

Parker T. Hart Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 04/15/1969
Administrative Information

Creator: Parker T. Hart
Interviewer: Dennis J. O'Brien
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Biographical Note

Hart was a member of the U.S. Foreign Service, 1938–1949; the U.S. Consul General in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, 1949–1951; Director of the Office of Near East Affairs, 1952–1955; Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, Egypt, 1955–1958; the U.S. Consul General in Damascus, Syria, 1958; Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, 1958–1960; the U.S. Ambassador to North Yemen (1961–1962), Kuwait (1962–1963), Saudi Arabia (1961–1965), and Turkey (1965–1968); and the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, 1968–1969. In this interview Hart discusses his tenure as the U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia including King Saud's visits to the United States for medical treatment beginning in 1961; the issue of the Dhahran Airfield and the American military's use of it; the creation of the Saudi cabinet and political leadership and the transition to Faisal in power; the revolution in Yemen and the problems and tensions it caused within Saudi Arabia and between Saudi leaders and other governments; the debate over U.S. recognition of the new Yemen Republic; various meetings of Near East State Department staff from 1961 through 1963; communication between President John F. Kennedy [JFK] and Faisal; oil matters in the Near East and different oil companies and related groups; Soviet interest in Middle East oil and in Saudi Arabia; and the work of American advisers in Saudi Arabia, among other issues.

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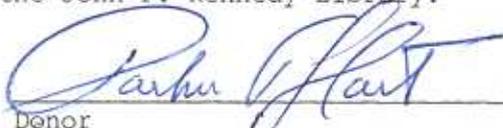
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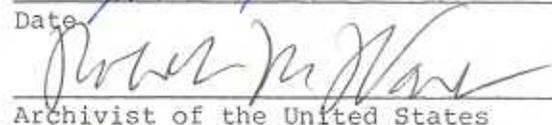
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Parker T. Hart – JFK #1
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First Oral History Interview

With

PARKER T. HART

April 15, 1969
Arlington, Virginia

By Dennis J. O'Brien

For the John F. Kennedy Library

O'BRIEN: I guess the logical place to begin is simply to ask you when you first met President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy].

HART: The very first time that I met him was in Vienna at my first post in 1938 or early '39 when he, and I believe it was his brother Joseph [Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr.] came down from London where his father [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] was Ambassador on a trip in Europe just as students. And they stayed with Consul General Leland Morris [Leland B. Morris], who was my boss, and I was one of his most junior Vice-Consuls. And Leland Morris had a little reception for the two men, and that's where I think I first met him and shook his hand.

O'BRIEN: Did you have much of a chance to talk to him or...

HART: Not a bit.

O'BRIEN: ...accompany him around...

HART: No, it was impossible. No.

O'BRIEN: ...at that point?

HART: No. Just meeting him in the line, that's all.

O'BRIEN: When did you see him again?

HART: Well, I don't believe that I ever saw him face to face until he was President and I had been already nominated to be Ambassador to Saudi Arabia without having actually met him.

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O'BRIEN: Did you have any contact with any of his staff, the Senate staff, when he was in the Senate of the United States?

HART: No, never. Nor, for that matter, with any of his White House staff at that time, that I recall. I was brand new to all of that group.

O'BRIEN: Well, you were in the Department [Department of State], and rather experienced with Near East affairs. How did you react to his criticisms of Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] policy after Suez and after the elections of 1956?

HART: Well, quite frankly, I don't remember his criticisms very clearly. He had a good deal to say about Algeria in those days, and I had nothing to do with Algeria. I'm afraid I didn't follow closely any criticisms that he made of the conduct of policy with respect to the Suez crisis or any of those matters. Of course, I expected that there would be a change of emphasis. There always is when you get a new Administration coming in, particularly after you've gone through a rather nerve-racking crisis. You wonder if you can't avoid those things again by taking a different tack. But I don't recall his being very explicit about his criticisms, so I wouldn't be able to give you any personal reaction on them. I had my own feelings about how we'd conducted ourselves in those days, both good and bad, but I don't remember his talking about them particularly.

O'BRIEN: How about particularly the Algerian speech, though, supporting basically national liberation movements?

HART: Well, this, of course, made him a good name among the Arabs, offset somewhat by pro-Israeli comments made during the campaign, as you saw on both sides of the political fence. But he seemed to ride those out pretty well. Once the election's over a good deal less is made out of those things than is made out during the campaign.

O'BRIEN: Did you have any contact with the so-called task forces in the interim period between the election and the inauguration? Several of them represented problems and policies in the State Department.

HART: None at all. I was the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asia at that time. But we had no contact with the task force.

O'BRIEN: Do you know how your appointment as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia came about?

HART: I assume only that it was made on the basis of recommendations of the people around Kennedy and perhaps from senior people in the State Department.

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O'BRIEN: Do you have any idea who might have made those recommendations?

HART: I can guess, but I don't really know.

O'BRIEN: Would you care to guess?

HART: I would guess possibly George McGhee, whom I'd known for many years, would have had something to say about it.

O'BRIEN: Who contacted you in regard to the appointment first?

HART: Well, I was just told over the telephone by the Acting Director General of the Foreign Service, who was Aaron Brown [Aaron Switzer Brown], that he supposed I knew that I was being lined up for this. And I said no, I didn't know it. And he said, "It's all set." And that was in the spring of '61. Having been informed of that, I immediately said that I wanted to take three months to study Arabic, to jack up my Arabic, which I'd studied before but didn't have any formal training in the FSI [Foreign Service Institute], to give me either a means of measuring my capabilities or to raise me to a higher level. And it was readily agreed to, and I took the three months over here. In the middle of the three months I was called by Aaron Brown again, who said, "We understand from the White House that they want to get their ambassadors out to the field right away. How about breaking it off and going out at once to Jidda?" And I said, "I'm going to President Kennedy. He's the man who nominated me. I'm not going to allow this to be interrupted without having a chance to appeal it to him personally." And I never heard anything further. I completed my three months.

O'BRIEN: Do you know of any other people that were in contention for that post or that had been suggested for Saudi Arabia?

HART: No.

O'BRIEN: Were you ever aware of any opposition to your appointment from

anywhere?

HART: No.

O'BRIEN: Oh, before leaving, did you brief anyone? Seeing that you were in the Department and very much involved in affairs of the Near East, did you brief anyone on the Near East?

HART: Well, in a way I briefed the President, because he called over a group of us newly nominated ambassadors—and I was one—and he talked to us each individually in the room for a few minutes. I was able to talk to him a little about Saudi Arabia, since I'd been there twice before in different capacities and tell him a bit about the country.

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O'BRIEN: Did you talk to any of the White House staff?

HART: At that time?

O'BRIEN: Right.

HART: No, not at that juncture. But, of course, after I had been out for a while and came back, I talked a good deal to Bob Komer [Robert W. Komer], who's the White House assistant to Kennedy on matters of the Middle East. We had lunch together and thrashed out a lot of questions. And I again talked with the President on that occasion, to some length, with Komer present.

O'BRIEN: In the rounds that you made before you left for Saudi Arabia, do you recall anything about your briefings in other agencies of government? Did you go over to the Pentagon and to the CIA?

HART: Oh, sure. I went to all those places.

O'BRIEN: Do you recall anything about those briefings that stands out?

HART: Nothing particular. It's a little far back to remember now. I suppose I was briefed in the Pentagon on the training mission, our military training mission out there. I don't recall anything particular about other training. We didn't have an AID [Agency for International Development] mission. I don't think there was anything particularly significant. I think it was expected that I knew all about Saudi Arabia or knew so much about it, because I was more of a veteran in the country than anybody else, really, in government. But I probably received a briefing on the military training mission.

O'BRIEN: Do you feel that some of the other agencies, the people that you talked to in other agencies about Saudi Arabia, had a pretty good grasp of basic politics of Saudi Arabia?

HART: If they'd been in the country, yes. If they hadn't, it was strictly from reading the files and traffic.

O'BRIEN: You didn't find any conflicting views at all about, well, not only Saudi Arabia but the Middle East in these briefings, did you?

HART: The big discussion was over the fact that King Saud Al Saud [Saud, King of Saudi Arabia] at that time had given notice to us to return to Saudi Arabia's full control over the Dhahran Airfield.

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He'd given us the proper year's advance notice. It was all done in accordance with the agreement. The implications of this, of course, were of concern to the military. What would happen to our landing rights and the facilities that we'd always held for our aircraft there at the airfield and procedures for gradually turning it over to the Saudis? This was the main preoccupation at the time with respect to Saudi Arabia itself. Also the discussion of the general stability and prospects of the Saud regime, whose reputation wasn't very good at the time. He'd projected a bad image: extravagance, particularly the extravagance of his sons, his unwillingness or inability to control them, the enormous amount of wastage of funds. This kind of discussion went on with respect to the survivability of his regime. The survivability even of Saudi Arabia as a monarchy was being talked about at that time: what would happen if the young military in Saudi Arabia should decide to take over? Would they decide to take over? All these things were much discussed, I think.

O'BRIEN: In regard to Dhahran, which, of course, was the major issue at that point, what real use was it to the U.S. Air Force and to the Pentagon and to the military, at that time?

HART: Well, Dhahran at that time was really of use as a military air transport service stopping place, a very handy airfield on long routes for refueling. Jet aircraft weren't being used so very much, so it was a question of propeller aircraft, and there was a turn-around facility there for them: resting of crews, putting in new crews, provisioning the aircraft in every respect. But it was a symbol of a close association between the United States and Saudi Arabia which had gone back to the days of President Truman [Harry S. Truman]. On that field we also had the headquarters of our training mission to the Saudi Arabian army and a little small unit to the navy, which wasn't much because there isn't much navy, but mostly it was to the Saudi army and, over in Jidda, a mission to the air force. And there were, in addition to those two positions, three other posts within Saudi Arabia which the training missions established in the interior.

The turning over of the base to King Saud's government had been actually recommended by King Faisal [Faisal, King of Saudi Arabia] when he was Crown Prince, but recommended as a move we should take before we were requested. In the spirit of the times, of the rising Arab nationalism and feeling against foreign bases, he felt that it would be better for our long-term relationship if we ourselves took the first move. We didn't do so. And then King Saud, in a moment of pressures from these elements and in some panic, over Cairo Radio gave us the notice. First he wanted to discuss it, and we said, we'll discuss it, and let's agree on a time. Then he became flurried and gave the news out publicly before we had agreed upon it, which annoyed our people in Washington somewhat. It wasn't well done. But we accepted it. There was no alternative, and, in any case, it was perfectly in

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accordance with the agreement. He gave us the advance notice of a full year—more than a full year, actually.

O'BRIEN: Did the element of airmen of Jewish faith at this point get into this particular matter of Dhahran?

HART: No.

O'BRIEN: It wasn't at all in the considerations of the Saudis at that point?

HART: No. No, that didn't figure in the situation. It was not that kind of a problem. It was simply a matter of foreign bases which were unpopular in the Arab nationalist media.

O'BRIEN: Were you ever aware of any reverse pressure on the part of Jewish elements in the United States about this whole question of screening of people in the Air Force on the basis of religious faith and staffing of posts overseas?

HART: Oh, that problem was chronic over the years as far as we were concerned here, but it was not a factor of any great consequence at that particular juncture. It was a problem for us because the Saudis would not give visas, you see, to anyone without asking the religious faith. But most of our military came out without visas anyway; they came out simply with I.D. cards. But, in my opinion, the general practice of our own people was simply to just not send out people there who were going to get into difficulties. To send someone out who would get into difficulties wouldn't exclude simply Jews. For instance, for some reason or other the Saudis didn't like the Bahaists, nor did they trust Armenians as a group. They were very reluctant to give a visa to an Armenian for some reason. I think the basic reason was that the capital, the religious capital, is in the Soviet Union. Saudis are extremely anti-Soviet, anti-Communist, and they feared that Armenians might be infected with this virus because of the religious capital being in Echmiadzin in Soviet Armenia.

But, of course, with the Jews there was sort of a special mental block. I used to argue this question with the Saudis a great deal. I said, "This is not to your advantage to take this position because it isn't even consistent with your own philosophy. You have nothing against Jews as such. Your objection is to Zionists. You regard them as enemies, but you don't regard Jews as your enemies." And they said, "That's correct. They're people of the Book." But they couldn't ever quite get over this hurdle and drop that part of the requirement on the visa forms. They rather expected that no Jews would show up in the training mission. Well, actually, eventually a few did. But nothing was said about it particularly.

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O'BRIEN: Well, there was a situation in '63, I believe, where Emanuel Celler made the comment....

HART: Yes, I remember that case. Well, this was in connection with the deployment of a special team of F-100s, a training mission to Saudi Arabia. And in this particular juncture we did have a momentary crisis over the deployment of that group because Emanuel Celler made public that it was expected that Jews would be included. It was kind of an interpretation of what he understood to be a non-objection attitude on the part of the Air Force, and then he sort of extended that by saying, "Jews will be included," or words to that effect—I've forgotten exactly how he said it. And that was made public, and it got back to Faisal and he stopped the whole mission temporarily.

O'BRIEN: That came out of a....

HART: But we sort of agreed to drop the matter, and the mission did finally come, and there was no problem.

O'BRIEN: Well, you must have gotten into Saudi Arabia in time to have some insight into one of the major cabinet reshufflings that took place in the middle part of 1961. Wasn't there a major cabinet reshuffling....

HART: I arrived in the middle of 1961, but I think what you're thinking of took place at the end of '60 when Faisal left. Faisal and his brother Saud, his older brother Saud, had been charged with fealty to one another by the old King [Ibn Saud, King of Saudi Arabia] before he'd died, who'd made them swear seven times that they would be loyal to each other. The Saudis played their cards as a family always very close to the chest and don't share their family problems with others, but we knew, and everybody knew, that those two men did not get along, they were too different. Saud had the mind of a child; he never really grew up mentally. Faisal was an extremely intelligent young man and had always been—he had always had the shrewdness and intelligence of his father [Ibn Saud], plus that which he must have gotten from his mother, a greater sophistication; he was more a man of the world in many respects, less of a rough and ready Bedouin. But between the two men there never was any question as to who was the more competent. We

knew twenty odd years ago that Saud would become the King and Faisal would be the Crown Prince and there would be problems. And sure enough, there always were.

Well, Faisal had become Prime Minister back about '58 or thereabouts. There was a great deal of financial confusion, and the consensus of the princes prevailed on the King to accept him as Prime Minister and give him executive powers. The King did reluctantly, King Saud. Faisal organized for the first time a cabinet. There never had been one before.

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He organized the budget. He called in outside advisers, one of whom is living right here in Washington now, Zaki Saad [Ahmed Zaki Saad] from Egypt, former president of the National Bank of Egypt. He tried to put things on an orderly basis and have a budget that meant something, with each cabinet member responsible to him for the maintenance of the budget, the expenditure. The budget and the appropriations are one and the same, a package, really.

The King began to be resentful not only of the fact that Faisal was making inroads in terms of reducing the great spectrum of money that he could spend as he wished, cutting it down, his discretionary spending authority, but also that he was becoming quite popular and respected. He was jealous of him. He deliberately attacked the budget and made an issue, unexpectedly, over approving it when it had always been approved by Faisal. And when Faisal saw what he was really up to, he just picked up his papers and walked off and went off in the desert and said he was through. He would have nothing to do with his brother. This caused an internal crisis in the royal family, because Faisal was more respected than Saud.

By the time I got there, Faisal was still not speaking to Saud. Saud was trying to build a bridge back to him for his own purposes. Faisal was as cold as ice (as he always is in a case like that): he'd have nothing to do with it, just retired. I called on the King, of course, and presented credentials and then went back to Jidda and then asked to come back and call on Faisal privately. That was arranged, and I went and called on him. He received me, living right in the same town, Taif, where I'd presented credentials to the King, but there was no contact between the two. And then later on the King came and called on Faisal before going back to Riyadh, and Faisal never returned the call. It was that kind of a setup.

But the real changes came later. The King became ill, seriously so, and frightened over his illness, and in November of '61—I having arrived in July and presented credentials in July—he went to the States [United States]. Before going to the States, he was hospitalized in Dhahran. And before he departed, the princes prevailed on Faisal to go down and pay a call on him, which he did, briefly, but without conversation. And then the princes prevailed on the King to give the executive power to Faisal, but it was apparently in a very limited way, while he was gone, just so there'd be somebody to sit in the chair and be at least the symbol of authority. Faisal reluctantly agreed to do it because it gave him no real authority. During the King's absence and recuperation in the United States, this was the way it was: Faisal would receive visitors and say, "Well, I'm not the man who can make the decision, but this is my advice," or something like that.

O'BRIEN: Did that visit cause you any consternation at all when...

HART: The visit of Saud here?

O'BRIEN: ...Saud came in November and went to Boston, I believe it was, for hospitalization?

HART: Yes. Yes, he did. Yes, he was in the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital [Brigham and Women's Hospital], I think.

O'BRIEN: Yes. Did that cause you any consternation at the Department or the White House as far as receiving him?

HART: No, the only trouble was that King Saud was always being influenced by his advisers in the wrong direction on protocol, and he thought that President Kennedy should have come up and visited him in Boston because he'd come to his country as a patient. It was hard to persuade him that that wasn't the way things were done. But the King did go to Florida in order to make it possible for Kennedy to drop in on him informally from Palm Beach where his home was, and then the protocol was accomplished to the satisfaction of both without getting Washington protocol into it. When President Kennedy called on Saud, he asked him to come up and have dinner with him in Washington later, and he agreed. And this was actually all sort of prearranged in order to save faces on both sides and not establish a precedent that wouldn't have been in accordance with White House practice. So they did have dinner together up here.

O'BRIEN: Was there any concern about him bringing, perhaps, a number of his wives? I noticed they did have a stag dinner at the White House rather than....

HART: Well, the wives never appear. You see, even Faisal's wife does not appear.

O'BRIEN: I see. So this was a kind of recognition of....

HART: Yes, recognition of the usage of the country. Yes.

O'BRIEN: The fact that Faisal, when Saud's out of the country, does not attempt to overthrow Saud is basically because of this pledge to the father and to the loyalty of the family?

HART: Yes, that's right, and also because of the custom of the country. You just don't try to do things that way in Saudi Arabia. You may in the Yemen or in other places where most changes of government have been by regicide, but not in Saudi Arabia. That's not the tradition.

O'BRIEN: Did the question of Dhahran ever come up—of course, you were in Saudi Arabia at the time—but did it come up in the discussions between Saud and President Kennedy in that visit in February?

HART: I don't really remember whether they discussed it or not, but all I can remember is, the visit as a personal relationship between the two was not a success because Saud, as I say, had the mind of a child and it was very hard to communicate with him effectively, mentally, even with an interpreter. But Saud came back extremely happy. I don't think Kennedy was impressed, but Saud was tremendously impressed and was as happy as he could be.

No, I beg your pardon, there was a discussion, I guess, in the general terms about Dhahran. But, in any event, when Saud got back I had business with him about Dhahran, and he was ready to do anything. He was completely euphoric over the whole visit. He felt that he had made a good friendly relationship with President Kennedy, and he felt more secure having established this relationship. As far as Dhahran is concerned, he readily agreed to an arrangement under which while we were turning over the base facilities to him, nevertheless we'd continue to have certain landing rights there that we needed for the MATS [Military Air Transport Service] and retain some buildings for our training mission on them and for our MATS facility. Most of it just would go over to the Saudis, but we'd have a small number of buildings we could continue to use. And we had no problem with the King on that.

O'BRIEN: Well, in this reform movement that's beginning in Saudi Arabia here, the change or westernization, Faisal is the key figure?

HART: He's the key. Now the transition to Faisal's power was a gradual one. The King got ill again. When he came back to Saudi Arabia he was King; there was no question as to who was the boss. Faisal was always, so long as he was around—and I guess he always was during that period—he acted as the principal counselor to the King. The King made him his principal lieutenant, so to speak. And I remember going to see the King on business and Faisal would be right there, counseling him and advising him and clarifying things. Faisal was trying hard to do what was right and also not to make the King feel that he was in any way trying to undercut him. He was always very respectful. He addressed him with the Arabic expression of respect *Tawwil 'Amrak*, which means, "May God prolong your life." This is used as a term of address of respect to someone. In those days Faisal even used this with me when we spoke Arabic together because I was an Ambassador, and he used it always with the King. For the time being relations seemed to be pretty good between the two, at least on an official plane. And yet the generally scandalous situation surrounding the King, you see, was not being corrected.

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The King got ill again, went away again. This was in '62. When he came back I think he finally decided that his health required putting Faisal back in a position of executive authority and giving him more powers than he'd ever given him before. And, he, Faisal, and I

had a conversation at the end of the summer of '62 in which Faisal said that in his new position and new mandate he was going to go to Washington. So he went to Washington and saw President Kennedy.

They had a very good meeting. And while he was on that trip the Yemen revolution occurred, which changed a lot of things. When he got back the King had given virtually complete executive authority over to him and had gone off to try to convalesce. And Faisal took this executive authority, and his very first act was to abolish slavery once and for all so there was no ambiguity about it.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever, particularly in that slavery matter make representations on that before...

HART: ...to the Saudis?

O'BRIEN: Right.

HART: No. I had no basis to make representations to them. Others made representations: African ambassadors who had found out that slaves from their countries were present in Saudi Arabia; Muslims, too—mind you, Muslims enslaving Muslims, a kind of slavery—it's more of a bondsman relationship than, perhaps, real slavery. But there were enough cases of that that the Africans were making a real issue out of it before Faisal did this. I think that's what expedited the general mood. But Faisal would have done it anyway because he didn't believe in it. He had no slaves of his own.

O'BRIEN: Did you find this infrastructure of, you know, well, political leadership in Saudi Arabia frustrating at times to you in your role as Ambassador?

HART: How do you mean, infrastructure?

O'BRIEN: Well, in a sense, as I understand it at this point, a good many of the cabinet members are either sons or uncles or in some way related to Saud and the family, and there's a good deal of tie-in in this respect, advisers and so on.

HART: Well, this is only traditional in the Arab system of the desert. You have to start from what they begin with and not from what we're accustomed to in the West. It's an extension of the old rule by the Sheikh over his tribe. He naturally puts his most trusted

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brothers and cousins in positions of authority, using diplomacy among them so as not to provoke a quarrel. In Saudi Arabia you can expect to find that the King and the Crown Prince will be brothers, that the Minister of Defense will be a brother, that the Minister of Finance,

the Minister of Interior, the key ministries for the security of the state will be in royal hands, just as they've been in Kuwait and other countries of the peninsula. There is no modern tradition of selecting others to do a job on which the security of the state and of the monarchy depends. But in Faisal's time even back in the fifties he had been selecting commoners for such jobs as Minister of Commerce, Minister of Trade and Industry, Minister of Agriculture, and other ministries of that kind.

O'BRIEN: How did you deal with this, though, as an ambassador? Did you ever find it something that, in a sense, frustrated your role as an ambassador?

HART: No, not at all. In fact, I had no particular problems in regard to that. I used to go direct to these ministers as I needed to and talked with them: the Minister of the Interior, Prince Fahd [Fahd ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, King of Saudi Arabia], Minister of Defense, Prince Sultan [Sultan ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz Al Saud, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia]....

O'BRIEN: In, I believe it was 1962—I may not pronounce the name right—Shuqayri [Ahmad Shuqayri], the Minister for U.N. Relations....

HART: Ahmad Shuqayri.

O'BRIEN: Shuqayri.

HART: Yes. Ahmad Shuqayri is not a relation of anybody in Saudi Arabia. He's a Palestinian. He was the Ambassador for years up in the United Nations.

O'BRIEN: Yes. Well, he makes a trip to the Soviet Union along with Mayor Fahd [Fahd al Faisal al Farhan], I believe.

HART: Yes.

O'BRIEN: Was this an approved kind of trip by the Saudi Arabian government or by Saud?

HART: That happened before I came, and I am not a hundred percent sure whether it was approved or not. But already by the time I arrived, there was a good deal of discontent with Ahmad Shuqayri in Saudi Arabia, and after Faisal took control Shuqayri was relieved of his duties.

O'BRIEN: The Petroleum Minister was relieved very soon, too, wasn't he? I can't think of his name—Tariki [Abdullah ibn Hamoud al-Tariki]?

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HART: Abdullah Tariki.

O'BRIEN: Tariki.

HART: Yes. I know Abdullah Tariki. He's a graduate of the University of Texas.

O'BRIEN: Right.

HART: Yes, he was. Well, Abdullah Tariki was actually a protégé of Faisal; Faisal got him educated, really gave him his education. But Tariki had become rather an anti-monarchical force in the country as well as a.... He belabored the oil company beyond what was necessary simply to make a bargaining for new revenues. Tariki had cut himself rather off from the royal family, I think for political reasons. He hoped to be a leader of the, well, you might call it here the new left, I suppose (in Saudi politics there wasn't any political party; there is no spectrum of political parties), but he wanted to be a young Arab dissenter. He had really pretty well cut himself off from the royal family, so being dropped when Faisal came in was not an unexpected thing.

O'BRIEN: Well, in regard to the problems in Yemen, why did Saud and Faisal both see this as a threat to the integrity of Saudi Arabia?

HART: Well, because for the very first time in a hundred thirty years or more Egyptian forces were deployed in the peninsula [Arabian Peninsula]. They have a feeling about the peninsula, similar to our Monroe [James Monroe] Doctrine feeling about Latin America, that outside forces don't belong there. Our military training mission was a mission to them; we were invited in; it wasn't a force. But a foreign force coming in (and particularly under these circumstances) to support a republican revolution, with loud propaganda over every medium, Cairo and Sana'a [Yemen] calling for the overthrow of the Saud clan and the overthrow of the monarchy in Saudi Arabia, it couldn't be regarded as other than a hostile act toward Saudi Arabia.

Faisal was in the United States; Saud was still running the thing. His first instinct when the Yemeni revolution took place was to stay out of it because they had no affection for the Hamid al-Din family on several counts. Historically the two families had never been close. They are on opposite sides of a schism in the religion. Their customs and their way of looking at things were so different that there was no closeness. The old Iman Ahmad [Ahmad ibn Yahya Nasir li-din Allah] was never admired in Saudi Arabia. He was regarded as hopelessly backward, a medieval type of ruler, and they didn't have any feeling for this man. There was no hospitality, but no closeness, and the first reaction of King Saud when the overthrow took place was—even though it was an overthrow of a monarchy, which he didn't like, I'm sure—to stay out of it until he heard the Egyptians coming in. He was persuaded, I think, then by Saif Al-Islam al-Hassan [Hassan Hamid al-Din ibn Yahya], brother of the late Iman [Ahmad], who had been

outside of the country at the time and was in New York, that he must help him and try to get the royalists back in. This would be a real threat to Saudi Arabia unless he did so he began helping. Of course, the Egyptians practically had their troops on board the ship when the revolution took place. They had advance notice.

O'BRIEN: The cabinet shakeup then actually takes place somewhat as a result of this, doesn't it?

HART: Well, when Faisal himself was given real full power, which was in October after he got back and the King went away, went off somewhere—I've forgotten now just where he did go, possibly to Europe—Faisal then established his own cabinet. For instance, King Saud's son, Muhammad Ibn Saud [Muhammad bin Saud Al Saud], had been Minister of Defense, and he was out. He's a young fellow, married to Faisal's daughter, Sara [Sara bint Faisal Al Saud]. That didn't make any difference, see. They replaced him right away with Sultan, who was a half-brother of Faisal. A complete cabinet change took place at that time.

O'BRIEN: Did this have any effect on the reform movement?

HART: Yes. Of course, the cabinet, being Faisal's choice, was ready to do his bidding at whatever pace he wanted things changed.

O'BRIEN: So Faisal coming back in is a major factor, too...

HART: Well, it was the factor.

O'BRIEN: ...as well as.... What were you advising Washington at this point in regard to Yemen?

HART: Well, I had been minister to the Yemen, resident in Jidda, and had been down there three times, and had been just preparing packing my bags for the fourth time when the revolution occurred before I could get there. Therefore I never was able to go in because, well, there was no way of getting in there; communications were cut. To better advise my government as to what was going on, feeling a little far from the scene, I flew to Aden where it was easier to get direct reports out of the Yemen from travelers coming over the border, Yemenis is coming out, reports from other missions other than our own. Ours was cut off; we were unable to hear from them at all—and find out, first of all, if our own people were safe, which I learned they were. Our primary concern at that instance was, what had happened to our own people in Ta'izz, because on the very first day of the revolution they killed virtually every cabinet member of the old regime and every leader of government up to some twenty odd people who were killed the first day including an old colleague of mine, a Yemeni, who used to be Minister here in Washington,

used to be in charge [Chargé d’Affaires of Yemen] in Washington, Abu-Taleb [Sayed Abdurrahman ibn Abdussamed Abu-Taleb].

The question of recognition did not arise immediately because the biggest concern was, what has happened to our own people and what are the status of those people? Our earliest report made it quite clear that there should be no recognition until they treated us like a legation, gave us our security of communication, pouch, telegraph, protection to our personnel, diplomatic privileges. They weren’t giving them at first. They were trying to pressure us in to recognize as the price of giving us these. We said, “Nothing doing. You will give us those privileges, and then we’ll think about it.” And we held firm on that.

O’BRIEN: What was Washington advising you at this point to do?

HART: They weren’t advising me to do anything because I was in Jidda and to the extent possible they were on the receiving end of information trying to figure out what could be done, whether to recognize it or not. The problem was complicated by the Egyptian invasion of troops to support the republic, to secure the republic in the first place, because there was no royalist opposition at the start. And then Faisal, like his brother Saud, reacted and began to help the royalists, and with all the money they had and some weaponry—small arms—to send in, the royalists’ tribesmen, always eager to get weapons and money, began to organize in the north on the royalist side and began a resistance movement against the republic. The Egyptians were already there, but then they poured more and more men in.

O’BRIEN: Where were they getting the weapons that they were giving to the royalist factions in Yemen? Were these....

HART: Well, we were concerned, of course, that some American weapons might have gotten in because we had a longtime military training mission. In fact, some boxes bearing the AID handclasp symbol and some weapons or pieces of military equipment were found or captured from the royalists by the republicans, and they raised hell with us about it later on. This was later on; it was some months later. But basically the weaponry did not come from our sources. It came from other places, old miscellaneous this and that that they’d picked up all over the place (there was a great deal of help given by Iran, eventually), but it was small arms weaponry of miscellaneous kinds.

O’BRIEN: Did you agree with the decision to recognize the...

HART: The republic?

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O’BRIEN: ...the republican forces?

HART: Yes, with some reservations. I wasn’t very happy about it, and I’ll tell you why. At the very beginning I was for recognition at once. As soon as they

had given us the diplomatic immunity and treated us with the respect that a mission deserved, then I was prepared to recommend and did recommend recognition on the grounds that the Hamid al-Din family had thoroughly discredited itself in the Yemen. And God knows, they had. That was a regime which belonged in the Middle Ages, and there was no basis for supporting the return of that regime. Of course, the Saudis claimed Al-Badr [Muhammad Al-Badr] would have been different. Well, maybe he would, but he had done very little before as Crown Prince to recommend him.

But when the Egyptians came in with these troops and began supporting a republic that was stridently anti-Saud, frequently anti-American in its pronouncements, anti-British, calling for the expulsion of them from Aden, really beating the war drum, it began to be a changed picture. The policy problem that the Department faced was how to do two things, or maybe three, at once: first of all, to get the Egyptians to agree to pull their troops out in return for the Saudis stopping aid to the royalists, in other words, get these foreign elements out of the war and let the Yemenis see if they could settle it among themselves; and in the second place, to get Abdullah Sallal [Abdullah al-Sallal], the new president of the Yemen Republic, to quiet down his imprecations and his threats against the British at Aden and against the Saudis in return for recognition by us of the regime, formal recognition, establishment of diplomatic relations.

Well, they made a procedural blunder, in my opinion, because they agreed to a formula between themselves and Egypt, and Egypt brought the Yemen into it, because they could tell them what to do, calling for simultaneous termination of Saudi aid to the royalists with the beginning of an evacuation by Egyptian troops over phases but not specified how long, and Sallal to quiet down and be a good neighbor to his neighbors, and we then to recognize, and all this sort of to happen at once; Sallal also to agree to abide by all his international obligations with us and with his neighbors. This was cooked up as a formula between Washington and Cairo and agreed to, and then I was told to sell it to King Faisal. Well, he was absolutely furious; I've never seen the man so angry in my life. Here we'd been a close friend of Saudi Arabia, and he was handed a *fait accompli*. He said, "You know what the Egyptians are going to do? They're just not going to withdraw. They'll take advantage of the stopping of aid to the royalists and liquidate the royalists." He said, "I won't agree to it." And he refused to.

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O'BRIEN: Well, Senator Hickenlooper [Bourke B. Hickenlooper] gets into this....

HART: And I then found myself very sharply in disagreement with the instructions I received. And I never earned my pay up to that moment harder than I did trying to persuade Faisal that this was the thing to do.

And I didn't really feel that the procedure was right. We should have taken Faisal in from the beginning and discussed the matter with him instead of telling him it was agreed to between Washington and Cairo and it was expected that he would come along. He said, "I won't come along."

O'BRIEN: Did you communicate these objections to the Department?

HART: Of course.

O'BRIEN: What kind of response did you get on them?

HART: Well, it was already done.

O'BRIEN: It was done. Senator Hickenlooper gets into this....

HART: In fact, President Kennedy sent a letter which I had to deliver at the same time, you see, to King Faisal. President Kennedy's letter was part of my instructions. Now Faisal was particularly taken aback because he was very attracted to President Kennedy. They had gotten along very well on the visit that he made here in Washington, and to be treated this way just went against the grain. His hand shook. He banged the paper down on the table. He just said, "This is an outrage." I'd never seen him lose his temper before, and in many conversations, tough conversations, that we had afterwards over the Yemeni situation I never saw him get upset as he did on that occasion. It was wrong the way we did it.

O'BRIEN: Well, Senator Hickenlooper gets in this, as I understand. He came out as a special representative of the President.

HART: Well, that was later.

O'BRIEN: Oh, I see.

HART: That would have been at least a year later. He came out for Thanksgiving Day, I think, in '63. He was not a mediator; he didn't get into any of this. He just paid a courtesy call. I took him to Faisal myself. I was present during the entire conversation, just generalities and friendly—yes, it was a friendly gesture. He was willing to come down and pay a friendly visit, and it was appreciated. It was not a negotiative visit.

O'BRIEN: At all? He made no representations on this then at all?

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HART: No, no. Ellsworth Bunker was brought in in the spring to try to do what needed to be done in the way of three-cornered negotiation.

O'BRIEN: Right. Just a point of reference—I happened to look at a book by a man by the name of Leacacos [John P. Leacacos] on the State Department called *Fires in the In-Basket* that has a good deal of gossip in it. He made this point about Senator Hickenlooper, that was supposed to have come out as a special representative and worked out this agreement.

HART: No, it's completely wrong.

O'BRIEN: There are several other inaccuracies in that book, so....

HART: That's one of them.

O'BRIEN: Well, that's good to know.

HART: I have to say immediately that Nasser [Gamal Abdel Nasser] didn't repay our recognition of the Yemen Republic very well. He took it as a hunting license to go after Saudi Arabia.

O'BRIEN: Yes. There are several instances....

HART: And he immediately made a military attack for the first time on the soil of Saudi Arabia.

O'BRIEN: That was the air strike.

HART: He hit a border area near Qizan and he followed it up with strikes against Najran, and in February of '63, in the middle of the night—believing, with false intelligence, that there was a big resistance group on his side that could be helped—he dropped by parachute force a hundred and eight bundles of ready-to-go weapons and ammunition on the Saudi coast north of Jidda where they were spotted in the early hours of the morning by an American special forces mission flying with Saudis on a training flight. They saw one bundle being picked up, and they circled over, and the truck dropped the bundle and disappeared. Then they found more bundles, and they were not picked up, and a hundred and eight of them—which suggests that maybe two of them might have been taken; God knows how many there were originally, but a hundred and eight's rather an odd number—were picked up on the coast and assembled by the Saudis in a barracks building where they were put on display. This thing never hit the press outside of Saudi Arabia. The American news media never took recognition of this for some reason. It was a major miscalculation by Nasser and a very poorly executed

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operation because those bundles were dropped over a hundred miles of highway up the coast, and the Bedouins, who in any other country than Saudi Arabia would have grabbed the weapons for themselves—Saudi Arabia remembered the days of Ibn Saud, “don't touch anything that doesn't belong to you; you'll get your hand cut off”—and they just reported to the police that these bundles were there. And they were picked up.

O'BRIEN: Well, then, President Kennedy's letter of October and then the subsequent publication of that letter supporting the family is somewhat related to this,

isn't it?

HART: Oh, yes, very much so, because President Kennedy knew the problem that Faisal was in. You see, the whole Saud regime had been under vicious attack by the Cairo radio, and this had been going on even before the Yemeni revolution; it had been going on for nearly a year. And they felt very hard pressed because it was quite clear that Cairo had adopted an attitude that it wanted the overthrow of that monarchy, wouldn't have any dealings with it anymore, refused to have any truck with it. It was a propaganda exercise. It was this business of the so-called progressive Arabs versus the reactionaries with a strong socialist overtone. The first thing that Faisal wanted to know is, "Do you Americans still support us the way you used to back in the days of the previous period? Do you still consider the relationship important?" The Kennedy Administration affirmed it privately and then publicly.

O'BRIEN: Did you have much to do with Robert Komer during this period, during the Arab crisis?

HART: Well, only when I came home.

O'BRIEN: Were you in contact with him, though, as....

HART: Not from out there.

O'BRIEN: Not from out there.

HART: Well, I mean, if I was I didn't know it. I mean, I just sent my telegrams in the usual way.

O'BRIEN: Did the Yemen crisis bring about more closely aligned military ties with the United States?

HART: Yes. As a result of these attacks on Saudi Arabia and the pressures—well, the pressures first and then the attacks—and as a result of the earlier visit of Faisal here and talks with Kennedy, it was agreed that the United States would make a visible demonstration of its interest in Saudi Arabia beyond what had been done in the past. Monthly destroyer visits became a matter of routine to Jidda. This had never been done before. We'd perhaps have a destroyer visit once

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a year at the most. There were various special missions flown in to train the Saudi troops but mostly really to jack up their morale because they were short term missions. And eventually in the framework of the Bunker agreements that he worked out, which included the United Nations observer force in the Yemen, there was deployed to Saudi Arabia an air unit as a training mission but with F-100 aircraft and live ammunition. They kept within the borders.

They flew around a good deal, and everybody knew they were there. That was a temporary mission, lasted about six months.

O'BRIEN: Were there any military people detailed there for training in counterinsurgency....

HART: Well, the military missions....

[BEGIN SIDE II, TAPE I]

HART: One of the missions that came was a—I remember it had a counterinsurgency short course which it gave. This was given in the classroom with some outside demonstration. It was a short course given to Saudi officers.

O'BRIEN: Do you remember much about the regional meetings that took place among the Near East people, the Near East people not only in Washington but also people in the field? I believe there was one in 1961 in Cyprus.

HART: Oh, yes. I attended that meeting.

O'BRIEN: Do you remember much about the major issues at that point and the people that came out from Washington?

HART: There were no issues batted out really at that meeting. It was a get-together meeting led by Chester Bowles [Chester B. Bowles] as Undersecretary to get to know the ambassadors—and their wives, incidentally; they were invited to come, and some women came from Washington. It was a large meeting. It embraced what we call the Near East: Greece, Turkey, and Iran, I believe, and some parts of Africa were included, Arab countries, Somaliland. It was rather a large and therefore somewhat unwieldy meeting, and it was really a get-acquainted meeting. Each ambassador spoke his piece, said what he had to say about the problems of the country as he saw them, discussed the Arab-Israel issue, things of that kind, in a general way. But I would say it came under the heading more of getting-to-know-you than anything else.

O'BRIEN: Besides Chester Bowles, do you remember any of the other people that came out? How about Phillips Talbot?

HART: Phillips Talbot was there. Yes. So was Williams [G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams], Soapy Williams, from the Bureau of African Affairs. He'd been in Africa and came up on a special flight. Katie Louchheim [Kathleen Louchheim] was there. Carl Rowan [Carl T. Rowan] was there.

O'BRIEN: Well, as a career person in talking to these people who basically represented the new Administration, did you sense any different directions in foreign policy at that point over what you had been familiar with during the Eisenhower years?

HART: Not yet. They obviously wanted to give a new and a fresh look to our foreign relations in this region; they wanted to start afresh and have a new flavor or relationship. They were naturally very much interested in the possibility of some kind of a solution to the Israel-Arab quarrel, but there was no ready solution available. President Kennedy had sent out a letter to every Arab chief of state asking his opinion on this matter. There was an attempt made by President Kennedy to get into good, strong, warm personal relationship with every chief of state in the area, I'm sure. Generally speaking, I think he succeeded rather well, particularly where he could make personal contact.

O'BRIEN: Did he carry on any series of correspondences with Faisal at all?

HART: Oh, yes, he did. I had many letters to deliver and receive between him and Faisal over my time there. I was there four years.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever get a chance to....

HART: Of course, Kennedy died in '63...

O'BRIEN: What was the general context of these letters?

HART: ...and Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] continued the tradition. Well, they were mostly matters, at the beginning, having to do with our reaffirming our attitude of general support, friendliness being demonstrated by saying that we considered it of great importance to the United States that Saudi Arabia's territorial integrity and independence be preserved and that.... I think the letters are of record. I wouldn't try to quote them now—I'd have to go back and check the language—but that kind of thing at the beginning was important. There were reaffirmations of friendship all the way along the line, and I had quite a hand myself in helping to draft some of these things because there was a good relationship. I felt that I had, at least a contact direct with the President through the White House group which was preparing the papers for him, but at any rate, you never know, how much comes from the State Department and how much from the White House. I used to take a hand in it because they'd send me a text of a proposed letter, and I'd send it back and say, "I think you ought to change this and put in this form." And they would do it because I knew what kind of language would go over and what kind of language would be regarded as too cold or perhaps peremptory sounding to them, whereas it wouldn't be to us.

O'BRIEN: Of course, you had a very good relationship with Faisal, too, didn't you?

HART: Yes.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever have much of a quarrel with Saud at all?

HART: No, I never quarreled with Saud. But Saud, you just could not mentally communicate with Saud very effectively. His span of attention was very brief. Anything complicated he couldn't keep himself on very long. He'd get exasperated. He just couldn't understand complicated things, really. But with Faisal, yes. Faisal's a good listener; a very shrewd, retentive memory; a very good, analytical mind; and basically a very fine character, a warm character.

O'BRIEN: Do you remember much about the '62 Athens meeting of the Near East people?

HART: Well, I attended that meeting, presided over by Phil Talbot. Yes, that was '62. We tried to focus on the main issues of the area. In all those meetings we tried to pick particular subjects that required joint counseling and give the best advice we could to the Assistant Secretary. He had the agenda, and we went along with it, and then if at the end we had specific problems of our own, we would take these up in separate, private sessions, bilateral things that didn't concern the group as a whole.

O'BRIEN: Do you remember much about the agenda for that meeting, any important things....

HART: Well, we always had to discuss the Arab-Israel issue at every one of those meetings.

O'BRIEN: It was Hawk missiles [Raytheon MIM-23 Hawk surface-to-air missile] at that point—wasn't it, in '62, the sale of the Hawk missiles to Israel?

HART: Well, frankly, I don't remember. It could have been. I think it probably did come into the picture.

O'BRIEN: Well, in that regard, at least one of the other ambassadors was instructed—well, in fact, it was Ambassador Badeau [John S. Badeau], as I understand it—to inform President Nasser before the United States made the public announcement of the sale of the Hawk missiles. Were you instructed to do this with Faisal at this point?

HART: Frankly, I don't recall whether I was or not, at this moment.

O'BRIEN: Do you remember any of the other people that came out with....

HART: I probably was. If it was a general instruction, it probably hit me. It may have, but I just don't remember for sure.

O'BRIEN: Right. I have no idea whether it was....

HART: It's a little too far back.

O'BRIEN: Right. It would be interesting if it was a general instruction. I only guessed....

HART: Well, it may not have been general; it may have been particular. It may have been to people that they thought could listen and not just blow their stack. I'm not sure whether they bothered to tell the Syrians, for example.

O'BRIEN: Do you remember anything about the 1963 meeting?

HART: Yes. The 1963 meeting was held under rather different problem circumstances. It was held in Istanbul. This was in October. Our greatest preoccupation at that time was this Yemeni crisis, even more than anything in the Arab-Israel scene, and most of our discussion centered on that crisis and the handling of it and our relations with Egypt and our relations with Saudi Arabia and with the Yemen.

O'BRIEN: Do you remember who came out from Washington that time?

HART: Well, Phil Talbot was there, and also Bill Gaud [William S. Gaud], who at that time was Assistant Director of AID for Near East and South Asia. There are always deputy assistant secretaries and office directors who usually come to those meetings—some, depending on the urgency. But I don't remember for sure who was there at that time.

O'BRIEN: Did you have much in the way of discussion with Gaud at that time?

HART: No. Personally I didn't have too much with him.

O'BRIEN: Passing on to the big economic interest, of course, in Saudi Arabia, Aramco [Arabian-American Oil Company], were relations generally good between the company and the Saudi Arabian government during your tenure as Ambassador?

HART: Yes. Fundamentally, after Abdullah Tariki [al-Tariki] left—you see, Abdullah Tariki made meaningful contact very difficult. He was making

noises mostly for general, youthful Arab consumption rather than for negotiating purposes, and he was demanding a complete

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revision of the relationship. The biggest dispute was over the posted prices in the Gulf as a basis for royalty payments. Well, after he left, the company settled this matter with his successor much to the advantage of the government of Saudi Arabia. They paid a pretty big bill. They could have done it with Tariki, but Tariki really was less interested in a settlement than he was in making himself a young Arab dissenter hero. It, therefore, didn't work with him, but once he left Zaki Yamani [Ahmed Zaki Yamani], the new Minister of Petroleum [Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources], who's still there in that job, settled the thing with the company after a negotiation which lasted a few months.

O'BRIEN: Was one of his objections the fact that Aramco was purely a producing rather than a fully integrated marketing-transporting organization?

HART: Yes. Abdullah Tariki had the concept that the Saudi government should share in oil revenues from the wellhead to the filling station, not realizing—although he's a very smart young man—that to buy into the filling station (that is, the distribution end of the business) was impossible except at the expenditure of vast resources by the Saudi government. You cannot oblige the marketing organizations to turn over assets to you gratis. You can't oblige them to do anything. You can oblige a producing company in your country to do anything—you can confiscate it—but you can't do that once you leave the shores. And there's no way of forcing the marketing organizations, the parent companies, and their various outlets to turn over assets to you and make you a co-owner. In any event, it probably would not have been very profitable for the Saudis, even if they'd had the money to do it. They didn't have the money; they wanted something for nothing. This was an unrealistic proposal, and it wasn't pursued by the Saudi government after Tariki left.

O'BRIEN: This matter of posted prices, though, is a major complaint of many of the countries of the Middle East, isn't it?

HART: Well, it was a matter, really, of the discounts given to the parent companies below the posted price and then royalties based on the 50-50 split, based on that rather than on the higher posted price.

O'BRIEN: Oh. Did you ever see any evidence of unfairness in this regard, manipulation of the posted prices?

HART: Oh, I don't know that you can call it manipulation exactly. They post prices, meaning they're prepared to sell for the world market at those

prices, but then the parent companies get a discount on that because they own the producing company. And that's where the complaint comes in. Sure, it's discriminatory in favor of the

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owning companies, the parent companies, but the posted price is based on what they hope they can get. The Saudi complaint was, "Well, all right, you've got to share that with us." And the company realized that it had to. They did. It was a very intricate argument of finance, which I can't oversimplify for you and make it meaningful, but in effect it meant whatever extra take you get we want a big share full.

O'BRIEN: At one time there was an attempt on the part of at least one independent to arrive at a contract. I was thinking of, as I understand it, in the fifties Aristotle Onassis [Aristotle Socrates Onassis]....

HART: Yes. King Saud tried to establish a tanker company for the Saudis' use. This was a violation of Aramco's concession, and after many fruitless negotiations it was finally taken to arbitration, and it was taken to arbitration during the period when Faisal was Prime Minister the first time. There was some bitterness on the Saudi side that it had to go to arbitration. But the arbitration was in favor of the company. But I didn't find any particular aftermath of ill feeling by the time I got there.

O'BRIEN: There were no more attempts to arrive at any kind of agreements of this nature?

HART: No. It wasn't, again, a realistic thing. It was a good financial deal for Onassis, but it wouldn't have meant much to the Saudis.

O'BRIEN: I have heard from various sources, reliable and unreliable, that there is an attempt on the part of Aramco, particularly, to influence not only the Saudis but American foreign policy. One thing, for example, that I've heard is that Foreign Service personnel were treated rather lavishly and flown on aircraft of the company. Did you see any evidence of this?

HART: No. I think that's not really correct. Aramco never buttered up the [U.S.] Foreign Service, nor did it try to influence the Foreign Service, nor influence the U.S. government particularly. It naturally tried to share its appraisals and estimates with the U.S. government on the Middle Eastern situation as a whole. We used to see these people a lot, and we used to compare notes, but they really operated pretty much in their own sphere. They left us alone: we left them alone. As far as handling our respective affairs was concerned, we never had any trouble that way. And as far as their flying people around, no. We generally flew on the Saudi Airlines [Saudi Arabian Airlines], or I flew mostly on military aircraft in Saudi Arabia. The only time I think I

remember during my time as Ambassador flying on Saudi aircraft was when I was traveling as their guest to see their own operations.

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O'BRIEN: Well, Aramco has a rather well organized public relations, kind of, in fact, a model public relations organization for Saudi Arabia, as I understand. Did you ever have much to do with that, observing this function?

HART: Oh, I observed it. We didn't have anything to do with it particularly. They have a very good—have always had a very good—government relations department with good Arabists, research men, students, Arabic speakers who could deal with the local emirs, sheikhs. They train them themselves, put them through schooling themselves; they're their own men; they bring them up in the company's paths, have given a number of them very advanced study opportunities abroad.

O'BRIEN: Did this Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries [OPEC] that was formed—Tariki, as I understand, had a great deal to do with it—did that have much of an influence, that matter of...

HART: Abdullah Tariki.

O'BRIEN: Tariki, right.

HART: Yes. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries included Saudi Arabia. During the time that Abdullah Tariki was there he used to use this occasion as a forum for very tendentious and emotional speeches against oil companies as exploiters. And he was a spellbinding orator; he was very good. But once he left the scene, OPEC didn't have quite those pyrotechnics in it. It got down more to the business of comparing notes as to how you can get the most out of the producing country. How much should the companies pay up? What can they really afford to pay? How much squeeze can you really put on them without hurting yourself? And this kind of thing. It was a lesson in economics, and on the whole a rather salutary one. I think they had to have some kind of an organization of that kind. After all, for the most part, these people were ignorant of oil economics. This was the way they educated themselves. They got experts in, of course, paid experts from private life to help them.

O'BRIEN: In regard to oil matters in the Near East, who were some of the important people in the State Department and out of the State Department that advise on matters of oil problems, let's say, with a nation like Saudi Arabia or Iraq or Iran, to a lesser degree?

HART: Well, we don't advise the Saudi government.

O'BRIEN: No, I mean as far as policy.

HART: As far as we were advising ourselves is concerned? Well, at that particular time when I was there I don't recall who was the principal oil officer in the State Department, for example.

O'BRIEN: George McGhee has a certain expertise in this area.

HART: George did, has had all his life, yes. He knows the industry well. He knows the problems in the area. But I don't think that was his primary job. He was certainly one of those who could counsel during the Kennedy period and Johnson period, but I don't think that was ever his principal job during that period.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever play any kind of an informal or formal role in relations between Aramco, Saudi Arabia, and/or the U.S. government? Did you ever enter into any of these things at all?

HART: In oil discussions?

O'BRIEN: Right. Over any...

HART: Between the Saudis and Aramco?

O'BRIEN: Right.

HART: No. Never.

O'BRIEN: Either informally or formally?

HART: No. I never counseled the Saudis nor got into the middle of their negotiations, and we never have, really, not really, with the Saudis. We've left it to the two parties to work out because Aramco was there before we were. Their first people arrived about 1931 or '32, and they have had an independent relationship with the Saudis which is more like a partnership than anything else. This is the pattern that was set by the old King, Abdual-Aziz [Ibn Saud]. It was a healthy arrangement, and we felt it much better and the company felt it much better to leave it that way and not.... We were not called upon by the company to get into their problems. They negotiated their 50-50 agreement of 1950 without us at all. They just informed us after it was done. That was the most basic agreement they could have negotiated with the government, and they did it entirely on their own. And after that when they got into these problems with Abdullah Tariki and others, they never asked us to do their talking for them.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever see any evidence of increased Soviet interest in moving into

the transportation, refining, and perhaps the marketing of the Middle East oil? Did they ever make any

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representations that you know of to the, well, let's say, the Saudi Arabian government along those lines?

HART: No, not in the time that I was there. In fact, they were regarded somewhat as competitors because they were trying to undercut the market in Europe. And of course, the Soviets have no representation in Saudi Arabia. They haven't had since the 1930s when they pulled out their own mission on their own accord. They have tried to resume contact, tried to resume diplomatic relations, but the Saudis haven't been interested up to now. No, I heard of no such thing as that, not in Saudi Arabia.

Of course, they did in Egypt, as you know. They got into that a long time ago, and into Iraq and into Syria, but not in the way of marketing, in the way of, well, I mean, not marketing the oil from those countries. They were marketing their own oil to Egypt at a time that Egypt needed it, at a low price. And the Egyptians called upon American companies to refine it or else, which they didn't like very much. And they offered technical teams for drilling, seismographic work, exploration work. In Iraq they built a refinery. In Syria way back the Czechs built a refinery, Communist Czechoslovakia, and the Soviets have gotten in there, too, I think, in advisory matters somewhere. The governments pay for this, you know. This is not a grant. It's a business proposition. You know, the Russians will come in, they'll do the work, and they get paid.

O'BRIEN: They just don't have the technical expertise either, do they?

HART: We estimated always that the Russians are at least twenty years behind us, except in certain special things. They had a very good drilling bit, and they developed a turbo drill in which the engine descends with the bit. This has proven to be useful only in very homogeneous geologic formations. In cavernous formations, water traps and things of that kind, you can lose the whole works. They tried it in Turkey when I was there, eastern Turkey, and it was not successful. No, I think in refining and in... well, first of all, I've had many oilmen tell me that if they were turned loose in Soviet Siberia, things would change fast in the oil picture in Russia. No, the Russians have not exploited their oil as they might have, and certainly their refinery construction techniques are far behind ours. I think almost everybody agrees with that in the trade. The Iraqis had a lot of trouble with that refinery that the Soviets built there.

Now the Saudis are not stupid at all. They catch up with these things; they watch these developments. But I don't recall that the Soviets have made any proposals to the Saudis along this line. I don't think they've gotten that far with any discussions with the Saudis. Any discussions they have with them are informal anyway because there are no formal relations.

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O'BRIEN: Well, passing over to some of the relationships between, well, organizations like AID, were there much in the way of AID programs...

HART: In Saudi Arabia?

O'BRIEN: ...active in Saudi Arabia?

HART: Well, only back in the fifties, and not when I was there in any capacity. The AID mission folded soon after it was there in the days of King Saud when he was first King. Fundamentally the Saudis never understood what the AID mission was supposed to do. It was a technical mission to train and get the Saudis to do things for themselves, and the Saudis expected them simply to build a lot of things for them gratis. The AID mission moved in and built out of the AID money housing for its own people, and it had to do this because there was no housing available. It was rather an expensive overhead. The Saudis couldn't see much being done for them. They saw a lot of houses being built, got impatient about that, began to grumble. And then when Saud came in, one of his first acts was to demand something like three hundred million dollars outright from the United States as a grant. Of course, we didn't have such money as that. And he didn't have any idea what he was going to use it for. As I've said before, he had the mind of a child, really. We just had to tell him politely we didn't have that kind of money, and he got angry.

Then we had other points of friction, discussions, misunderstandings between us. And in their exasperation they informed us, Saud's government informed us, that—I think it was Sheikh Yusuf Yassin—that they had decided not to renew the AID mission from the United States. Well, it wasn't up for renewal; it was a polite way of saying you can leave. They didn't expect us to pick this up so quickly. We did. We just told them we'd pack up and get out right away, and they were quite astounded. They thought we would discuss it, and argue and haggle a little over it. We weren't supposed to just move out. That was the most salutary thing I think we've done in a long time in our relations, because they realized that we were not there because—we were not insisting on our presence in any form. When the air base notification was given, we, businesslike, packed up and got out. And the Saudis, I think, value their relationship with the United States the more because they knew they could lose it all.

During the time I was there, some people referred to this departure of our AID mission of nearly ten years before, and I remember one prominent Saudi saying, "I don't know why the Egyptians should complain about the American relationship with Saudi Arabia. They've had a big U.S. AID mission in their country." And they knew the story of how we happened to leave.

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O'BRIEN: Were there any attempts to get additional AID missions or P.L. 480 [Public Law 480—Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act] programs?

HART: No, nothing of that kind. They had their own cash: they didn't need it. What they asked for from us during the time that I was Ambassador and what they got were special teams to give advice on special subjects. In particular, they wanted an American outfit to come in, U.S. government to come in, and help them establish a television network. So we first had an appraisal by somebody from the FCC [Federal Communications Commission], and then we had the Corps of Engineers [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers] take charge and get an American firm, which proved to be RCA [Radio Corporation of America], to come in and set up the beginnings of the network in accordance with their wishes and in the way they wanted it done. The Corps of Engineers was also used for other purposes, for example, in building Army cantonments in three different parts of Saudi Arabia, in overhauling and refurbishing their military transport system on the ground, this kind of thing. They've called upon us, and we've given it. And we've also sent special short-term teams out to make appraisals of the economic situation, development needs and things of that kind. But we have never been in the position of having, since the early fifties, an AID mission there. We have individual experts who will go out as they request and stay there for a while.

O'BRIEN: Was there ever any attempt to get the Peace Corps into Saudi Arabia?

HART: The Saudis never asked for the Peace Corps, although they showed an interest in it. They never directly asked for it, so it never went in.

O'BRIEN: How about the World Bank [International Bank for Reconstruction and Development] and international reconstruction development loans, things of this sort? Did you ever in any way become involved in any of Saudi Arabia's attempts to go to these organizations?

HART: Yes, the Saudi Arabs way back in the period right after World War II in their earliest development efforts called upon the Export-Import Bank to help them build a railroad from the east coast into Riyadh. That was an Ex-Im Bank project. During the time that I was there, I believe there was some discussion about helping finance some big aircraft purchases, but I'm not quite sure whether we actually loaned the money or not for any of those things. They were not doing so much business during the time that I was there with big international lending institutions because they preferred to just fund it directly with the outfit they were dealing with.

There is a problem in banking in Saudi Arabia which is traditional. It's against their interpretation of Islam to pay interest. But their inhibitions in that have been taken care of to some extent by putting the

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interest in some kind of a service charge context in the bulk of the loan where they've had to have a loan. But they've got enough cash now so that they really don't have much reason to go out and borrow and pay charges. They like credit arrangements when they can get them on certain big items. When they negotiate with an aircraft company, for example, they're

interested in credit terms, and they want them as lenient as possible, and they deal directly with the company on most of those things.

O'BRIEN: Passing over to some administrative matters, would you care to comment on some of the so-called changes and reforms—sometimes I think they're referred to as the Bundy [McGeorge Bundy]-Rostow [Walt Whitman Rostow] changes in foreign policy management—going away from the National Security Council and the OCB [Operations Coordinating Board] and developing a, you know, tight corps of White House advisers as well as people in the State Department to deal with particular crises?

HART: Task force business?

O'BRIEN: Right.

HART: Well, you mean, comment on them from my observation as to what I think of them?

O'BRIEN: Yes. As a person with long experience in Near East affairs.

HART: Well, we didn't have too much of a problem with this. Bob Komer was our man, so to speak, for liaison purposes in the White House. Now, Bob was not an expert on the Middle East. He simply had to make himself one by studying the problems and reading the traffic without benefit of very much travel. He did travel a little, but not much. But he was very alert to all developments and was constantly on the phone with all our desk officers in the bureau, and he maintained very good personal relations with them. I would say he was more a coordinator and a special eye for Kennedy than anything else. That is, he didn't want any balls to be dropped; he wanted to know what was going on; he wanted to be in a position to advise; and frequently, I think, he was helpful to us. But he did not replace direct contact between the State Department and Kennedy. For instance, I went over to see Kennedy. Sometimes I'd argue with the President. Kennedy was accessible to his ambassadors.

O'BRIEN: Do you remember anything particular about the meetings that you had with him?

HART: Yes, I remember one very clearly. This was *the* one, really. I came home on leave in the summer of '63, in the middle of that Yemen crisis, when it had just subsided; that is, we'd gotten

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the air unit out there, we'd gotten the Bunker mission wrapped up, and the agreements were in effect. Once that had been done, then I came home on leave and consultation. I had a talk

with the President at that time about the situation. We discussed some various correspondence he was having with Faisal at the time, and the problems of our deployment of an air unit, what he could do and what he couldn't do, this kind of thing. We had a good discussion.

O'BRIEN: Do you feel he had a pretty good grasp of....

HART: Excellent. He followed things in great detail. It was commonly said that he could give an excellent briefing on the Yemen to anybody. He had a very retentive memory, and he went into details in depth. He understood. It was very satisfying to talk to him about these things.

O'BRIEN: Komer was particularly involved in the Yemen matters, wasn't he?

HART: Oh, yes. There was a nickname around the White House: Komer's war. That was just a joke, of course.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever have any problems with....

HART: The President used to kid Komer a little bit.

O'BRIEN: Oh, that's the origin of "Komer's war."

HART: He'd kid him a little bit.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever have any problems with other agency operations in Saudi Arabia? AID, for example, people; CIA; and the MAAG [Military Assistant Advisory Group]—well, of course you didn't have a MAAG group....

HART: We had no AID mission up there.

O'BRIEN: Right. You didn't have a MAAG group there, did you?

HART: Yes. The U.S. Military Training Mission was our MAAG. Yes, of course, I had constant contact with them, and the chief of the training mission was in constant touch with me, and I would have him over to the embassy frequently. We even made trips together. We visited all the installations more than once.

O'BRIEN: How about CIA?

HART: Sure, I used to have contact with them whenever I was here.

O'BRIEN: Did they carry on any operations, functions, in addition to their intelligence gathering?

HART: No. No.

O'BRIEN: They kept you pretty well informed as to....

HART: Well, yes, that was in the nature of sharing of information. There was nothing special.

O'BRIEN: Did you put the country team approach into effect?

HART: Oh, yes. Yes, I did indeed. I certainly did. Yes, it was in full effect all the time.

O'BRIEN: How do you feel that it worked for you? Was it effective?

HART: Oh, yes, entirely. I had no problems with the country team.

O'BRIEN: Do you feel that you were getting across to the Department in your dispatches?

HART: Oh, very much. In fact, I felt a very responsive Department of State and a very responsive White House, not that we always agreed on everything. I mentioned one case where I disagreed strongly about the approach in that Yemen situation, but apart from that, basically we got along extremely well. I don't think I always agreed about the way we were handling our relations with Egypt, but that wasn't my job to interpret. It was simply the way I saw it from being on the receiving end of a lot of the attempts to subvert and overthrow the government of Saudi Arabia.
I guess I'll have to call this off pretty soon because.... Well, I've enjoyed this.

O'BRIEN: Well, we were getting very close to the end.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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