



**Interview with Richard Armitage**  
**Collective Memory Project: Post-9/11 Policy in East and Southeast Asia**

**Interviewers:**

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**[Begin Transcription]**

LEONG: I'm LaiYee Leong, for the Center for Presidential History here at SMU, and I have the honor of interviewing former Deputy Secretary of State, Richard L. Armitage. If we may begin by setting up what the world was like prior to 9/11. So we're looking at early 2001, you were just sworn into office as deputy secretary of state. What was the vision at the time, for policy in East and Southeast Asia.



ARMITAGE: For Asia? The vision was encompassed in something that Dr. Joe Nye and I wrote a bipartisan report in the year 2000, which wanted to focus on making sure that the Japan relationship was correct. It had some suggestions on how to increase our interaction with Japan, and it made the general point that in Asia, Japan was the most important relationship and that we had [00:01:00] to get that right before we could get Asia right. That was the general vision and it was generally accepted by President Bush. He didn't have a deep grounding in Asia, but he trust his so-called Vulcans, of which I was one, and Paul Wolfowitz was one, and we had similar views on Asia. Even as the administration got to be loggerheads on various Middle Eastern policies, particularly on North Korea. As a general matter on Asia, we were very much aligned with the Defense Department and the State Department.

LEONG: And this was considered a more muscular policy than under the Clinton presidency?

ARMITAGE: Well, it was more muscular in that one of the first decisions we made concerned Taiwan arms sales. We realized that these are always neuralgic and China would object to that, we understood that, we've had experience with China over the years, Mr. Wolfowitz and I particularly. So we wanted a quick, clean, muscular, if you will, [00:02:00] arms sale decisions on Taiwan to kind of set the stage. Beyond that, we made it very clear, we wanted to reinvigorate our relationship with Japan in the main. We had had the previous administration of

Mr. Clinton, so suggestions of passing Japan, etc., so we were quite intent on fixing that.

LEONG: And how did China fit into this picture?

ARMITAGE: You will remember that China, it was a big and rising power. We realized we were going to have to accommodate China, but almost the first thing that we faced, Secretary Powell and I particularly, was the loss of a reconnaissance aircraft in the United States, off of Hainan Island, and through US-China relationships, into a real cocked hat.

LEONG: What about Southeast Asia, how did that fit into this vision?

ARMITAGE: Southeast Asia was an area that I particularly liked, having served for six years in Vietnam and having traveled throughout Southeast Asia. Paul Wolfowitz had been Ambassador to Indonesia, [00:03:00] and we went the combination of large populations, interesting religious dynamics, particularly with Indonesia being a large Muslim nation; the fact that two of our treaty alliances were in ASEAN, would lead us to a pretty good future with ASEAN.

LEONG: I remember reading news reports at that time, saying -- the Southeast Asians saying well, we expect really, to be on the backburner. Is that correct?

ARMITAGE: Well, they would probably have said that, but as I say, Wolfowitz, having been an Indonesian ambassador, I had spent so much time in Vietnam, had been quite active in the normalization of Vietnam, I don't think the view of total



backburner was entirely warranted, though it was quite clear that in the main, we were going to focus on Northeast Asia, where there were larger centers of gravity.

LEONG: So, 9/11 happened, and when that happened, [00:04:00] how did it affect, if at all, this vision that you had?

ARMITAGE: Initially, it didn't affect our Asian equities very much. We did use it as an occasion to increase the political interaction with all of our friend, including the Philippines, Japan, Australia, Malaysia and Indonesia, for obvious reasons, having large Muslim population, Thailand. It just allowed for more political interaction. It wasn't too much in terms of practical assistance or practical requests that we had of our Asian friends.

LEONG: Now, it was considered, it was called the second front.

ARMITAGE: I'm sorry?

LEONG: Southeast Asia was called the second front in the war against terror.

ARMITAGE: Laterally, as it became clearer that we'd been hit from Saudi Arabia, that these fellows had traveled a lot. We became more and more aware that in some areas of Bangkok, for instance, [00:05:00] are entire Muslim quarters, we had the Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines, we had some terrorist activities in Bali, which killed a large number of Australians. So, it became clear over time, that this was a second front. It wasn't immediately obvious in the immediate wake of 9/11.

LEONG: So, when 9/11 first happened, what was your sense of how people in Southeast Asia and East Asia sort of reacted?

ARMITAGE: Pretty much the entire globe. The day of 9/11, I was acting secretary.

Secretary Powell was in Peru. We received calls of support and condolence from almost every country in the world. Our ambassadors were called in and people were offering whatever assistance they could give to the United States. This was true even in the Russian Federation. So, as a general matter, that everyone was so horrified. [00:06:00] Many of my countrymen were horrified, because we'd always felt safe, hidden behind our two great oceans. This was such a shock to the body and it took a while to really take it all in.

LEONG: So, as it became clear that Southeast Asia did harbor some of these Muslim militants, what sort of attention and resources were then directed to this area?

ARMITAGE: Well, the resources were primarily intelligence and intelligence cooperation, and then we've seen both in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, it bore fruit. In the Philippines, it was a more, the term now is kinetic. We had Special Forces soldiers who went down to Mindanao and were actually running around looking for al-Qaeda and terrorists, and they remained there for some number of years. It was a mixed reaction throughout Southeast Asia.

LEONG: So was this attention welcomed? [00:07:00] Did you get a sense it was welcomed by the governance?

ARMITAGE: Well, in the Philippines it was, the government had asked for the help. Yeah, the intelligence help was welcomed, and as I say, I don't believe -- and I'm prejudiced in this. I don't believe we were too heavy-handed in most of these areas.

We didn't ask for huge amounts of assistance in our fight in Afghanistan.

Remember, we hadn't gone to Iraq yet. Some nations, particularly Japan, stood up immediately in Afghanistan and wanted to be of assistance, Koreans came in, but the others took a more standoff view, it wasn't their problem.

LEONG: So, what was -- if we may speak more specifically, let's talk about Indonesia.

As this began to develop, what was Indonesia's reaction? They were quite sympathetic to Afghanistan, at least initially, and then as the United States moved into Iraq, what happened? [00:08:00]

ARMITAGE: Well, we had, with Indonesia particularly, we had changed our ambassador and put in a really dynamic fellow by the name of "Skip" Boyce, really rapidly increased our relationship with Indonesia. The Indonesians were not part of the decision on Iraq. They were somewhat aghast at an "attack on another Muslim nation," but not so vocally. I think to the extent they were concerned that it might reawaken sort of nascent stirrings in a more extremist element of their population, but I don't recall them being highly exercised about it. Not happy but not exercised.

LEONG: What about Malaysia?

ARMITAGE: Pardon me?

LEONG: What about Malaysia?

ARMITAGE: Malaysia as well. I can remember welcoming Mr. Mahathir. [00:09:00] The secretary was traveling, he and I were the guys who welcomed him to the State

Department, and he was more concerned with his issues here in Southeast Asia.

He was also concerned with his own follow-on, Mr. Badawi was going to be following on, and how he could maintain his influence. So, if all politics was local, most of the Southeast Asians stayed very locally involved.

LEONG: I remember reading at that time, --

ARMITAGE: Singapore was -- excuse me. Singapore was probably the most interested one, who was most inquisitive about all the actions of, what's the United States going to do, how do you view this. They were by far, the most energetic of the Southeast Asian nations.

LEONG: Singapore has traditional pretty close ties with the US, so they were probably --

ARMITAGE: Well, that's true, but not allied ties. Singapore had, over the first Bush Administration, had welcomed a US Air Force aircraft transiting through Singapore, [00:10:00] had enlarged Changi Naval Base to accommodate a US carrier on occasion, and we had very close intelligence cooperation. What I'm stressing here is that they, more than anyone else, tried to and die, up the political involvement, so they could make sure they understood just what the United States was up to.

LEONG: When the national security strategy was released in 2002, that paper or report came to be called -- parts of it called the Bush doctrine. John Gaddis referred to it as the grand strategy of transformation. That's come under some fire.

ARMITAGE: It shouldn't, because no national security strategy is worth the paper on which it's drafted. That's true of the recently released Obama strategy, it was true of our strategy during the Bush Administration. It's a requirement and so we fill a requirement, and then you handle the problems as they come.

One thing we certainly learned [00:11:00] after the end of the Cold War is there is no one size fits all. How we handle a rising China is not how you handle the problems of Korea, North Korea particularly. It's not how you handle the problems of a Venezuela, it's not how you handle the problems of an Iceland. So there is no one size fits all, and that's what a national security strategy wants to do but it's not possible.

LEONG: So you're saying that in reality, on the ground, it really didn't come to very much?

ARMITAGE: That's exactly what I'm saying. There's a saying in the military that plans don't survive the first contact with the enemy, and that's true.

LEONG: Having said that though, it did sort of send out a message, at that time at least.

ARMITAGE: Well, it sent out the message that we were pissed off and we were going to do something about it, and don't tread on us, sort of a traditional American message. But as I say, as an actual strategy, [00:12:00] someone could tell what you were going to do in one particular case or another, it's not worth the paper it's written on.



LEONG: The Asians nonetheless responded to it, did they not?

ARMITAGE: I don't recall. I'm sure they would have. I didn't have anyone who came in to me, as deputy secretary, to complain about it. I'm sure the at the assistant secretary level, different ambassadors were sent in to say what does this mean and what does that mean, and our assistant secretaries may or may not have known what it meant, but we had a lot of things going on that weren't war related and those things seemed to nudge ahead in the queue of things that were of concern to Asians and others, whether it's a bilateral relationship. A terrible problem with Canada at the time, on softwood lumber, which sounds funny now, but it was a real problem. [00:13:00] And so Canada was much less interested in the battle and the war on terror, than it was in solving this softwood lumber.

LEONG: Sure. What other issues in Asia and East Asia and Southeast Asia, began to nudge forward, as you say?

ARMITAGE: How did they come forward?

LEONG: What sort of issues.

ARMITAGE: Well, in Korea for instance, we started off our relationship with Kim Dae-jung not very well, and because of a briefing that Secretary Powell had given the press, where he said we're basically going to take up the Clinton policy; at least that was the headline in the *Washington Post*, and George Bush got very angry at that, made the secretary go forth and correct it. But almost immediately after that, we got into a real contretemps because some of our tanks -- a terrible situation --

had run over a couple of young girls, so there were huge demonstrations. Now, you're trying to manage a relationship with Korea, keep the North Koreans from misunderstanding that this is a real problem between two allies, [00:14:00] and as I say, manage the rise of China, get through the post-EP<sub>3</sub> episode. In Southeast Asia and in South Pacific, we had FTAs, free trade agreements, with Singapore, with Australia. They were interested in seeing what they could do in the trade area. As I say, the day-to-day work of diplomacy hammers you, but it doesn't always. It's not always like young children playing soccer, where everybody runs to the ball. Everybody still has to take care of their own national interests.

LEONG: Right, absolutely. I had the opportunity to speak to a couple of ambassadors out in Southeast Asia this past summer.

ARMITAGE: Previous US ambassadors?

LEONG: No, ambassadors to the US.

ARMITAGE: Yeah, yeah, like Chan Heng Chee and others.

LEONG: Exactly, and in fact Chan Heng Chee in particular.

ARMITAGE: I just saw her last week.

LEONG: Oh, is that right?

ARMITAGE: Yeah.

LEONG: So, I had an opportunity to speak to people like her, and she did say, at least the first term of President Bush's [00:15:00] presidency, Southeast Asians at least

felt, from their perspective, that there was this constant hammering on counterterrorism.

ARMITAGE: Well, it bore fruit, positive fruit, for Singapore. They stopped a major truck bomb and we, as I understand it, had something to do with that. I don't find a constant -- I would have said that she might have said that the constant theme for the United States, of counterterrorism, drowned out the ability of some of the Southeast Asians to express their views on bilateral issues of interest to them. And in that case, I could understand what she was saying, but as I say, Singapore, chief among all of our Southeast Asian friends, was in constantly, looking for information on the war on terror.

LEONG: One of the issues that at least academics worried about, is this notion of whether [00:16:00] the United States focused too much on sort of unilateral action, as opposed to approaching issues on a multilateral platform. Is that something that you think criticism is warranted?

ARMITAGE: Well, I think that criticism of the United States is certainly warranted. We are either too big, too close, or too far and too disinterested, so we get which ever way the United States turns, we're going to be criticized. The criticism in the main of the United States that I remember, had to do with climate change? Certainly, that was -- and the environment, that was a big one. The lack of signature to the law of the sea, these are kind of general. All the others, -- and sometimes the use of some of these platforms to push what are seen as pet United States rocks; such

as democracy, human rights, [00:17:00] empowerment of women, things of this nature. So various countries would complain, from time to time, about that.

Others would come in and urge us to even greater efforts. So this is just the life of an American diplomat.

LEONG: It's interesting that you mention these other issues, because there are also critics who would say well, because of the focus on counterterrorism, issues like human rights, for instance, got sort of swept under the carpet a little bit. Any basis for that?

ARMITAGE: Yeah, probably, to the extent that you've got 24 hours in a day and that you're trying to manage your coalition in Iraq situation, of umpteen countries, or whatever it ended up, 46 countries. Yeah, that takes away from time spent doing other things, but I'll remind you that we didn't totally turn our back. I personally was involved in the Rebiya Kadeer case, when you got a Uyghur woman out of China's jails.

But there wasn't a constant [00:18:00] emphasis, nor could there be, on human rights, to the same degree in every country, and I'll give you a perfect example. We were required, by Congress, to have a trafficking in persons report each year, which has three tiers. One is, your good guys and you're doing the right thing. Two was, you've got to work a little harder, kind of a caution light, and three actually was terrible, you were in the seller or trafficking of persons, and if you don't do something about it then there will be sanctions, etc. This was a



yearly thing. I spent enormous amounts of my time trying to adjudicate people who said, well we really should be in tier two, rather than tier three, etc., etc.

Human rights encompasses so many elements, that it's difficult to sort of codify them. Sometimes trafficking persons, sometimes it was [00:19:00] money laundering, corruption, empowerment of women, women's education, I mean it goes across the board.

LEONG: Where did East Asia, I mean given that there are only 24 hours in a day, how much attention really, did sort of East Asia and Southeast Asia get, compared to the Middle East?

ARMITAGE: Are we talking Asia generally?

LEONG: Yeah.

ARMITAGE: Well, you ought to ask them, but I know that at the end of the first term of George Bush, both the Japanese and the Chinese said it was the golden age, for both of them at the same time, and they were referring to Powell, and probably to a lesser extent, me. We never missed the meetings, we showed up to everything, we had plenty of time for any ambassador and any foreign minister. We treated them with dignity and respect. And when they can say that, and the Australians said the same thing, we've got FTA through forum, that it was the golden age.

So I think that speaks to it pretty well. [00:20:00] Were there people who weren't as happy? Yeah, sure. Mongolia wasn't as happy, Bernai wasn't as happy. Vietnam was coming along at their own pace that was comfortable to them. As a

general matter, I'm kind of bullish on how our Asian friends felt about the way they were treated during Bush one.

LEONG: And did the US feel the same way about them? Was it a golden age for us too?

ARMITAGE: Pretty much. Here's one of the funny things that I've found, and I can only compare Bush one with Obama one and two, and I'm not criticizing anybody, I'm just making a point. Many people and many countries, including Asian countries, sometimes hated some of the US policies, yet they really liked George Bush. They liked the interaction with him, they liked the fact that if he was happy, you knew it, if he was unhappy, you knew it. You could get a good read on our president.

With Mr. Obama, it's been quite confusing. I think many people like his policies somewhat more, but can get any warmth out of him, so they don't know how to read him. [00:21:00] In Asia, this interpersonal work was not work. It was fun for President Bush, it was fun for us, we enjoyed it and we liked our colleagues. I can't think of a colleague with whom we couldn't have a pretty good conversation; even some guys who could be difficult, like Dai Bingguo, with the State Council of China, on occasion, but at the end of the day, I think the interpersonal interaction worked better in Asia than it's worked before or since.

LEONG: Coming back to the US, was there much internal debate within the US, and I mean --

ARMITAGE: About Asia issues?

LEONG: About Asian. I mean the White House, I mean the Defense Department.

ARMITAGE: Only about North Korea, only about North Korea. For the State Department, and I'm talking for Mr. Powell and myself, we found that outside of three issues; [00:22:00] North Korea, the peace process in the Middle East, and the War on Iraq, no one bothered us.

LEONG: And that was because they weren't interested or because there was so much consensus?

ARMITAGE: Part of it was a bandwidth problem. Some of our neocon friends didn't have the bandwidth, and they spent so much time on Iraq and kind of thwart the secretary's efforts in the Middle East, and on North Korea, that they didn't have much energy left for the rest, but left us with open playing fields for all the rest. I think that's one of the reasons that the Bush one policy in Asia is generally considered a success.

LEONG: It has been documented that you have disagreed with some of your colleagues in the Defense Department, say.

ARMITAGE: Yeah.

LEONG: Over the Iraq War.

ARMITAGE: Not on Asia though.

LEONG: Not on Asia, no.

ARMITAGE: Except North Korea.

LEONG: Right, but certainly on the Iraq War. [00:23:00]

ARMITAGE: Absolutely.

LEONG: Did that -- Nonetheless, so much of foreign policy at the time was seen through the prism of the Iraq War.

ARMITAGE: Well, yeah, you're right. Did we have conflicts? You bet. Were they serious? You bet. Did Secretary Powell and to a lesser extent me, did we oppose the War in Iraq? No. We tried to avoid the war. That's why we prevailed upon President Bush to go back and get yet another UN Security Council resolution, in his September, 2002 speech to the UN, but much to the dissatisfaction of Mr. Cheney and Mr. Rumsfeld, and that's all part of the record. So we didn't oppose it, we tried to avoid it, but it sapped so much energy and money, the whole Iraq War, that it made everything else somewhat more difficult, particularly for the second Bush Administration.

LEONG: Actually moving on now then, to that time. You left office?

ARMITAGE: [00:24:00] February of 2005.

LEONG: Right. Why did you leave office if things were going so well?

ARMITAGE: Well, as you may know, the President was kind enough to have Steve Hadley and Andy Card inquire if I was interested in having several other posts.

LEONG: Right.

ARMITAGE: There were three reasons why I wasn't interested. One, I was the Plame leak and had immediately announced that to the Justice Department. That would have been confusing. Second, I came in with Secretary Powell and it would have





been awkward, since he was leaving, for me not to leave. I would have felt awkward about it. Third, I didn't want to deal, any more, with an administration that wouldn't self-correct, that wouldn't get rid of people who obviously did not have the President's and the nation's best interests at heart. He eventually did, President Bush, in 2006, finally dumped Mr. Rumsfeld and got Mr. Gates in, thank God for that. [00:25:00]

LEONG: Talk a little bit about -- (laughs).

ARMITAGE: Oops.

LEONG: Talk a little bit about Bush two, the second Bush term.

ARMITAGE: Well, I can only, from the outside, clearly, he was coming more to the conclusion that things weren't working, and he started to move the deck chairs a bit. As I say, getting Mr. Rumsfeld, Mr. Wolfowitz went over to the World Bank, the influence of Mr. Cheney was seen more and more as corrosive rather than additive, and this allowed, I think the combination of Dr. Rice, Secretary of State, and Mr. Gates at the Defense Department, to have a much clearer playing field when they were dealing with the President. Secretary Powell, in my view, and me when he was gone, we had people littering in the playing field in front of us, trying to make things more difficult. I think [00:26:00] the second Bush, and particularly the last two years, once Mr. Rumsfeld was gone, very much helped the President, and helped him to get into the position where President Bush is today; where

people are more kindly viewing his activities than they did perhaps the day after he left office. I'm talking about opinion polls.

LEONG: And I realize that this might be a repetition but just for the record, what precisely was your disagreement with Mr. Rumsfeld?

ARMITAGE: Well, everything from the breakfast menu all the way through. The way the war was conducted, the number of troops that were involved, the way he ran his department and did not make them have a good order of discipline, things of that nature. Now, he would say to me, he didn't like the way I was talking to the press. He calls it leaking. I said, I always put my name to it. I wasn't leaking it, I was speaking for the record. So, [00:27:00] the disagreements on how to handle the peace process, where Mr. Rumsfeld basically felt to hell with the Palestinians. We felt that was a recipe for disaster for Israel. They were suffering an intifada.

So, you name it. The relationships with France, who, although we've had a relationship for well over 200 years, Secretary Powell used to say it's a relationship that has spent a tremendous amount of time in the marriage counselor's office, but the marriage still lasts. Mr. Rumsfeld didn't want anything to do with the French, and yet it was the French government, the civilian side, he was a troublesome force. The French military was very much on our side. So you name it and we fought about it.

LEONG: Did he have anything to say about China and Japan?

ARMITAGE: Yes. Not about Japan. He deferred -- Mr. Wolfowitz was very good in Japan and Mr. Lawless, who was the deputy assistant secretary, [00:28:00] was good on Japan. So no, not on that. He did on China, and I'll give you an exact answer. When the EP3 incident happened, for nine or ten days, Secretary Powell and I resolved that issue, as a matter of record, it's not -- I'm not making this up -- much to the dissatisfaction of Mr. Rumsfeld. We got all our folks back unharmed, with relations with China not terribly damaged, and without apologizing, which is what the President didn't want to apologize for this. Rumsfeld demanded immediately, or the Defense Department did, to be given command of removal of the aircraft. They were going to make the Chinese have the aircraft flown out in whole. What happened? Several months went by. Finally, the Chinese cut up the airplane and sent it out. [00:29:00] A perfect metaphor for the Defense Department in Bush one.

LEONG: So, in Bush two then, back to Asia and Bush two, now you're the outsider, after 2005.

ARMITAGE: Yeah.

LEONG: What's your assessment of how they approached Asia?

ARMITAGE: Pretty good on the approach of Asia, in philosophy, but in fact, if I recall correctly, Dr. Rice skipped two ARF meetings, and this was very much frowned upon. We never missed one. Second, and this I think actually brought some difficulties to Chris Hill, our assistant secretary, and to Dr. Rice. There was a lot of



dissatisfaction in the way North Korea was being handled, and a feeling that perhaps Mr. Hill and Dr. Rice were giving a little too much away to try to get an agreement with the north. So those two -- and that, by the way, [00:30:00] caused us some difficulty with Japan, who felt they weren't getting the full interaction that they had come to expect; the six party talks, etc. So, in philosophy, Asia remained sound, but in practice, I think skipping the two ARFs, and the difficulties surrounding North Korea, it was somewhat harmful to our relationships in Asia.

LEONG: Some people have said because of the focus on counterterrorism, because Secretary Rice was not as engaged as Secretary Powell was, that China was able to launch its so-called Charm Offensive, and as a result of that, you had lost some standing, lost some influence. Any grounds for that?

ARMITAGE: Well, I would be -- I would generally make haste to criticize Secretary Rice for her Asian activities. I've said what I said about ARF. [00:31:00] But I think there was an inevitability to the rise of China, and China rapidly offset her Charm Offensive with a coercion, a tailored coercion policy, and the Spratly and Paracel. So I think where the United States lost some ground, and I can't put an exact time to it, but it's a combination of several things. One, democracy seems to be to have lost, at least temporarily, a little energy and a little efficiency, and now we've got the specter of members of Congress are having to close the government and things of that nature. So, the model is under some stress and I think that's perfectly true in our country right now. But I think also, the fact that the United States engaged

in torture, this really sacrificed a lot of the high ground. Is it regainable? Yes, it is, but we have to [00:32:00] walk the walk and talk the talk. So, I think there were several reasons why our influence was down temporarily. I think things have changed a bit, and I think the eagle is flying a little bit higher in Asia these days.

LEONG: The memo on torture, that was -- the report rather.

ARMITAGE: The memo?

LEONG: I mean the report.

ARMITAGE: The Senate report.

LEONG: Exactly.

ARMITAGE: Yes.

LEONG: I'm sorry. That was released in December, I believe it was.

ARMITAGE: Yes.

LEONG: Several months ago. What was your reaction to that?

ARMITAGE: I was sick. I was horrified to think that my government would ever, as a matter of policy, involve torture. And I'm not an ingénue, I'm not a baby. I did six years in Vietnam, I know bad things happen to people, and sometimes good people do bad things, but I never thought governmental policy would ever be issued by my government that would allow for "enhanced interrogation techniques." [00:33:00]

LEONG: When you were over at State, no hint of any of this?

ARMITAGE: Not for me. Laterally, toward the end, I can't tell you exactly when because he never told me, Secretary Powell received, what I understand was a truncated briefing on this, but the Senate report to which you referred, refers to him and me, as being told, the CIA talking, saying keep it away from these guys, they'll object. Don't tell them. And our ambassadors in the field were actually told not to tell us about black sites. We found out over time, from knowing about prisons and knowing about what went on inside of them are two different things.

LEONG: You say the ambassadors knew? So, in Thailand for instance?

ARMITAGE: They didn't know about enhanced interrogation, no. They knew that we had black sites. These are sites that are hidden prisons.

LEONG: So they knew of the existence of black sites, but not what they did.

[00:34:00]

ARMITAGE: Yes, that's my understanding, and they were told not to tell us. We eventually found out about black sites.

LEONG: Why Thailand? Thailand was the first.

ARMITAGE: I don't know, you have to talk to some of the intelligence communities. I don't know.

LEONG: What is your sense? We're running out of time, so what is your sense of the legacy of President Bush's Asia policy?

ARMITAGE: I think as a general matter, it will be seen as all right. Certainly, the first administration, quite good, and I've already said about our Chinese and Japanese

friends and Australian friends, I've said about that. The second, we slipped a bit for the reasons I've indicated, but I want to emphasize that I have never heard an Asian leader who didn't enjoy his interactions with Mr. Bush. I have heard plenty of them, and I talk to them now, [00:35:00] when I travel around, people who were in leadership saying we sure do miss George Bush. We don't miss all of his policies but we sure do miss him. So I think as a general matter, it will be seen favorably.

LEONG: His popularity, at least among the people, was very low though.

ARMITAGE: Yes, but his popularity here is creeping up. I was talking about leaders, I was specific.

LEONG: Sure.

ARMITAGE: The people see his policies, they don't interact with the President, and George Bush may not -- George Bush 43, may not have been a great wholesale politician, as Mr. Obama is, but on retail, he was fantastic. As I was saying, I've never heard -- I'm sure someone out there didn't care for him, but even Chinese leaders, saying gosh, we sure do miss interacting with President Bush.

LEONG: Given your participation in the first Bush Administration, if you could do it over again, [00:36:00] what might you have done differently?

ARMITAGE: I think what I'd have done is not -- if I could do it over again, is make a purposeful choice, after talking with Secretary Powell, to do everything but Iraq, and he'd have to be Secretary of State of the United States. But it sapped a lot of our energy, and that was energy that I feel I could have spent elsewhere. And I'm



not talking particularly about Asia, because I feel pretty good about what we did in Asia, but more generally in other parts of the world, Central and South America, Africa.

LEONG: What about your personal triumph? Was there a particular event that you feel was one sort of a moment of your personal triumph?

ARMITAGE: No. I was proud of my part in resolving the EP3, but when you do policy, [00:37:00] you don't have a take the hill moment. You don't have a moment where you charge your machinegun nest. You go into work early in the morning and you work all day long, on things that sometimes barely seem to be moving. So, I would find it very difficult to be able to say there's a eureka moment or some moment that stands out above all the rest. As a general matter, I think the recognition that Asian friends have given to Secretary Powell and to me has been splendid, and it indicates that over time, we made a difference to them, but I don't think that I can see any particular moment that I can point to on remitting pride. You just go to work in the morning and beaver away all day long.

LEONG: Is there a story that you might tell us, that you might share with us, an anecdote, an episode, that might illustrate your working relationship with Secretary Powell or your working relationship with the President? [00:38:00]

ARMITAGE: Well, with the President, I had known him as a Vulcan, on his campaign, and the fact that he was kind enough to inquire my interest in three jobs indicates that he must have felt pretty good about it.





I think with Secretary Powell, who was a little older, with me and President Bush, I could joke with him, I could have fun with him, because we were of an age. Secretary Powell was of a different generation. I said to him one day, I said, “With you and the President, it’s like I think the President feels he’s in the room with his father and he can’t swear.” And for Secretary Powell’s point, his view of the presidency was so dignified. He worked for several presidents and he viewed the office with such great esteem, that he couldn’t laugh and joke with the President.

I can tell you an anecdote about Secretary Powell, however. [00:39:00] I had been asked to be the deputy, I’d accepted, I was going through the process of getting cleared. I was the secretary’s office one day and he said, “Wait a minute, I’m going to call my new counterpart in Moscow, Igor Ivanov.” And just as he was about to place the call, this was 2001, March, just as he was about to place the call, we had somebody, who I won’t identify, came into the office with the information that we were about to throw out 50 spies from the Russian Embassy, the attaché, he’s KGB. And so the first call that Secretary Powell is going to have with his counterpart, was to tell him that he was going to pitch 50 Russians. So, he got Ivanov, who has become a good friend of Powell’s and mine since then, on the phone, and he said, “Minister, this is Colin Powell. I’m your new counterpart here [00:40:00] in the United States and I’m looking forward very much to working with you,” and Minister Ivanov reciprocated, and Powell said, “There’s one issue I’ve got to raise with you.” He says, “Tomorrow at twelve o’clock or so, we’re going to pitch

50 Russians out of here for espionage activities.” Complete silence on the other end of the phone. I’m sitting there watching the big boys play, and finally Minister Ivanov said well, “Mr. Secretary, do you realize what this means?” Powell said, “Yeah, I suppose it means you’ll pitch 50 of our folks, and then we can get down to business.” Splendid, splendid.

LEONG: Well, thank you so much.

[END OF AUDIO/VIDEO FILE]