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U.S. Consulate in Tijuana, México

The following transcript is from an interview conducted by TBI Intern Morayma Jimenez with U.S. Consul General Ronald Kramer, who was accompanied at his office by consular officer Charles Smith. Consul Kramer comes from an academic background that included extensive studies in theology, literature and history. He holds a bachelor's degree in English Literature from the University of Illinois (1971). His seminary studies at the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) in Epworth, Iowa and Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, and at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago put Mr. Kramer on a trajectory toward priesthood, but before ordination he elected to pursue instead a Master's Degree in European History, which was awarded to him by the University of Illinois's Chicago Circle Campus (UICC) in 1976. Mr. Kramer worked for the Chicago Transit Authority from 1977 until 1979, when he joined the U.S. Department of State as a Foreign Service Officer. Since joining the Foreign Service, Mr. Kramer has served as a visa officer in Barbados (1980-81), and Monterrey, N.L. Mexico (1982-85). He also served as a consular officer in Riyadh Saudi Arabia (1985-87) and in El Salvador (1987-89). From 1989-92 he was principal officer at the American Consulate in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico followed by four years as Chief of the Consular Section in Guadalajara, Mexico. After Guadalajara, Mr. Kramer spent three years as Consul General at the United States Interest Section of the Swiss Embassy in Havana, Cuba. Upon leaving Cuba he was again a principal officer, this time at the American Consulate in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico, from 1999-2002. He then served for three years as Consular Section Chief of the American Consulate General in Lagos, Nigeria.

M= Morayma Jimenez

C= Charles Smith

K=Consul Kramer

M: Would you like to describe your job to me and... maybe, I guess, would be my first question.

K: I am a consular officer, I am a career consular officer. I mean diplomatic representation has a lot of different facets and so on, but I have always been a consular office and what this building here and the people in it are mainly concerned with, we do everything I mean we do a little reporting and we do some of this and Charlie does public diplomacy and we've got some law enforcement people and different things and all under the rubric of mission in

Mexico but we are basically engaged here, most of the people anyway in resources are engaged in consular work and in counselor work between visas, passports, arrests and detentions so on and so forth, visas claims the largest share of that work.

M: I can imagine.

K: You know I mean, there's always places, I mean they have a very active and big arrests and detention center, section, in London for instance, because Americans unfortunately get arrested all over the world, not in the same number they do here but all over the world. But, Britains don't need visas, so actually their visas operations is much smaller than in it was years ago when Brits had to have visas too, but you know, we are basically engaged in consular work, protection of American citizens, and you know, deaths and estates, so on and so forth, we do reporting on the violence and stuff like that so that Washington and the embassy knows what's going on here.

M: OK. Can you tell me how you got your job?

K: That was a chore, that was a chore. I wanted to take it, I remember this one time I was in graduate school at the University of Illinois and I was taking, I was, I decided I wasn't going to make any money doing that because I was going in debt with student loans and all the rest just like you, so I went and I quite graduate school and I got a job, I had been working summer time with the Chicago Transit Authority as a bus driver, and I got a job, so I was working with the CTA and one day on a break, you know, I mean, some of our people complain now about working a little overtime and you know I, when I was a boy, well you know I mean we used to have such a thing known as a three way split, you would get up at 6 o'clock in the morning and work the rush hour, the morning rush, then fall back to the barn by like 9 o'clock or something and then do one or two runs downtown around noon and then go back and then have to come out again for the evening rush and you wouldn't get home until 7 o'clock at night or something like that, so I mean I just don't think our boys and girls are suffering too badly around here, but I was on fall back one day downtown and went to the federal building to go to the job center to see how somebody gets a job in the embassy, actually I had thought about this since I was like 14, never did anything about it, so then I went to take the test but it was too late, in those days they only gave it once a year in October then I, the next year, I slept through it because I had a terrible cold and took a bunch of medication and slept through it, and then the third year, I didn't pass it, frankly, the fourth year, I passed it and by that time so I started before I left the university, so I was 18 months working on the buses and when I got the letter, came home one day had a letter saying "Congratulations Mr. Kramer, we wish to offer you employment, United States State Department, Department of State" and so from there to here its been a straight line more or less, started in December 27, 1979. That is my 'enter on duty' date. So you got to take the test and that's the bear, I don't know how they do it anymore because it used to be like a 4 hour test or something, something more like that and then they added on a written portion, an essay portion and then besides that, if you pass that you went for the oral exam and after the oral exam, in my day, they would like ask 3 guys and ask you questions and it was always guys because there were hardly any women in the department and they would ask you to step into the next room or something and they would come in in ten or fifteen minutes and tell

you whether you passed it or not and now you have to go be evaluated and you have these group exercises and stuff and then they get you, they notify you by mail or something which I think is, I don't know, I don't think its, maybe not a step forward but anyways that's what makes them happy in Washington.

M: When did you become a Consul General?

K: Oh, well that just depends, you can be a consul general in a very small place. I was, my first post was in, my wife is Mexican, I offered, they always give the 1st class, they have all these lists of openings and they ask you to give your preference and I always thought that all that was a trick, because if you have experience in an area or something like that, they are never going to send you there because they want to see how you behave in new and unfamiliar surroundings, the whole idea about the foreign service is they want to see how you behave in foreign times, foreign cultures. So I said I would go to any Spanish speaking post, take any Spanish speaking post so I could get the language and they sent me to the English speaking Caribbean, went to Barbados and then from Barbados went to Monterrey from 82 to 85 and then I went from Riyadh 85 to 87 and then I went to El Salvador 87 to 89 then went to Nuevo Laredo from 89 to 92 then I went to Guadalajara, direct transfer from Nuevo Laredo from 92 to 96 and got my daughter through high school and then I went to Cuba from 96 to 99 and then went to Hermosillo from 99 to 2002 and then I went to Lagos from 2002 2005 then Mexico City for a year and then I came up here in 06.

C: Wow, your eleventh assignment.

K: Never worked in Washington either they don't allow you to do that anymore, seemed like the thing to do at the time.

M: Is it common to be moved around that much?

K: Oh you always move. I mean some of these people in Europe would like to hang out there for as long as they could but now Europe is capped at 3 years because all the people coming out of Baghdad want to go to Europe, so they are kind of stuck.

M: Wow, I had no idea that it was typical to move that much, I sort of always figured it was sort of, you got to your final place and were there for a really long time

K: Nope, not our service. Plus you they, you can hang out in Washington for quite a while it used to be a little less, they used to have a 8 year minimum but now its 6 years but then after 8 years people don't want to move you know the spouse has got a good job or something and the kids have got all their friends in school or something and you know no one wanted to move and when they hardened up the rule a lot of people switched to CS employment, civil service. But foreign service you got to be willing to move around and it's no like how it used to be, you didn't have email, you didn't have video clubs and we didn't, I mean it's not as bad as people had to go to post in ships I did find out though that when my grandmother had died I got a cable from Washington.

C: Wow, really?

K: Yea. "We regret to inform you." I still got it somewhere; I don't know where it's at.

C: Those were the old days. Before e-mail or anything.

K: I mean you are looking at a 50 dollar phone call for what we used to get paid, I mean it wasn't, you know different services do it differently, the Japanese, I think, you've got to go to an academy for them, no you got to go to a school, they have a foreign service school.

C: The Brazilians do, the Mexicans do too don't they?

K: Mexicans got to test for their grades and do all kinds of stuff and the Swiss, man, in a lot of services they promote you really, really, really slow to get back to the idea about, I remember one guy telling me he had just gone to a promotion party for a guy who had made Consul, it was in combination with his retirement. Well we make Consul when you make grade three, foreign, FO3, foreign service officer 3 and so that's not much of a stretch and it's automatic promotions up to there anyways so you get up to an FO 3 and then you but it depends on the size of your post, they just made three posts here in Mexico, Consulate General that weren't before: Hermosillo, Matamoros and Nuevo Laredo. When I was in Nuevo Laredo and the boss, it was just a Consulate now the officer's job is a grade higher too plus they've got more agencies in there, they've got agriculture and DEA and what else anyways it's gotten bigger, I had one JO when I was there, junior officer, so anyways, you just stick around, keep your nose clean and eventually the cream rises to the top.

M: Yeah, ok, and so in your experience, all around the world, what one has been your favorite?

K: Which post?

M: Yeah.

K: Guadalajara, I think, the kids think, I mean my son is a dual national, just this week he started a job down in Mexico with a Mexican corporation and he got out of school in May so I thought that was pretty good, especially in this economic climate, I thought he was going to be hanging out there on my bill for a long time, but and my daughter went to all four years of high school there and actually when she got out of the university she went down there and taught for three years but they really don't, they pay Mexican teachers really bad. So anyways she came back, she still got friends down there, she's going down there Thanksgiving time I think and so yeah, Guadalajara, and another thing that's queer about my career is that this is my 6th post in Mexico, most people don't do that, and especially counselor officers, because Mexico is loaded with counselor work, lots and lots of and even in the foreign service there are lazy people and they avoid posts and all the posts in Mexico are very busy, busy on every level, I mean the political officers have more than they can handle and the public diplomacy officers have more than they can handle and everybody has more than they can handle, you should go someplace, I mean I know this guy who curtailed

out of Bern, Switzerland because he was bored, I mean you can't vacation every day and when you are living there and the basic part of your life is your work and that's boring to you and stuff so he pulled out, pulled the plug and came back to Latin America.

M: What has been the most challenging?

K: Nigeria, Nigeria... it's a very difficult place to live, the country is challenged in so many ways and we were way behind. A lot of people don't like to work there, so the positions are perennially underbid and a lot of people don't show up and a lot of positions, it's not that they don't show up, they go vacant for a long time, with long staffing gaps and stuff and so it's very hard to gel as a community, which is important when you are overseas to try to hang together a community and so on, for social and support reasons and so on but also it's hard to put together a team, so if you don't have a team, a decent team, then the work suffers. So 6 months, if you asked for a visa appointment today you would get one in 6 months so people were making appointments who didn't need appointments so they could sell their appointments to people and then there were a lot of things that had to be straightened out and right about the time I left, I spent three years over, and by the time I left, it was alright by that time, I didn't have many problems, much to speak of, it has since gone to hell again. Now a good friend of mine is over there and I'm sure he will leave it right as rain and that is when I got that Barbara Watson award for consular excellence.

M: Congratulations.

K: It used to be consular officer of the year award but now everybody, everybody has a name.

C: It is pretty high, it is quite a high honor in the foreign services, if you are a consular officer, it is the highest honor.

M: Wow, congratulations.

K: Well, that was good, I mean I give all the credit to the junior officers who worked for me, because such an incredibly bright group, one thing I think, I think everybody in the state department is uniformly very intelligent.

M: That's good.

K: But I mean, I suppose some have their bad habits too, some are fat, some are thin, some are you know, bad husbands, some are bad mothers and things like that but I mean all pretty smart, basic IQ, they are all pretty smart. How they use it well that's another thing but they are all pretty smart and I have always been impressed with that and I had some great, great junior officers, who have now gone off and doing very well, one of them is working for a friend of mine over in the middle east and he is very happy with it and he was just so smart. I mean I prefer to have people, people are smarter than I am, I love to have them working for me, I don't feel like I'm upstaged at all. They say the best way to get an award is to an incompetent predecessor and superior subordinates and that, I think that's true and even if

you don't have an incompetent predecessor, superior subordinates will go a long way towards making you look good, I have never felt threatened or challenged or anything, I don't care, whatever religion race, sex, if they are bright, they can work for me, I don't care.

M: I guess my question, have you noticed a difference in all your different posts in working in a border post compared to a non-border?

K: The border is different, I mean it's like working in a third country in some ways almost. You know they've got all this stuff up here, I remember, I'm old enough to remember when they used to talk about 'puchismo' and all that and I haven't heard that referred to in a long, long time.

C: 'Puchismo'? What is that?

K: It is kind of like, like you know, the people who live along the border don't speak English, don't speak Spanish, they are not fish, they are not fowl, they are not Mexican they are not U.S. they are 'pochos.' I haven't heard anybody call anyone a 'pocho', maybe joking or something, for a long, long time, but it is still different because I mean Mexico has three distinct economic areas, they have got the north here which especially since NAFTA is pretty well integrated with the U.S., the large central region, you know there is not a lot of people in Mexico north of San Luis Potosi, in terms of absolute percentage of the population there's not that many of folks, so the great body of people is in the south, and then if you have any third world, they don't have a third world income but because of some distribution, income distribution problems they probably have some third world conditions and if those exist they are in the south, down near the southern border down near Chiapas and parts of Oaxaca and things. So Mexico, you know people don't think about this because we live in the United States, one of the biggest countries in the whole world, but after Canada, Russia, China, U.S., Brazil a few places like that, Mexico is like in the second, in the top twenty I mean their bringing up country, they have regional food, regional dress, regional accents, you know so it's a big and varied country and so yea there's a lot of things, there's definitely a difference, even in Mexico between posts much less between countries, I mean there is such a thing as culture shock, I mean the State Department kind of, its almost like being in a room with a view because you have all these support mechanisms and everything from Washington and all the rest but you see the people that come over seas and the fact that the lights go out, they find very disconcerting and all the rest of the stuff, you can, you can tell, I mean, people who have never been overseas before and the ones who are experienced travelers, its yeah, obviously there are many difference, between here and the border, between here and Chiapas there is a grand difference, a great divide.

M: So what would you say is the most important issue that comes up because it is a border post?

K: Well I mean I don't know if it's the most important, but you can class different things I suppose you could say the war on drugs is the most important and for somebody else the war and the illegal immigration is the most important and for this and for that but the most frequent is visas. How to get them, where do I have to go, what do I have to do. You know,

we got a whole bunch of people dedicated to answering those questions plus websites and the rest of the stuff, that's the most common one. I mean obviously the bilateral relationship, I suppose you can argue different kinds of things, again the war on drugs, trade, you know, there is a the North American free trade zone, the inclusion of other countries, they have agreements pending with South Korea and Columbia, things like that, those are all important things, so it would be hard to say exactly. It depends on who you talk to too, if you talk to a Consul General from Asia he will have a different point of view on some of these things and one in Italy, he will have a different point of view and somebody from South Africa and she'll have a different point of view. I mean I think, these views all get synthesized at the top, but I mean those are some of the leading issues: trade and you know free trade and immigration and drugs and so on.

M: So with the recent increase, I guess you could say, of the narcotics trafficking and stuff, have you seen changes in the flows from tourism and immigration?

K: Oh yea. I think its common knowledge, it's in the press every day. I mean well it's not, I don't know if its increased flow of drugs, I think they have actually been hammered, I mean the cartel here is headless right now, so you've got factions fighting with each other and that's why the violence went up because usually it used to be just one big, you know, crime ridden family and they were all top down, very heavy hierarchy and much fewer number of dead and so on so forth but now they are fragmented and splintered and the splinters are fighting with each other and there is more, drug trafficking has been disrupted as a result of the disruption of the organization and so now they are indulging in other things which are probably more frightening to some segments of the population like all the kidnappings and so on that go on. They are very heavy into that, they are robbing ATM machines, they are raiding, going into restaurants and robbing all the patrons as well as the establishment and stuff like that and so ironically its because they have had some success against them they are now in this more violent situation, so you know and yea there are things happening around here but I don't think they are doing any better.

M: Typically, I guess, if an American citizen got caught in it, how would the Consulate deal with that?

K: Well I mean usually, well thank God, we haven't had any Americans, well we haven't had anybody hit in a crossfire or anything like that except for a woman I think 3 years years...

C: Two and a half years.

K: Two and half years ago, there was a woman who was hit by a stray bullet otherwise, all, well most of the crime and the vast majority of the violent crime has been cartel on cartel or you know group on group within the narco-traficantes so they are hammering at each other until they started widening out into kidnapping and so on and now it has affected a wider segment of the population. Americans if they get caught up into it, if they did get injured or something we go visit them, we make arrangements for them to get back to their families in the U.S., if they get arrested we go visit them in jail, we got over, we have over 200 still at the penitentiary here, and some more in El Hongo, another penitentiary up toward Tecate.

Yes, we you know we are fully engaged in this, it falls under protection, under protective services, and you know we help people in moments of crisis all the time, I mean there is the death cases regularly happening, because Guadalajara has a very old retired community they have got over 200 people dying a year, you better not quote me on that because I'm not exactly sure on the figure, but they have, it's an elderly kind of service intensive kind of population, there is a large number of deaths, I mean people have just gone to their reward so you know we are on hand and we issue consular mortuary certificates and certificates of death and sometimes a little more joyfully we also do birth certificates, my son actually was born in Monterrey so he comes to be a dual national so he has a consular certificate of birth.

M: Pretty fascinating, I didn't know there were consular certificates of birth.

K: Oh yea for Americans born overseas. Does the military do that for themselves? No, we do it, because we've got control, they have got their own notaries.

C: We document citizenship abroad and the attorney general does it in the United States, they delegated to us.

M: Do you see a lot of kidnappings of Americans?

K: No. No, I mean there's more people here, I mean they had a rash of people, they had a number of people over by Laredo but they were dual nationals, but since your are Mexican-American yourself you can appreciate that fact that a lot of these people were born when dad and mom were working the fields in California or something and they went back to Zacatecas or Michoacan or Jalisco or something so they spent their whole life so yes they may have a right to an American passport, they may have one, but they are not, if there is such a thing as a cultural American, they don't grow up watching baseball and you know cartoons Saturday morning or at least not our cartoons, they grow up culturally Mexicans, you know my wife told me, she is going to be Mexican until the day she dies, she has both passports, you can take the girl out of Mexico but you can't take Mexico out of the girl.

M: I guess another question would be, with the economic crisis that the U.S. is clearly in now, have you seen any changes in trade or in border flows again?

K: Well I mean you know, actually I don't think I completely answered one of your previous questions because yea obviously the border violence too there has been a big decline in tourism here and the city decries that and they are doing everything they can to try and reverse that and the state as well but and then on the business side of course it has ramifications as well, a lot of the people here, their livelihood is based in one way or another on tourism and especially in resort areas of say Rosarito and Ensenada and stuff like that, they are, they're hurting. They are affected, very much, by the Americans who are not coming down here, plus there is one friend of mine and God knows how many other people who are involved in real estate development along the coast, and a lot of that was spurred or being paid for by loans, equity loans on existing properties up in this real estate bubble in the United States, or by the sale of these houses at inflated prices up in the United States and when that stopped, which it did 100% now over the last year or so, then of course people

didn't have the money, the disposable income to turn around and buy a condominium in Rosarito, Ensenada or down in Cabo San Lucas, so yea it's had problems, whether it meets the classical definition of two quarters of negative growth, I don't but that the things are down, yea definitely, no doubt about it.

M: With the whole decline in tourism I guess is there anything that the consulate does to...

K: Well you know we are not really cheerleaders, I mean we put people together, we have an office here for the foreign commercial service which puts American producers together with Mexican empresarios, and who puts Mexicans who are looking for export markets, they can look for partners in the U.S. and so on, partnering themselves with U.S. business men, but we aren't really cheering for people to come spend their money outside of the United States so that's kind of up to the Mexicans and you see that, they had this thing on TV years ago, you know, "Mexico: the amigo country" and you've also got the Mexican office for tourism, you see it on TV, come visit San Luis Potosi, and you know Zacatecas, these little TV spots and all those are put on by the Mexico Secretary of Tourism, I mean they are the ones who are hyping the tourism down here.

C: You want to talk about the travel alerts and the role that plays in advising Americans?

K: Right. We for the last several years now, every country has a consular information sheet and consular information sheets deal with everything, I mean everything that we can think of: geography, ethnic makeup of the population, business, tourism, everything and of course tourists about travel condition and right now we've got an alert that we've beefed up a little bit it's not a travel warning, it's an alert that calls for a heightened degree of attention or vigilance, that people coming to Mexico, we're not saying don't come to Mexico we are saying exercise normal precautions, stay in well lit areas, stay in well traveled areas, stay in areas frequented by tourists, don't go, conversely, were you don't know anybody, don't go in areas that you aren't familiar with, stay in large groups of people, so on, so on, so on, and it is the common sense sorts of things that really, really make a difference, I think in their own hometowns people do that because they know everything, people stay away dangerous parts of Chicago, which I'm familiar with, and they just do it because they know it, people go to different cities and it's be aware, that's the main thrust of what we're telling everybody.

M: With the whole immigration problem, I guess you can definitely call it a problem, like what...

K: You're characterizing now.

M: Well, I don't know but, like what does the Consulate do in regards to like reform or like to deal with it?

K: We don't really, you know, I mean, up on the Washington level there's an interagency process and so on and because things like deportations and visas and all that sort of thing impinge on our work well that gets well dealt with up there, border protection and all that everything now belongs to that "super-agency" back in the states: DHS. Homeland security

has border patrol and they have customs, immigration service, and they have immigration customs enforcement, most of the enforcement business goes on on the other side, policy that's all Washington, way above by pay grade. But I mean they are involved at the interagency level about discussing different things like when we came out with this new passport card, DHS has an iron in the fire because they are all about travel documentation for people entering the United States but we, as Charlie mentioned, we do determination of nationalities abroad and actually the State Department has always been involved in the issuance of passports and things like that so well we had to come together and have a meeting of the minds you know, what kind of things go into the documents, what biometrics, what little security features and so on and so forth and that was thrashed out at the Washington level but all of those cards are going to be really used down here, have you applied for yours yet?

C: No sir.

K: I haven't either.

C: It only does you any good if you cross a land border so...

K: Yeah, if you're on a ship or something or an airplane... no only if you're going into Cancun or something, not even?

C: No, not even.

K: Not even.

C: No, no airplane.

K: And contiguous islands, as they say.

M: Huh?

K: Sorry, we're talking shop talk, parallel code.

M: No, no, that's fine.

C: We know what we're talking about.

K: Most of the time.

M: Well, I guess, sort of a random question, just because I don't know, but where does the Consul live, in Tijuana, in San Diego, in this building?

K: It's almost always, we have had some places, oh they used to have such a place, we had a place in, on the island of Bermuda, that was fabulous, it went back to the nineteenth century and it was you know, I think, in days when your mission, your embassy was the only thing,

now you can turn on TV and you can see Sylvester Stallone and a hundred other American actors and things so the embassy's not the only place in town, so we don't necessarily build the show places and things we used to and it was a fabulous residence, it was right up there with the crème de la crème of the people living on the island. Sometime in the last ten years we unloaded the thing. I never lived in something that wasn't rented; I mean we've got different ways to pay for it. In some countries you still go out and find your own house and then you get the reimbursement in your paycheck and then you submit bills after three months and see, no one is supposed to be making money on their housing allowances and they adjust up or down depending on, within the stated allowance, based on how much your utilities and things are, but most places now you go, the administrative section which used to be very small but now is very big because they've got all these leases, we've got thirty-five Americans more or less so we've got thirty-five housing units that they have to look after that are on lease, they don't do anything about emergency repairs most of it is still up to the landlord, but they've gotten much bigger because they do own some things and I happen to be in a house that has been rented for something like thirteen years or more by the consulate, here up the hill in this 'colonia' up in here, it's good, you know it's not the most modern house I've lived in, it's the biggest certainly, we've got an area there too that we're able to use a lot for business purposes like luncheons and breakfasts and such and such, basically you just live in leased housing.

M: So, but it's always in the city that you're working in.

K: Oh, yea.

C: We cannot live on the other side that's...

M: Ok.

C: If you're in foreign service, you live in the place where you serve.

K: Otherwise you don't get the foreign allowances.

M: So, I guess in your career, what would you say has been your most crowning achievement?

K: My career? The best thing I ever did was marry my wife.

C: I knew you were going to say that.

M: Awww.

K: That's the smartest thing I ever did. But, the, I think Lagos, I was sure I was going to be retired by now, you know, it almost killed me, man; but we got it fixed and I got promoted against all odds and here I am.

C: Figured it out.

K: And it was you know, that's all fleeting, that, the thing that's going to last the longest though is there's a Mexican engineer that I hired when I was when I was the boss in Hermosillo. He's still working there and he is one of the finest employees in Mexico. The best thing you can ever do, I think looking back over the last twenty-nine years, the best thing you can ever do, is hire good people in the jobs.

C: Yeah, makes sense.

K: Not your chauffeur's brother, necessarily, unless he's the finest worker, but I mean take that hiring process very, very seriously and in one generation it can make a huge difference. That and a few excellent, excellent officers have done me the great, great honor and favor of telling me that I have had some positive effect on their life, so that goes off, you know that's trans-generational their going to be working a long time after I'm laid in the ground, so that's worth it.

C: That's a legacy.

K: But just coming to work everyday to flog at visas, that disappears you know, that easy, gone.

C: Sir, thank you very much for letting.

M: Yes, thank you.

K: Did we get to the end of the list?

M: Pretty much.

K: Did we hit it all?

M: I think so?

K: What about long border wait times? That's what everybody around here whines about, from both sides of the border, from here all the way over to Matamoros, it takes so long, when are they going to do more of this, more of that, that is you know, what do they say in the department, where you stand depends on where you sit, where you stand on an issue depends on where you side.

C: Yeah, yeah.

K: So, everybody wants, you know, in the United States, what percentage of the two country's population lives on the border, it's very important and everything, we can all stipulate that but does anybody in Chicago, I know my relatives in Iowa, where my mom and dad are from, I grew up in Illinois, but they don't know or care about anything that is going on down here, except that now they read about Tijuana and I get phone calls, but nobody

cares and it takes political will and all that and all the questions about long border wait times has got to be solved between Mexico City and Washington D.C. and with the help of our congressional delegations and hopefully they'll be able to concentrate enough intellectual power and resources to make that go away and the need for passports hasn't effected tourism at all I mean I think people are still going to Greece, still floating around on the French Riviera and all the rest of the stuff, they're not coming here right now but that is a different issue it's with the narcotraficantes.

M: Yeah, that makes sense.

C: Remittances.

K: Remittances are down I reckon, they are down somewhat, but you know, that's a function of the economy you know, it can't go up forever, but we still have a rock-solid relationship to Mexico, so I don't think its based solely on remittances, remittances are still very, very hefty, they are second only to petroleum in Mexican economy.

M: That's very high.

C: I didn't know that.

M: I didn't know that either.

K: OK, yea it won't effect relationships because were in this for the long haul. TBI, que es eso?

M: The Trans-Border Institute.

K: Well, we have a justice reform program, Charlie is working with AID about that, AID is I think they're the head driving force in the embassy now

C: They got the money.

K: They got the money. They contract the extras to come down here and consult and do all the rest, we're open to assisting them you know and we do sometimes like Charlie does, but you know trying to help the Mexicans reform their judicial system and it is their judicial system so and it takes time, I'm definitely a Latin American person, I've never been hardly out of the Caribbean basin really more than anything.

C: Well, you've been to Riyadh.

K: Yea those two weird excursion tours of mine, Africa, NEA that's the Near Eastern Bureau, the Near Eastern Affairs, I think that about covers it, any additions or corrections. This is your copy Charlie, I still have mine here somewhere.

C: OK.

M: Is there anything you would like to ask? I don't know.

K: Have you ever heard of the, the what is it? Where she's going to school, is that where Davidow is at?

C: No, this is a Jesuit University, Davidow is at UCSD.

K: Ah bueno. Your school is very nice too... catholic boy. I know my son looked at that, my son looked at several I couldn't afford and so did my daughter.

C: It's a beautiful university.

M: It is, gorgeous, the number one reason people go there is the location of the campus, I'm like, come on, what about academics? Come on guys.

K: Well it's good, the Jesuit's are good, they're the kind of people who brought you the reformation, the counter- reformation.

C: Exactly

K: Yeah, that's about, if you know, there's a lot of interesting things Zedillo is going to be, of course, Jeffrey doesn't do things cheap either, my former ambassador friend and diplomat extraordinaire, Jeffrey Davidow, is the director of the Institute of the Americas.

M: OK, I've definitely been to several of their lectures.

K: He's always the biggest guy in the room, so if you see Jeffrey, tell him I say hello, actually I sent him a note today saying I'm going to Caracas. He was ambassador to Venezuela wasn't he?

C: Oh, I didn't know that.

K: I know he was Paul's chief there but I thought he was back after being head of the political section, I thought he went there as ambassador, his daughter was born there.

C: I didn't know that. You'll probably see him down there.

K: He's out of town until the first part of November.

C: Really, thank you, it's been a full hour so we appreciate it, chief.

M: Thank you very much.

K: ¿Segura?

M: Yes.