



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

May 27, 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILE

From: HA - Assistant Secretary Elliott Abrams
Subject: George Lister, Intermittent Expert:
Performance Evaluation

The accompanying memorandum is to record my appraisal of the work of George Lister in HA, under my supervision, for the period December, 1981 through February, 1985.

George 7/11
many thanks
for sharing this with
me. Wish I'd read it
before we lunched
Well, I'm ready
for next time.
Kw

This memorandum is submitted as a review of the work of George Lister, Intermittent Expert in HA, for the period December, 1981 through February, 1985. His overall rating is, for reasons detailed at length below, Outstanding. It is requested that this memorandum be placed in Mr. Lister's personnel file and I recommend that the Department consider appropriate opportunities for continuing use of his ability, experience, personal contacts and commitment.

Mr. Lister was in the Foreign Service for almost 30 years, specializing in Eastern European and Latin American affairs, with assignments including Moscow (plus two years of Russian language and Soviet area training), Warsaw, the Polish Desk, Rome, Germany and Colombia. He played an active role in the development of our human rights policy, working closely with the office of then Congressman Don Fraser (D-Minn.), now the Mayor of Minneapolis, prior to the formation of HA as a separate Bureau. He was the first Human Rights Officer in ARA.

Mr. Lister's role in HA is unique and his contribution in helping to improve USG policy and performance has been invaluable. He works on human rights worldwide, and also follows Congressional and Human Rights Movement (NGO) activities in the U.S. Along with his extensive experience and ideological training, Mr. Lister brings to this work a keen interest in human rights issues combined with a self-starting approach which takes imaginative initiatives rather than merely responding to events and requests for action. He is essentially a democratic activist, unencumbered by a bureaucratic in-box/out-box mentality, focusing primarily on the world outside the Department and placing priority on direct personal action and dialogue (including attentive listening) in helping to achieve USG objectives. At the same time Mr. Lister is a first rate team player, quiet, low key and cooperative, with a good sense of humor. He has regularly obtained clearance for all his substantive activities and I have found his work to be consistently accurate and reliable.

Since I assumed my current position a little over three years ago, Mr. Lister has been sending me a steady stream of informative and timely memoranda, including, among other things, suggestions for improving USG policy and performance and for achieving USG objectives, opportunities for influencing domestic and foreign perceptions of our human rights policy, etc. These "Lister-grams", as I refer to them, provide some of the most interesting and useful information to pass across my desk.

Mr. Lister is a political animal with extensive expertise in Soviet/Communist tactics (his studies at Regensburg's Detachment R, in a class taught in Russian by former Soviet citizens, included the history of the CPSU). He is an enthusiastic advocate of giving human rights a high priority in our foreign policy because he is convinced that to do so is not only ethically and morally correct, but also in the U.S. national interest, providing, among other things, a potentially explosive weapon against the Soviet dictatorship. With respect to the latter point, Mr. Lister sees the non-Communist Left as a crucial target area in our daily political warfare with Moscow, and one which we have sometimes neglected at great cost to ourselves. Mr. Lister has zeroed in on two related issues in USG political performance: 1) our willingness to allow ourselves to be identified (often by Communist propaganda) with some right-wing dictatorships, thus affording the Communists opportunities to create and manipulate broad left-wing coalitions which are not only anti-regime but also anti-USG; and, 2) our frequent failure to maintain and develop adequate dialogue with non-Communist leftist (including Marxist but not Marxist-Leninist) circles which are very critical of the USG, and often consider themselves anti-U.S., thus again allowing the Communists to influence and dominate much of the Left.

In connection with the above (and set forth in detail below) one of Mr. Lister's most valuable assets is his unusual credibility with many sectors of liberal and left-wing opinion (both foreign and domestic) which are suspicious of, and frequently hostile to, the Department. He has succeeded in prevailing on many of these people to come to HA for dialogue, exchanges which have almost always proved to be in the interest of the USG. At the same time Mr. Lister has used his experience with Marxist-Leninist tactics and ideology effectively to counter Communist propaganda efforts among these groups. Because of his keen interest in human rights issues Mr. Lister spends much of his free time in activities supportive of his work in HA.

As a result of Mr. Lister's credibility with many critics of the USG he proved of invaluable assistance to HA in 1982, when I first assumed my duties as Assistant Secretary. At that time there was a widespread assumption that our human rights policy would have no value or substance. Some domestic and foreign groups were willing to undertake a dialogue only on Mr. Lister's recommendation, making the decision to come to the Department on the basis of "well, if George says so....".

Mr. Lister has an excellent command of Spanish and Italian, and can converse passably in French. His Russian was very good (two years of study) and although he has used it little in recent years he sometimes finds it useful.

Mr. Lister is a very effective public speaker with many years of experience. His personnel file contains abundant evidence of his first rate performance as a Department representative.

Specific examples of Mr. Lister's work performance are detailed below.

1. Guatemala

Mr. Lister has followed Guatemalan political developments for many years, maintaining close relations with both the Guatemalan Christian Democratic and Social Democratic Parties. For example, he is an old friend of Christian Democratic leader Vinicio Cerezo, a strong contender in the upcoming Presidential elections in that country. Because of attempts on his life, Cerezo keeps his wife and children in this area. Ms. Cerezo is in frequent touch with Mr. Lister, often transmitting her husband's phone messages. Mr. Lister has arranged for me a number of meetings with the Cerezos which have been most useful, both in obtaining first hand accounts of the human rights situation in Guatemala and also in conveying our assurances of support for democratic progress in that troubled country.

As a result of these contacts and activities Mr. Lister has played a helpful role in assisting HA to exert a beneficial influence on USG policy and performance with respect to Guatemala.

2. Chile

One of Mr. Lister's most noteworthy contributions has involved HA participation in our relations with Chile. He enjoys a wide range of friendships with leaders of the democratic Opposition in that country (as well as with those in exile in the U.S. and elsewhere) and has brought many of them into the Bureau for human rights discussions with me and other HA Officers. These meetings have helped to improve and implement USG policy and tactics, and to establish good working relations and desperately needed credibility with the Opposition, which is often prone to criticism and suspicion of the USG. This Chilean democratic network is in almost daily contact with Mr. Lister and he is sometimes the first in the Department to be informed of events in Santiago.

The foregoing contribution is especially important because Soviet political/propaganda objectives have been, on the one hand, to portray the USG as supporting the Pinochet dictatorship and, on the other, to push for an opposition Broad Front which will include the Communists, along with some democratic parties, and can be manipulated by Moscow against the U.S. In countering these tactics Mr. Lister has worked hard to convince his friends among the Chilean Socialists that they have been mistaken in assuming that we support dictatorship in Chile (Communist propaganda notwithstanding). He urged that the Socialists develop a dialogue with HA and cooperate with the democratic Opposition, not, repeat not, with the Communists. I have found conversations with these Socialist contacts, despite their initial skepticism, most useful in clarifying the human rights objectives of our policy in Chile. The Socialists currently remain split with respect to their relations with the Chilean Communist Party.

In summary, Mr. Lister has exerted a beneficial influence on the policies of both the Chilean democratic Opposition and the Department. It is noteworthy that Mr. Lister is a close friend of Eugenio Velasco, the unofficial representative in the U.S. of the democratic Opposition, as well as of Claudio Grossman, a local democratic Chilean Socialist. On Mr. Lister's recommendation, Mr. Velasco was included in the White House Human Rights Day ceremony in 1983 and Mr. Grossman was invited in 1984.

It should also be mentioned that Mr. Lister has been active and effective with regard to Chile in both Congress and the Human Rights Movement (NGOs), two major areas of strong criticism of the Department. As one example of this activity specific reference is made to Mr. Lister's success in obtaining public praise for the Department's Chile policy from Congressman Harkin (D.-Iowa), one of our most frequent and acerbic critics, as reported on pages 11 and 12.

3. Nicaragua

Mr. Lister has been actively concerned with Nicaraguan affairs for many years. He is an old friend of the present GRN Foreign Minister, Father Miguel d'Escoto, and a decade or so ago, long before Somoza's fall, he would watch "Father Mike" lead protest demonstrations in front of the White House. Mr. Lister is of course strongly opposed to the Marxist-Leninist policies pursued by the current regime in Managua, and has been helpful in providing specific evidence of its anti-democratic ideology and objectives, along with recommendations as to relevant USG tactics. Among other things, Mr. Lister keeps handy a collection of pertinent statements, articles, broadcasts, etc., which he calls to the attention of human rights activists, both foreign and domestic, who maintain that the GRN is democratic.

Mr. Lister is also a close friend of Arturo Cruz, the former Sandinista Ambassador to the U.S. who resigned in protest over Managua's policies. Mr. Lister arranged for very useful HA conversations with Dr. Cruz, in which the latter has provided us with valuable recommendations and insights.

Norman Bent, pastor of the Moravian Church and spiritual leader of the Miskito Indians of Nicaragua, is also a good friend of Mr. Lister's, who brought him in to HA for helpful and timely human rights discussions.

When I visited Nicaragua last year I had a long and informative talk with Marta Baltodano, Director of the Permanent Committee for the Defense of Human Rights and one of the most courageous and effective opponents of the GRN. During our discussion Ms. Baltodano told me that George Lister understands the situation in Nicaragua better than any USG official she has ever met.

4. Poland

Having served in Warsaw and on the Polish Desk, Mr. Lister has proved a reliable source of information and advice on Polish human rights developments and issues. He maintains extensive contacts in the Solidarity movement and in the Polish-American community. In 1983 he helped to facilitate a meeting in HA which resulted in liberalizing our Polish asylum policy. In 1984 Mr. Lister arranged a useful HA meeting with Solidarity representatives. Among other things these activities have improved HA relations with local Polish and Polish-American groups, as indicated in the attached March 1983 Solidarity letter.

5. South Korea

One of Mr. Lister's major successes involved the South Korean democratic Opposition leader, Kim Dae Jung, who has just returned to Seoul. Mr. Lister met Kim in early 1983, shortly after he arrived here, and soon became friends with him and his family. Kim was very critical of USG policy, as he understood it. He was not successful in his attempts to be received at the Assistant Secretary level, but Mr. Lister quietly persisted on Kim's behalf and after several months I talked with the Korean leader for the first time. The latter's relations with HA have improved steadily since then, and Mr. Lister has continued to provide him both help and advice. As evidence of that fact there is attached a November 1984 letter from Kim Dae Jung to Mr. Lister.

In January 1985 Mr. Lister succeeded in arranging for Kim Dae Jung to speak at the Open Forum. Three days before the speech Kim requested Mr. Lister's opinion of his proposed text. Mr. Lister counseled numerous changes, all of which were accepted. Two of these changes deserve specific mention. First, Kim's original draft urged the USG to be as critical of human rights violations by right-wing dictators as of those by Communist governments. Mr. Lister suggested that Kim express satisfaction with the Department's Human Rights Reports in that respect. That addition was included as indicated in the attached excerpt (page 10 of the speech). Second, Mr. Lister advised that Kim Dae Jung stop asserting that the USG sides with the ROKG against the Korean people. He recommended that, instead, Kim emphasize that he is confident the USG favors democracy in Korea, but that unfortunately many Korean people are not aware of that fact and Communist propaganda alleges the contrary. That view was included in the conclusion of the speech as attached (page 12 of the speech) which was extremely well received by a standing room only crowd.

Prior to Kim's departure Mr. Lister was instructed to deliver the Department's parting message to the returning leader. Kim Dae Jung was under house arrest until recently but his representatives have been in touch with Mr. Lister. A few days ago Kim sent word that he regards his Open Forum presentation, and the subsequent lunch with Department officials, as his greatest success in this country.

6. El Salvador

Mr. Lister has old friends on both sides of the tragic conflict in El Salvador. He is close to President Napoleon Duarte and Jose Antonio Morales Ehrlich, Secretary General of the Christian Democratic Party, and at the same time he has remained on friendly terms with the two principal rebel political spokesmen, Guillermo Ungo and Ruben Zamora.

Mr. Lister follows Salvadoran events closely, and has provided HA with useful relevant information and recommendations. In addition he has covered Congressional hearings on that country and has attended numerous meetings and rallies protesting USG policy there (including those held by CISPES, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, in support of the objectives of the guerrillas). In so doing, Mr. Lister has been active in getting across our human rights views to relevant Members of Congress, human rights activists, etc.

7. Uruguay

Mr. Lister has for many years been a good friend of Blanco Party leader Wilson Ferreira, and his son, Juan Raul. The Blancos have been one of the two major democratic parties in opposition to the Uruguayan Military Government. Both Ferreriras have been critical of the USG as supporting the military dictatorship in their country. Mr. Lister succeeded in prevailing upon them to come to HA for human rights discussions which proved mutually beneficial. As a result of these conversations it has been possible to improve relations between the USG (including our Montevideo Embassy) and this important sector of the Uruguayan democratic Opposition, a success which has been both rewarding and timely as Uruguay passed from military to democratic rule in March.

8. Uganda

Mr. Lister has played a key role in attracting attention to human rights violations in Uganda, and in improving USG relations with the democratic Opposition in that country. Having established contact with recently arrived escapees (Banyarwanda) in the U.S., Mr. Lister also met with a representative of the U.S. Committee for Refugees who had investigated the critical situation in Uganda. This in turn led to discussions in the Department, which were followed by a Congressional hearing in August 1984 at which I testified.

In connection with the above there is attached a copy of a February, 1985 letter to Mr. Lister from the Honorable Paul Ssemogerere, head of the Christian Democratic Party of Uganda. The letter reflects a recent conversation with the Ugandan leader in which Mr. Lister emphasized the Department's sincere interest in the human rights cause and the importance of developing a friendly, informal dialogue with human rights advocates in Uganda.

9. Philippines

Mr. Lister has played a most useful role in developing good relations with the Filipino democratic Opposition. He has long been a friend of Raul Manglapus, former Foreign Minister of the Philippines and one of that country's best known democratic leaders abroad. Despite earlier Department reluctance to receive Manglapus, Mr. Lister quietly persisted in his low key efforts to bring him in, and HA is now in regular contact with him. Mr. Lister also arranged for Manglapus to speak at the Open Forum, where he was well received.

I have found Manglapus to be a valuable friend, democratic, well informed, reliable and instrumental in improving relations with the Filipino democratic Opposition. Our conversations have had a salutary effect on USG policy and tactics. These relations with the Opposition are crucial as the future of the Marcos dictatorship becomes questionable and Moscow clearly hopes to exploit any crisis and confusion, and to turn anti-Marcos feeling against the USG, as well. In this respect the role of Raul Manglapus is pivotal. For example, in October 1983 when President Reagan decided against making his scheduled visit to Manila, Manglapus led a large and friendly demonstration outside the White House, thanking the President for that decision. Before delivering his speech on that occasion Manglapus asked Mr. Lister (who was present) whether he might mention him specifically as a friend of Filipino democracy, but Mr. Lister amiably declined the honor.

10. USSR

Having specialized in Soviet affairs Mr. Lister carefully follows Moscow's policies and propoganda with an experienced eye, and has called attention to numerous relevant Soviet broadcasts, articles, pronouncements, etc., including Communist criticism of our human rights policy and of me personally. Mr. Lister frequently suggests appropriate action and policy statements in, as he sees it, our daily political/propaganda warfare with Moscow throughout the world. For example, Mr. Lister has long recommended that we stop public references to Central America as "our back yard", a practice which is effectively exploited by Moscow and Havana broadcasts to Latin America. When the well known Soviet dissident and former prisoner, Vladimir Bukovsky, asked me to name one person in HA with whom he might best cooperate I recommended Mr. Lister as an expert in "agit-prop".

Mr. Lister has also been helpful to HA in the Bureau's relations with the American spouses of Soviet citizens denied permission to emigrate. As one example, there is attached a July, 1982 letter from Lois Frolova, thanking Mr. Lister for his efforts in the case of her Soviet husband, who was finally allowed to join her in this country.

11. Dominican Republic

Mr. Lister has been involved in Dominican affairs since his participation in the U.S. intervention of 1965. He is on excellent terms with the leadership of the ruling Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) and received an official commendation by that Party for his help in securing USG support for an honest vote count in the 1978 elections, which brought the PRD to power. Mr. Lister attended the 1982 Presidential inauguration as a personal guest of the PRD.

Jose Francisco Pena Gomez, the PRD leader, has been a close friend of Mr. Lister's for almost 20 years. Pena has played an important political role in Latin America as head of the Latin American section of the Socialist International (ref. page 10). On Mr. Lister's suggestion he has come to HA for mutually useful conversations. It should be noted that the current Nicaraguan leadership often seeks the support of the PRD, and Father d'Escoto (ref. page 4) and Pena are old friends.

12. South Africa

Mr. Lister has been following events in South Africa regularly for the past three years and has met with visitors, both black and white, from that country. He has also reported on relevant Congressional hearings, demonstrations, speeches, etc. Mr. Lister maintains good relations with the Washington Office on Africa, one of the main local organizations covering developments in South Africa and seeking to influence USG relations with that country. The Washington Office is especially active on the Hill, with the media and in the Human Rights Movement. Much domestic (and some foreign) criticism of USG policy is influenced, if not stimulated and guided, by that Office. Mr. Lister has repeatedly urged the Office to improve its criticism of USG policy, e.g. to stop asserting that the Department supports apartheid despite our numerous statements opposing all forms of race discrimination in South Africa. Mr. Lister did succeed in arranging a mutually helpful lunch with the head of the Washington Office on Africa and HA's Senior Deputy Assistant Secretary.

13. Yugoslavia

Mr. Lister maintains useful contact with the Yugoslav democratic opposition in exile, including Mihajlo Mihajlov and the Committee to Aid Democratic Dissidents in Yugoslavia. Mr. Lister is also a good friend of Svetlana Nikolic, the wife of Milan Nikolic who was on trial with several other Yugoslav dissidents earlier this year.

A December, 1984 letter from the prominent Yugoslav journalist, Grozdan Popov, who recently addressed the Open Forum, is attached as an eloquent reflection of Mr. Lister's ability to develop useful contact and dialogue.

14. Paraguay

Mr. Lister has many friends in the democratic Opposition in Paraguay, and indeed one of his human rights speeches was published verbatim some years ago in ABC Color, a leading Asuncion newspaper. I have met several of these Paraguayan democratic leaders and have found our conversations useful in understanding the situation in that country and clarifying our human rights objectives. Fortunately, Ambassador Davis has been extremely helpful in supporting our human rights dialogue.

15. Cuba

Mr. Lister follows Cuban political/propaganda activities in this hemisphere and he has many friends among the Cuban democratic Opposition living abroad, including Carlos Franqui, Huber Matos and Luis Aguilar. The first two were top aides to Castro and subsequently went to prison in Havana. Mr. Lister works closely with the local Cuban emigre organization Of Human Rights and the Cuban American National Foundation. It was through Mr. Lister's initiative in December, 1982 that I met Armando Valladares, the well known Cuban poet who was a political prisoner for 22 years and is now a major anti-Castro voice abroad.

16. Christian Democrats

Over the years Mr. Lister has developed excellent relations with the Christian Democratic International and, as noted elsewhere in this memorandum, is a friend of many Christian Democratic leaders. As a result he has been able to help improve our dialogue and cooperation with this important sector of the democratic political world. About two years ago the International discussed with Mr. Lister the possibility of his becoming their official representative in this country, with an office in Washington.

Mr. Lister also enjoys good relations with the Latin American Confederation of Workers (CLAT), sympathetic to the Christian Democrats, and reports regularly on its activities. In May 1983, he was able to arrange a helpful HA meeting with CLAT representatives which has proved a basis for informal cooperation. This was an especially valuable contribution in that for years USG relations with CLAT had been poor, despite the latter's important activity in Latin American political affairs and our many common objectives. CLAT now cables Mr. Lister directly for help in some specific human rights cases.

17. Socialist International

Mr. Lister has made a special effort to follow and report on relevant activities of the Socialist International, partly because of the key role played by that organization in the political area of the non-Communist Left. Mr. Lister has emphasized to his numerous International friends the importance of candid discussion with HA as a means of understanding and influencing our human rights policy. Partly in response to such advice an International group met with HA in December 1982 for a very useful exchange.

It is indicative of Mr. Lister's special relationship with the International that he was invited to sit in on a Santo Domingo meeting of the Latin American section of that organization while attending the 1982 Dominican Presidential inauguration as a guest of the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD). It should also be mentioned that the spokesman for the Salvadoran rebels, Guillermo Ungo, another friend of Mr. Lister's, is an active member of the International.

18. Visa Policy

Mr. Lister has long been an articulate advocate of a sophisticated USG visa policy, arguing that we usually stand to lose far more politically by refusing visas to leftist critics of the USG than we do by allowing them to come. This is all the more true because the views of such visitors are usually already widely known here, and visa refusal frequently gives them far greater publicity than they could usually hope to achieve by a mere routine visit and speaking tour.

One well known case in point was that of Hortensia Allende, elderly widow of the former Socialist President of Chile, Salvador Allende. In March 1983, Ms. Allende was refused a visa to accept a relatively unimportant public speaking engagement in the U.S. The refusal was reported and deplored on front pages and in editorials and has been endlessly exploited by Moscow, Havana and other enemies of the USG.

Mr. Lister's quiet, persistent efforts have helped to improve our visa performance considerably, following a decision taken by the Secretary last year. HA is now regularly consulted on controversial visa cases.

19. Congressional Relations

Mr. Lister follows relevant Congressional activities closely and has many contacts among Members and staff. He frequently covers Congressional hearings and has prepared numerous useful and informative reports on those proceedings.

As a result of the above, Mr. Lister has been able to help HA with timely information and relevant recommendations while exerting a beneficial influence on some Congressional thinking and action. For example, Mr. Lister is skilled at getting Department speeches, policy statements, etc., inserted into the Congressional Record, along with approving support by Members. One case in point is provided in the attached statement placed in the Record by Congressman Harkin (D-Iowa), a frequent critic of the Department and its policies. Mr.

Lister drafted the statement, approving a Department press briefing comment on Chile, and persuaded Mr. Harkin to put it in the Record. Mr. Lister also drafted Senator Percy's attached statement placing in the Record my first major human rights speech in early 1982.

Mr. Lister follows the Congressional Record regularly and has thus been helpful in bringing to my attention relevant statements, speeches, bills, resolutions, debates, etc., many of which would not otherwise have been seen in HA. In some instances I have thereby been able to take appropriate action, e.g. correcting or refuting a Congressional criticism of our human rights policy.

20. Foreign Broadcast Information Service

Mr. Lister reviews the eight daily volumes of the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), sending me items of particular interest and significance. I have found this material of great value, often providing useful information not covered in our cable traffic, including criticism of our human rights policy (and occasionally of me personally). Some of these items have stimulated specific action by HA.

The following is one example of the above. The departing Chilean Ambassador to the OAS recently gave a foreign interview reported in the FBIS. On that basis Mr. Lister suggested it might be useful to talk with the Ambassador before her departure. I invited her to the Department and the resulting conversation proved extremely timely and informative.

21. Human Rights Movement (NGOs)

Mr. Lister performs an especially valuable service as the Bureau's main contact with the Human Rights Movement, the numerous NGOs (political, religious, academic, etc.) here and abroad who are involved in one way or another with human rights issues. Some Movement groups exert considerable influence, for better or for worse, on public opinion, Congressional hearings and legislation, the press, radio and TV, religious and academic conferences, etc.

Many of these organizations are suspicious of, if not hostile to, the State Department and some have been reluctant to dialogue with HA. As noted on page 2, Mr. Lister has long maintained close relations with these groups and enjoys unique credibility with them.

In connection with the above, Mr. Lister spends many day and evening hours at Movement meetings, debates, receptions, rallies, demonstrations, etc., and is almost always the only Department official attending. Mr. Lister represented the Department at the International Conference on Latin America at Montreal in March 1984, as well as at the Conference for Democracy in Central America, in Costa Rica in August 1983, and the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) Conference in Mexico City in September 1983. Mr. Lister was the first Department official to speak at a LASA conference, in 1977.