat. Here was the best place to monitor their activities in the South Atlantic. We developed initiatives for key countries of each region. For example, it was at this time that the US approved the sale of F-16's to Venezuela. In Brazil, we worked together to establish a series of joint staff talks in 1983 and they continue today. We also worked out some important exchanges to include one involving the US Army Training Doctrine Command, or TRADOC, providing Brazil with up-to-date information on our Army doctrine. We did everything we could to try and bring Brazil towards us and share those things ideas given the limitations of the law.

Another initiative that I had a direct hand in was that of proposing that Brazil be offered the opportunity to participate in our space program. We had not yet had a foreign astronaut. This was proposed as a way to engender space cooperation between our two countries. It wasn't just hype. It didn't go anywhere until 1981. I was watching President Reagan's appearance in front of the Brazilian-American Chamber in Sao Paulo during the President's visit to Brazil, and I heard him make the offer to join us in space with a Brazilian astronaut. I thought the idea had died, but there it was, alive and well. But the Brazilians didn't take him up on the offer. It's too bad. I believe it would have been good for both countries.

Q: Were these joint staff talks...what does this mean?

BRINTNALL: They were held annually and covered a mutually agreed upon agenda. Included were such things as drugs, doctrine, the Amazon, space, and others. We agree upon an agenda. Things that we should discuss on an annual basis... our way of looking

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at certain things. They tended not to be very controversial, but they were a means of exchanging thoughts and airing ideas at a fairly high level.

Q: All this time this is going on you still are very aggressive, at least from our perspective, with the Soviet Union with the Blue Water Navy, and you had Brazil which sort of dominated the South Atlantic, how is this-had cooperation fallen off on this aspect of our relationship with Brazil?

BRINTNALL: Navy cooperation continued in the form of the annual Unitas Exercise where our Navy goes around South America and West Africa and holds exercises with their navies. This continued despite the other difficulties. Brazil had a modest Navy and it really couldn't provide the sort of surveillance in the South Atlantic that would be required to keep up with the very quiet Soviet submarines. Unitas was a way to maintain our good relations and to help keep an eye on what the Soviets were doing in the South Atlantic.

Q: Were we still flying P-3's out of...?

BRINTNALL: Yes, P-3's. These were an important means of watching the Soviet submarines. We were able to receive Brazilian permission to stage some P-3 flights out of Recife. This was not easy but this was important because it covered the Atlantic Narrows.

Q: During the flotilla that started moving towards the Falklands, did the Brazilians sort of shut things down for us at that time?

BRINTNALL: No. Not really. In fact, there was a British plane that landed in Rio during this period, and everybody was hoping that nobody would notice and that it would fly away. The Brazilians did not want to offend either the British or the Argentines.

Q: One of the "V" Bombers.

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BRINTNALL: I don't recall, but it put the Brazilians in a difficult position. They didn't want have to take sides.

Q: What about the other important areas as we think about them. Let's take Colombia. Did we have issues with Colombia during this early 1980's period?

BRINTNALL: Yes. It was one of the key countries. We were trying to work with Colombia to help its navy, particularly their "brown-water" navy so they could patrol their shores and rivers. The problem was narcotics, and we wanted to be able to keep an eye on this part of the world. Our counter drug efforts did not receive the emphasis of a few years later, but it was important, particularly for a key country such as Colombia. There had been a history of cooperation. For example, Colombia provided a battalion to Korea, and we were very grateful to have their assistance.

Q: Drugs, I take it, weren't the...we weren't thinking in terms of major military support for suppression of drugs at this point?

BRINTNALL: Not at that point. We were just beginning to look at it but it wasn't the issue that it was seven or eight years later.

Q: What about Mexico? It always comes up and yet it always seems to be a blank spot as far as...I mean we got all sorts of cooperation but when you talk about the military it is almost as though they were...was there anything going on with Mexico?

BRINTNALL: Not a lot. Mexico really didn't want to be seen as at all close to the United States. The responsibility for the conduct of military relations with Mexico lay not with the Southern Command but with our Continental Army, specifically the US Fifth Army in San Antonio, Texas. Remember that even in World War II, Mexico did not want to be seen as too close to the US Of course, Mexico maintained good relations with Cuba and that was of concern to us. Nonetheless, we wished to maintain close military relations with Mexico.

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Q: Cuba. I assume Cuban operation in Africa was not in your bailiwick. But Cuba, per se, were you watching Cuba?

BRINTNALL: Oh, absolutely. We knew we weren't going to invade Cuba but we were very concerned with about what Cuba was doing in Latin America-particularly Central America and what it was doing in Africa as well.

Q: Castro had been on, I mean, did we see any changes?

BRINTNALL: Not really. No.

Q: How about Grenada and Guyana? Did either of those raise particular flags, I mean, during your watch?

BRINTNALL: Later on. It came a few years later. At that time they were not of major concern.

Q: Colombia? Not Colombia. Venezuela.

BRINTNALL: Again. A very dominating country in the Caribbean. When we looked at Latin America by region, Venezuela was in the Caribbean basin and not the South Atlantic or Andean region. At that time, Venezuela wanted F-16's. We hadn't sold F-16's in Latin America...

Q: They were advanced fighter-bombers.

BRINTNALL: Yes. We tussled over that one for many, many months and finally wound up approving the F-16.

Q: What happened, I mean, we talked about this before. For years there had been this policy of trying to keep the Air Forces down...their expenses, in Latin America and once you start one...was Venezuela the first one to get the F-16?

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BRINTNALL: Venezuela was the first country, yes.

Q: Did this mean that everybody else had to have these?

BRINTNALL: No, it didn't. Not everybody wanted them, not everybody could afford them, and no other country occupied Venezuela's strategic position in the Caribbean Basin.

Q: With oil.

BRINTNALL: With oil. Venezuela had to replace its old aircraft. They didn't have to be F-16s, but they made a good case.

Q: Were there debates about giving the F-16 to Venezuela? That Venezuela would use these against Colombia or Guyana or whatever. Were there any border problems that were of significant magnitude to make us concerned about what these might be used for?

BRINTNALL: Every time we thought of Venezuela we thought of Colombia and vice versa. As we would think of Argentina and Chile and weapons systems. This was a concern. We didn't want to accelerate or precipitate any action on the part of Venezuela. But we received sufficient assurances and safeguards to approve the sale.

Q: What about some of the Andean countries? Ecuador, Peru and Chile? Were there any developments there that concerned you particularly?

BRINTNALL: Of course the Soviets had been providing a lot of weapons systems to Peru. This was of concern to us. Actually it didn't work out to well for Peru, because they had to maintain them and they weren't getting the spare parts. Some years later they came to us and asked us if we could maintain the Soviet weapons for them. So, as is often the case when you buy Soviet weapons, there isn't sufficient logistical support to ensure their adequate maintenance.

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Q: What about Peru and Ecuador...they still have an unresolved border thing. Did we see any involvement there or any concern?

BRINTNALL: We were doing our best to help them resolve their dispute. But as you say, it is still there. In fact, I talked to a Brazilian General who is in Peru right now working on the border area.

Q: We were a guarantor. This was what....1941....

BRINTNALL: Yes. It was. I don't know how it's being resolved. It is still of concern. It is still a problem.

Q: Were we seeing any particular strategic interest in any of these countries?

BRINTNALL: Well certainly. Brazil-the South Atlantic. Argentina- South Atlantic. Venezuela, so very important in the Caribbean. Colombia-the Panama Canal. Peru- approaches to the Panama Canal. So, yes, all of these countries had strategic importance.

Q: What about Panama itself at that time? We had gone through the Panama Treaty. Had this seemed to have lanced the boil or was it still a problem?

BRINTNALL: I think it lanced the boil. Many Panamanians to this day still don't want a US presence of any sort. Although it was obviously very controversial, I think that most Americans agreed that something had to be done. And it was good that we had did. We were looking ahead to what our relations would be concerning the bases, but it wasn't an overriding problem at this time. General Noriega was becoming a problem , however, as was assistance to democracy in Panama and the role of the National Guard.

Q: In looking at this...you had been in the South Command and all...Southern Command...did you have different perspective from ISA on what we were doing or than you had in your other positions in Latin America?

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BRINTNALL: There is a different perspective from ISA. There one has the advantage of looking at the policy not just from the military standpoint but from the political-military standpoint, looking at the policy along with one's colleagues from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the State Department and the White House. There was a little different perspective and it was there that policy was to be made. SOUTHCOM then became an instrument by which this policy was carried out. It was a different perspective.

Q: I notice you have something here...TRADOC?

BRINTNALL: US Army Training and Doctrine Command.

Q: Oh. I see.

BRINTNALL: The Brazilians wanted access to so they could know what our thinking was and what our doctrine was.

Q: Could you explain for somebody like myself who doesn't...what is the importance of a training doctrine, knowing about it?

BRINTNALL: What our training consisted of, what we were looking at. Why we were doing certain training. The way that we viewed our strategy; the way that we write our manuals. These are all very important and become the way in which we organize to fight, the way we fight a war.

Q: And for other countries would this be that they could emulate us or they would understand what we were doing so they would not feel as threatened or what was the...?

BRINTNALL: It was a NATO objective to coordinate our training and to be as much alike as much as possible in the way that we looked at our adversaries in terms of our training and our weapons, so that our doctrine and weapons systems be inter-operable. No Latin American country is in NATO, but we still believe it is useful to be able to work together.

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There is a record of cooperation to include Brazil and Mexico in WW II, Colombia in Korea, Several countries to include Brazil and Paraguay in the Inter-American Peace Force in the Dominican Republic in 1964, and Argentine support for the Gulf War.

Q: What about Chile? We had gone through a very difficult patch with Chile. Pinochet was very much in command at this period.

BRINTNALL: We really couldn't do anything with Chile at this time. As we couldn't do anything with Argentina after the Falklands War. Pinochet was there. The human rights were such that there was virtually no cooperation.

Q: Did you sit and ponder, what if...at this point I suppose there wasn't really much of a chance of a war between Argentina and Chile, was there? Argentina's got such a bloody nose...

BRINTNALL: There really wasn't.

Q: How about any problems in the Caribbean? Cuba of course was there but were the small island nations of any particular interest other than just be nice to them?

BRINTNALL: We had problems, but not major ones. The Navy has communications sites and gunnery ranges in the Caribbean, and we wanted to make sure our Navy had continued access to the area. We worked with them on civil affairs projects but there were no major problems other than Cuba.

Q: With Cuba, I've sort of wondered...Next year Hong Kong reverts to China and people are watching this with not a lot of glee. What about Guantanamo Bay with Cuba? Here we have really a mortal enemy and yet we've got a rather extensive base right on their soil. Were we thinking about the value of it? Was it such a political thing that you couldn't even discuss if it was useful or not? How did we look at Guantanamo?

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BRINTNALL: I don't think we can discuss returning Guantanamo Bay to Cuba given the current political climate. It is something we can look at when Castro goes. But it is an odd thing to visit Guantanamo Bay and look at Cuba. It is kind of an eerie feeling. It was like being in Berlin during the Cold War.

Q: I can't remember now. Guantanamo wasn't a 99 year thing, was it?

BRINTNALL: No. It was in perpetuity.

Q: Nobody does those treaties anymore.

BRINTNALL: No. We provide a nominal amount of rent each year and Castro doesn't cash the checks.

Q: You were back to your main area of concentration, Brazil, is that right?

BRINTNALL: Yes. I left ISA in 1983 and went to the sort of orientation that new general and flag officers get and then went to Brazil.

Q: You were by this point a brigadier general?

BRINTNALL: Yes. I was promoted in 1983.

Q: Well, now. Did Brazil call for a flag officer?

BRINTNALL: It did. At the time we had general and flag officers in Moscow, Beijing, Mexico City and Paris.

Q: Just to get a feel for this. The training that a flag officer gets, I mean, this is where officers really enter, have to deal with more than just troop command and all this. Did you again find that there was much emphasis on policy dealing with more than just troops and all this?

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BRINTNALL: It was more orientation than training. Each service has its own couple of weeks of orientation. I was one of the lucky ones who went to Harvard for the course in National and International Security and then that year we had our first Capstone Course- which was a course at the National Defense University for new general and flag officers. It went on for a couple of months and it was a chance to exchange views with one's colleagues from the other services, to look at how to operate better together, and to look at some of these international issues and military issues as well.

Q: You were in Brazil from when to when?

BRINTNALL: July of 1983 to July of 1985-2 years. Q: What was the situation when you arrived in Brazil? In the first place what was the internal political situation and then we will talk about our relations.

BRINTNALL: It was clearly moving towards civilian government. It hadn't gotten there yet. But that was the direction, there was no question. We still couldn't do a lot together because of nuclear and space launch vehicle issues. There was some concern about US designs on the Amazon. This kept coming up. There was some distrust of the United States and its motives.

Q: Could you explain what this would be?

BRINTNALL: Brazilians have always looked upon the Amazon as a great national resource with gold, petroleum and other resources. It is their huge undeveloped area. They were concerned that other countries had designs on it for various reasons or wanted to turn it into an international ecological preserve. So they were always looking over their shoulder at other countries as they could become a problem for Brazil. This was the reason that in the 1970's Brazil developed the northern perimeter highway. They spent lots and lots of money to build a highway along the northern border.

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Q: Did you find the Brazilians were looking with great concern to what became known as generically called the "Green Movement" which is ecology and I mean, one can hardly, and still today, the Brazilian Rain Forest is considered to be a world treasure and the Brazilians are squandering it and that sort of things. Was this an issue when you were there?

BRINTNALL: Yes. It was and it still is. It remains an issue. It has been for a long time. There was a lot of mistrust and military relations were not close. We were preoccupied with Central America, and Brazil had no interest in Central America whatsoever. They said, "that's your war up there and it doesn't involve us". We were still concerned about Brazil sending arms to Iraq for example and Libya. We were beginning to be quite concerned about drugs and Brazil as a transshipment point. These were issues that Brazil didn't want to hear about. These were things that we wanted to talk about but they didn't want to hear about them.

Q: How did this affect your job?

BRINTNALL: I dealt on two levels in Brazil as most people do. There was the personal level. I dealt on that level with my friends and contacts whom I had for many, many years. They were not effected in any way. But on the official level, it was..I had to ask for permission to travel everywhere like all the other attach#s. I gave talks here and there. Once I spoke at the War College for example, I talked to the Command and Staff College, I talked on Central America but they really weren't interested. They wanted to hear about other things. They didn't want to hear about Central America. The things we wanted to discuss, they didn't want to talk about. Relations were correct but there wasn't a lot going on in terms of security assistance, in terms of military exchanges. But we began. We worked very hard. In 1983 we held our first Joint Staff Talks. Then the Training and Doctrine Command Exchange. So, we did what we could to advance these mutual confidence-building measures.

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Q: Who was our Ambassador during this 1983-1985 period?

BRINTNALL: Tony Motley had just left. Harry Kopp was the Charge for several months and then Diego Asencio became the Ambassador.

Q: How did Asencio use you?

BRINTNALL: Diego Asencio was a great Ambassador to work for. The country team meetings included all the principal sections so the Defense Attach# was represented in both the larger and small meetings. We would give him the military views on areas that were of concern to him. He took advantage of the Defense Attach# aircraft. He traveled in Brazil a great deal. He would take his attach# with him. It was a very cordial and very business like relationship as well. We got along very well.

Q: On the military side, did we have any concerns? I would think, you say there was a gradual return towards a democratic form of government, were the Attach#s tasked with the force of sort of keeping the temperature of the military and would they revert to the old take over thing?

BRINTNALL: Attach#s are always tasked with taking the temperature of the military, no matter where they are. This didn't change. It was just a given. It was just something they do.

Q: What were you seeing in the Brazilian military? How did they observe this stepping aside from power?

BRINTNALL: By that time, they were pretty tired of taking the heat for the things that hadn't gone right. They were tired of the belt tightening and inadequate military budgets. Their budgets had been squeezed ever since the military takeover in 1964. One would think that this would not be the case with a military government, but it was. They were tired. Some

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said, "It's too early, the Communists are still out there; the leftists...we can't afford to do this." But, by and large, the military had had enough and wanted to leave government.

Q: Were you seeing a Communist, or maybe not Communist but an extreme leftist threat within the military in the corporal level or maybe young officer? Was this a concern?

BRINTNALL: It's of some concern and of course, there comes a point when you can't tell the difference between the extreme right and the extreme left. There comes a point where they join each other. The areas which would appeal to the extreme left would appeal to the extreme right as well-the ultra-nationalists. You know, "The Amazon is ours and we will have to fight the United States" or whatever it might be. So this is always an area of some concern. It is a concern today, not just for Brazil but for other countries as well. It is behavior that doesn't bode well for good relations based on mutual trust.

Q: Did you have trouble getting into the Amazon area?

BRINTNALL: No.

Q: I was wondering with Diego Asencio and your Attach#s plane popping up the Amazon...

BRINTNALL: No. I had no trouble whatsoever. All the requests for travel were granted. They didn't see a threat from the Attach# plane but they could see...for example, we had some exercises with Guiana. That troubled them. And there was our counter-drug effort. That concerned the Brazilians...some said this was just a subterfuge for taking over the Amazon.

Q: It is so odd to hear this from somebody. Because you know, taking over the Amazon does not seem a way at all.

BRINTNALL: You know, it's like the dog chasing the fire truck...what do you do when you catch it? What would we do with the Amazon?

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Q: There you are!

BRINTNALL: But it is such a nationalistic issue.

Q: How did you deal with that, in your talks and all?

BRINTNALL: I'd say for example, "Why would we want the Amazon? What would we do with it?" Just hit on it directly. It wasn't so easy of course, to knock down any idea of a green occupation of the Amazon. This was a little more difficult because I'm sure there are some "greens" out there that would love to internationalize the Amazon. That was something different. But as far as the United States occupying the Amazon, it was pretty easy to respond it.

Q: How about the drug business? Was your office concerned with the drug business?

BRINTNALL: Yes. We were concerned with drugs. We kept trying to promote Brazilian military cooperation in the drug area. But there was a great resistance on the part of the Brazilians. The Brazilians saw this as potentially very corrupting issue for their own armed forces. You know, everybody is paid so poorly. Even the officers, the generals. So what do you do? You put some young privates, sergeants or lieutenants out there and they are faced with a bribe of many thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars? They were concerned about their involvement. They saw this as a police issue, not a military issue.

Q: What was the American Embassy was seeing? What was happening with drugs in Brazil at this time?

BRINTNALL: More and more Brazil was being used as a trans-shipment point. Drugs coming across from Paraguay for shipment to Europe and the United States. More and more use within Brazil. We saw it as a more serious problem than the Brazilians saw it.

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Q: You mentioned the nuclear safeguards and Brazil has always been high up on our list of concerns in the non-peaceful use of nuclear materials.

BRINTNALL: Brazil said, "We are a sovereign country...the fifth largest country in the world, we have the right to make our own decisions. We don't want to make a nuclear weapon or plan to make such a weapon, but we reserve the right to make one if we want to. This is our own decision." This is kind of hard to argue with. "You have your weapon, France has its weapon, why can't we have a weapon if we choose to? We don't want one but why we can't make one if we want to have one?" It was very tough. We didn't make much progress at the time but we have made progress in the past couple years on adherence to the nuclear safeguards. But still, at that time, it was very difficult.

Q: Was this an issue that you got involved with?

BRINTNALL: Yes. We tried to persuade our counterparts that there should be safeguards not only for non-proliferation reasons, but also so that we could have greater cooperation between our two countries.

Q: Did the Embassy use the Attach#s to pass on messages and things of this nature because it is still the lingering military?

BRINTNALL: The attach#s passed messages but everybody passed messages just is did the political section, the economic section, the military section ...

Q: This is no longer any Vernon Walters going and talking to the President.

BRINTNALL: No. By no means.

Q: What was the government like at that time? You say the military was slowly moving out. How do you mean?

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BRINTNALL: I didn't sense repression. Most of the cabinet positions and sub-cabinet positions were filled by civilians. They weren't military positions. Although the three military ministers had far more weight than they would have for example, in the United States. They had a veto power, but they were not making the day-to-day policy.

Q: The rocket technology, was this getting anywhere?

BRINTNALL: They were testing. They had their own series of rockets called the Sonda system. They have a very privileged location just a couple of degrees from the equator, Barra de Inferno, which they launch rockets from. Some Brazilians saw this as a money-making potential. They could launch rockets for other countries from this privileged location. So, it was still a very sticky issue. A very thorny issue. They were guarding the secrecy of this very carefully, this and the nuclear program.

Q: Did you have any problems with Attach#s getting too close to the wrong bases and things like this?

BRINTNALL: Well, we weren't welcome in the test facilities. They would take Attach#s for example, to the space launch facilities but there were limits to what they could see.

Q: Are Attach#s in all countries-talking about the Soviet Union at that time, East Germany etc., often would sort of play games with the security forces that would follow them and try to see where they could get and all this. Even though our relations weren't of the coziest, our attach#s were on, would you say, "good behavior"?

BRINTNALL: Yes. We had generally, good access except, as I say, to the nuclear program and for what was happening in the space launch vehicle program. Other than that we had good access. We could visit military units.

Q: Is there anything else we should discuss?

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BRINTNALL: No. It was an era, a time, of confidence building. A time for trying to put behind us the antipathy which had developed over the breakup over the nuclear accords. We were slowly returning to what I consider a good and normal relationship.

Q: Did you find when you, not in a public posturing, but when you'd sit down and have a drink with Army officers and all their understanding of why we did what we did in supporting the British against the Argentines?

BRINTNALL: This was not a major issue. They understood this.

Q: I mean, it hadn't aroused the emotion even at the time.

BRINTNALL: No.

Q: I guess the Argentines were not their favorite people anyway.

BRINTNALL: No. The Argentines, I must say, they came out of the war different people. Relations have become very good since the war, as good as they have ever been. There is a different attitude on the part of the Argentines. I really enjoy working with them. Not that I didn't before, but now they are viewing our relations a little bit differently.

Q: Well then, you left in 1985 and you went to do what?

BRINTNALL: I became Deputy Director for Attach#s and Operations for the Defense Intelligence Agency, which meant I was responsible for our 96 Attach#s posts throughout the world. Finding the Attach#s to put in there. The training, the equipping and telling them what we wanted them to do.

Q: You were in that job from when to when?

BRINTNALL: I was there for a year and a half.

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Q: What were your primary concerns with what you were dealing with the Attach#s, what did you want?

BRINTNALL: Our primary concerns were getting good people, bright people, people that would understand why they were there, that knew their military business, that could get along with the embassy, who were good reporters and good representatives for the United States.

Q: I would think that you would have a problem recruiting Attach#s, I mean, you had obviously been through the process yourself, in that this is not the major road to promotion, at least this is my conception of it. And so this is always a damper. And, it takes a different mind...you know a troop commander...you are told to charge up a hill and you know how to do this but it is not somebody that is necessarily going to worry about the XXX people on the other side of the hill or something like that. It must be difficult to get good people.

BRINTNALL: Well, actually its the contrary. When you are a troop commander and you are working in coalition warfare with another country's forces you must be concerned about his sensibilities, his objectives, his aspirations. I believe that it was General Eisenhower who said, "In coalition warfare, you may think you are in command, but you are deluding yourself if you believe you can get someone to do something which they do not believe is in their national interest. You have to coax, cajole, and convince." This is really what an attach# does. He coaxes, cajoles and convinces. He is a practitioner of this philosophy.

Q: How did you go about getting people? Did you have some way of looking through fitness reports or what have you and saying "This would be a good person", or did you just allow the services to percolate up or did you have a way of getting out and doing a little recruiting at all?

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BRINTNALL: The Army had its own built-in recruiting system when it came to the Foreign Area Officers. It was never a problem to get top-notch attach#s for Moscow and Beijing. These were people that had been training for years and they wanted to go. That was the top, what they had been aiming for. They wanted to go. For many other countries, Africa, Europe, there were Foreign Area Officers that had been training to go there. These people sought out attach' assignments.

For some countries it was more difficult. There aren't many perks. There were a lot of dangerous posts, a lot of posts where life was very difficult. For example, I opened Mozambique when I was Director for Attach#s affairs. We had to get somebody, a bachelor or somebody willing to leave his family to go to a very unpleasant place. Getting the right people for Nicaragua wasn't easy. The same for El Salvador. It was not easy to get the right person...with the necessary background and experience. They lived with body guards and weapons. No. But we managed to fill these posts, even Mozambique, with good people.

Sometimes they were highly qualified people but matched against the wrong position. For example in the Philippines, right after the revolution in 1985, it was very important that we got someone who understood counterinsurgency, special operations tactics. I switched, diverted, an attach# who was slated to go another country and sent him to the Philippines instead. At first he wasn't too happy about it but once he got there he was delighted. And so was the Embassy with what he was doing. So, it is a matter of finding the right person for the right job at the right time.

Q: Did you, I imagine you did quite a bit of traveling, didn't you?

BRINTNALL: I did as much as I could.

Q: Where did you see those strong points and where did you see the problem areas?

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BRINTNALL: Well, it varied with the people. It was very much personality driven. But by and large they got along very well, and became fully integrated into the country team. Given the fact that there were 96 posts and 1200 people in the system, it was pretty good.

Q: Any trouble with Ambassadors? Either political or career ones who just didn't really understand the attach#s' business or misused it or something?

BRINTNALL: There were occasional problems. But you just do the best you can. I could fire, an attach# but I couldn't fire an Ambassador. There were problems. They did come up.

Q: Can you talk about any of them?

BRINTNALL: I won't talk about Ambassadors but I can talk about one that came up with a Congressman.

Q: OK.

BRINTNALL: In Pakistan, we had an aircraft, (a C-12 Beechcraft) one of 22 aircraft around the world. One time a US Congressman who was a regular visitor to the area showed up in Islamabad and asked that he and his female companion - he was not married and he was accompanied by a rather flamboyant companion that day - be transported on the attach# plane. To use the plane, there has to be a request from their congressional committee. Well, he showed up in Islamabad without this request and insisted that he and his companion be allowed to use the plane. The assistant to the Secretary of Defense, General Colin Powell, said "No." And I said "No" and he didn't travel with his companion, but the congressman said that he would get even. He did, and he eventually was able to take the aircraft away through legislation. So, there are problems like this. It is very rare.

Q: He was not a jewel in our "political crown".

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BRINTNALL: He got even.

Q: That is terrible when you think about that. What about the budget? Was this a problem?

BRINTNALL: The budget was a great problem my first year there. There was an arbitrary cut of 25% for housing. Having to implement a 25% cut over a year is not easy. There was a lot of pain involved.

Q: What was the reason for this, was this just general?

BRINTNALL: There were cutbacks and they were putting some pressure...I don't know the precise reasoning and the effect was very unpleasant but we did it. And we made do.

Q: What about the attach#s' program in the Soviet Bloc? This was all sort of the...all the stories coming out of there of the problems and what was the situation like when you were there? Were you having any great problems with this?

BRINTNALL: Well, we wanted to see things that they did not want us to see. So you have a built in problem. I think our attach#s were respected. Our attach#s spoke good Russian, they knew their job; they were well trained. It was not an easy post in which to live. They were isolated and it was very difficult on the attach#s and their families, but they did a remarkably good job and a good reporting job. They saw things developing under Gorbachev. They saw aspects that were not in the reporting of other organizations. It was a different perspective which was very useful in trying to evaluate what was happening in Russia.

Q: Were you getting reports from the FBI about the activities of Soviet or Soviet Bloc attach#s because of mutual, if we "persona-non-grata" somebody, they "persona-non-grata" somebody, that type of thing. Were you monitoring what they were doing?

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BRINTNALL: I was aware of some of the things that were going on but that was our counter-intelligence that was looking at his. I was concerned mostly with what our attach#s were doing.

Q: How did you feel about the reports that were coming in? Were you seeing the reports that were coming from the attach#s?

BRINTNALL: Yes.

Q: How, in our government, the attach#s are reporting and obviously the attach#s, I suppose, share their information with the Ambassadors and all. When the attach# reports come in is there is a way of getting the pertinent information over to the State Department?

BRINTNALL: Yes.

Q: Did you have any problems with attach#s sort of doing it on their own?

BRINTNALL: No. This was not a problem. Attach#s were told in no uncertain terms that they were a part of that country team and their boss is the Ambassador.

Q: Then you left DIA in...?

BRINTNALL: In the later part of 1986 and went back to ISA where I became the Director of the Inter-American Region.

Q: Was ISA still split into two parts?

BRINTNALL: Yes. It was.

Q: ISA is sort of the reporting, collecting, analysis and then the what is the difference...?

BRINTNALL: NO. NO. ISA, International Security Affairs, and ISP, International Security Policy, have similar functions. They are both policy making organizations. But they had

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different geographic areas of responsibility and different functional areas. ISA covered the Middle East, East Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America. ISP covered the NATO countries and also was responsible for nuclear and missile technology policy.

Q: Who was the head of...sort of the next layer up?

BRINTNALL: At that time, the Under Secretary was Dr. Fred Ikl#. The Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs was Richard Armitage.

Q: And he was a man of great knowledge.

BRINTNALL: Great knowledge. Very well informed. And immense energy. He would arrive at work at 5:00 or 5:30 in the morning, read what had come in overnight, and then go to the Pentagon Athletic Center and work out for an hour or so. He would return and talk by secure telephone with General Colin Powell who was President Reagan's National Security Advisor. By 7:30 or 8:00 it was difficult to find an issue on which those two were not totally informed.

Q: What was your particular function? What were your concerns?

BRINTNALL: I was concerned with everything that was happening in Latin America. I was the Director of the Inter-American Region. Nestor Sanchez, who had been Deputy Assistant Secretary for years urged me to come over and then he promptly retired, so I was both the Director and the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary. Major concerns were in Central America and Panama was becoming a concern. But Central America was the big one. Iran Contra was just about to break when I got there.

Q: Could you explain what the Iran Contra was?

BRINTNALL: The Iran Contra involved the unauthorized assistance to the Contras. Central to the controversy was Lt. Colonel Oliver North who on the staff of the staff of the National

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Security Council. But it was assistance that was provided in contravention to laws passed by the US Congress.

Q: What was coming into you from that? I mean, were you aware of this?

BRINTNALL: I was just arriving. It was October 1986. I recall attending my first meeting of the Inter-Agency Group chaired by Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams and meeting a very cocky Oliver North who was a member of this group. It wasn't more than two weeks later when the controversy broke in the press. For the first couple of meetings everyone was there and then this controversy broke just a couple of weeks later. I was unaware of the unauthorized assistance that was being given to the Iran Contras.

Q: How did we view, during this time you were there...you were there from 1985 until ?

BRINTNALL: October 1986 until the beginning of 1988.

Q: How did we view developments at that time in Nicaragua?

BRINTNALL: Well, we were concerned with what the Soviets were doing; what the Cubans were doing and what the Nicaraguans were doing to unseat the democratic governments in Honduras, and particularly El Salvador.

Q: From your perspective did you see us doing anything about this or just pretty much looking at it?

BRINTNALL: No. We were doing a great deal. And totally within the law. We had a very large contingent in Honduras-military trainers-we were training the Salvadorans and the Hondurans and the Guatemalans to counter this threat the from Nicaragua, and from their own extreme left. We were doing a great deal.

Q: What about Panama at this time and General Noriega?

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BRINTNALL: This was becoming a very serious problem. Noriega was clamping down. He began to show himself for what he really was, a dictator of the first order. Relations with Panama had, until that time, been close. When Noriega began to show his colors, we began to distance ourselves. It was very difficult to work with him.

Q: Were you aware or were we talking about maybe we would have to do something?

BRINTNALL: Not at that point. We thought we might have to do something but we didn't know what it was. Operation "Just Cause", the US military operation into Panama, came much later. We weren't even thinking of such a thing at that time. We didn't know how to handle Noriega but were putting political pressure on him because of the drugs and human rights. He was showing himself to be a thug.

Q: Argentina. I notice you were talking about at one point we were trying to open up initiatives towards Argentina?

BRINTNALL: We were but it was still very difficult because we were so close to the British that the British almost had a veto over anything we wanted to do in Argentina. But we began with very small steps to rebuild our relationship. Argentina was doing its part. For the first time a civilian Minister of Defense was appointed. We invited him to the US for exploratory talks. We helped him to organize a staff that was accountable to the elected civilian leadership. Their armed forces were in terrible shape and we were looking a small ways we could help them. Their A-4 aircraft, for example, were a hazard to fly. We were looking at very basic steps to help them and to slowly re-establish a working military relationship. By the end of that time, the end of the Reagan Administration, we were able to make some progress.

Q: But you felt the "cold eye of the British" on you all the time.

BRINTNALL: Absolutely.

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Q: Did you ever get yourself in conversation with a British colleague or something and say, "Come on fellows, we've got to do something...we can't just sit here and we've got to bring them back..."

BRINTNALL: No. But I would say that our efforts with the Argentines had a very positive effect. They were the only Latin American country to publicly support us in the Gulf War.

Q: I notice you left some notes here and one was the launch vehicle technology and one was nuclear technology. These seem to come up all the time.

BRINTNALL: These kept us from working more closely with Brazil. They just went on and on and on and they did not stop.

Q: Was there any way, I mean, did you ever sit down and say maybe if we did this or that we might be able to come up with something, you know. Sometimes these unending problems can, if two people just sit down and figure out how to do it...I mean, this just wasn't in the cards?

BRINTNALL: Yes, I did. In fact, at the end of this period, the very end of the Reagan Administration, I sat with down with Mr. Carlucci who was Secretary of Defense and we made a trip to Brazil at that time.

Q: And he was a Brazilian hand too.

BRINTNALL: He was a Brazilian hand. He understood the issues very well. He was concerned about them, and we made some progress.

Q: No longer sort of a festering sore?

BRINTNALL: Today, no. But it took a long time.

Q: Were you there during the Grenada business? Had that been resolved by the time...?

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BRINTNALL: Yes, I was there. That happened very quickly and it was resolved very quickly.

Q: With Grenada, was there sort of warning flares going up before hand? Or did it pretty much sort of happen?

BRINTNALL: There were some warning flares. We really couldn't understand what the Soviets were doing with that 10,000 foot runway there. There was no reason for it.

Q: I mean, it really didn't make any military sense, did it?

BRINTNALL: None whatsoever. What they were doing made no civilian sense. It made no sense to have an airfield like that on Grenada.

Q: Because it was too close to Cuba to be a stepping stone anywhere?

BRINTNALL: Well, they had some military designs on it probably because it made no civilian sense to have it. So, obviously they had some military thoughts in mind when they were doing it.

Q: Was there any feeling about what they might be trying to do with this?

BRINTNALL: They could use it to support subversion throughout the area, use it as a threat against other countries. Obviously, the Soviets and the Cubans were very much involved there.

Q: Were you passing on things to military planners or anything like this about saying, well, Grenada is getting revolutionary and the condition there is getting sort of septic because of the breakdown of the New Jewel movement and all that sort of thing...?

BRINTNALL: In the Pentagon, the Joint Staff takes part in all the interagency meetings just as do ISA and ISP and as the State Department. So, everybody was aware of all these

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things. It is not a matter of passing on something, they are all aware. There is very close coordination among the...

Q: Did you see any reverberations from the American attack on the Cubans and the Grenadines?

BRINTNALL: Not really. It happened so quickly. They moved in and moved out. And it didn't have a major lasting impact.

Q: Were you getting the feeling that the Americans, there are things with which we will not put up. Was this sort of a message you think went out?

BRINTNALL: Oh, yes. There are some things that we won't put up with. There is no precise line drawn in the sand, but at some point we will act. At the time, the Administration made it clear that we would not put up with this, particularly given what was happening in Cuba and Central America.

Q: How about Guyana? Because Guyana was closely tied to Grenada. It was having almost some of the same elements were sort of working there or not. Was this of concern to us at this time?

BRINTNALL: It had been a concern for some time.

Q: Drugs.

BRINTNALL: Drugs. a major problem. Surveillance for the Caribbean, radar sites, radars in Colombia. What to do about these. The Drug problem was becoming very important in the forefront of our military thinking. What should our policy be? How do we work with the organizations? Should our response be interdiction, should it go after the source, where should the emphasis be? These were all interagency matters, interagency concerns.

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There wasn't a Pentagon policy. There wasn't a DEA policy. But we tried to work together with them to develop a policy.

Q: Was there a willingness to work with this or was there a certain reluctance on the part of the Department of Defense in getting involved into the messy business of drugs?

BRINTNALL: There was a reluctance.

Q: Same with the Brazilian military.

BRINTNALL: For different reasons though. We thought we should not take a major role because it took away from our primary mission. It took away from the war-fighting capability of our armed forces. Just like reluctance to place troops along the Mexican border to stop illegal immigration. This is not something that should be done by military forces. Ideally, it would be done by Federal authorities working with the local police.

Q: Was there any talk about...you know every once in a while because of illegal migration particularly from the Mexican border, and of going through holes in the fence and all, the subject is raised, why don't we just put some troops down there? Was this during your time? Did you ever look at this?

BRINTNALL: Oh, this keeps coming up, but I believe it is feckless to think that we can seal our border with Mexico, or that we would even wish to do such a thing.

Q: a politician is always looking for a "quick-fix".

BRINTNALL: Absolutely. We can't seal our borders.

Q: You left ISA in 1987?

BRINTNALL: 1988. Early 1988.

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Q: And then where?

BRINTNALL: I retired from the Army and started on a civilian career. Three months later I was asked to join the Staff of the National Security Council.

Q: You were there from when to when?

BRINTNALL: May of 1988 through March of 1989. End of the Reagan Administration and beginning of the Bush Administration.

Q: What were your concerns in the NSC?

BRINTNALL: Panama was a daily concern. Panama was an overriding concern. Central America was a concern but I spent a lot of time with Panama. I spent far more time on it than I really wished to.

Q: Let me just switch, I want to put another tape on. This is tape 3, side 1. What was the analysis you were getting? How did we figure Noriega at this time?

BRINTNALL: We really didn't know what to do about this thug. He was making life very difficult for the operations of the Panama Canal. The people operating the Panama Canal...a simple thing like garbage collection... just driving a truck into town to pick up the garbage became an international issue with Noriega. Everything was difficult. He was a drug runner. He was a crook and a very corrupting influence.

Q: What was the NSC doing? Was it pretty much just a watching brief at this point?

BRINTNALL: Well, we were trying to decide what to do. The Joint Staff...should we take military action, should we not? What should be done? All of us were scratching our heads at that time within the State Department, NSC, ISA, the Joint Staff...

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Q: Sort of the feeling was that for God's sake, can't the CIA do something we know nothing about and get rid of this joker.

BRINTNALL: Well, by law, the CIA is very restricted in what it can do. And the President has to approve any such activities. But, I can tell you there was not a consensus of what to do at that time.

Q: Who was the head of the NSC at this period?

BRINTNALL: Colin Powell.

Q: Did you have the feeling at that time, the NSC had really been ripped apart by the Iran Contra business, this was of course before your time. Did you have the feeling that the NSC was walking gingerly on things at this point because of the intense scrutiny of Oliver North and his...?

BRINTNALL: No. By that time, order and confidence had been restored at the NSC. Certainly there was some concern over Iran Contra. But I must say that the NSC under Colin Powell was a delight. He was a consensus builder. He could bring people together, opposing factions together. He would answer his mail. If you left a telephone call, he would return the telephone call. There was a great sense of closeness and rapport working with the NSC at that time.

Q: What was your estimate? You've already obviously given some now, of Colin Powell in this position. How well did he operate with the President and all during that time?

BRINTNALL: I think he operated with the President very well. He had the President's confidence. He couldn't have been a nicer person to work with. He called everybody by their first name. He knew everybody. You could sit down at a meeting over which he was presiding and he would break the tension by telling a homey story on himself and people

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would relax and go to work. He was a very good leader. Very responsive to the people that worked for him.

Q: Did you get a feeling, obviously you are close to the White House, about Ronald Reagan at that time? Because one does get a feeling from time to time that some of the reports that he seemed to be very disengaged. He would set general policy but other than that there wasn't much attention to what was happening. Was this the feeling or not?

BRINTNALL: If you prepared a report for Ronald Reagan, an action item, he use it. Everything was carefully coordinated within the NSC, and if required, with other agencies. If you recommended points to be covered, he would do so. He used his staff very well. He relied on his staff.

Q: So there wasn't a feeling that you were dealing with a non-involved President?

BRINTNALL: Some of the details he wasn't involved in but he would...no. Not in my case.

Q: How about George Bush? Did you get any feel for him? The Vice President at the time.

BRINTNALL: He was kept informed. I worked with his staff on all the major issues I was involved in, to include Panama. He was a charming person, a delightful man to be in the same room with. Hail, well-met. Just a prince of a man to have a conversation with.

Q: What about relations with the State Department at that time? Obviously, during the Henry Kissinger period way back, this was not, although, Henry Kissinger did not use the State Department very much, what was the NSC-State relation?

BRINTNALL: I think they were very good. We would take the lead on some things. State would take the lead on others. I think it was a pretty good division of labor.

Q: Who was the Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs at the time?

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BRINTNALL: Elliott Abrams.

Q: Were you getting anything particularly from your bailiwick Panama, were you getting anything from the State Department that was any discrepancy or was just everybody sort of trying to figure out what to do?

BRINTNALL: Everybody had a little...and obviously we did not reach an agreement until several months later in the Bush Administration. So, we did not come to any conclusion that allowed us to resolve the Panama problem. It was still there when I left.

Q: In your notes, you mentioned something about the decision to go into upper Huellga Valley.

BRINTNALL: It was a decision to go into Peru at that time with military personnel and begin our drug efforts there.

Q: This was with the cooperation of the Peruvian government?

BRINTNALL: Oh, yes.

Q: How did that come about?

BRINTNALL: Well, we had a big problem with Peru, a big problem in Colombia, in Latin America. And the thought was that maybe we could go after the producers at the source, those who were getting the drugs from the small farmers. To work with the Peruvian authorities and go to the source. Obviously we didn't stop the traffic, we made some progress but we weren't able to stop the drugs in Peru. The decision to move US military personnel into Peru was a major decision.

Q: I was wondering how...this would strike me as being just what any troop commander would say, "Hell no!" to, if asked. I mean, a sticky situation.

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BRINTNALL: The President doesn't ask. The President directs, as the President should. And if the military is told to go to the Upper Huellga with its helicopters and its personnel, it will. And it did.

Q: How successful was it, would you say?

BRINTNALL: Well, we still have the problem. How successful are any of these efforts? We continue to work on them but the problem persists.

Q: How about when you were at the NSC, the issue with the Latin American governments debt?

BRINTNALL: It was still a problem. Argentina and Brazil were two major debtors. The Brady Plan was a major factor in helping the debtor and creditor countries come to an agreement.. To write down part of the debt was very important, and the external debt is no longer a major issue. At the time many of the Latin American countries were smothered by the external debt. Something had to be done. You know, the banks had made a lot of money from the interest payments over the years. Very high interest payments. It was time to get this issue behind us, and we did. The Brady Plan was very helpful.

Q: What was the role of the NSC in the Brady Plan?

BRINTNALL: There is a Special Assistant for Economic Affairs in the NSC and it was principally that officer's responsibility to work with Treasury on the plan.

Q: From your perspective, was there good input from State and the NSC for support to do something about this?

BRINTNALL: Everyone knew we had to do something about this.

Q: How about pressure from the banks and all that?

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BRINTNALL: Of course, the banks didn't want to write down any of their loans....forgive the debt. But Treasury took the lead on this. I believe that it was Secretary Brady's initiative. He personally took the lead and made this happen. I think it was a very, very good one, a very laudable one. And it worked!

Q: Was there anything else we should talk about at the NSC before...?

BRINTNALL: No. I think that's...the NSC is...I'm sorry that every American doesn't have the opportunity to work for a brief period in the NSC. I don't care how old you are or what your experience prior to that time or who the President is or what party he belongs to. It is a great thrill to be an American and to work in the White House.

Q: I'm sure it is. Shall we stop at this point? Then you retired.

BRINTNALL: From government service. Now I'm in the private sector.

End of interview