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Q: Now you were sent off in the middle of--at the end of your tour--about two-thirds through to Afghanistan.

BLOOD: Yes.

Q: Spike Dubs had been shot in February.

BLOOD: Yes, Valentine's Day, February 14. The same day that the embassy was . . .

Q: I was in the Department at that time. Yes, I know.

BLOOD: Yes.

Q: But you came later? You didn't go immediately?

BLOOD: No. Bruce Amstutz was the DCM to Spike, and he became chargé after Spike's murder. But by October--in the meantime--yes, by October he wanted a break. He wanted to join his wife in Europe and have a little respite from Afghanistan. Washington asked me to go up from New Delhi and take over the embassy for, as it turned out, about six weeks. And so I did.

Under supplementary instruction there we didn't maintain embassy, but we dealt with consular administrative matters not political. The foreign minister then, Shah Mohammed Dose, I had known when he was a junior political officer when I was there the first time so I did call on him and did find out a couple things about . . . For instance, there was a fellow that had been director general of their ministry of foreign affairs, Raul Rolanfahadi. It was rumored that he had been killed in Afghanistan, and Dose could tell me in all honesty that he was not dead. I was happy to report that. Subsequently, he did escape from Afghanistan and got back to France.

Then Washington asked me to seek an appointment with Hafizullah Amin who was the president and the leader. He was also head of the party. And I did. I think I was the last Westerner to see Amin alive because he was killed by the Soviets when they invaded Christmas of '79.

Q: What did Washington want to tell him?

BLOOD: Well, about the only thing they wanted to tell him was that he couldn't expect any resumption of aid until he could satisfy us about their role in Spike's death.

Q: Uh huh.

BLOOD: Because, you know, remember the circumstances were--

Q: Right.

BLOOD: Were such that it was just an equivocal role that the Afghans and the Soviets played, too, in that. Then to just sort of listen to him. And I did make that point. We had really terminated our AID mission. There were just a couple residual people left over there. Of course, it was impossible. You couldn't have conducted an AID effort anyhow because there was a civil war going on, and you couldn't--I mean, it was an academic issue really. But at least we could make that point - that we weren't satisfied with their attitude.

Q: Did you have anything that you observed in your six weeks in Afghanistan that gave you the feeling the Soviets might be contemplating a move into the country?

BLOOD: Not really. The Soviets were moving in incrementally all that time. In fact, we were having sort of a running discussion with Washington about how many were in the country. We were trying to keep track. We could see convoys with Soviet equipment and Soviet troops coming down, and we tried to keep tabs on as much as we can. As I recall, we were debating whether there were 8,000 or 12,000 in the country.

Q: Were they engaging in combat at that time?

BLOOD: No, just as advisors. A lot of military advisors for the Afghan troops.

I was surprised by the actual invasion for two reasons. One, I didn't think the government of Afghanistan was in that much danger of being toppled. I mean, they weren't very close to a military defeat. Also, it seemed to me that the Soviets could accomplish their purpose just by continuing what they were doing which was infiltrating, you know, a 1,000 a week or something like that until they had more and more and more troops in there rather than coming in suddenly. The only reason I can see for it was they had to get rid of Amin, and they . . .

Q: Well, if they also felt they were going to need a 100,000 troops, they couldn't do that incrementally.

BLOOD: Yes. Well, they could have done--

Q: Pretty soon someone would say, "Look what they've done here."

BLOOD: Yes.

Q: What did you do, though, that made the Soviets not want you as chargé on a permanent basis? What do you suppose you did? Or what do they think you did?

BLOOD: They didn't give any specific reason. My own favorite reason is that in New Delhi we had been operating a program whereby we each week brought in American and other western journalists--the political section did this--and briefed them on what was going on in Afghanistan based on reports from our embassy. In those days, no foreign correspondents were getting into Afghanistan. And our idea was, of course, to keep Afghanistan alive as a story. Of course, we played up any successes of the resistance and any troubles that the government had.

Q: These were based on reports from your embassy in Kabul?

BLOOD: Yes. The Indians didn't like this. And, of course, we had--

Q: George Griffin.

BLOOD: George Griffin was up there then. He came down because his wife was here, and we would chat with him. We were getting quite a bit of information. And the Indians didn't like this particularly. Of course, I'm sure the Afghans didn't like it. Most of the stories that appeared in the American press or the European press at the time were coming out of these briefings. That's my feeling.

Now the Indian ambassador in Kabul, a fellow named Monty Diction, was Indian high commissioner in Sri Lanka in 1986 when I stopped there. We talked about this. He said that he had gone to the Afghans and asked why that they turned me down because we had known each other. He had been the press spokesman for the foreign ministry. They said because he had had secret meetings with Amin. And I told him that was not true. I had had the one meeting that I mentioned with you with Amin and no others.

But I think another reason may have been that some Afghans, hostile to the regime, knowing that I had served in Afghanistan, when they came through Delhi, would call on me and chat with me.

Anyhow, they said anybody but him. The Department decided not to send anybody, instead to have Charlie Dunbar, who was the number two--he would have been my number two--that he would become chargé which worked out very well for Charlie.

Q: You weren't going to be ambassador.

BLOOD: No, I was going to be chargé. No ambassador. No, we weren't going to send an ambassador.

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