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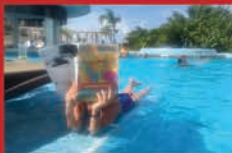
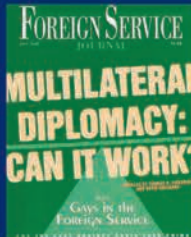
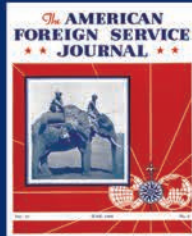
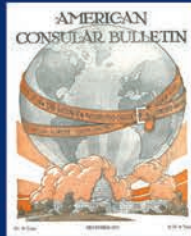
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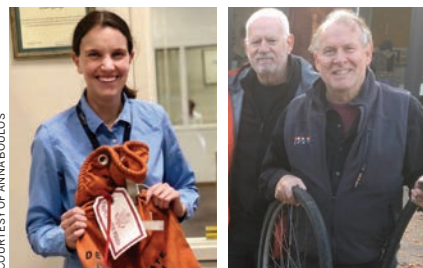


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# Back to the Gilded Age?

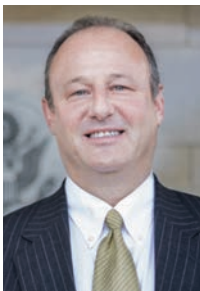
BY ERIC RUBIN

The 19th century was a time of excess in our country. Acute partisanship and violence led to a bloody civil war that killed more than 600,000 Americans, based on division over the evil institution of slavery and the compromises our Founding Fathers had made to accommodate it. And there was an excess of political corruption and politicization that led to the so-called Gilded Age in which federal jobs were treated as the spoils of political victory.

Starting with President Andrew Jackson, federal jobs were treated as rewards for partisan supporters and as a way to ensure that loyalists were in every key position. President James A. Garfield's assassination in 1881 by the disgruntled Charles J. Guiteau—who believed he helped get Garfield elected and thus deserved a consul position in Vienna or Paris—marked the low point for our government's ability to serve the American people and not simply the elected politicians of the moment.

Against the toxic brew of corruption, concentrated wealth and partisanship came a wave of talented reformers, led by the ambitious New York Republican politician Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt.

As he wrote in *The Cosmopolitan* in May 1892, "the spoils system of making appointments to and removals from office is so wholly and unmixedly evil,



Ambassador Eric Rubin is the president of the American Foreign Service Association.

is so emphatically un-American and undemocratic, and is so potent a force for degradation in our public life that it is difficult to believe that any intelligent man of ordinary decency who has looked into the subject can be its advocate."

Serving as U.S. Civil Service Commissioner and later as president, he eradicated the spoils system and laid the groundwork for our national merit-based Civil Service, the Foreign Service and other career federal services.

Reform of the diplomatic service took a bit longer. Representative John Jacob Rogers of Massachusetts led the way, stating in 1923: "Let us strive for a foreign service which will be flexible and democratic; which will attract and retain the best men we have; which will offer reasonable pay, reasonable prospects for promotion, [and] reasonable provision against want when old age comes to a faithful servant."

The Rogers Act of 1924 created the U.S. Foreign Service. (It was later updated by the Foreign Service Act of 1946 and then 1980.)

The decades that followed saw the expansion of professionalization, writes historian Margaret O'Mara in an opinion piece for *The New York Times* on Oct. 26, 2019. "Creation of the Foreign Service established a rigorous entry examination and raised pay. The diplomatic corps was no longer limited to rich young men with time and family money to take overseas postings.

"The Hatch Act placed sweeping restrictions on political activity by govern-

ment officials, including the president's political appointees," O'Mara continues. "Merit-based hiring diversified the work force, making the career Civil Service outpace the private sector in representation of women and minorities, especially in executive roles."

Is all that starting to slip away?

Here we are today, almost 100 years after the creation of the career, professional Foreign Service and almost 140 years after the spoils system was (mostly) abolished.

In the context of a highly polarized political environment, the loss of exceptional diplomatic talent to retirement and resignation has further removed the Foreign Service from its leading role in the policy process—a role mandated by the 1980 Foreign Service Act.

The painful experiences of our colleagues who have been pulled into the impeachment inquiry as witnesses, at great professional risk and personal expense, is illustrative. The historic deficit in career appointees to assistant secretary positions and ambassadorships adds further to this negative direction.

We at AFSA will continue to do everything we can to stand firm in defense of our profession, our Service and our colleagues. At this difficult time for our country, for diplomacy and for the Foreign Service, we must stay true to our oath and commitment to serve the American people.

Join us in supporting our profession and the ideals that underlie our professional and nonpartisan Service. ■

**Editor-in-Chief, Director of Publications**  
Shawn Dorman: [dorman@afsa.org](mailto:dorman@afsa.org)

**Senior Editor**  
Susan Brady Maitra: [maitra@afsa.org](mailto:maitra@afsa.org)

**Managing Editor**  
Kathryn Owens: [owens@afsa.org](mailto:owens@afsa.org)

**Associate Editor**  
Cameron Woodworth: [woodworth@afsa.org](mailto:woodworth@afsa.org)

**Publications Coordinator**  
Dmitry Filipoff: [filipoff@afsa.org](mailto:filipoff@afsa.org)

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## CONTACTS



[www.afsa.org](http://www.afsa.org)

**AFSA Headquarters:**  
(202) 338-4045; Fax (202) 338-6820  
**State Department AFSA Office:**  
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# Foreign Service Excellence and Silver Linings

BY SHAWN DORMAN

**A** FSA's annual awards give us a chance to highlight and celebrate Foreign Service excellence. That feels like the right focus for the December edition to close out a difficult year for our institution. With the impeachment hearings having just begun as we go to press, career diplomats are quite literally on the front lines of a battle they did not choose but accepted as part of their duty to their country and oath of office.

Professional nonpartisan career diplomats are rarely in the limelight, and they tend to prefer it that way. Success in diplomacy is most often measured incrementally by crises averted, relationships preserved, compromises reached and agreements made. Diplomats seek the win-win, and are most successful when not loudly taking credit for success.

Yet today, these so-called “radical unelected bureaucrats,” subpoenaed as witnesses in the impeachment hearings, look more like superheroes, standing up to share the truth as they know it. The Foreign Service community embraces them and feels a sense of pride in their dedication, professionalism, patriotism and bravery, on display for the American public and the world to see.

And so our focus on excellence in diplomacy resonates powerfully.

AFSA's 2019 Award for Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy was bestowed on Ambassador (ret.) Herman “Hank” Cohen at the annual AFSA Awards



Shawn Dorman is the editor of The Foreign Service Journal.

Ceremony on Oct. 16. He advises today's Foreign Service to continue “speaking truth to power” and to make sure policymakers understand the negative foreign policy consequences of politicizing professional diplomacy. Amb. Cohen tells the *FSJ* he is still optimistic about the career: “There can be no more rewarding experience than professional government service that is protecting U.S. interests around the world.”

Two mid-level FSOs were selected for the William R. Rivkin Award for constructive dissent: Anna Boulos and Timmy Davis. Moises Mendoza received the W. Averell Harriman Award for dissent by an entry-level officer.

The Mark Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy went to Nora Brito and Christopher Gooch. The Nelson B. Delavan Award for an office management specialist went to Katherine Elizabeth Koehler; the M. Juanita Guess Award for a Community Liaison Office coordinator to Michelle Ross; the Avis Bohlen Award for a family member to retired FSO Laurent Charbonnet; the award for contributions to AFSA to F. Allen “Tex” Harris; and the post rep of the year award to Larry Fields.

Outstanding and courageous work is celebrated in these profiles. We hope you will share the *Journal* with family and friends to spread the word on Foreign Service excellence at a time when Americans are more curious about these dedicated public servants. Who is that fellow in the bow tie? Who is “the woman” referred to in the Trump-Zelensky call? (How fitting we chose Marie “Masha” Yovanovitch as the ambassador to profile in *Inside a U.S.*

*Embassy* eight years ago—the very model of an ambassador.)

The silver lining in the impeachment process is that it offers civics lessons—in particular on the importance of professional diplomacy and how it's supposed to work—to all who care to pay attention. The *Speaking Out* compilation of statements of support for the Foreign Service and diplomacy, all written before the open hearings, underscores the point.

Qualifications matter. It's not a completely wild idea to think that our country deserves professional representation overseas by those whose primary duty is to serve the American people.

In this month's cover story, USAID Counselor Chris Milligan presents an overview of the ongoing USAID Transformation initiative, while AFSA USAID VP Jason Singer critiques the program in his AFSA News column. USAID colleagues, tell us how the reform project is going from your vantage point.

Elsewhere in the issue, Lt. Commander Jimmy Drennan offers lessons on dissent he learned on a Navy ship. Retired FSO Tom Owens shares two moving consular stories, and FSO Daniel Morris brings us a quick tech guide to FS life.

Please consider contributing to the *Journal* in the new year—a *Speaking Out* piece, a letter, a reflection or feature. Send a photo for Local Lens. Or write for one of the focus sections—check out the 2020 editorial calendar (a tab on the *FSJ* homepage). Send submissions to [journal@afsa.org](mailto:journal@afsa.org).

Wishing the extended Foreign Service community a peaceful new year.

#FSProud ■

## Reporting, Then and Now

Thanks for publishing an excerpt from my 1969 article, “Communication and Controversy: The Future of FS Reporting” (October Talking Points, 50 Years Ago). Some readers may find it difficult to imagine that everything was done on typewriters in those days.

Revisiting that article today, I realize that political pressures now are a potential problem for those advocating nonconformist ideas. Nonetheless, it is still important to be advocates in some situations—making judgments and recommendations rather than being passive observers. Foreign affairs professionals in Washington will always need thoughtful, stimulating reports from the field.

In some cases, that may mean using back channels. There also should be significant rewards for bold, innovative reporting officers whose ideas have an impact in Washington.

My essay was stimulated by two factors that were new 50 years ago: a younger generation of officers likely to insist on more open reporting and policy processes, and the impact of electronic media on traditional Foreign Service reporting.

I suggested the then-futuristic idea of all reporting officers having access to the keyboard of an on-line teletype that enabled them to send direct electronic communications to specific addressees in Washington who have printouts near their desks.

There would be no clearances and no machine work for the embassy’s communications unit. The officer would not be inhibited by the law of anticipated negative reactions.

If only I had thought of calling it “the internet”!

*Michael A.G. Michaud*

*FSO, retired*

*Founding editor, Open Forum journal  
Lawrence, Kansas*

## Explaining Resignation

I am sympathetic to Andrew Kelly’s view (October Speaking Out, “There Is No ‘Complacent State’”) that one should not generalize about the decisions of FSOs to stay or remain in the face of foreign policies with which they disagree.

However, I believe the public is well

served when FSOs explain their reasons for resigning or offer respectful and informed critiques of current foreign policies. I do not regard such contributions as inconsistent with the “emeritus status” of former FSOs.

And by the way, we are not “required by Congress to spend the bulk

of our career overseas.” In my case, for example, I spent 10 years (and four postings) abroad out of a 25-year career.

*Greg Thielmann*

*FSO, retired*

*Arlington, Virginia*

## Let Actions Speak for Themselves

I wish to commend Andrew Kelly for his Speaking Out piece (“There Is No ‘Complacent State’”) in the October issue of *The Foreign Service Journal*. Mr. Kelly placed FSO Charles Park’s resignation in proper perspective, one with which I completely agree.

I have always admired those who act

on principle and let their actions speak for themselves. I find less admirable those who claim to act on principle and trumpet their acts by attempting to demonstrate their moral superiority and criticizing those who don’t follow suit.

Mr. Park appears to be of the latter persuasion, as demonstrated by his swipe at those who remain at their jobs as representing the “complacent state” and his immediate, post-resignation op-ed in *The Washington Post* and appearance on CNN.

Some have called Mr. Park “courageous” and praised his “integrity” in deciding to resign from the Foreign Service. He is no more courageous and has displayed no more integrity than those who have chosen to remain in the Foreign Service to perform the myriad tasks—from political/economic reporting to assisting American citizens—that must be accomplished if the United States is to remain a force in the world, regardless of the administration in office.

Fortunately, there are many FSOs who take their oath of office seriously and remain at their desks.

*William H. Barkell*

*FSO, retired*

*Arlington, Virginia*

## Thank You, Foreign Service Professionals

I want to express my gratitude to the professionals in the Foreign Service who have upheld the high principles of American diplomacy at a time of extreme duress in domestic politics.

The facts are damning: There have been unprecedented efforts, instigated by President Donald Trump, his political diplomatic appointees and Rudy Giuliani, potentially aided by Attorney General William Barr, to circumvent professional diplomatic channels so the



White House can use the might of the United States to force a foreign government to help President Trump's reelection campaign.

As the darkness and light at the White House, State Department and Department of Justice become apparent, I salute the men and women of the Foreign Service who have come forward to tell the truth. I'm sure the costs—professional, personal, financial—are tremendous.

I hope Ambassadors Bill Taylor and Marie Yovanovitch, and other diplomats whose names we may soon see in the headlines, know how deeply grateful most of our country is to them in protecting the national interest. They are courageous, nonpartisan patriots who do honor to their oath of office and the cause of democracy.

They are role models who show what duty to country looks like when the stakes couldn't be higher. I only wish that those at the highest levels of government followed their example.

*Merry Ann Moore  
Portland, Oregon* ■



**Share your thoughts about this month's issue.**

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## State Department Under Fire

October was a tumultuous month for the State Department, as several top diplomats were called before House committees in connection with the impeachment inquiry of President Donald Trump over his dealings with Ukraine.

At issue are allegations that the president withheld military aid, and a meeting with that nation's new president, Volodymyr Zelensky, in order to get the Ukrainian government to say it would investigate political rival Joe Biden and his son's dealings in that country, as well as conspiracy theories of alleged Ukrainian interference in the 2016 U.S. election.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has taken heat from many quarters for not speaking out publicly in defense of State Department diplomats who have come under attack from the White House.

When former career diplomat Marie Yovanovitch was abruptly pulled from her post as U.S. ambassador to Ukraine in May for alleged political reasons, Secretary Pompeo did not prevent the removal. (Amb. Yovanovitch testified before House committees on Oct. 11.)

Secretary Pompeo's alleged silence on the matter prompted Senator Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and 10 of his Democratic colleagues, to send a letter on Oct. 10 asking the Secretary for answers. "You have not made a single remark defending Ambassador Yovanovitch or heralding her more than three decades of service to the American people," they wrote.

Other diplomats have taken flak from the Trump administration, as well.

In remarks to reporters gathered on the White House lawn Oct. 25, President Trump criticized Ambassador William Taylor, the *chargé d'affaires* at Embassy

## Contemporary Tweet

Today we begin the formal process of withdrawing from the Paris Agreement. The U.S. is proud of our record as a world leader in reducing all emissions, fostering resilience, growing our economy, and ensuring energy for our citizens. Ours is a realistic and pragmatic model.

—Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, @SecPompeo, Nov. 4.

Kyiv who testified before congressional committees Oct. 22. "Here's the problem, he's a 'Never Trumper' and his lawyer's a 'Never Trumper,'" the president said. (Amb. Taylor has served under each Republican and Democratic administration since 1985. After retiring from the State Department, he was brought back by Secretary Pompeo to serve in Kyiv.)

Vice President Mike Pence chimed in, too. "An awful lot of the swamp has been caught up in the State Department bureaucracy, and we're just going to keep fighting it," he told Fox News personality Laura Ingraham on Oct. 22.

White House Press Secretary Stephanie Grisham released a statement Oct. 23 that said, in part: "President Trump has done nothing wrong—this is a coordinated smear campaign from far-left lawmakers and radical unelected bureaucrats waging war on the Constitution."

"Radical unelected bureaucrats.' That is what the White House called Ambassadors Bill Taylor, Mike McKinley, Masha Yovanovitch and Deputy Assistant Secretary George Kent. Secretary Mike Pompeo must repudiate this statement. That's what a leader would do," tweeted Career Ambassador (ret.) Nicholas Burns, former under secretary of State for political affairs under President George W. Bush.

President of the Council on Foreign Relations Richard Haass called Ms. Grisham's statement "an outrage." Diplomats "swore to defend the Constitution, and they're doing just that. Long since time for @SecPompeo to defend his troops," he tweeted.

In media interviews, Secretary Pompeo has declined to discuss in detail Amb. Yovanovitch's removal from Ukraine or attacks by the White House against other U.S. diplomats. But in an Oct. 11 interview with *The Tennessean*, he attacked the impeachment inquiry as unfair. "I protect every single State Department employee," he said. "It's one of the reasons that we asked the House of Representatives to stop their abusive prosecutions, where they won't let State Department lawyers sit with our employees."

The State Department initially refused to provide documents to the House committees, even after being subpoenaed, but by the end of October had agreed to cooperate on document collection. The department directed its employees not to appear before the House committees, but officials have been appearing in response to subpoenas.

We see daily media stories on dwindling morale at the State Department. These include an Oct. 16 article in *The Washington Post* titled "Testimony Exposes Deepening Discontent with Pompeo at State Department," and an

Oct. 20 *Politico* article by Nahal Toosi, “The Revenge of the State Department.” Toosi wrote: “As U.S. diplomats defy the president and the Secretary of State to testify before impeachment investigations, they’re being hailed as heroes by colleagues who’ve long felt abused.”

As of press time, the State Department officials who have testified in the closed-door phase of the impeachment hearings so far include Ambassadors Marie Yovanovitch, Kurt Volker, Gordon Sondland, Mike McKinley, William Taylor and Philip Reeker; Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale;

Deputy Assistant Secretary George Kent; and Foreign Service Officers Catherine Croft, Christopher Anderson and Jennifer Williams. Open hearings began Nov. 13.

## Trump Announces U.S. Military Pullout from Syria

**T**urkish forces invaded northern Syria on Oct. 9 to fight the Syrian Democratic Forces—a Kurdish-led militia that has worked with the United States—three days after a phone call between President Trump and President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan in which President

Trump agreed that the U.S. military would withdraw from the area.

The Kurds had been longtime allies of the United States, and thousands have died in the fight against the Islamic State. But on Oct. 13 they announced a new deal with the Russian-backed Syrian government, *The New York Times* reported.

American politicians from both sides of the aisle expressed their dismay.

“Withdrawing U.S. forces from Syria is a grave strategic mistake,” Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) wrote in an op-ed in *The Washington Post* Oct. 18. “It will leave the American people

**F**oreign Service officers perform invaluable, nonpartisan work; and those in power should never target them for political purposes. I’m proud to cosponsor a resolution today to affirm those convictions and show these public servants we have their backs.

—Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.),  
from a Facebook post, Oct. 24.

Specifically on USAID, I want to say I don’t think you guys get enough credit, and just generally the State Department does not get enough credit. ... So I want to thank you and your folks for all the good work; and, specifically, I think it’s important to try to make sure we’re spending taxpayer resources effectively and efficiently and in a targeted way. I think we shouldn’t cut those resources simply to cut them.

—Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-Ill.) at a House Foreign Affairs Committee subcommittee hearing, “The FY20 Budget: Examining the Administration’s Policy Objectives for a Turbulent Middle East,” Oct. 29.

I have been deeply troubled by reports of the administration sidelining State Department policy experts on critical national security issues and retaliating against career employees. Career diplomats dedicate their lives to

## Heard on the Hill



... serving the American people and government both home and abroad. They serve on the front lines of American diplomacy, helping mitigate and prevent some of our country’s most pressing foreign policy issues. We must send a strong signal to our diplomats that they are valued, and that starts with retaining and promoting our best and brightest public servants.

—Rep. Ami Bera (D-Calif.), in a press release introducing his bill, the *Strengthening Traditional American Diplomacy (STAND) Act*, Oct. 30.

Our State Department is on the front lines of our national defense. They are patriots charged with achieving our goals through diplomacy, not conflict.

—Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee nomination hearing, Oct. 30.

I’ll tell you, as a former State Department political appointee, in my experience the difference between career folks and political appointees is the career folks take very good notes.

—Tom Malinowski (D-N.J.), in response to *Amb. Bill Taylor’s deposition before the House committees in the impeachment inquiry into President Donald Trump*, Oct. 22.

## 50 Years Ago

### Advice to the Foreign Service

I would urge that the Foreign Service Association greatly strengthen its defenses against the political ambassador. As I have been one of the latter, I assume I can speak without being accused of excessive bias. There is a place, no doubt, in the system for political ambassadors. But they should be confined to the positions of empty grandeur, to those where someone is needed to serve as a political lightning rod and to those where some exceptional qualification is required. ...

I suggest that a committee of your organization, including young officers as well as old, look at all political appointees somewhat in the manner of the [American] Bar Association. And if a man is obviously unqualified, I suggest that it so advise the President and the Senate, with courtesy but without reticence. If this is done in defensive and parochial fashion it will, of course, be without influence. But if it is a careful and fair and large-minded exercise of judgment designed to screen out political nonentities and oddities, it would be influential.

—Ambassador John Kenneth Galbraith, from his article of the same title in the December 1969 FSJ.



and homeland less safe, embolden our enemies and weaken important alliances.”

“Once again, President Trump is deserting an ally in a foolish attempt to appease an authoritarian strongman,” House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) wrote in an Oct. 7 statement. “This decision poses a dire threat to regional security and stability, and sends a dangerous message to Iran and Russia, as well as our allies, that the United States is no longer a trusted partner.”

On Oct. 23, Career Ambassador (ret.) Jim Jeffrey, the State Department’s special representative for Syria engagement and the special envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that he was not consulted or advised in advance about the president’s decision to pull U.S. troops from northern Syria.

“Turkey has not really gained all that

much from this,” he testified, “but in the process has scrambled the entire north-east, undercut our efforts against ISIS and brought in the Russians and the Syrian regime forces in a way that is really tragic for everybody involved.”

Ambassador Jeffrey also testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee Oct. 23: “We haven’t seen widespread evidence of ethnic cleansing. Many people fled because they’re very concerned about these Turkish-supported Syrian opposition forces, as we are. We’ve seen several incidents which we consider war crimes.” (Turkey denies it has committed any war crimes, according to an Oct. 23 Reuters report.)

President Trump announced Oct. 23 that Turkey would abide by a “permanent” cease-fire along the border of Syria. On Oct. 30, *The New York Times* reported that around 200,000 Kurds had been

displaced from the region as a result of the fighting, and more than 200 civilians had been killed.

On Oct. 27, President Trump announced that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, leader of ISIS, had committed suicide after U.S. Special Forces descended on his Syrian compound during a nighttime raid.

### Senate Panel Urges Action Against Russian Election Interference

Russian attempts to influence the 2016 U.S. elections through information warfare are likely to expand and intensify in 2020, according to a report released Oct. 8 by the Republican-led Senate Intelligence Committee.

“Russia is waging an information warfare campaign against the United States that didn’t start and didn’t end with the 2016 election,” said Sen. Richard Burr (R-N.C.), the committee’s chairman, according to an Oct. 8 article in *The Washington Post*.

“Their goal is broader: to sow societal discord and erode public confidence in the machinery of government. By flooding social media with false reports, conspiracy theories and trolls, and by exploiting existing divisions, Russia is trying to breed distrust of our democratic institutions and our fellow Americans,” said Burr.

The Russian attack, the committee found, was “a vastly more complex and strategic assault on the United States than was initially understood ... an increasingly brazen interference by the Kremlin on the citizens and democratic institutions of the United States.”

The bipartisan panel of U.S. senators called for sweeping action by the Congress, the Trump administration and technology companies to prevent social media sites from being used to interfere in the upcoming elections.

The panel said Congress should consider legislation to increase the transparency of political ads on social media. It urged social media sites to do a better job of notifying users of exposure to disinformation. It also recommended that the Trump administration establish an interagency task force to monitor Russia's efforts to interfere with the election.

## Clinton Email Investigation Ends

A three-year State Department investigation into former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's private email server "uncovered no persuasive evidence of systemic misuse" of classified information, according to a report from the Diplomatic Security Office of Information Security's Program Applications Division (known as APD). APD completed the report in September and shared it with Congress in mid-October.

After reviewing 33,000 emails sent to or from Secretary Clinton's private server between 2009 and 2013, APD investigators found that 38 current or former employees were "culpable" of violating security procedures, but none of the material in the emails had been marked as classified at the time.



Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Ivanka Trump tour Wichita State University Tech National Center for Aviation Training, Oct. 24.

## Contemporary Quote

I'd like to open this evening with a breathless update on how some obscure diplomat you've never heard of said something forgettable to an even more obscure Ukrainian government official about a topic that has literally nothing to do with your life or the future of our country. Then we are going to drone on about this non-story for the entire hour tonight, and every night this week, hoping that by sheer volume and repetition, we can give it the illusion of relevance. I hope you find it edifying.

—Tucker Carlson, "Tucker Carlson Tonight," Nov. 5, 2019.

(Read more about this in State VP Tom Yazdgerdi's column on p. 66.)

## Has Sec. Pompeo Violated the Hatch Act?

Senator Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has requested a probe to determine whether Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's recent trips to Kansas violated the Hatch Act, which restricts federal government employees from engaging in political activities.

Senator Menendez sent a letter on Oct. 29 asking the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, which investigates potential Hatch Act violations, to look into Secretary Pompeo's three trips to Kansas since March, "apparently at the expense of the Department of State."

"For months, public reports have persisted that the Secretary was considering running for U.S. Senate in Kansas. Many in Kansas perceive his appearances in the state to be a de facto campaign effort," wrote Menendez.

News reports have said Secretary Pompeo has been mulling a U.S. Senate run, Reuters reported on Oct. 29. Senator Menendez cited a *Wall Street Journal* article on Oct. 26 reporting that Secretary Pompeo met with Charles Koch, a top financial contributor to his previous political campaigns.

"The events in Kansas were aimed largely at promoting the president's 'Pledge to American Workers,' which has no discernible relation to the Department of State," Senator Menendez wrote.

Secretary Pompeo called Menendez's letter "just all silliness" in an interview with the Mid-America Network on Nov. 1.

## Bill Introduced to Limit Political Ambassador Appointees

A new bill proposed by Rep. Ami Bera (D-Calif.) would limit the number of "political appointee" (non-career) ambassadors. The Strengthening Traditional American Diplomacy (STAND) Act would require 70 percent of those nominated by presidents to come from the career Foreign Service and Civil Service ranks.

"Under this administration, a record number of ambassador positions have been filled by political appointees," says Rep. Bera, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and

Investigations. "While it's true that some political appointees have a wealth of professional experience that contributes to our nation, many individuals have little to no prior diplomatic experience."

Rep. Bera adds: "During a time of increasing complex global challenges and national security threats facing the United States, we must have our most qualified and experienced public servants representing the U.S. around the world."

Forty-five percent of President Trump's ambassadors are political appointees, compared to 30 percent under President Barack Obama, 32 percent under President George W. Bush and 28 percent under President Bill Clinton, Rep. Bera said.

## Moley Resigns After OIG Claims Employee Mistreatment

Ambassador Kevin Moley, who was serving as assistant secretary of State for international organization affairs, announced in an email to his staff Oct. 18 that he would retire by the end of November. Amb. Moley was the subject of an investigation by the State Department's Office of Inspector General of allegations that he mistreated career employees.

In a report released in August, the OIG documented their findings: Amb. Moley and his former senior adviser, Mari Stull, who left the department in January, "frequently berated employees, raised their voices, and generally engaged in unprofessional behavior toward staff." The pair also reportedly retaliated against holdover employees from the Obama administration.

## Building More Resilient Embassies

Landon Van Dyke, a senior adviser at the State Department on energy,

## Site of the Month: [www.ifixit.com](http://www.ifixit.com)

**N**eed to fix the screen on your phone? Replace a battery for your laptop? Refill your car's engine oil? Or even mend your jeans? Check out iFixit, a wiki-based website that teaches people how to make all kinds of electronics and household goods work again. The main goal of the site is to educate consumers about what's inside their electronics and motivate them to fix things when they break.

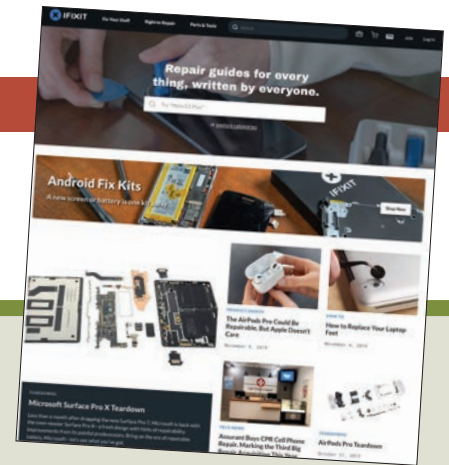
iFixit has an environmental angle, as well. Repairing electronics can significantly cut down on electronic waste. The website notes that 1.5 billion cell phones—made with toxic chemicals—were manufactured in 2018, and on average Americans keep cell phones for 34 months. Only 20 percent of the world's electronic waste is recycled, leading to toxic

environment and sustainability, sees the Internet of Things (IoT) as an opportunity to create more secure diplomatic facilities, according to a Sept. 9 Federal News Network report.

The "Internet of Things" refers to computing devices embedded in everyday items—such as security systems, thermostats and cars—that are connected to the internet.

IoT devices give U.S. embassies in 190 countries a means to take snapshots of their air quality and other important data points, Van Dyke said.

State also uses IoT sensors to track seismic and floodplain data to protect embassies from natural disasters. "When we build an embassy, hopefully it will be around for 50 to 100 years," Van Dyke noted, adding that the department uses



metals leaching into the environment.

iFixit tries to tackle this problem by providing high-quality repair manuals and videos. You'll find repair guides for 26 varieties of iPhones and hundreds of kinds of Android phones.

Anyone can create a repair manual or edit and improve existing manuals in this virtual community that "empowers individuals to share their technical knowledge with the rest of the world." As of this writing, the site boasts nearly 56,000 free manuals for more than 20,000 devices.

"Repair saves you money," according to iFixit. "It saves the environment. And it connects us to our things. Ditch the throwaway economy!"

satellite information to learn more about the integrity of its buildings.

The department also uses sensors to monitor its global fleet of more than 14,000 vehicles. The sensors provide management with data about safe driving practices and wear and tear on vehicles.

But Van Dyke acknowledged that it's important to make sure that data from IoT devices doesn't fall into the wrong hands. "When you buy a new car these days ... that information gets uploaded to the dealer. Now for the U.S. embassy, we probably don't want that information just uploaded to a local dealer," Van Dyke said. ■

*This edition of Talking Points was compiled by Cameron Woodworth and Shawn Dorman.*



# In Support of Professional Nonpartisan Diplomacy

**D**uring this time of unusual attention to diplomacy in connection with the impeachment inquiry of President Donald Trump, we want to call attention to some of the strong voices speaking out in support of professional diplomacy and the U.S. Foreign Service. Here are just a few of them.

## Lawmakers Emphasize the Importance of a Career, Nonpartisan U.S. Foreign Service

Whereas the Foreign Service of the United States, established under the Act of May 24, 1924 (commonly known as the “Rogers Act”), and strengthened by the Foreign Service Act of 1946 and the Foreign Service Act of 1980, provides indispensable support to the President, the Secretary of State, and other senior leaders in conducting the foreign policy of the United States; ...

Whereas members of the Foreign Service take an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States and to remain above partisan and political considerations;

Whereas members of the Foreign Service are deployed worldwide—(1) to serve the people of the United States; (2) to advance the interests and values of the United States; and (3) to project the leadership of the United States globally;

Whereas the work of the Foreign Service is vital to the national security, foreign policy, and commercial interests of the United States;

Whereas members of the Foreign Service often serve in extreme hardship and difficult security situations;

Whereas not fewer than 250 members of the Foreign Service have given their lives in service of the United States while serving the people of the United States abroad;

Whereas the presence of the Foreign Service abroad gives the United States a competitive advantage in advancing the interests of the United States;

Whereas the knowledge and expertise of members of the Foreign Service are invaluable in shaping the foreign policy of the United States;

Whereas, through diplomatic engagement, the Foreign Service promotes partnerships that further good governance, the rule of law, and democratic institutions; and

Whereas the contributions of the Foreign Service are extraordinarily valuable to the United States:

### **Now therefore Be It Resolved, That the Senate—**

Highlights the nonpartisan nature of the Foreign Service of the United States and the oath taken by members of the Foreign Service to defend the Constitution of the United States to advance the foreign policy of the democratically elected officials of the United States and to serve the people of the United States;

Recognizes the importance of a nonpartisan Foreign Service in advancing the foreign policy of the United States;

Calls on all people of the United States to respect the nonpartisan, nonpolitical work of the Foreign Service;

Condemns political retaliation against members of the Foreign Service; and

Urges all people of the United States to support a strong Foreign Service as essential to the national security and interests of the United States.

—Resolution submitted to the U.S. Senate of the 116th Congress by Mr. Merkley (for himself, Mr. Van Hollen, Mr. Coons, Ms. Duckworth, Mrs. Feinstein, Ms. Harris, Mr. Kaine, Mr. Reed, Ms. Hirono, Mr. Blumenthal and Mr. Markey), Oct. 19.

## AAD Stands with the Oath of Office and the Diplomats Who Follow It

The American Academy of Diplomacy stands with the diplomats who have recently followed their oath of office and appeared before Congress despite orders not to do so.

The women and men of the State Department, as well as our military and intelligence colleagues, take a solemn oath both as they begin their careers and then reaffirm it many times after during their service to our great nation.

The key words of that oath, which is established in law, are worth quoting here: “To support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic.” The

oath is taken “freely and without mental reservation.” Senior leaders put their left hand on a bible (or an equivalent of another faith) and with right hand raised ask their God to help them meet this commitment.

The oath compels many things, but key among these are a belief in the rule of law and a belief that the purpose of the exercise of power and diplomacy is to promote, protect and defend the interests of the United States of America. Happily, most who take this oath never face the choice of following the law or following a contradictory order from their leaders. That was no longer true for some of our former colleagues. They met their responsibilities by honoring subpoenas to appear before the Congress even when reportedly told not to do so by the State Department. We admire their bravery and courage.

This matters for two reasons: First, Foreign Service and Civil Service employees at the State Department, like our military colleagues, make sacrifices to serve. It is crucial that they and all who take the oath of office believe in the legality and justice of their service. The oath is their guide to what it means to serve. Second, U.S. foreign policy is most effective and best executed when nations around the world know that it is based on the rule of law.

The oath is the beacon that lights this path.

—*American Academy of Diplomacy press release, Oct. 22.*

## Women Ambassadors Speak Out

Women Ambassadors Serving America is an organization of over 170 current and former U.S. ambassadors who have served faithfully under both Republican and Democratic administrations. The undersigned members of WASA call upon the President of the United States to ensure that no American diplomat at any level is singled out for retribution for partisan, political reasons. Similarly, we call upon Secretary of State Pompeo to follow the procedures and standards of the U.S. Department of State and to ensure that our country’s professional Foreign Service Officers—who swear an oath to uphold the Constitution—never suffer retaliation for political reasons.

President Trump’s reported remarks regarding former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Marie “Masha” Yovanovitch in a July 25 phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, as presented in the memorandum of conversation released by the White House, raise serious concerns. In particular, denigrating the Ambassador and stating that “she’s going to go through some things” ... appears to be a threat of retaliation for political reasons, which is both shocking and inappropriate.

Ambassador Yovanovitch is a highly respected Senior Foreign Service Officer who has served the United States with remarkable commitment and distinction under numerous Republican and Democratic administrations.

For U.S. diplomacy to be an effective instrument of statecraft, it is vital that the non-partisan, nonpolitical work of the dedicated public servants of the U.S. Department of State be respected and honored—just as we honor the contributions of U.S. military service members and other government colleagues. That respect must begin at the highest levels of U.S. leadership, and be communicated consistently to international audiences, in private as well as public communication. To do otherwise is to undercut U.S. diplomatic efforts and the safety of U.S. personnel worldwide.

—*Women Ambassadors Serving America  
October press release.*

## USAID: In Support of Colleagues Under Siege

As former Foreign Service Officers, civil servants and political appointees with the U.S. Agency for International Development, we have served under both Republican and Democratic administrations, in Washington, D.C., and throughout the developing world. We are writing in support of colleagues now under siege for their work as diplomats with the Department of State. Together, we spent our careers working to represent the policies and values of the United States. ....

A professional Foreign Service is key to the ability of the United States to develop and conduct a coherent foreign policy that protects our national interests. All of us, as Ambassador Yovanovitch stated in her deposition, took an oath when we joined to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic” and “bear true faith and allegiance to the same.” As she said, we feel privileged to serve and are committed to do so on a nonpartisan basis “to strengthen our national security and promote our national interests.”

Our country needs a strong and vibrant Foreign Service, untainted by partisan political interference, to strengthen our relationships with countries around the world. If there is one small consolation all of us can take from recent events in Ukraine, it is that the country has been introduced to public servants like Ambassadors Marie Yovanovitch, Michael McKinley, William Taylor and Deputy Assistant Secretary George Kent.

They represent the high integrity, capability and professionalism of career State Department officers, and we are proud to stand with them.

—Statement signed by more than 320 former FSOs, Civil Service employees and political appointees who served with USAID, Oct. 22.

## A Brief Tribute to Our Foreign Service

I can't tell you how many times, in and out of uniform, I've been thanked for my service. But there's another group of Americans who also deserve the thanks of a grateful nation and of a grateful people: our Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) and the other career and professional employees of the United States Department of State.

American influence in this world, regardless of the era, had been shaped in large measure by the diplomatic underpinnings of our foreign policy. ... In the last several years things have gone badly for the Service and for the institution. Hiring is down, the budget is down, and morale is down. We have called upon one of the most professional cadres of women and men in the service of United States, our FSOs and Ambassadors, to discharge a chaotic, incoherent, and inward-looking foreign policy that has confused and frightened our allies, abetted the growing numbers of autocrats, and aided our enemies. ...

From this quiet community has emerged one hero after another who have searched themselves, who have replayed their oaths of office over and over again and are resigning and/or are now speaking up to defend their Service, to defend their Department, and to defend our precious Constitution. Enter Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch: an immigrant whose family fled both the Soviet Union and the Nazis, who as a child was called Masha by her family, and whose uncommon service to our Nation landed her as Ambassador to Ukraine (a difficult posting by any measure). ...

All Americans ... and much of the rest of the world ... should be deeply grateful for America's Foreign Service and for the likes of Ambassadors Yovanovitch and [Ambassador Bill] Taylor, and thousands of others just like them who've served quietly, often-times thanklessly, sometime fatally ... but always honorably ... at the outer edge of American influence.

As these officers come forward now to speak, they are indeed doing their duty and honoring their loyalty to their oaths and to the precious principles of the American Constitution. ... So, three cheers for Masha and for our Foreign Service. And for the

American people, the next time you thank an American in uniform, take another second and thank God for our diplomats.

—Brookings Institution President John R. Allen, Oct. 12.

## A Most Damaging Attack on Diplomacy

In my three and a half decades as a U.S. Foreign Service officer, proudly serving five presidents and ten secretaries of state from both parties, I've never seen an attack on diplomacy as damaging, to both the State Department as an institution and our international influence, as the one now underway. ...

Ambassador Yovanovitch is not the first professional diplomat to find herself in political crosshairs in the history of the State Department. Trump is not the first demagogue to bully career personnel. And Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is not the first secretary of state derelict in his duty. But the damage from this assault—coming from within the executive branch itself, after nearly three years of unceasing diplomatic self-sabotage, and at a particularly fragile geopolitical moment—will likely prove to be even more severe to both diplomatic tradecraft and U.S. foreign policy.

—Ambassador (ret.) William J. Burns, "The Demolition of U.S. Diplomacy," Foreign Affairs, Oct. 14.

## AFSA: Call to Respect the Nonpartisan U.S. Foreign Service

At this time of great stress and rancor in our national political life, the American Foreign Service Association calls on all Americans to honor and respect the non-partisan, non-political work of the dedicated public servants of the U.S. Foreign Service.

Our members have taken an oath to the U.S. Constitution, and do their utmost to support the foreign policy of the United States under the leadership of the elected leaders of our democracy. We urge that their service, which at times is under the most serious hardship conditions and security risks, not be politicized, and that they not be dragged into partisan political battles.

Our country needs and deserves a professional, non-partisan Foreign Service. Our members pledge their lives to service to their country and its interests. Any attack on their integrity and commitment to non-partisan service does a great disservice to them, to their families and to our country.

—American Foreign Service Association press release, Sept. 26. ■



## Here are the highlights of USAID's ongoing Transformation initiative, undertaken to better meet the development challenges of the 21st century.

BY CHRIS MILLIGAN

**T**he world was quite different when I joined the U.S. Agency for International Development in 1990. The Cold War was ending; cell phones and email were novelties; and Nelson Mandela had just been released from prison. Moving from a bipolar world and then, later, to a post-9/11 one, the threats to our national security and prosperity also changed.

Growing the ranks of prosperous, capable and democratic states that can partner with the United States is in our national interest. Nevertheless, the 21st century is being defined by resurgent authoritarianism and a competition for ideas. At question are the values and standards that have governed international institutions, protected U.S. interests and promoted global stability since the end of World War II.

Authoritarian governments need a world that looks like them, and they are strategically investing in creating one, using their growing influence to reduce international criticism of their internal policies while expanding their clout in international



*Chris Milligan is the Counselor to the U.S. Agency for International Development. A member of the Senior Foreign Service with the rank of Career Minister, he has a deep wealth of development experience, having led and contributed to high-priority initiatives to advance*

*U.S. government foreign policy both in Washington and overseas. (To learn more about USAID's Transformation, visit [www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/transformation-at-usaid](http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/transformation-at-usaid).)*

organizations. They are advancing an alternative to democracy, increasing support for illegitimate elections, exporting new tools of censorship and repression, and pressuring other governments to compromise on core democratic principles. *The Economist* reports, for instance, that China spends \$10 billion a year on soft power initiatives that complement its economic and military strength.

Despite significant development gains, many countries are vulnerable to crises and instability that can derail progress. Today, the majority of USAID's programming is in states that are fragile, suffering from active conflict or recovering from it. Our work is increasingly focused on the root causes of instability and extremism. Underscoring the changing global context is the stark fact that fully 80 percent of our humanitarian assistance helps those suffering from violent conflict—conflicts that are increasingly complex and entrenched.

As the world continues to evolve, development has become even more central to U.S. security and economic goals. The events of 9/11 brought greater awareness of the fact that terrorism and international crime thrive in fragile states, and that good development is essential for national security. Terrorism and violent extremism have grown since September 2001, and extremism cannot be curbed through military force alone. Our continued economic prosperity depends on maintaining and expanding access to global markets where 95 percent of the world's consumers live.

In response to Executive Order 13781, *A Comprehensive Plan for Reorganizing the Executive Branch*, USAID established a Transformation Team in June 2017 to lead the agency's reform efforts. The resulting Transformation initiative positions USAID

# Transforms

to better meet the challenges of this evolving world. Through a series of interconnected, employee-led reforms, we are changing how we are structured; how we work; and how we support our people to better achieve our national goals.

## **Changes in USAID's Structure and How We Work**

With congressional approval, we are reforming our structures to improve effectiveness. I will focus on three of the important changes here.

First, USAID is standing up a new Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization, bringing together the agency's conflict prevention expertise and integrating it throughout our development programs. The CPS bureau will allow USAID to better respond to the challenges of preventing and mitigating violent conflict by strengthening our capacity to address fragility, respond to crises and act as a stabilizing force in times of transition.

Second, we are elevating USAID's core humanitarian function through the new Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. Creating a strong platform for humanitarian policy and operations, the HA bureau will optimize resources to ensure coordinated and effective humanitarian programs. It allows for a more cohesive approach to disaster preparedness, mitigation and risk reduction, safeguarding communities and allowing them to recover more effectively.

Third, the new Bureau for Resilience and Food Security builds on USAID's successes in reducing global hunger, poverty, malnutrition and water insecurity. Despite development gains, shocks and stresses can cause backsliding and perpetuate a cycle of chronic vulnerability, poverty and hunger. The

**Standing up these new entities underscores a strategic shift in how USAID addresses the challenges presented by increasing state fragility, conflict and complex humanitarian issues.**

RFS bureau's focus on building resilience will help break this cycle, reducing the need for costly humanitarian responses and mitigating state fragility.

These new bureaus (CPS, HA and RFS) represent USAID's work in relief, response and resilience. Standing up these new entities underscores a strategic shift in how USAID addresses the challenges presented by increasing state fragility, conflict and complex humanitarian issues. This shift is not only about elevating USAID's expertise in these areas but also integrating it across other core processes such as strategic planning, program design and program evaluation.

USAID is implementing other important structural changes that improve how we operate, such as standing up a new Bureau of Development, Democracy and Innovation. For more detailed information on this change and others in the area of

## Our ability to effectively meet the challenges of an evolving world depends on attracting and retaining highly skilled FSNs.

structure, please see [www.bit.ly/transforming-structure](http://www.bit.ly/transforming-structure).

The world has changed, and we are changing how we work. We have created new tools and approaches that make us a better partner and increase the impact of every development dollar. Recognizing the private sector as the most powerful force for lifting people out of poverty, we launched our first Private Sector Engagement Strategy last year. In this we are moving beyond the traditional public-private partnership model, and deepening true collaboration, co-creating and co-financing with the private sector, unlocking investment and market-based approaches to development challenges. We have rolled out new tools, mechanisms and support for our overseas missions to be able to quickly operationalize this strategy.

Like any sector, the development sector benefits from the robust competition of ideas. It also benefits from the agility, fresh thinking and innovations that a greater diversity of partners can bring. We are expanding who we work with under our new acquisition and assistance strategy and our New Partners Initiative, which lower the barriers to entry for working with USAID, especially for small and local partners. And we are expanding the use of procurement tools like broad agency announcements that identify a challenge, raise its visibility and then work with interested partners on the proposals they bring forward.

### Changes to Support Our Workforce

Our success depends on our people. Three-quarters of our overseas workforce are local employees, or Foreign Service Nationals. Our ability to effectively meet the challenges of an evolving world depends on attracting and retaining highly skilled FSNs. Many of our FSNs are technical experts with

advanced degrees. They bring deep and nuanced understanding of their countries to bear as they implement multimillion-dollar U.S. government programs. We are giving FSNs a greater voice by supporting the FSN Advocacy Council, creating senior-level FSN positions and hosting the second-ever Worldwide FSN Conference. We are also expanding professional development opportunities such as the FSN Fellowship Program, which allows FSNs to rotate into different bureaus in Washington and at other USAID missions for an extended period. These fellowships allow FSNs to not only bring their experiences and voices to important policy development but also gain a greater understanding of how the agency works.

To grow talent and support new leaders, we have launched new leadership and mentoring initiatives. We have institutionalized training for first-time mission directors and senior development advisers. We are using a similar process to develop training for our deputy mission directors. Working

with the USAID Alumni Association, we are supporting a professional development program linking career or career-candidate Foreign Service officers

and retired USAID FSOs. During my 30 years with USAID, I've repeatedly heard about the need for a better Foreign Service Performance Management system.

Previously, meeting evaluation submission deadlines often took priority over actual management time between supervisor and employee. Based on extensive employee input, in 2018 USAID rolled out a new FSPM system that emphasizes the interaction between supervisor and employee.

Consistent with our agency's new leadership philosophy, the new FSPM system seeks to build a culture of excellence and leadership—and, importantly, accountability. The leadership philosophy sets our expectations of behavior and accountability for all employees, regardless of position or hiring mechanism. This philosophy models the USAID Core Values and outlines how agency employees should act on these values, both within the agency and on behalf of the agency.

In addition to these reforms, the creation of new bureaus in relief, response and resilience provides new professional opportunities for USAID FSOs. While we continue to value the contributions of experts regardless of hiring mechanism, we are building in opportunities for FSOs to develop their profes-



sional skills in these areas that are fundamental to our foreign policy goals.

We are also clarifying roles and responsibilities, and better aligning functions. Addressing today's complex challenges requires a concerted unity of effort. In the field, this can be complicated by multiple funding sources and authorities, and specialized functions. To reinforce a "One Team, One Mission, One Voice" approach, agency leadership has clarified that all USAID personnel—regardless of home bureau or funding—function under a single organizational structure under chief-of-mission authority, led by the senior-most USAID officer at post, whether a mission director, USAID representative, senior development adviser or the senior USAID representative. Implementing this guidance improves the coordination, programming and communication necessary to achieve foreign policy goals and to contribute effectively to the interagency team at post.

One commitment of the Transformation initiative is to make our agency more field-focused. Our field missions depend on Washington for technical support in many sectors, and this support comes from a variety of offices and bureaus, each with its unique procedures. Lacking a standard process, missions can spend considerable time and effort to track down and secure support. USAID staff members often draw on personal relationships to shortcut the mix of processes. But the overreliance on personal relationships erodes transparency and increases inequities in the level of support Washington provides.

Having collected feedback from FSOs, USAID is implementing an "Agency Approach to Field Services"—a system that establishes uniform, agencywide procedures for requesting and providing field support; creates an online portal with a searchable database of support services to facilitate requests and allows our FSOs to track these requests; and establishes governance mechanisms to ensure accountability, oversee standards of performance and continually improve how we support the field.

## The Journey to Self-Reliance

At the core of all this change is the principle of the "journey to self-reliance"—that the purpose of foreign assistance should be to end the need for its existence. All of our reforms are designed to accelerate development progress and work toward the day when partner countries can finance and implement solutions to their own development challenges. In doing this, USAID presents a different model to the developing world—

## At the core of all this change is the principle of the "journey to self-reliance"—that the purpose of foreign assistance should be to end the need for its existence.

namely, a strategic partnership that strengthens governance institutions, rules and practices to advance the country's own development. By contrast, the authoritarian government's model is one of establishing strategic dependence based on the use of predatory finance, corrosive capital and tools of repression in an attempt to build legitimacy.

The relationship between the Department of State and USAID is central to the United States achieving its foreign policy objectives. While diplomacy and development are distinct professions with distinct expertise, they must coordinate closely to achieve U.S. government goals. The spaces we operate in (e.g., humanitarian assistance, conflict prevention and stabilization, political transitions, countering violent extremism, fragile states) are increasingly interagency spaces. The Transformation initiative recognizes that our work requires far more coordination and engagement with the interagency than has been the case in the past.

Change is not merely an implementation process. At the center of this change are people who have dedicated their professional careers to the work of USAID. Despite our employees' participation in shaping these reforms, reorganization interrupts predictability, fuels uncertainty and adds to work-life stress. Given the scale of the Transformation reforms, change is neither easy nor instantaneous. It takes significant time to move from consultation to design, approval and implementation—a lengthy process that can increase the anxiety that uncertainty brings. We are also sensitive to the need to work with different organizational cultures, manage distinct authorities and untangle overlapping processes. To be successful, we need to hire for the future and attract talent with skills in areas such as private-sector engagement and innovative partnering.

Reforming our structures, programs and workforce is an ambitious undertaking, but it positions USAID to best achieve our national goals in today's challenging global environment. ■

# FS INSTITUTION *Builder* AND AFRICA HAND

## A CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR HANK COHEN 2019 RECIPIENT OF THE AWARD FOR LIFETIME CONTRIBUTIONS TO AMERICAN DIPLOMACY

**C**areer Ambassador Herman Jay Cohen (universally known simply as Hank) received the American Foreign Service Association's 2019 Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award at an Oct. 16 ceremony in the Dean Acheson Auditorium at the Department of State. (For coverage of the ceremony, see AFSA News, p. 62.)

He is the 25th recipient of the award, given annually in recognition of a distinguished practitioner's career and enduring devotion to diplomacy. Past recipients of this award include George H.W. Bush, Thomas Pickering, Ruth Davis, George Shultz, Richard Lugar, Joan Clark, Ronald Neumann, Sam Nunn, Rozanne Ridgway, Nancy Powell and William Harrop.

Hank Cohen was born in New York City, New York, on Feb. 10, 1932. He earned a B.A. in political science from the City College of New York in 1952, and an M.A. in international relations from American University in 1962. Mr. Cohen served in the United States Army as a second lieutenant infantry platoon leader in Germany from 1953 to 1955, receiving an officer's commission via the Reserve Officer's Training Corps.

Mr. Cohen joined the Foreign Service in 1955 and served as a consular officer in Paris for three years. In 1958 he returned to Washington, D.C., as the first Foreign Service officer to work in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Exchange. He remained there until 1961.

Next came six months of labor training, followed by four consecutive assignments as a labor attaché (often with ancillary duties as a consular, economic or political officer) in Africa: Kampala, Uganda (1962-1963); Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe, 1963-1965); Lusaka, Zambia (1965-1966); and Kinshasa, Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1966-1969).

From 1969 to 1974, Mr. Cohen directed the State Department's Office of Central African Affairs. After three years as political counselor in Paris (1974-1977), he was named ambassador to Senegal and The Gambia, based in Dakar, where he served from 1977 to 1980.

Ambassador Cohen then returned to Washington to serve as principal deputy assistant secretary of State for intelligence and research (1980-1984) and principal deputy assistant secretary for personnel (1984-1987). In 1987, Amb. Cohen was appointed as special assistant to the president and senior



A portrait of an elderly man with white hair, wearing a dark blue suit, a light blue shirt, and a patterned tie. He is standing in front of a row of international flags. A quote is overlaid on the image in a dark grey box with a gold border.

*“That is the beauty  
of the Foreign Service.  
One can be both part of  
the workforce and part  
of management.”*

**When I saw that 35 African colonies were about to become independent just as I was beginning my career, I saw an opportunity to apply economic theory to the real developing world.**

director for Africa at the National Security Council, a position he held for two years.

From 1989 to 1993, he served as assistant secretary of State for African affairs and was promoted to the rank of Career Ambassador in 1992.

After retiring from the Foreign Service in 1993, Amb. Cohen served as a senior adviser to the Global Coalition for Africa, an intergovernmental body assisting African governments to adopt sound economic policies, through 1998. He then became a professorial lecturer in Africa studies at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, a position he held until 2010.

Since 1994, he has been president and chief executive officer of Cohen and Woods International, an international consulting firm specializing in providing services to American companies interested in doing business in Africa. Amb. Cohen was also a member of the board of directors of Hyperdynamics Oil and Gas from 2009 to 2016.

He is the author of two books: *Intervening in Africa: Superpower Peacemaking in a Troubled Continent* (Macmillan, 2000) and *The Mind of the African Strong Man: Conversations with Dictators, Statesmen and Father Figures* (New Academia, 2015). He is also co-author of an audiobook, *Who Lost Congo? The Consequences of Covert Action* (Foreign Affairs, 2015).

In addition to *Hank Cohen's Africa Blog* (<http://www.cohenonfrica.com/publications>), he has a Twitter account—@cohenonfrica—where he tweets in English and French. It currently has more than 21,000 followers.



**Hank Cohen, State Department, 1977.**

AFSA conferred its Christian A. Herter Award for Constructive Dissent by a Senior Officer on Amb. Cohen in 1982. And in 1999, it presented him with a Special Achievement Award in recognition of his many contributions to the organization over the previous three decades—from his role as one of the “Young Turks” who helped AFSA modernize and unionize in the early 1970s to his multiple terms as a member of the association’s Governing Board.

Before AFSA had a large Labor Management Office, Mr. Cohen chaired the Members’ Interests Committee for many years, negotiating with the State Department for benefits and allowances to improve the quality of life for personnel serving overseas. Later he chaired AFSA’s Insurance Committee during the period when the union sponsored a variety of insurance policies for members, and chaired other committees that obtained many of the benefits and allowances that Foreign Service personnel and their families now take for granted.

For instance, Mr. Cohen led AFSA’s successful effort to obtain the first educational allowances for kindergartners; he was instrumental in getting housing and shipment allowances for Foreign Service specialists raised to match those of FSOs and in resolving long battles with State about overtime pay for secretaries, communicators and other staff in their favor. He also wrote the first state tax guide for *The Foreign Service Journal*, an annual feature that is always very popular with members.

Amb. Cohen has received the Distinguished Foreign Service Presidential Award, the Foreign Service Director General’s Cup, the Douglas Dillon Award for Best Writing on Diplomatic Practice, the French Legion of Honor and the Belgian Order of Leopold II. He is currently a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the American Academy of Diplo-

macy and AFSA.

Mr. Cohen is married to the former Suzanne Karpman, who worked for the Voice of America as a French-language correspondent and for the Foreign Service Institute and the Central Intelligence Agency as a French-language instructor. The couple have two sons, Marc and Alain, who are technology entrepreneurs.

*FSJ* Editor Shawn Dorman conducted the following interview with Amb. Cohen via email in October.



COURTESY OF HERMAN J. COHEN

Hank Cohen (at right) and Secretary of State James Baker meet with President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia in 1990.

**FSJ:** *Congratulations on receiving AFSA's lifetime contributions to diplomacy award, which is well deserved. You've had a fascinating career, both inside and outside government. I understand you decided to apply to the Foreign Service in 1953, while you were still an undergraduate at City College. What was the impetus for that decision?*

**HJC:** My favorite subjects were "Theory of International Relations" and "Comparative European Governments." My professor for both courses was Bernard E. Brown. He encouraged me to take the Foreign Service examination, arguing that hardly any City College graduates were in the Foreign Service. In any event, I wanted to have a career in the international sphere, possibly in business or journalism. When I was informed that I had been successful in the examination, I decided to pursue a career in the State Department.

**FSJ:** *What were your impressions of the Foreign Service application process? Did it involve both a written exam and oral assessment at that time?*

**HJC:** It was quite a comprehensive and very long exam in those days. It lasted three days, with lots of essay writing. There was also an oral assessment. Unlike today, the retired FSOs who administered the oral examination did not have a script. They asked whatever questions they considered suitable for each individual. For example, they asked me major league baseball questions, including who played third base for the Pittsburgh

Pirates. They also asked me to describe the differences between the British Labor Party and the British Conservative Party. I expressed the view that there was virtually no difference. This set off a rather heated discussion among the examiners. In general, they appeared to appreciate my "American-ness."

**FSJ:** *What were your impressions of orientation and entry-level training?*

**HJC:** I considered the A-100 course to be quite comprehensive with respect to the varied functions of the Foreign Service. There was also a lot of practical advice on the side from the senior officers with lots of experience, during coffee breaks. The detail on consular work was particularly useful.

### Overseas Assignments

**FSJ:** *Your colleagues must have been jealous when you got assigned to Paris as your first Foreign Service posting. Was that because you were fluent in French?*

**HJC:** On the contrary. After several weeks of French training, I flunked the language examination. For that reason, I was sent to Paris to improve. Most of my colleagues went to Palermo and Naples to do refugee relief processing. Their jealousy was palpable.

**FSJ:** *Did your three years as a consular officer in Paris give you a good introduction to the Service?*



COURTESY OF HERMAN J. COHEN

Ending the war for Eritrean independence: London, England, May 31, 1991. Hank Cohen is at the center. To his left is Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia. To his right is President Isayas Afwerki of Eritrea.

**HJC:** I served in the Paris visa section. Every embassy section had an interest in visas because so many of their key contacts were traveling to the United States. With so many people having been members of the Communist Party, we were constantly working to get visa waivers for important travelers. Because of my embassy contacts, I decided to take training to be a labor attaché.

**FSJ:** How different was France when you returned 16 years later to serve as political counselor?

**HJC:** The progress of economic development was remarkable. Where there was very little automobile traffic in 1955, traffic jams were abundant in 1974. There were many new buildings in Paris, especially apartment houses. Tourism was massive.

**FSJ:** Tell us a bit about your assignment as chief of mission to Senegal and The Gambia.

**HJC:** Senegal and The Gambia have Muslim-majority populations. The people are very tolerant and welcoming. At Christmastime they celebrate with lights and gift giving. The educated people are quite sophisticated and a pleasure to talk to.

**FSJ:** You spent nearly all of the 1960s as a labor attaché. What led you to focus on labor issues?

**HJC:** I come from a blue-collar family associated with labor unions. I grew up in a working-class neighborhood in New York. In my first assignment in Paris, working with the embassy labor attaché on visa issues, I saw how important labor movements are with respect to both politics and economics. Labor unions are a separate and unique window into the political system.

**FSJ:** You are, of course, best known as an Africa hand. What made you decide to concentrate on that part of the world?

**HJC:** While majoring in international affairs in college, I did a thesis comparing economic planning in India and Brazil. That gave me a new interest in the economics of the developing world. And when I saw that 35 African colonies were about to become independent just as I was beginning my career, I saw an opportunity to apply economic theory to the real developing world.

**FSJ:** What were some of the opportunities and challenges you've experienced working in that region, both as an FSO and now?

**HJC:** The fact that the new African political leadership was so open to ideas constituted a great opportunity for an American diplomat because the United States had a strong reputation as a proponent of ending colonialism. The American voice was trusted. As an American diplomat, I felt proud that I was constantly being called on for advice.

**FSJ:** Do you feel Africa is coming into its own on the world stage? Should the United States be doing more to promote political and economic reform there? If so, how?

**HJC:** Africa has not moved ahead rapidly, neither in economic development nor political democracy. Africa is far less successful than Southeast Asia and Latin America. I attribute this mainly to poor governance. I am pleased that U.S. policy started to emphasize good governance in Africa when I was assistant secretary. Progress has been much too slow, however.

**FSJ:** You were able to get to know every first-generation African leader (Mandela, Mobutu, Gaddafi and many others). I know you wrote a whole book about this, but could you tell us something of what you learned through those relationships?

**HJC:** Most of the African leaders whom I got to know well did not wake up in the morning and ask themselves, "What am I going to do for my people today?" Most of them were more interested in enhancing their personal power. Mandela was a notable exception, as were several other leaders in southern Africa. I attribute this to the presence of Christianity in Southern Africa for more than 400 years. In the rest of Africa, Judeo-Christian values have yet to become strong.

## Washington Assignments

**FSJ:** When you came back to Washington from Kinshasa in 1969, it was to head the Office of Central African Affairs, right? What were some of the main issues you handled during five years with the African Affairs Bureau?

**HJC:** We had to cope with some crises. For example, there was a major genocide in the Republic of Burundi in 1972. Minority Tutsis, who were in power, became frightened by educated persons in the majority Hutu community who were demanding political equality. They started to murder educated Hutus, as vividly reported by Embassy Bujumbura at the time. What astonished me was that there was so little interest in this unfolding tragedy. The press, the U.S. Congress, the nongovernmental organizations were indifferent. I was going crazy trying to galvanize higher levels.

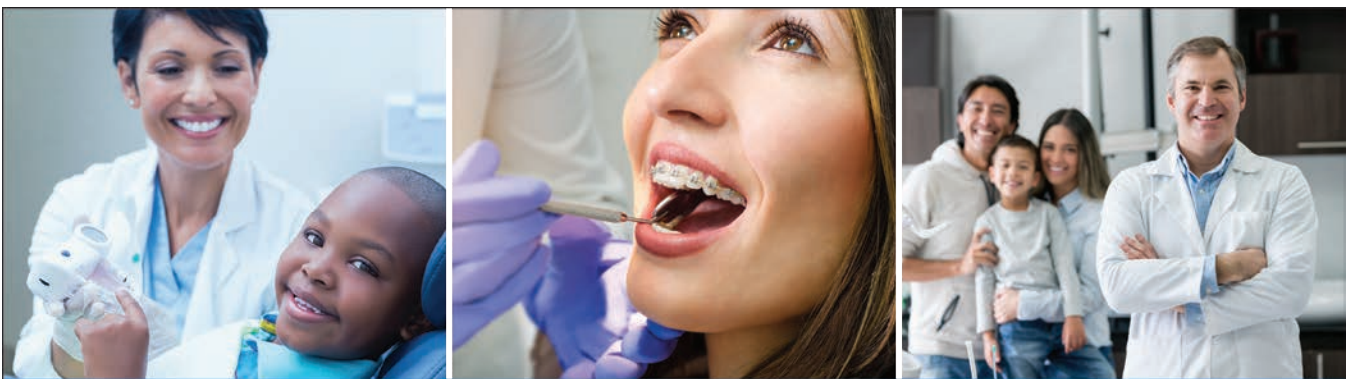
Finally, I persuaded the president of neighboring Tanzania to cut off Burundi's railway to the port of Dar es Salaam. That ended the genocide. But there was a follow-up. Congressional hearings, at which I was the chief witness, resulted in legislation in 1976 requiring the State Department to produce an annual human rights report on every country receiving U.S. development assistance. That annual report still exists, and is as important as ever.

**FSJ:** You helped guide U.S. policy toward Africa, both at the National Security Council and then as head of AF. Could you compare those experiences?

**HJC:** In the NSC, I was special assistant to President Ronald Reagan for Africa. I had to be careful not to let it go to my head. There was the State Department assistant secretary for Africa and counterparts from every agency. I decided to coordinate policy, rather than make policy. That worked out very well, with a major achievement in the December 1988 accords resulting in the independence of Namibia, the departure of both Cuban and South African troops from Angola. I found President Reagan to be very smart about foreign policy, and quite willing to listen to advice.

**FSJ:** What would you identify as your main challenges and achievements during your four years as head of the Bureau of African Affairs?

**HJC:** There were four major civil wars going on in four important African countries when I arrived to head up the Africa bureau in April 1989. We decided that nothing good



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In March 1990, Nelson Mandela, recently released after 27 years in prison, enters the State Department with Hank Cohen at the beginning of his first official visit to the United States.

Curiosity is probably the most important element of successful diplomacy. I spent most of my career abroad asking questions.

could happen while those wars were going on. We decided to make conflict resolution our highest priority. Mediation by the AF Bureau brought peace to Ethiopia/Eritrea, Angola and Mozambique. We were very proud of our achievement.

**FSJ:** How was your time as principal deputy assistant secretary for the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the early 1980s? (Ron Spiers was INR's head, right? What was it like to work for him?)

**HJC:** I started as principal deputy assistant secretary under Ron Spiers, a great professional and extremely insightful about U.S. foreign policy and what was doable and not doable. Ron left shortly to be U.S. ambassador to Turkey, and his successor was Hugh Montgomery, a senior CIA officer. As directed by Secretary of State Al Haig, he spent most of his time trying to prove that the Soviets tried to assassinate the Pope. That

left me in charge. When President Reagan decided to send troops to Lebanon in 1982 as a goodwill gesture, I sent the INR analysis that the U.S. troops would be seen as enemies and not friends. I kept repeating it until Secretary of State George Shultz told us to shut up. The endgame was tragic. For my warnings, I received AFSA's Christian A. Herter Award for Constructive Dissent by a member of the Senior Foreign Service in 1982. I wish it had been different.

### The Role of AFSA

**FSJ:** You've been a large figure in AFSA's history. When did you join the association?

**HJC:** I joined AFSA in 1955 when I entered the Service.

**FSJ:** How did you get involved with Lannon Walker and the "Young Turks" who were trying to reform and strengthen AFSA?

**HJC:** When I became active in 1971-1974, the "Young Turk" leadership consisted of Bill Harrop, Tex Harris and Tom Boyatt. Lannon came later. I had known Bill Harrop when we were both assigned to the Congo. He asked me to take over members' interests in 1972. I accepted the challenge with enthusiasm.

**FSJ:** Given your many years negotiating with State on behalf of AFSA members, was it awkward to sit across the table from AFSA's leaders during your years as Deputy Director General of the Foreign Service? If so, how did you handle that?

**HJC:** That is the beauty of the Foreign Service. One can be both part of the workforce and part of management. When I was Deputy Director General, there were not many difficult issues on the table. I believe the issue of promotion precepts was somewhat difficult, but not overwhelming. Where I innovated was to have a strong grievance officer who was under my orders to find solutions at the first level, and not permit grievances to rise to higher levels. We had very few grievances go to appeals boards.

**FSJ:** In your view, is AFSA still strong today? Has its role changed? Should it?

**HJC:** AFSA became a professional organization about 100 years ago. It became a collective bargaining agent nearly 50 years ago. I believe that AFSA's role as a collective bargaining agent has made it stronger as a professional association.

**FSJ:** *What should AFSA's primary focus be today?*

**HJC:** AFSA needs to concentrate on upholding professional standards and, above all, to protecting the professionals in the Service from being dragged into domestic politics that are leaking into foreign relations. I believe that AFSA is currently involved in real-time issues of this nature and is courageously fighting back.

### Life after the FS

**FSJ:** *Instead of taking a well-deserved break when you retired from the Foreign Service in 1993, you became a senior adviser to the Global Coalition for Africa almost right away. What did that position entail?*

**HJC:** The GCA was an intergovernmental body bringing

together African finance ministers and donor nations. Our mission was to discuss, at a high level, how to make African economies stronger and speed up their growth. It was chaired by Robert McNamara, who was a pleasure to work with. He was full of wisdom. My life did not change much from State because I was meeting with the same senior African leaders I had known as assistant secretary. From them I learned how difficult it is to overcome cultural impediments to progress. Corruption was extremely strong in most countries, and hard for even determined politicians to stop.

**FSJ:** *Your long interest in Africa is obviously as strong as ever. What are some of the main issues you track there today? Are there any trends you can point to that we should watch?*

**HJC:** A major phenomenon is a massive youth bulge. Thirty percent of Africans are under 30. Major reforms are needed to create jobs for them, and agriculture must be modernized to feed them. I see some leadership understanding this, for example, in Ghana, South Africa, Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya. They have

# THANK YOU!

AFSA THANKS ALL THOSE WHO HAVE STEPPED FORWARD IN THE PAST YEAR  
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AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR.



**[Members of the Foreign Service] need to continue speaking the truth to power, and make sure that policy-makers understand the negative foreign policy consequences of politicizing professional diplomacy.**

enlightened leadership. Unfortunately, in the biggest African countries—Congo, Nigeria and Sudan—corruption continues to prevail. This is a prelude to real trouble in those countries.

**FSJ:** For 25 years, you have led Cohen and Woods International, an international consulting firm that advises and assists U.S. companies doing business in Africa. What can you tell us about that work?

**HJC:** We advise American companies that want to do business in Africa. A good example is the ContourGlobal company of New York, which invests in power generation. The investment is totally private. The host government signs a contract to purchase power for 20 years. The host government invests nothing. It is a great way to overcome Africa's power deficit. I have negotiated six such investments for ContourGlobal: three in Nigeria, one in Rwanda, one in Togo and one in Senegal.

We are also working with a U.S. company, GFS Solutions, to do affordable housing. They produce houses that sell for \$40,000 to civil servants and Army officers, who take out mortgages. We help with government negotiations and the search for finance.

When a friendly African government asks us to lobby for them in Washington, we usually accept. Our emphasis is not so much on defending their interests with the U.S. govern-

ment, but on advising them on what the policy challenges are and how to define their own approach.

**FSJ:** You say on your blog that when you have found "that clients who I hoped would follow my guidance did not move in that direction, I ended my relationships with them." Is that what happened with Robert Mugabe?

**HJC:** Yes, I advised Robert Mugabe to accept an International Monetary Fund stabilization program. Instead he started to seize white-owned farms, resulting in a total decline of the economy within a few years. With that action, I decided there was no reason for me to continue trying to help him.

**FSJ:** Many believed the situation in Zimbabwe would improve with Robert Mugabe out of office, but that does not seem to have happened. What can the United States do, if anything, to help in that crisis?

**HJC:** The Zimbabwean army took control of the main sources of state revenue about 10 years ago. Mugabe's overthrow in a coup was engineered by the minister of defense who is backed by the army. Post-Mugabe has really been the same as Mugabe, with the army monopolizing state revenue.

**FSJ:** I understand you have a new book coming out shortly. Can you tell us about it? What is the central theme of the book?

**HJC:** The book is titled *U.S. Policy Toward Africa: Eight Decades of Realpolitik*. In it I describe U.S. policy toward Africa beginning in 1942 and going all the way to Trump. I reached several conclusions as a result of the research: (1) The Cold War never had any influence on U.S. policy toward Africa. Economic development was consistently our priority in

Africa in every administration. (2) With respect to economic development, we were constantly experimenting because most of the programs were not working. Growth has been very slow. (3) The key reform that the Africans need to adopt is to create an enabling environment for private investment. After all these years, the rule of law and other requirements for investments continue to be absent in most of the countries.



COURTESY OF HERMAN J. COHEN

Ambassador Hank Cohen at Washington, D.C.'s World Affairs Council in 2015.



## Diplomacy and the Foreign Service Today

**FSJ:** *Is the United States being “outplayed” in Africa by China? By Russia? How can the United States best compete for influence and business in Africa?*

**HJC:** The United States is not being “outplayed” in Africa by China and Russia. China is doing a lot of infrastructure work in Africa financed by soft loans. The amount of debt toward China is now so large, there is no way the Africans can pay it back. In addition, the work done by Chinese state-owned companies is often shoddy. Roads wear out in two years.

As for Russia, they have nothing to offer beside arms and mercenaries. They like, of course, to take control of gold mines to pay for their services. U.S., European and Japanese investors are all doing far more good work in Africa than China and Russia. The big problem remains the absence of security for investors. Despite this, the United States is in Africa in a big way and is highly respected.

**FSJ:** *What are the essential ingredients for a successful diplomat?*

**HJC:** The successful diplomat should be interested mainly

in absorbing the culture of other nations in order to better understand why they make certain decisions and say what they do. Curiosity is probably the most important element of successful diplomacy. I spent most of my career abroad asking questions.

**FSJ:** *Is the Foreign Service as an institution strong today? How has the role of the Foreign Service changed?*

**HJC:** The Foreign Service is more important and more essential than ever. The world is very diverse and very complicated. CNN and Al-Jazeera cannot tell the policymaker what is really going on abroad. The Foreign Service, on the ground abroad, is the main instrument for Washington to be able to decide on policies toward countries and regions. Also, with so many U.S. government agencies having personnel abroad in U.S. embassies, the Foreign Service is needed to coordinate so that everyone is on the same page.

**FSJ:** *What areas, either functional or regional, would you*



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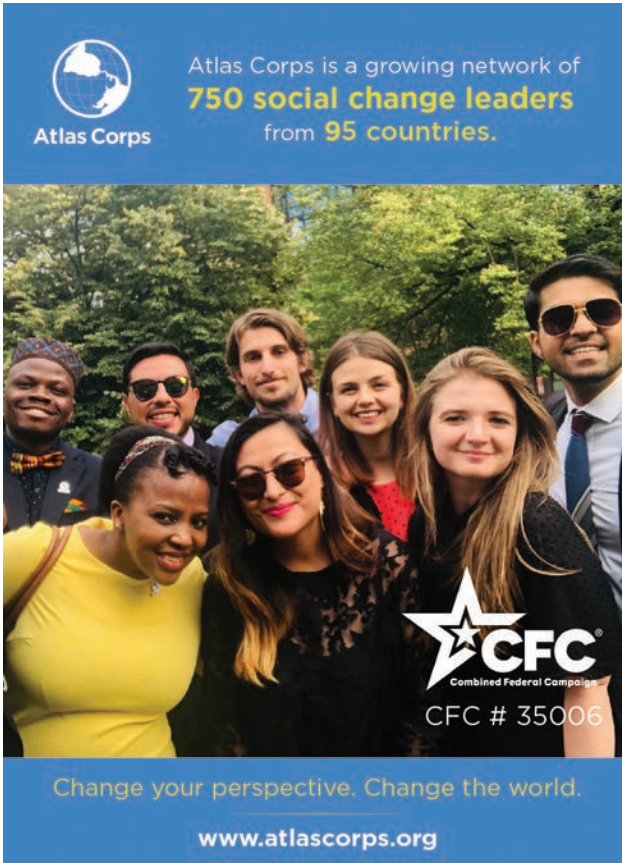


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*point to that may require increased focus for American diplomacy in the coming years?*

**HJC:** The Middle East will continue to be unstable for years to come, and will require close U.S. attention. Action must be taken to stabilize Libya, which is a major source of Islamic terrorism in the African Sahel countries. In the long run, the major issue facing U.S. foreign policy will be climate change. I believe that all new U.S. Foreign Service classes should provide extensive knowledge about climate change.

Should the United States be playing a leadership role in climate change diplomacy? Yes.

**FSJ:** *Are you optimistic about the future of professional diplomacy?*

**HJC:** Yes. Professional diplomacy is more indispensable than ever. U.S. foreign policy cannot be made rationally without the in-depth knowledge of foreign cultures that only the Foreign Service can provide.

**FSJ:** *There's no denying the last few years have been hard on diplomats and diplomacy, and many senior diplomats have left the Service. What's your advice to those wondering whether to stay or leave?*

**HJC:** Foreign Service life is very difficult. Moving families around the world is not a picnic. Add to that efforts by administrations to politicize the career Service, and the stress level is high. Some senior diplomats cannot accept working under those conditions. I hope that most will remain because their expertise and wisdom are needed even more during periods such as the one we are currently experiencing.

**FSJ:** *How should active-duty FS members protect the Foreign Service and State Department, and each other, as they find themselves in the crosshairs of an impeachment inquiry related to U.S. relations with Ukraine?*

**HJC:** They need to continue speaking the truth to power, and make sure that policymakers understand the negative foreign policy consequences of politicizing professional diplomacy.

**FSJ:** *What would be your advice to college students and recent graduates seeking to enter the Foreign Service or government service more generally?*

**HJC:** There can be no more rewarding experience than professional government service that is protecting U.S. interests around the world. The U.S. Foreign Service is truly on the front line of U.S. national security. ■

# 2019 CONSTRUCTIVE DISSENT AWARDS

## William R. Rivkin Award for a Mid-Level Officer

### Anna Boulos

#### *Reforming the Visa Lookout Accountability Process*

**W**hile serving in Tijuana, Consular Officer Anna Boulos challenged Mission Mexico's consular management over policies and practices that exposed adjudicators to an increased number of Visa Lookout Accountability violations, which, in turn, harmed their chances for tenure and promotion.

Consular officers are trained to carefully use the Visa Lookout system and to avoid VLA violations, which occur when an officer fails to properly resolve derogatory information about a visa candidate before issuing a visa. They work hard to avoid issuing a visa to an applicant ineligible under the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Careful adjudications are vital, but adjudication can be more difficult when considering the complex immigration histories of those who have held H-2 visas for seasonal work and have crossed the U.S.-Mexico border for many years in connection with that work. H-2 visas allow individuals to work temporarily in the United States in certain sectors, including the agricultural industry. Because of the importance of timely H-2 visa issuance to Congress and the White House, Mission Mexico's consular management prioritized processing H-2 visas quickly. In 2018, Mission Mexico performed 13.8 percent of all adjudications worldwide in all visa categories, but its officers accounted for more than 30 percent of the VLA violations recorded that year.

Ms. Boulos challenged Mission Mexico's centralized consular management procedures in a letter to AFSA that was signed by 60 current and former Mission Mexico entry-level adjudicators. She highlighted the perception that Mission Mexico prioritized visa processing speed over critical assessment and therefore, for



Anna Boulos speaks at the AFSA Awards Ceremony Oct. 16.

AFSA/ZOQUIN SOSA



COURTESY OF ANNA BOULOS



AFSA/ZOQUIN SOSA

Above, Robert Rivkin (left) presents Anna Boulos with the William R. Rivkin Award at the AFSA Awards Ceremony Oct. 16. Left, Anna Boulos in Tijuana in early 2019.

example, had adjudicators interviewing five to 10 H-2 applicants at once. Adjudicators were instructed to issue H-2 renewals without

an interview if derogatory information had been previously addressed. This policy violated regulations and exposed officers to VLA violations if the original adjudicator made a mistake.

Ms. Boulos requested AFSA's assistance to advocate for reforms to VLA procedures within the Visa Office at post and to advocate for improved disciplinary procedures for officers who received VLA violations with the Office of Employee Relations' conduct, suitability and discipline division in Washington, D.C.

**“For me, dissent is the opposite of cynicism; dissent is forward-looking and optimistic. We didn’t dissent just because the department is imperfect, but because we cared and believed the department could be better.”**

—Anna Boulos

Ms. Boulos worked with AFSA to guide its discussions with the Visa Office in the Bureau of Consular Affairs, explaining that 2018 revisions to the Foreign Affairs Manual (9 FAM 307) unfairly broadened the scope of VLA violations. She raised the profile of the problem, explaining that the Visa Office was issuing VLA violations in record numbers to Mexico adjudicators, and that many of those individuals’ careers were placed on hold because they were following the mission’s erroneous guidance.

As a result of Ms. Boulos and AFSA’s efforts, the Consular Bureau’s Visa Office announced significant changes to VLA procedures in 9 FAM 307. These changes have benefited all officers who adjudicated H-2 visas in Mexico, as well as all visa adjudicators worldwide. Today, FSOs know the Visa Office is more fairly conducting its VLA violation process. But Ms. Boulos continues to advocate for dozens of officers held up in the disciplinary process for old violations.

“Moving forward, I hope our story reminds everyone that we have a voice, and we should use it to speak up in areas big and small,” Ms. Boulos said Oct. 16 on receiving her award. “For me, dissent is the opposite of cynicism; dissent is forward-looking and optimistic. We didn’t dissent just because the department is imperfect, but because we cared and believed the department could be better. And even though we’re still facing pushback from HR, I remain optimistic. So, I ask anyone who sees other imperfections, don’t be cynical. Dissent. And count me in when you do.”

Anna Boulos received a bachelor’s degree in international relations from Tufts University, and a master’s degree in public policy from the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University. She joined the State Department in 2013.

## William R. Rivkin Award for a Mid-Level Officer

### Timmy Davis *Courage and Conviction in Southern Iraq*

**A**s Basrah consul general, Timmy Davis embodied the best traditions of the Foreign Service and constructive dissent. During the lead-up to the September 2018 decision to suspend operations and evacuate the consulate and its nearly 1,000-member staff, and throughout the subsequent evacuation itself, Consul



Timmy Davis.

General Davis showed courage and conviction in presenting the case for the continued operation of U.S. Consulate Basrah. For speaking out on this issue, he was selected as a recipient of the 2019 William R. Rivkin Award.

CG Davis made the conscious decision to lay out his case



Basrah Consul General Timmy Davis greets a child in southern Iraq in 2018.



COURTESY OF TIMMY DAVIS

**Basrah Consul General Timmy Davis in Basrah, Iraq, in 2018.**

directly, rather than through the Dissent Channel, in a series of sensitive discussions that began with the ambassador and the under secretary of State for political affairs and concluded with several direct discussions with the Secretary of State. He made the strongest case possible to maintain a presence in Southern Iraq’s Shia heartland and follow ample security precautions to prevent harm to consulate personnel.

When the decision was made to close the consulate over CG Davis’ dissent, he dutifully carried out the order, showing the highest level of efficiency in moving out all personnel and equipment within the Secretary’s three-week deadline, while seeing to the needs of his disrupted team.

CG Davis has devoted years to southern Iraq, serving previous tours both with the State Department and before that as a Marine during the early days of the Iraq War. Under his leadership, the consulate had gone from a marginal player limited by security restrictions to a major and welcomed presence in the region.

While security concerns were real, so were the consulate’s precautions. Under CG Davis, Consulate Basrah maintained a robust operation that included highly trained force protection professionals, sophisticated early warning systems and a significant security force to secure the compound.

In one of his final actions, CG Davis issued a cable—“Basrah 223: Staying Engaged in the Shia South”—explaining the impor-

tance of continued U.S. engagement in that region to understand and influence national politics, protect U.S. economic interests in the oil sector and elsewhere, and serve as a counterweight to Iran’s often unwelcome influence.

“I never imagined that I would receive the award, but I do know that I have long believed that leadership means little without action,” CG Davis said at the Oct. 16 awards ceremony. “In my case, I could not have moved forward in my career without standing up for what most mattered to me as a leader: taking care of the people I worked with and speaking clearly about the sacrifices we, Foreign Service and Civil Service personnel, are willing to make for our country.”

Timmy Davis is from New Orleans and attended the University of Alabama. He served in the United States Marine Corps for nine years before joining the Foreign Service as a political officer. His overseas tours include Guatemala City, Najaf, Canberra, Basrah and Bogotá.

In Washington, Mr. Davis has served as a senior watch officer in the State Department Operations Center, special assistant to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, director for Iraq at the National Security Council, deputy chief of staff to the special presidential envoy for the global coalition to counter ISIL, chief of staff to the counselor of the department and, most recently, as chief of staff to the under secretary for political affairs and acting chief of staff of the department.

## W. Averell Harriman Award for an Entry-Level Officer

### Moises Mendoza *Bringing CPR to a Small Post in Mexico*

**M**oises Mendoza, an entry-level Foreign Service officer, was honored with the W. Averell Harriman Award for constructive dissent in connection with his extraordinary two-year effort, at great professional risk, to make U.S. Consulate General Matamoros safer by ensuring his colleagues had training in dealing with medical emergencies. Because the consulate has no medical unit and local emergency response services are lacking, Mr. Mendoza was concerned that colleagues experiencing a medical emergency could die before help arrived.

Despite bureaucratic obstacles, he became an emergency medical technician (EMT) and an instructor in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) so that he could make the consulate safer. He then developed a partnership with a local hospital to make his



Moises Mendoza at the AFSA Awards Ceremony Oct. 16 in the State Department.

work sustainable, creating a model that many other small posts can follow.

Mr. Mendoza went far beyond what would be expected from an entry-level officer in overcoming obstacles to his proposal. When he learned that no funding was available for his emergency medical training, he obtained a scholarship from the Foreign Service Institute to fund his certification as an EMT. When he was told that the department couldn't pay for his training to be a CPR instructor, he worked with Valley Regional Medical Center in Brownsville,

Texas, across the border, to obtain training at no cost.

But when Mr. Mendoza approached management to gain approval to set up a training program at post, he ran into a new challenge. Several officials expressed liability concerns and Mr. Mendoza was not permitted to offer CPR training to his colleagues.



Moises Mendoza with his sister, Viviana Mendoza, at Flag Day in September 2016, receiving his first posting.



Moises Mendoza during graduate school in Berlin in 2016, with friend Adam Kong, also an FSO.

# 2019 OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE AWARDS

## Mark Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy

### Nora Brito *Promoting Democracy in Venezuela*

**N**ora Brito is recognized for her work to promote a new generation of leaders to restore democracy in Venezuela.

Shortly after Ms. Brito's arrival as a political officer at U.S. Embassy Caracas in 2017, she created an informal group of 12 young members of the Venezuelan National Assembly. This group included members from all sectors of the Venezuelan opposition.

Using her strong relationship-building skills and substantive knowledge of Venezuelan politics, Ms. Brito built honest, long-lasting relationships with the group. These interactions provided her, Embassy Caracas and Washington a fresh perspective on the Venezuelan political situation.

"Since day one, Nora has focused on advancing democracy and freedom in Venezuela," Venezuela Affairs Unit Chargé d'Affaires James Story said. "Her imaginative efforts have proven effective in creating a space for the new generation of Venezuelan leaders to fight for democracy and a better future for all Venezuelans."

Over the past several years, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has undermined democratic institutions, culminating in



Nora Brito.

**"This award demonstrates that the Foreign Service values innovation, striving to make positive change despite all obstacles and making our institution better. Constructive dissent is not always easy, but sometimes it is simply the right thing to do."**

—Moises Mendoza

But Mr. Mendoza worked with all stakeholders to address their concerns. In 2019 he re-approached management to explain his idea and received permission to teach CPR at post. He then trained more than a dozen staff members and their families. He also facilitated the training of a local staff member to be a CPR instructor, at no cost to the department.

This will keep this project sustainable and ensure that despite Matamoros having no medical unit, there will always be someone available to teach CPR to community members. Because of Mr. Mendoza's efforts, Matamoros is now a safer post for all members of the consulate community.

"To me, this award demonstrates that the Foreign Service values innovation, striving to make positive change despite all obstacles and making our institution better," Mr. Mendoza said upon receiving the award. "Constructive dissent is not always easy, but sometimes it is simply the right thing to do. I feel deeply honored to follow in the footsteps of some fantastic officers who have won this award."

Moises Mendoza joined the Foreign Service in 2016 and completed his first tour in Matamoros in June 2019. He is now in language training and will serve as a political officer in Port-au-Prince beginning in 2020.

He holds a bachelor's degree from Georgetown University and master's degrees in public policy and international affairs from the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin, Germany, and Columbia University, respectively. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, Mr. Mendoza was a journalist whose work appeared in the *Houston Chronicle*, the *Los Angeles Times* and *Hemispheres* magazine, among other publications.



AFSA/JOAQUIN SOSA

Dr. Sushma Palmer (left) presents the Mark Palmer Award to Foreign Service Officer Nora Brito at the AFSA Awards Ceremony Oct. 16.

fraudulent May 2018 presidential elections and a sham January 2019 presidential inauguration. Against this backdrop, Embassy Caracas had been working to unite a fractured opposition and find a new generation of leaders to restore democracy.

Ms. Brito, an entry-level political officer, accepted the challenge and discovered a young generation of lawmakers that could potentially bridge the generational gap with the “old guard.”

Once Ms. Brito discovered this group, she took the next step to help empower them. Working with other State offices and USAID, she developed multiple programs enabling the parliamentarians to connect with grassroots organizations and learn about monitoring elections, reforming law enforcement and strengthening democratic institutions.

These programs helped strengthen the group members’ knowledge base and experience, enabling them to be stronger, more active participants in restoring Venezuela’s democracy.

A young National Assembly deputy, Juan Guaidó, emerged from this group. At the time relatively unknown, Mr. Guaidó worked across the opposition to garner support, and the National Assembly elected him as the body’s president in January 2019.

After Mr. Maduro’s sham election and in line with the Venezuelan constitution, Mr. Guaidó, with the support of all opposition parties and the Venezuelan people, declared himself interim president of Venezuela until new, free and fair elections could be held.

The United States immediately recognized Mr. Guaidó as president; and, to date, more than 50 countries around the world recognize him and his efforts to develop an inclusive democratic transition in Venezuela.

While Mr. Guaidó has been the face of the movement, the other 11 parliamentarians from Ms. Brito’s group are working with him as heads of National Assembly commissions and are involved in humanitarian assistance and reconstruction efforts.

In the face of harassment, extrajudicial arrests and violence, this group is bravely putting their lives on the line to fight for democracy and the future of Venezuela. Ms. Brito saw the value of listening to these young leaders and providing them access and resources to promote democratic values and institutions.

When given the opportunity to go further, she connected these leaders with embassy leadership and, ultimately, helped shape today’s Venezuela where the people finally can work to restore democracy.

Nora Brito joined the Foreign Service in 2014. Her first tour was in Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad and Tobago, where she worked in the Non-Immigrant Visas and American Citizen Services sections.

She started her second tour, in Caracas, in April 2017 as a political officer and, following the drawdown of Embassy Caracas, took on a new role as an adviser to Special Representative for Venezuela Elliott Abrams.

Prior to joining the Foreign Service, Ms. Brito received her master’s degree from Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies. She received a bachelor’s degree in international relations and economics from American University.

## Mark Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy

### Christopher Gooch *Promoting U.S. Values in Iraq and Nepal*

**C**hristopher Gooch is a forceful advocate for U.S. and universal human rights and values who made bold and imaginative efforts to expand democracy, freedom and good governance during assignments in Iraq and Nepal.

In Iraq, he helped protect female civil society activists, persuaded the Iraqi government to act to protect trafficking victims and helped launch an initiative aimed at resolving the Kirkuk



dispute. In Nepal, he crafted a transitional justice strategy, triggering the first movement on the issue in four years.

During a period of intense civil unrest in Basrah, Iraq's major port city and oil hub, extremists began targeting female leaders who appeared in the media with U.S. officials. After one woman was assassinated, others were subjected to online threats in what appeared to be coordinated efforts to intimidate them into silence.

Urgently seeking avenues to protect them, Mr. Gooch organized a team to identify accounts being used to threaten the women leaders and inform U.S.-based social media companies of these terms-of-service violations.

Mr. Gooch also helped provide expedited assistance through the Human Rights Defenders' Fund—run by the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor—enabling activists to shelter safely. His efforts to protect these brave women sent a powerful message of the United States' support for equal rights and democratic freedoms in Iraq.

In another vital human rights area—countering human trafficking—Mr. Gooch acted to overcome Iraqi government resistance to cooperation. He built a coalition of Iraqi allies across its police and bureaucratic structures and used a series of interagency meetings to explain the practical and ethical imperatives for action.

Through persistent engagement, he convinced his interlocutors to cooperate to develop Iraq's first action plan to combat human trafficking and to dedicate resources to achieving the goals they identified. Mr. Gooch's actions enabled Iraq to come into alignment with the department's approach to combatting trafficking.

Mr. Gooch's work also sparked new optimism in Iraq after 50 years of unresolved conflict in Kirkuk. He showed extraordinary leadership in conflict resolution in a territory where conflict between Arabs, Kurds and Turkmen resulted in a political power vacuum and ethnic tension, fuel for a potential ISIS resurgence.

His engagement with local political, tribal and civil society leaders, United Nations representatives and international mediators resulted in an embassy decision to actively foster reconciliation and reanimate moribund negotiations between ethnic groups.



COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER GOOCH

Christopher Gooch.

In Kathmandu, Mr. Gooch led the Human Rights Core Group and an interagency working group on counter-trafficking in persons. He organized roundtables that united U.S. agencies, the Nepalese government, civil society and employment agencies in tangible cooperation, and garnered specific commitments from the Nepalese government to address trafficking-in-person action-plan recommendations.

Mr. Gooch's groundbreaking reporting on the problem highlighted a previously unrecognized form of trafficking in persons—"orphanage trafficking"—providing a more complete picture to inform programming and advocacy.

Christopher Gooch currently serves as refugee coordinator in Jerusalem. He has previously served tours as a political officer covering human rights in Baghdad and Kathmandu, and as a consular officer in Riyadh.

He received a bachelor's degree in international politics from Georgetown University's Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service and conducted post-graduate Arabic study at the Institut Français du Proche-Orient in Aleppo, Syria. Born and raised in Salt Lake City, Utah, he speaks Arabic, Nepali and Spanish.



AFSA/JOAQUIN SOSA

Dr. Sushma Palmer (left) presents the Mark Palmer Award to Foreign Service Officer Christopher Gooch at the AFSA Awards Ceremony Oct. 16.

## Nelson B. Delavan Award for an Office Management Specialist

### Katherine Elizabeth Koehler *Taking on Many Tasks in Ethiopia*

In addition to her full-time role as an office management specialist (OMS), Katherine Elizabeth Koehler simultaneously serves as U.S. Embassy Addis Ababa's de facto full-time staff assistant and has been instrumental in tracking and coordinating multifaceted efforts to support major Ethiopian governmental reforms.

Ambassador Michael Raynor, who nominated her for the Delavan Award, calls Ms. Koehler "the finest OMS I've worked with in my 31-year career."

During the past year, Ethiopia underwent a stunning reinvention from a country deeply hostile to democracy, human rights and free-market economics to one that welcomes an expanded relationship with the United States while pursuing a

huge reform agenda to embrace Western values, foreign investment and multiparty democracy.

If successful, Ethiopia's ambitious but vulnerable reforms will benefit core U.S. security, commercial and political interests. Helping the reforms succeed, which has enormously increased the volume and complexity of the workload at Embassy Addis, is one of the U.S. government's top priorities in Africa.

Ms. Koehler led an interagency project to survey Ethiopia's

population to learn how they feel about their country's reform agenda and the United States. Also in her staff assistant role, Ms. Koehler superbly supported the embassy's interagency response to a major Ethiopian Airlines crash in March that involved a U.S.-built aircraft and the tragic deaths of 157 people.

During long and stressful days over several weeks, Ms. Koehler secured multiple high-stakes and last-minute meetings and phone calls for Amb. Raynor with senior Ethiopian officials to elicit candor and ensure U.S. participation in the crash investigation. She coordinated daily situation reports to Washington and ensured empathetic and responsive front office support to families of American crash victims.



COURTESY OF KATHERINE KOEHLER

Katherine Koehler, left, with Kariftu, a Safe Motherhood Ambassador for the Healing Hands of Joy organization.



COURTESY OF KATHERINE KOEHLER

Katherine Koehler with a group of Ethiopian musicians who came to a presentation she gave on black opera singers during Black History Month.

**“Winning the Nelson B. Delavan Award is an incredible honor. I could not have come this far in my career without the expert guidance of fellow OMSes and innovative supervisors who allowed me to seek out new responsibilities and empowered me to make changes when and where I was able.”**

*—Katherine Koehler*

In addition, she organized—and wrote excellent remarks for—a major reception that promoted women’s empowerment while spotlighting efforts to combat obstetric fistula, a devastating condition that afflicts many Ethiopian women at childbirth. Despite this difficult focus, the event was exhilarating thanks to Ms. Koehler’s success in ensuring the right preparations, guest list and messaging.

Ms. Koehler also became an Equal Employment Opportunity counselor and has provided EEO training to more than 100 local staff members, many of whom had never had such training before. She hosted a charity clothing swap that donated 300 pounds of clothes to charity.

“Winning the Nelson B. Delavan Award is an incredible honor,” Ms. Koehler said. “I could not have come this far in my career without the expert guidance of fellow OMSes and innovative supervisors who allowed me to seek out new responsibilities and empowered me to make changes when and where I was able.”

She would especially like to thank Susan Walke, Tiffany Byrd, Jacob Rocca and Kathleen Morenski for their leadership and guidance, as well as her current supervisor, Amb. Michael A. Raynor.

Katherine Elizabeth Koehler joined the Department of State as an office management specialist in 2013. She served previously in Kathmandu, Islamabad and Warsaw, and is currently serving in Addis Ababa.

A native of Charleston, South Carolina, she also spent two years working at the Global Financial Service Center as a contractor. She has two degrees in music (vocal performance) from Florida Southern College and Georgia State University.

## **M. Juanita Guess Award for a Community Liaison Office Coordinator**

### **Michelle Ross**

#### *Extraordinary Steps Ease an Ordered Evacuation*



Michelle Ross, addressing the audience in the Dean Acheson Auditorium of the State Department after receiving the 2019 Guess Award.

**M**ichelle Ross is honored for her extraordinary efforts to assist Embassy Caracas personnel and family members who were quickly evacuated after the Venezuelan government broke diplomatic ties with the United States in January 2019.

Ms. Ross, a Foreign Service spouse who joined the Caracas Community Liaison Office team in August 2018, was a key ally to evacuees during the difficult transition that followed, working with the management section and the Family Liaison Office to facilitate the swift evacuation of 79 Americans and 22 pets.

“I can think of no one more deserving of this award,” said James Story, chargé d’affaires of the Venezuela Affairs Unit, the interim diplomatic office of the U.S. government to Venezuela, based at Embassy Bogotá. “At every step of Michelle’s assignment, she demonstrated leadership and a genuine dedication to her community.”

Ms. Ross had maintained a spreadsheet of all incoming and outgoing personnel since her arrival at post. She knew the whereabouts of officers on travel and had updated personal



AFSA/JOAQUIN SOSA

**Michelle Ross at the AFSA Awards Ceremony at the State Department Oct. 16.**

contact information for all U.S. direct hires. She had a record of all pets and pet owners in the embassy community.

When Ms. Ross learned about the ordered evacuation, she immediately contacted a local veterinarian who agreed to visit the embassy the following day to give vaccinations and complete pet exportation documents required by U.S. and Venezuelan authorities and American Airlines. Even the pets of employees who were on travel were able to be evacuated through her efforts.

Ms. Ross did this while coordinating other logistics to facilitate the evacuation, relieve employees' anxiety and provide relevant information to the community.

To ease the community's arrival in Miami, she coordinated with the regional security office to have U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Transportation Security Administration agents

assist evacuees through customs.

Ms. Ross was in the first group to depart post. She coordinated with current and former Caracas personnel in the Washington, D.C., area to organize a welcoming committee for each of the four flights that carried evacuees. She even arranged for taxis and luggage collection.

In short, she made the evacuation more bearable by surrounding the community with support every step of the way.

After the Venezuela evacuation, Ms. Ross "paid it forward," mentoring CLOs in Haiti and Sudan when those posts experienced ordered departures.

"Winning the M. Juanita Guess Award is really a testament to the amazing CLO team in Caracas and the outstanding community we had at a difficult post," Ms. Ross said. "I was blessed to work with a stellar and tireless assistant CLO and a local staff administrative assistant who could and did work miracles."

Michelle Ross served as CLO for Embassy Caracas at post and in Washington, D.C., during the post's ordered departure. Previously, she worked at the Family Liaison Office as the CLO program specialist in Washington, D.C., providing operational and program support to CLO coordinators worldwide.

Prior to joining the FLO, Ms. Ross worked as a consular associate in Kuala Lumpur and as the CLO in Chengdu. Before her husband joined the Foreign Service as a consular officer in 2011, she taught eighth-grade English and reading for nearly a decade and spent two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Gansu, China.

Ms. Ross earned a bachelor's degree in secondary English education from Brigham Young University and graduate degrees in middle-level education (Walden University) and literature and writing (Union Institute and University).

While on breaks from her work supporting the Foreign Service community, Ms. Ross can be found reading the latest literary releases or typing up reviews (on a real typewriter) for her book review blog.



COURTESY OF MICHELLE ROSS

**Michelle Ross at a local market flower stand in Caracas, Venezuela.**

## Avis Bohlen Award for a Foreign Service Family Member

### Laurent Charbonnet *Bicycle Diplomacy Helps Refugees in Frankfurt*

**L**aurent Charbonnet, a Foreign Service family member and retired FSO at U.S. Consulate General Frankfurt, has received the Avis Bohlen Award for the diplomacy via bicycles program he initiated through the consulate community's Frankfurt Refugee Outreach Committee.

Mr. Charbonnet volunteers weekly as a bicycle mechanic at a refugee center in Frankfurt's Bonames district. The center is home to hundreds of recently arrived refugees who rely on volunteers like Mr. Charbonnet to develop survival and self-sufficiency skills.

Over the past three years, the informal bicycle program has significantly enhanced the morale of Consulate Frankfurt's community, said Stephan Langley, a general services officer: "Laurent's initiative and volunteerism serve as an inspiration and model for others, and his visionary leadership will ensure that the program and the consulate's ties to Frankfurt's refugee community will endure long after his departure from post."

At the center, refugees acquire English-language proficiency, learn the cultural mores necessary for integration, and ultimately prepare themselves for employment and schooling in Germany.

Laurent Charbonnet, right, and retired FSO Paul Cantrell work on bikes at a refugee center in Frankfurt.



Laurent Charbonnet at the AFSA Awards Ceremony at the State Department Oct. 16.

Mr. Charbonnet collects donated bicycles from the consulate community and elsewhere. He volunteers his time, energy and effort to repair and replace broken parts, creating safe, functional bicycles from myriad pieces.

The bicycles have given refugees greater mobility and new recreational opportunities for their children.



**“Laurent’s initiative and volunteerism serve as an inspiration and model for others, and his visionary leadership will ensure that the program and the consulate’s ties to Frankfurt’s refugee community will endure long after his departure from post.”**

—Stephan Langley, ConGen Frankfurt

“I want to recognize the hard work of the consulate’s volunteer refugee assistance group,” Mr. Charbonnet said in accepting the Bohlen Award.

“My work maintaining some 300 bicycles at one of the refugee centers is just one facet of what they do. And once I’d built up my skills and specialized tools, it just seemed natural to start fixing bikes for the consulate community.”

Mr. Charbonnet credited his late father, Arthur, for teaching him to repair bicycles a half-century ago in New Orleans. Born and raised in New Orleans, he earned a bachelor’s degree in Asian studies from Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York.

He was a member of the first group of American exchange students to go to the People’s Republic of China after the United States and China established diplomatic relations, spending his junior year abroad in Beijing from 1979 to 1980. After graduation, he worked as a visa interviewer and agricultural commodities reporter for the American Institute in Taiwan.

In 1987 he became a Foreign Service officer. He retired from the Foreign Service in 2016, after serving overseas in the Philippines, Shenyang, Taipei, Hong Kong (twice), Singapore and Baghdad, and domestically in the Arms Control Bureau, the Japan desk, the National Security Council, the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, and the Office of the Inspector General.

After retiring, he proudly took up a support role as an eligible family member to his FSO wife, Michelle Burton. He enjoys indulging his passions for sailing, cycling (and bicycle repair) and travel—combining them when he can. He eagerly awaits his first grandchildren, while trying not to put too much pressure on sons Paul and Daniel.

## 2019 Award for Achievement and Contributions to the Association

### F. Allen “Tex” Harris “Mr. AFSA”: 50 Years of Active Engagement

**F** Allen “Tex” Harris, a retired FSO and a titan of the Foreign Service, was selected to receive the 2019 Award for Achievement and Contributions to the Association for his vital and continuous involvement in AFSA over the past 50 years.

As a “Young Turk” working with Tom Boyatt, Lannon Walker, Charlie Bray, Hank Cohen and others starting in 1969, he was instrumental in ensuring that American diplomats had a clear voice in establishing the standards for their profession and that AFSA would be an institution that would defend both the Service and its members. Mr. Harris was the State VP for the 1973 to 1976 AFSA Governing Boards, led by Bill Harrop and Tom Boyatt, respectively. During this time, AFSA became the union for all Foreign Service employees. Tex, as he is known by all who know him, was instrumental in drafting and negotiating the core labor-management agreements in the foreign affairs agencies.



AFSA President Eric Rubin (left) presents F. Allen “Tex” Harris with the AFSA Achievement and Contributions to the Association Award at the AFSA Awards Ceremony Oct. 16.



AFSA/JAQUIN SOSA

“Tex” Harris at the AFSA Awards Ceremony at the State Department Oct. 16.

An attorney, Tex was AFSA’s in-house counsel in the early to mid-1970s. He was one of four drafters of the 1976 legislation that led to the Foreign Service grievance system, which was eventually adopted in the Foreign Service Act of 1980.

He remained active in AFSA throughout his distinguished 36-year Foreign Service career, serving two terms as AFSA president from 1993 to 1997. During his tenure as president, he battled against RIFs (reductions-in-force) in USAID, government shutdowns and the appointment of unqualified political ambassadors.

He also fought against major management abuses such as naming Diplomatic Security protective detail agents “managers” to avoid payment of millions of dollars of overtime, and gaining significant benefit increases for service overseas. He helped secure improvements to conditions of service and pushed for ending ethnic, gender and racial discrimination within the State Department.

Following his retirement from the Foreign Service in 1999, Harris received the Distinguished Honor Award (the State

Department’s highest award) for his achievements in reporting on and opposing the massive human rights abuses of the Argentine military dictatorship’s “Dirty Wars” of the late 1970s. Posted in Argentina during that time, he had been identified for selection-out after leaving Buenos Aires for that same work. His courageous role during that period has been profiled on TV and in publications and has been cited by AFSA and others as a prime example of what professional diplomacy can accomplish in the face of internal opposition.

In 1984 AFSA recognized Tex Harris with the William R. Rivkin Award for Constructive Dissent by a Mid-Level Officer for the “courage, strength of character, and dedication to the Foreign Service” he demonstrated during his tour in Buenos Aires. The award noted that Harris displayed not only physical courage, but “bureaucratic courage to stand up for what was right despite unnecessary obstacles placed in his way.”

He was honored again, in 2013, for his work in Argentina, when the United Nations Association of the National Capital

# Widely referred to as Mr. AFSA, Tex Harris remains in contact with hundreds of retired Foreign Service colleagues who have held senior positions over the past 50 years.

Area presented him with their Award for the Use of Diplomacy to Advance Human Rights.

In the early 1980s, Mr. Harris was the first person fired by President Reagan's EPA administrator, Ann Gorsuch, for his efforts as head of that agency's International Activities Office in seeking to ban CFCs, which were destroying upper atmospheric ozone, creating a hole above the Antarctic.

As a retiree, Mr. Harris continued his close involvement with AFSA. In 2000, he established AFSA's "Tex Harris Award" for constructive dissent by a Foreign Service specialist—bringing the same recognition to Foreign Service specialists as has been afforded to Foreign Service officers since 1968.

AFSA members elected him to multiple terms on AFSA governing boards in the 2000s and 2010s as secretary and retiree representative, and he contributed much to setting AFSA's agenda and policies during these years.

In recent years, he has been active in several of AFSA's sister organizations that work to advance the interests of the Foreign Service. He served several terms on the board of directors of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, which collects and manages the Foreign Service oral history program, and is currently a coordinator for the group Foreign Affairs Retirees of Maryland and D.C.

Mr. Harris is also currently the producer of the ADST Video/Podcast series, "Tales of American Diplomacy," which screened its first "TAD Talk" episode on C-Span in November.

Widely referred to as Mr. AFSA, Tex Harris remains in contact with hundreds of retired Foreign Service colleagues who have held senior positions over the past 50 years—sharing information with them and connecting them with other colleagues to discuss the issues facing today's Foreign Service.

He is an active member of the group of former AFSA presidents who advise AFSA and other Foreign Service groups.

Mr. Harris is currently traveling to present lectures on climate diplomacy, which he subheads, "No more prizes for predicting the rain, only for building the Ark."

In accepting the award, Mr. Harris forecasted the critical role American diplomats will have in combating global warming under the voluntary National Determined Commitments regime established in the Paris Accords.

"The U.S. Foreign Service will be called on to meet its greatest challenge since the Cold War in convincing elites and publics in more than 200 nations to ratchet up their cuts in fossil fuels to save the planet from further overheating," he said during his remarks accepting the award Oct. 16.

"We have probably already lost the coral reefs, much of the arctic ice and low-lying areas of Alexandria, Miami Beach and Lower Manhattan to global warming," Tex continued. "American diplomacy must lead the way to protect the planet from major damage. ...

"New times, new challenges. Onward. Go AFSA!" he concluded.



In 1993, Tex Harris was elected for his first term as president of AFSA, heading the new Governing Board that took office on July 15.



During his second term as AFSA president, in August 1996, Tex Harris (at left) led a demonstration outside USAID Administrator Brian Atwood's office to demand "better management" at the agency, where reductions-in-force (RIFs) were decimating Foreign Service ranks. USAID VP Frank Miller is at right.

AFSA/FSJ/SEPTEMBER 1996



## AFSA Post Representative of the Year

### Larry Fields *Bringing AFSA Back to Frankfurt*

Larry Fields is recognized as Post Representative of the Year for his work as the AFSA liaison at U.S. Consulate General Frankfurt. One of the largest posts in the world, ConGen Frankfurt boasts 200 direct hires from State alone, and it is host to a variety of regional offices covering information technology, security engineering, courier operations and more. But the post had gone without an AFSA post representative for several years.

Mr. Fields revived AFSA's presence by organizing an election for the position of post representative. He created an AFSA email group to keep members in Frankfurt informed of developments throughout the year and launched an "AFSA Corner" column in the Community Liaison Office weekly newsletter. He recruited a USAID post representative and a State alternate representative to serve members' needs.



Mr. Fields worked with the CLO to make sure that its regular newcomers orientation briefs included a short presentation from post representatives describing AFSA benefits.

During last winter's partial federal government shutdown, Mr. Fields hosted an informational lunchtime meeting to share information, answer questions and concerns, and pass on queries to AFSA headquarters. At an embassy town hall on the shutdown, he answered AFSA-related inquiries and reminded employees to avoid violating rules against lobbying elected leaders using government resources.

He also established an excellent working relationship with the consul general and the deputy principal officer at post. He has had several opportunities to build on these relationships, including



Larry Fields at the AFSA Awards Ceremony at the State Department Oct. 16.

one case in which a section head at post attempted to require employee attendance at a Saturday barbecue. Mr. Fields worked with the DPO and HR to ensure that the section head learned that this was neither legal nor appropriate, resolving the issue. He has been an AFSA rep at two other posts, and his experience has proven valuable in many ways, including assisting members with employee evaluation reports, overtime matters and interpersonal relationships at post.

Mr. Fields is the first person to receive the AFSA Post Representative of the Year Award twice. He was also recognized in 2011 for his work at U.S. Embassy Kathmandu.

"At a time when sharply increased income and wealth inequality herald the arrival of a new Gilded Age, public-sector unions continue to prove their worth not only by fighting for better working conditions for their members, but also by battling misguided and ill-advised management initiatives," Mr. Fields said upon accepting his award. "I'm proud to do my part to safeguard the public interest and contribute to the effective conduct of public business."

Mr. Fields joined the Foreign Service in 2006 as an information management specialist. He has served in Addis Ababa, Buenos Aires, Kathmandu, Luxembourg and Frankfurt. He earned his bachelor's degree from Georgetown University, and a master's degree in information systems from George Mason University.

# 2019 AFSA AWARDS RUNNERS-UP

## M. JUANITA GUESS AWARD RUNNER-UP

### Jennifer Allen

Jennifer Allen is one of this year's runners-up for the M. Juanita Guess Award for her leadership as community liaison office (CLO) coordinator at U.S. Consulate General Guangzhou during a health alert crisis in 2018. In May of that year, the consulate learned that one of its employees was found to have medical findings consistent with the "Havana Syndrome" symptoms suffered by embassy personnel in Cuba.



Jennifer Allen.

COURTESY OF JENNIFER ALLEN

The news sent shockwaves through the large Guangzhou consulate community. As CLO, Ms. Allen played a key role in managing the crisis. On hearing the news, some employees feared for the safety of their family members and began making plans to depart post, while others worried that their tour in subtropical China would come to an abrupt end, disrupting their careers and children's education.

Having built strong and trusting relationships with nearly everyone at post, Ms. Allen was uniquely placed to provide feedback on the community to post, mission and department leaders struggling with how to best manage the situation. Ms. Allen kept the front office in Beijing as well as consulate management apprised of the situation amid the constantly swirling rumors and speculation flowing around the community. Post leadership used this information to tailor town hall presentations to effectively lead the community through the crisis.

Originally from California, Jennifer Allen has spent the past 17 years traveling the world with her consular-coned husband and family. After previous postings in Dili, Seoul, Barbados, Busan, Shenyang, Taipei and Guangzhou, her recent move to Frankfurt represents an entirely new continent to explore.

Prior to her Foreign Service life, Ms. Allen worked as a school counselor. After finding her passion for working in the Community Liaison Office in Shenyang, Jennifer has spent the last three years serving as CLO coordinator in Guangzhou, and is excited to continue in this role in Frankfurt.

## M. JUANITA GUESS AWARD RUNNER-UP

### Jonette Cahoon Vaughan

Jonette Cahoon Vaughan is a runner-up for this year's M. Juanita Guess Award for her outstanding work as community liaison office coordinator serving the U.S. Consulate General Frankfurt community.

The Frankfurt consulate is one of the largest in the world, and 80 percent of the direct-hire employees have regional responsibilities that keep them on the road for weeks at a time. The spouses

left behind can feel unsupported. But Ms. Vaughan's outreach skills, compassion and uncanny ability to connect with people have made a big difference for family members.

The Frankfurt consulate general community experienced several traumatic events during the past year. In June, an 8-year-old girl died after falling from a window at the housing compound. In February, a colleague died unexpectedly. And in November 2018, ConGen Frankfurt's facility manager passed away in his sleep. In each case, Ms. Vaughan expertly shepherded the community through the difficult emotional aftermath of each tragic event.

Jonette Cahoon Vaughan has served as the CLO in Ouagadougou and Frankfurt. Before her Foreign Service life, she lived in New York City, Singapore and Washington, D.C. She loves to run, read, travel and connect with people.



Jonette Vaughan.

COURTESY OF JONETTE VAUGHAN

## MARK PALMER AWARD RUNNER-UP

### Robert Works

Robert Works, a USAID Foreign Service officer, is recognized for his outstanding work promoting democracy in Nicaragua.

In 2018 and 2019, Nicaragua suffered its most violent political crisis since the 1980s. The government suddenly cracked down on peaceful protests, killing more than 325 Nicaraguans, detaining more than 700, injuring thousands and forcing some

50,000 people to flee the country. The political crisis resulted in an ordered departure for most American staff, including Mr. Works' supervisor.

Thrust into a high-profile leadership position, Mr. Works led two of the U.S. government's frontline responses to the crisis. He assumed the management of USAID's in-country democracy and emergency response programming, oversaw the office's six staff members and managed the State Department's "Lifeline" rapid response program, typically run by the embassy's political section.

As a junior officer saddled with complex responsibilities that are highly scrutinized, Mr. Works showed creative leadership that quickly became a crucial lifeline to civil society organizations, journalists, human rights defenders and emerging rural and



Robert Works.

COURTESY OF ROBERT WORKS

student leaders—many of whom were attacked, jailed or killed by their own government. As a result of Mr. Works' leadership, the U.S. government built trust with Nicaragua's emerging leaders, strengthened their newly formed democratic movements and empowered journalists to hold the government accountable.

Robert Works is a democracy, human rights and governance officer with USAID, currently serving as the elections team lead in Kabul, Afghanistan. Before Kabul, he served on a short-term assignment with USAID/Ukraine, where he worked on elections programming during the country's historic presidential elections.

Mr. Works was nominated for the Mark Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy for his work as a first-tour officer in Nicaragua, where he played a critical role in helping the U.S. government build trust with Nicaragua's emerging youth leaders. From 2016 to 2017, Mr. Works was a Penn Kemble Fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy. In 2012, Robert earned a master's degree in philosophy at the University of Cambridge and is a 2010 graduate of the University of Louisville, where he was part of the McConnell Scholars Program. ■



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# Lessons on DISSENT from a NAVY SHIP

A sailor shares valuable lessons on dissent that apply in any enterprise.

BY JIMMY DRENNAN

**D**uring the course of a damage control drill on my first ship, USS *Anzio* (CG 68), I was barking orders to sailors from my repair locker. My job was to ensure my team quickly suited up in firefighting equipment and established fire control boundaries and then report back to the



*Lieutenant Commander Jimmy Drennan is a naval officer currently assigned to United States Central Command as a maritime operations planner. He has 15 years of experience in the surface navy, with assignments as repair division officer, navigator and operations officer, as well as three deployments to the Middle East on guided missile cruisers. Out of uniform, he is president of the Center for International Maritime Security. He is the recipient of the Surface Navy Association's Arleigh Burke Award for Operational Excellence and the Navy and Marine Corps Association Leadership Award. These views are presented in a personal capacity and do not necessarily reflect the views of any U.S. government department or agency.*

damage control assistant (DCA) in the Central Control Station. The DCA gave periodic status updates, and in one such update he noted my repair locker was the only one that hadn't reported completion.

When my team heard this, they scrambled even faster to put on their gear and establish boundaries. Noticing that some sailors began skipping key steps in their haste, I yelled out: "I don't care what the DCA says! I want you to do this right!"

Just then, the chief engineer, who had been observing the drill in the background, grabbed me by the arm, looked me straight in the eye and said: "Don't ever do that again."

I got the message immediately. But I didn't realize until many years later that the lessons I learned that day involved how to properly and effectively dissent in the military. Over time, the more I grasped the best techniques, motivations and conditions for disagreeing with my superiors, the more I realized that these lessons apply in any enterprise.

If you choose the right venue, build a reputation of

U.S. NAVY/DALE MILLER





Except in rare circumstances, it is almost never the right call to publicly disagree with your superiors, especially if your intent is to convince them to change direction.

The author learned basic lessons about dissent aboard the guided missile cruiser USS Anzio (CG 68), shown here pulling alongside the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) for a refueling at sea somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean.

competence and integrity, and honestly evaluate your reasons for dissent, you will maximize the chances of being heard.

### How Not to Dissent

When I told the sailors in my repair locker to ignore the DCA, I violated several principles of effective dissent. *First, and maybe most importantly, I dissented to the wrong audience.* If I believed proper procedure was more important than speed, I should have had that conversation with the DCA in private following the drill. The whole point of dissenting is to help guide your organization in the direction you believe best. But as it was, I didn't give the DCA the chance to hear my thoughts before I shouted my disagreement to the sailors.

*This was my second mistake: I dissented in public.* Except in

rare circumstances, it is almost never the right call to publicly disagree with your superiors, especially if your intent is to convince them to change direction. Public dissent tends to back decision-makers into a corner and, more often than not, forces them to dig in their heels.

Dissenting in a public setting, whether it is a Navy repair locker, a meeting or a widely distributed email, could jeopardize external stakeholders' trust and confidence in your organization. In my case, I put sailors in the uncomfortable position of having to choose whether to follow my orders (to proceed deliberately) or the DCA's (to proceed rapidly). This undermined our chain of command. I could have inadvertently introduced delays and confusion in future scenarios as my sailors waited to hear whether I agreed with the DCA's orders

## If it is properly done in a measured way with a valid message, dissent can spur professional, unemotional conversations.

or not. I should have waited for my opportunity in the appropriate venue.

I later discovered I would have countless private discussions with the DCA and attend several small group meetings where my honest opinion would be received with an open mind. If I ever doubted whether I had permission to speak candidly in those private sessions, I recalled some advice from my first chief: “You’re in the room, aren’t you?”

Back in the repair locker, most of my sailors chose to follow the DCA’s guidance instead of mine because he had already demonstrated competence in firefighting and earned their trust. I had been onboard for only a matter of weeks, and my sailors barely knew me. *My third mistake was not building trust with my audience before I offered my dissent.* Although I believed strongly that it was most important for my sailors to practice their emergency actions deliberately before picking up the pace (and I still do), my sailors had no real incentive to listen to me over the DCA. I would have made more progress if I had first taken the time to demonstrate my competence as a naval officer and shipmate to them.

### Building Credibility

If your audience respects your credibility, they will be more apt to heed your dissenting view. Likewise, it is imperative that your audience trusts you to act ethically. There is no surer way to destroy trust than to give dissenting advice based on some ulterior motive, such as politics or personal gain.

One thing I did right that day in the repair locker was to shut my mouth once the chief engineer counseled me. That was another lesson I didn’t fully understand until many years later: *don’t carry on blindly.* I voiced my dissent, my superior heard me, and he told me to fall in line. And I did.

Throughout my career, I often found that once is enough. Dissent does not have to be contentious or dramatic as it is often depicted in movies. Rather, if it is properly done in a measured way with a valid message, dissent can spur professional, unemotional conversations. If your audience understands your dissent but still decides to go its own way, you can rest assured that you did your job and gave your best advice.

Over the years I’ve also learned there are often factors I wasn’t considering or even aware of. Every so often you may find yourself in a situation where your convictions compel you to persist in your dissent, despite your audience’s initial dismissal. As always, your convictions and principles should guide you, but do acknowledge the potential consequences of your persistence, and recognize the possibility that you may not be seeing the full picture.

### Being Heard

Many years after that first damage control drill, I found myself in an entirely different situation where the lessons I’d learned on dissent proved invaluable. I was in a four-star general’s office with a small group of officers to discuss an investigation. An incident had occurred in conjunction with an ongoing operation and we were being asked to relay the details so the general could answer questions from his superiors. I was the most junior person in the room.

Working in a four-star headquarters as a staff officer, I rarely had the opportunity to interact with the general. But I had briefed him several times in small and large venues, and I had built a reputation as a knowledgeable and trustworthy officer regarding the subject matter at hand.

I listened quietly as the tone of the conversation clearly indicated the general intended to continue the operation, with no one offering a serious alternative. As the meeting was coming to a close, I spoke up and recommended we consider terminating the operation. I am sure I surprised a few senior officers in the room, but I made sure to be respectful, direct and concise. The general heard me out, and the meeting soon adjourned.

I cannot say the general took my advice, but I know he considered it; and several of the other officers in the room later told me they agreed with what I said. Instead of damaging my career, my dissent further cemented my reputation as a subject matter expert and even opened career opportunities for me. Because I followed the lessons I had learned on dissent over the years, starting with that day in the repair locker, I was able to deliver a much-needed dissenting opinion that would be honestly considered, without fear of consequence. ■

# Americans' Welfare

## IT'S ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

**A consular officer remembers the personalities he encountered on the job.**

BY CHARLES "TOM" OWENS

In my days as a Foreign Service officer, consular work was considered of less value and consequence than other embassy work. My time as protection and welfare officer (PWO) in Buenos Aires, however, showed me how wrong that assumption could be. It brought me into contact with interesting people, not to mention vexation, humor and humanity in unpredictable, even unfathomable, ways.

These people added immeasurably to my maturation—both professional and personal. Among the many memorable individuals who crossed my path in Argentina were two in particular—I'll call them "Morris Cohen" and "Conrad von Blanton." Their stories I share here.

I suspect that fewer opportunities exist today to do this kind of work with the same discretion and latitude I had back then, but am sure that today's PWOs are still finding ways to get things done for Americans abroad in need of help.



Charles "Tom" Owens joined the Foreign Service in July 1963, took Spanish language training at FSI, and then worked in the Security and Consular Affairs Bureau and as factotum for the Senior Seminar in Foreign Policy. He was assigned to Embassy Buenos Aires as protection and welfare officer (1966-1968), and then as an intelligence analyst in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (through 1970). Following an out-of-agency assignment to the National Science Foundation, Mr. Owens resigned from the Foreign Service in 1971 to work at NSF. He was an active participant in U.S.-Soviet Union nonproliferation programs from their beginnings, on detail to State and with the nonprofit Civilian Research and Development Foundation where he served in many roles, including as president and CEO. Later he worked at the Washington Advisory Group and its successors on issues of international cooperation in scientific R&D and education, primarily on the establishment of the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology as a co-ed, international institution in Saudi Arabia (2007-2013) and with King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (2015-2017). Mr. Owens resides in Arlington, Virginia, with his wife, Susan.

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**Cohen spent the weekend days in my apartment, seated by the window. Having misplaced his dentures, he subsisted on soup, toast and tea.**

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## Morris Cohen

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One fall Friday afternoon, I was called to Ezeiza International Airport by Argentine immigration officials hesitant to admit an elderly, perhaps disoriented, passenger from the New York flight. On arrival I was directed to the coffee shop, where two uniformed officers sat with a small man wearing a fedora. An inspector handed me the U.S. passport of Morris Cohen—age 77, born in Greece—and said that Cohen was speaking “a very strange sort of Spanish.”

Introducing myself, I asked Cohen what brought him to Argentina. He had come to visit his brother. The only contact information he had was an address on an envelope. I asked whether the brother knew he was arriving today. He didn’t think so; it had been 25 years since they last met. The brother had immigrated to Argentina about the same time Cohen had immigrated to the United States. I asked him where he would spend the night, and he said with his brother. He then asked where we were, that he wanted to see his brother. I told the inspector that I would look after Mr. Cohen and take him to his brother’s house.

Night was falling, and the lights of Buenos Aires came into view across a long stretch of open fields. Cohen pointed and asked whether that was Manhattan.

“Buenos Aires,” I replied, “a city almost as big as New York.” He fell silent for more than 30 minutes.

Arriving at the address Cohen had, we found a small restaurant and bar. The barkeep said he did not know any Cohens. Neither did the occupant of the apartment over the bar. It was almost 8 p.m. People were beginning to fill the downtown area in search of weekend entertainment and dining. My

weekend, on the other hand, was beginning with Morris Cohen, unsure of where he was or where he might find his brother.

I brought him to a hotel near my apartment. Giving the desk clerk my card, I asked to be told if Cohen decided to leave the hotel. Then to my handing him a few Argentine pesos, Cohen reacted with disdain at the “funny money.” I escorted him to his room with the bellhop, wished him a good night’s sleep, and then headed for home, dinner and bed.

Cohen spent the weekend days in my apartment, seated by the window. Having misplaced his dentures, he subsisted on soup, toast and tea. I called the local Jewish benevolent organizations and asked for help to get the word out to their community about Morris Cohen and to locate possible relatives. It was during these conversations that I learned the likely source of Cohen’s strange variety of Spanish: his family had almost certainly been Sephardic Jews, expelled from Spain during the Inquisition. He was speaking 15th-century Spanish.

Over the next three weekdays, Cohen sat in my office as I worked on his case and my other duties. The State Department replied to my report on Cohen’s situation—the Social

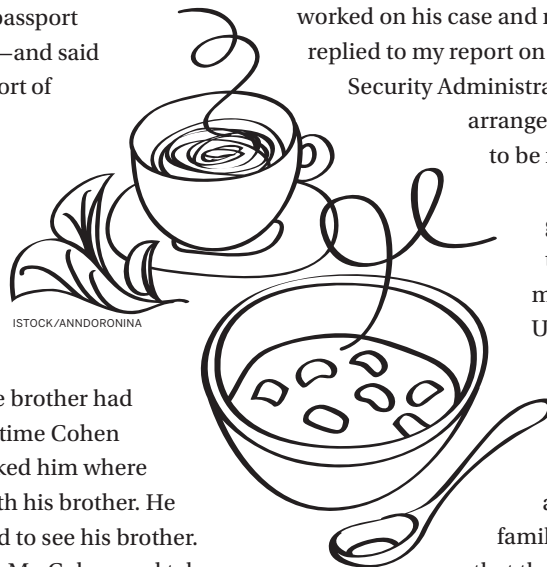
Security Administration office in New York City could arrange to meet him upon arrival if he agreed to be repatriated to the United States.

Repatriation meant that the U.S. government would buy the return ticket, and that his passport would be marked as good only for return to the United States, until such time as the

government was reimbursed for the ticket. I learned on Tuesday that the Jewish benevolent organizations were unable to find

a trace of Cohen’s brother or other family members in Argentina. Cohen said that then he would go home.

As I got to work on repatriation, the ticket home presented a bit of a quandary: he had sent \$50,000 to himself, c/o the Chase Bank in Buenos Aires. Someone with that kind of money should not be receiving government assistance for airfare. So I decided to send the money back to New York. (It had not “entered” Argentina yet, absent opening an account.) That way Cohen would have no resources in Argentina, and I could purchase the ticket with government funds in (relatively) good conscience. We processed the loan for his ticket on the Thursday afternoon flight.



ISTOCK/ANNDORONINA



In all the time that he spent in the chair in my office, Cohen had rarely spoken, except to ask after his brother or for help getting to the bathroom. Just before it was time for the airport, he asked me why I was here, in the embassy. I told him that the U.S. government had sent me to do the government's work here; to underscore the point, I unfurled the large American flag that stood on a pole behind my desk.

He stared at me and, after a long pause, said, "God put you here to take care of me." I replied that maybe he was right, but it was time for us to go.

I was allowed to board the plane with Morris Cohen, to fasten his seat belt and to wish him good luck. I reminded him to visit the Dime Bank with his paperwork from Chase and that he would be met by some nice people from Social Security. When the plane was wheels up, I left the airport. Cohen arrived and was met by SSA as planned. I never heard anything more about him.

After almost a whole week never far from him, I reflected that I had probably done a few things not in the protection and welfare officer's manual of best practices. Throughout my time as a PWO, I cannot claim that all my decisions about what was sensible and practical and expedient worked out as well as those I made for Morris Cohen.

## Conrad von Blanton

The assistant manager of the toney Hotel Crillon in Buenos Aires called the embassy for help; several days earlier, he said, an American had checked in and had neither left his room nor allowed housekeeping staff to enter. Most alarming to the manager was that the American had a dog, who had not left the room either.

The desk clerk directed me to the room of Mr. Conrad von Blanton, who reluctantly let me in after I identified myself. The room was not nearly as bad as I had expected, though a certain tell-tale scent left no doubt that an animal was present. Said animal was "Bongo," an adorable if annoying little dachshund who peered at me, shivering, from the bathroom.

Von Blanton explained that his mother was angry. He could not venture out while she was in this mood. I asked whether she was also staying at the Crillon. No, he replied, she was deceased. She came to him in dreams (or hallucinations), the source of his fearfulness. Argentina, he went on, was to be a new start where his trust-fund money would go further and his life would be calmer.

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**It was not an auspicious beginning. Giving him my card, I urged him to register at the embassy and to let me know how he was getting along. Famous last words, these.**

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It was not an auspicious beginning. Giving him my card, I urged him to register at the embassy and to let me know how he was getting along. Famous last words, these.

He did visit me at the embassy, dressed nattily in white, sporting a cane and a white Panama hat and a cigarette in an ivory holder, much like a character out of a Graham Greene novel. He also began calling me—at almost any time of the day or night—for assistance with interactions with Argentines, where to get household things done, and about his mother. He came to my office to discuss his life in Argentina and problems with those who controlled his trust.

Months went by, calls to get him out of one scrape or another became more and more frequent, and he became increasingly agitated and fearful of almost nightly "visits" from his mother.

I told von Blanton that I could work on his return home if he wished. He would think about it. A big impediment was Bongo, who could not enter the United States without a long period of quarantine. A political officer and his wife (an unflappable and patient mother of four) agreed to take Bongo in; von Blanton agreed. I set the wheels in motion for his return to the United States with help from the Social Security Administration. He flew to Miami, where he was met successfully by SSA—after a daylong detour in Lima occasioned by a "visit" from his mother that resulted in his being taken off the original flight.

Soon after, I received a thank you note from von Blanton for helping him return home to a more stable life. But about two months later, I received a testy letter from the department—von Blanton's attorney had informed State that I



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**Enclosed was another letter addressed to me from von Blanton. In it, he expressed his gratitude for everything I had done for him in Buenos Aires and for my being someone he could always depend on.**

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had stolen Bongo from him as he was leaving Argentina. After reporting on the circumstances surrounding the allegation, I was to return the dog to von Blanton immediately. I went hat in hand to Bongo's hosts, who tearfully agreed to return him. After a series of required inoculations (at my own expense), and with

proper Argentine and U.S. paperwork, Bongo was off to quarantine and, eventually, to von Blanton's waiting arms. End of story ... almost.

Sometime in the early 1970s, I received a letter from the American consul general in Milan, in which he regretted to inform me "of the death of your friend, Mr. Conrad von Blanton, after a fall from his hotel room window." Enclosed was another letter addressed to me from von Blanton. In it, he expressed his gratitude for everything I had done for him in Buenos Aires and for my being someone he could always depend on. He was sorry if he had caused me trouble and would always remember me fondly as his closest friend.

During the more than a year I knew Conrad von Blanton, there were always problems, drama and tension with whatever he brought to my attention. Yet however frustrating and difficult he might have been, he was a gentle soul tortured by things beyond his control, and it seemed that he deserved a better best friend. And a better death than whatever sent him from that hotel window. ■

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# 2020 TECH GUIDE to Foreign Service Life

Here's the skinny on some of the new but lesser-known communication technologies that can make living abroad easier.

BY DANIEL MORRIS

**A** few years ago I was lucky to have coffee at the Foreign Service Institute with a sharp-witted and kind retired FSO. As fellow students ate their lunches and shuffled through their vocabulary index cards, she recalled her time in Bamako in the early 1980s. Security for the USAID office, in an ordinary building downtown, consisted of one local guard. But making a simple international phone call was agony, she said.

There were four—she held up that many fingers—physical phone lines leading out of Mali, which meant that she typically had to give the destination phone number to an operator, who would call back at some unknown point (maybe three minutes, maybe three hours) when a line was free to connect the call.

Ironically, it seems that today, while embassies sometimes located on remote farmland have made interacting with the local population more difficult, staying in touch with loved ones in the United States and elsewhere has become remarkably painless and easy.

Everyone is familiar with the tools that have helped make that happen: Skype, WhatsApp, FaceTime and other free video calling services. Less well known, but perhaps as useful, are a set of additional tools that have come on the market in recent



*Daniel Morris is a Foreign Service officer with the U.S. Agency for International Development, currently on extended leave. He was previously posted to Jerusalem, Cairo and Kabul. He has written about international affairs for The Globe and Mail, the Baltimore*

*Sun and other publications. These views are presented in a personal capacity and do not necessarily reflect the views of any U.S. government department or agency.*

years and may make various aspects of living abroad a bit easier. The following is a brief description of some of them.

## Mail-Forwarding Options

One of the inconveniences of Foreign Service life is changing your address every few years. We've all been there—contacting credit cards, banks and insurance companies, not to mention letting family and friends know. It's about as fun as opening a door in an up-armored SUV.

Enter the virtual mailbox. After you sign up for a plan and choose a mailbox number on the service's website, you will have to submit a signed notary to the U.S. Postal Service authorizing the company to handle your mail. The process took me just a few minutes at the American Citizen Services counter at the embassy's consular section.

Once you've notified everyone of your new address, when a piece of mail arrives you will receive a notification by email with an image of the front of the envelope. You then typically have three options: Scan, Forward or Trash. Selecting "Scan" will direct the service to scan the contents of the mail and send you a PDF. It usually takes a half day, or so, to receive. "Forward" will direct the service to physically send the mail to an address of your choosing (for the cost of postage and a handling fee).

I usually scan first and, if necessary, have it forwarded. Checks can be deposited directly to your bank for a small fee. You can keep mail forwarding costs down by waiting until you have a batch and then forwarding them all together. I recently forwarded five pieces of mail first class for \$3.55.

There are a number of plans to choose from. I use virtualpostmail.com, but whatever service you choose, do your due diligence by reading reviews. FlyerTalk.com forums are a good start and are popular with frequent travelers. Some folks are understandably skittish about using a third party for sensitive banking and tax information, though it's worth keeping in mind that any well-established service would understand the reputational and

legal risks involved in being less than diligent about maintaining your privacy. For especially sensitive pieces of mail, I forward it without having them open it first.

If you think you'll want to use your virtual mailing address for forwarding retail purchases (handy for certain items that don't play nice with the DPO and pouch), you may want to look into a service that offers an address in a state with no sales tax.

### Seamless Phone Service

Beyond Skype and WhatsApp, there's another telephone service that you may want to incorporate into your communication toolbox: Google Voice. The service provides you with a U.S. telephone number free of charge, though you should be familiar with how Google uses your data.

While you're overseas, it will redirect SMS messages you receive to your email address and the Google Voice homepage or smart-phone app. You can then respond via email, with the person on the other end having no idea that you're using email. The SMS service is invaluable to use with banks and other services that will send authentication confirmation codes by SMS only to U.S. numbers.

You can also receive voicemail messages with Google Voice. As with SMS, it will redirect audio messages to your email address with both the audio and a handy (though rarely perfect) transcription. You cannot forward calls from your Google Voice number to a non-U.S. mobile number, but you can have calls redirected to a U.S. number for use when you are stateside.

I started this process before I moved overseas by porting my "old" mobile phone number that all my friends and family had to Google Voice (for a one-time \$15 charge). When I'm back in the United States, I simply purchase and put a pre-paid SIM card in my phone and then forward my Google Voice number to it with a couple of clicks in my GV account. Contacts can still use my "old" phone number, blissfully unaware their call was forwarded to my temporary pre-paid SIM. Note that you will need to sign up for a GV number from a U.S. IP address.

If you are overseas and have trouble using one, a VPN can help (see below).

Competition is always a good thing, but unfortunately there are no direct free competitors to Google Voice. Magic Jack and an online Skype number are popular alternatives with roughly the same feature sets. They each cost \$35-\$55 per year, which may get you better privacy protection than Google Voice.

### VPNs and Their Alternatives

If you've ever tried to watch American Netflix, the BBC online or Amazon Prime content, then chances are you've run into

it—the dreaded "this content is not available from your region" message. You've heard colleagues say you need a VPN to pretend you're surfing from the United States, so that's what you sign up for, right? Not so fast. Turns out a cheaper and faster solution might suit you just fine.

The alternative is called a Proxy DNS. VPNs slow down your connection because they encrypt your data. But if you just want to watch geo-restricted content, there's no need for encryption. As an added bonus, the Smart DNS route will often save you a few dollars per month compared with a VPN.

But okay, you want the additional security and encryption of a VPN. Unfortunately—and this applies to Smart DNS, as well—the VPN world is about as regulated as air pollution in South Asia. There are no standards, guarantees or safeguards, which can make choosing one a daunting experience. Beware of VPN review sites that present themselves as unbiased. They can be slanted toward whatever VPN services advertise on their site, if they're not funded directly by them.

The Department of State's Directorate of Cyber and Technology Security has issued useful advice. The VPN provider should be headquartered in the United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand or the U.K.—the so-called Five Eyes—to minimize the security risk of a VPN service, intentionally or not, allowing unauthorized access to your browsing history.

Also, the VPN service should be fee-based. Since most people naturally gravitate toward one of the free services, especially for only occasional use, this is sometimes easily dismissed, but it shouldn't be. Internet user Andrew Lewis is credited with being the first to say, "If you are not paying for it, you're not the customer; you're the product being sold." Those words are no less true for VPNs (or Google Voice, for that matter). If you read the fine print, you'll usually find that free services are making their money by selling data about your habits to advertisers.

Once you've narrowed down your search to a few sites you trust, it can be hard to make an apples-to-apples comparison between them since each may work with some media destinations and not others. For instance, perhaps one allows access to U.S. Netflix but not the BBC, while for another it's vice versa. It may be unpleasant spending time researching your needs, but you'll be thankful later if you do.



Whether it's by phone, postal mail or online, it's now light-years easier to maintain your American connections than in the days of operator-assisted calls in Bamako. There's a wealth of other services out there, but hopefully this quick survey is a useful starting point. With a healthy dose of prudence, enjoy connecting! ■



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## AFSA Awards Honor Foreign Service Excellence and Constructive Dissent



AFSA award recipients (from left) Laurent Charbonnet, Jonette Vaughan, Michelle Ross, Nora Brito, F. Allen “Tex” Harris, Ambassador (ret.) Herman “Hank” Cohen, Keith Koehler (father of Katherine Elizabeth Koehler, who was unable to attend), Lawrence Fields, Timmy Davis, Moises Mendoza, Christopher Gooch and Anna Boulous at the awards ceremony on Oct. 16.

AFSA’s 51st annual awards ceremony took place Oct. 16 in the Department of State’s Dean Acheson Auditorium. More than 200 guests gathered to recognize the winners of this year’s awards for outstanding performance and constructive dissent in the Foreign Service, and to honor the recipient of the Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award.

AFSA presented 11 awards in all. Profiles of the winners begin on page 35. Ambassador Eric Rubin, president of AFSA, served as emcee of the ceremony before a distinguished

audience that featured four former winners of AFSA’s Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award, as well as many current senior officials from the State Department.

“AFSA takes great pride in being able to honor the dedication, patriotism and sheer excellence of the professional career Foreign Service,” Amb. Rubin said in his opening remarks.

He also acknowledged the passing of three former AFSA Lifetime Award recipients over the past year: President George H.W. Bush, Ambassador Lowell

Bruce Laingen and Senator Richard Lugar.

Award recipients gave brief remarks on accepting their awards. Many had family and friends in the audience. The ceremony was followed by a champagne reception in the Delegates’ Lounge. AFSA congratulates this year’s award recipients!

### Lifetime Contributions

Amb. Rubin presented this year’s Lifetime Contributions Award to **Ambassador (ret.) Herman “Hank” Cohen** for his 38-year Foreign Service career, his contributions to strengthening

the career Foreign Service, his work between 1969 and 1974 to help AFSA become a union and his consulting, lecturing and writing about African issues in retirement.

In accepting the award, Amb. Cohen talked about his long service in Africa, and the role that AFSA plays in promoting the U.S. Foreign Service.

“I would like to say a few words about the American Foreign Service Association,” he said. “AFSA has been in existence as a professional organization for about 100 years. AFSA has been the official collective bargaining



AFSA President Eric Rubin (left) presents Ambassador (ret.) Herman "Hank" Cohen with the Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy award at the Oct. 16 awards ceremony.

agent for the Foreign Service for about 50 years. Having been involved in AFSA's beginning as our collective bargaining agent, I sincerely believe that AFSA's labor union activity has enhanced AFSA's role as a defender of high professional standards for the Foreign Service, and continues to do so."

Amb. Cohen continued: "Professional issues in the Foreign Service and bread-and-butter issues are connected. That is why it is important for AFSA to do both.

"For that reason, it is also important for the Foreign Service to support AFSA at all levels, including retirement," he said. "AFSA spends a lot of time defending retiree interests."

See the *Journal's* interview with Hank Cohen on p. 24.

### Constructive Dissent

AFSA's constructive dissent awards are unique within the U.S. government. Each year for nearly a half-century, AFSA has given these awards to Foreign Service officers and specialists who have had the

courage to dissent within the system.

This year two Foreign Service officers were awarded the **William R. Rivkin Award** for a mid-level officer: **Anna Boulos**, for her efforts to reform and improve Visa Lookout Accountability



Constructive Dissent Award recipients (from left) Timmy Davis, Moises Mendoza and Anna Boulos.

## CALENDAR

December 2  
AFSA Scholarship  
Applications  
Available Online

December 3  
12-1:20 p.m.  
"Understanding the  
Hatch Act"

December 11  
4:30-6:30 p.m.  
AFSA Holiday Happy Hour

December 18  
12-2 p.m.  
AFSA Governing  
Board Meeting

December 25  
Christmas –  
AFSA Offices Closed

January 1  
New Year's Day –  
AFSA Offices Closed

January 8  
12-2 p.m.  
"The New TSP: What  
You Need to Know"

January 15  
12-2 p.m.  
AFSA Governing  
Board Meeting

January 20  
Martin Luther King Jr. Day –  
AFSA Offices Closed

January 29  
Webinar: "Reviewing Your  
Retirement Plan"

February 17  
Presidents' Day – AFSA  
Offices Closed

February 19  
12-2 p.m.  
AFSA Governing  
Board Meeting



Nora Brito (left) and Christopher Gooch, recipients of the Mark Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy, at the Oct. 16 awards ceremony.

procedures while serving in Tijuana; and **Timmy Davis**, for his courage and conviction in presenting the case for the continued operation of Consulate General Basrah, leading up to and following the suspension of operations.

“Dissent is integral to the ethos of our government, and it should be celebrated,” Ms. Boulos said on receiving her award.

The **W. Averell Harriman Award** for an entry-level officer went to **Moises Mendoza** for his extraordinary efforts to make Consulate General Matamoros safer by ensuring his colleagues had training in dealing with medical emergencies.

**Exemplary Performance**

AFSA also offers five awards in recognition of exemplary performance and

extraordinary contributions to effectiveness, professionalism and morale.

The **Mark Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy** is open to all Foreign Service members from any of the foreign affairs agencies, especially early- to mid-career level, who promoted American policies focused on advancing democracy, freedom and governance through bold, exemplary, imaginative and effective efforts during one or more assignments.

This year there were two winners: **Nora Brito**, for her outstanding efforts promoting democracy in Venezuela; and **Christopher Gooch**, a forceful advocate for expanding democracy, freedom and good governance during assignments in Iraq and Nepal.

“This award is not about individual achievement,”

Mr. Gooch said during his acceptance speech. “It is about recognizing the importance of advancing democracy, freedom and good governance, ideals that are important to the department, to our country’s long-term success and to the well-being of many people I worked with in Nepal and Iraq.”

USAID FSO **Robert Works** was runner-up.

The **Nelson B. Delavan Award** recognizes the work of a Foreign Service office management specialist who has made a significant contribution in office or post effectiveness and morale beyond the framework of his or her job responsibilities.

**Katherine Elizabeth Koehler** is this year’s recipient of the Delavan Award for her role in coordinating multifaceted efforts to support Ethiopia’s democratic reforms.



Michelle Ross (right), recipient of the M. Juanita Guess Award for Community Liaison Officers, and Jonette Vaughan, a runner-up for the award, at the Oct. 16 awards ceremony.



AFSA State Department VP Tom Yazdgerdi (left) presents Lawrence Fields with the AFSA Post Representative of the Year Award at the awards ceremony Oct. 16.



The **M. Juanita Guess Award** is conferred on a community liaison office coordinator (CLO) who has demonstrated outstanding leadership, dedication, initiative or imagination in assisting the families of Americans serving at an overseas post.

**Michelle Ross** received this year's Guess Award for her extraordinary efforts to assist embassy personnel and family members who were evacuated after the Venezuelan government broke diplomatic ties with the United States in January.

"Embassy Caracas has had a rough go of it over the last year, but I wouldn't change the fact that we were assigned there for the world," Ms. Ross said in her acceptance speech. "My team in the CLO office was extraordinary, and they are much more family than colleagues at this point. As the political heat was ramping up at post, I spent hours in planning and contingency meetings, while Erin and Gerard kept the office running without missing a beat."

**Jennifer Allen** and **Jonette Cahoon Vaughan** were runners-up.

The **Avis Bohlen Award** honors the accomplishments of a Foreign Service family member whose relations with the American and foreign communities at post have done the most to advance the interests of the United States.

**Laurent Charbonnet** is recognized this year with the Bohlen Award for his work creating and running



F. Allen "Tex" Harris (left), with AFSA President Eric Rubin at the Oct. 16 awards ceremony.



Mette Beecroft (left) presents Laurent Charbonnet with the Avis Bohlen Award for a Foreign Service family member at the awards ceremony Oct. 16.

the diplomacy through bicycles program at a refugee center in Frankfurt, Germany.

The **AFSA Post Representative of the Year Award** is presented to an exemplary AFSA post rep who has demonstrated sustained and successful engagement with AFSA membership at post

and post management to advance the strategic priorities of the association.

The winner this year is **Lawrence Fields**, recognized for reviving AFSA's presence at Consulate General Frankfurt.

The **AFSA Achievement and Contributions to the Association Award** recognizes an active-duty or

retired AFSA member from any of the foreign affairs agencies who has made a significant (nonmonetary) contribution to the association in its role either as a professional association or its role as a labor union.

**F. Allen "Tex" Harris**, widely known as "Mr. AFSA," received this year's award for the enormous contributions he has made over five decades of service to AFSA and advocacy for the U.S. Foreign Service.

In accepting his award, Mr. Harris talked about the battles he and his colleagues won to reform AFSA decades ago. Two stand out, he said.

First, ensuring that Foreign Service professionals would have "major input in the organization and conduct of our profession," and that "we had a strong institution that would protect the backs of Foreign Service members in the future.

"And second, making AFSA the elected union representing all U.S. Foreign Service employees from multiple agencies.

"Thank God, in the world we live in we have AFSA protecting our interests and professional standards," Mr. Harris concluded. ■



## Understanding Why People Leave the Foreign Service

AFSA is concerned about the loss of highly skilled and experienced diplomats during the last several years; the lack of Senate-confirmed career diplomats leading bureaus and in key overseas posts; and the highest percentage of political-appointee ambassadors (45 percent) in recent memory.

AFSA leadership has raised these grave concerns with both department management and bipartisan leaders on Capitol Hill—and will continue to do so.

On a more basic level, we want to get better data on why our people actually leave the Foreign Service. We all are aware of the high-profile departures of high-level officials who were either pushed out or resigned due to policy differences, but what are the reasons rank-and-file members leave?

If AFSA could find out what specifically motivates people to resign, we could advocate for and shape targeted personnel policy changes that can retain this talent. Right now, State has an exit interview process that is, to be frank, less than ideal.

Aside from helping us address concerns that affect all of us as Foreign Service members—career opportunities for spouses/partners, promotion numbers, workplace flexibility, etc.—

having more and better data would let us know how we are doing with regard to advancement of women and minorities, which is one of AFSA's top concerns.

The department is doing a better job of attracting these two groups at the entry level, certainly better than when I joined in 1991. I enjoyed meeting the newest A-100 class, the mighty 200th—which is “herstoric” in that for the first time ever women outnumbered men, 44 to 26.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the department has problems retaining this talent through the mid-level. AFSA does not know who exactly (by gender, race, ethnicity, age) is resigning from the Foreign Service and why. If we could gather this information, we might begin to see trends that may (or may not) indicate unconscious or unintended bias.

For that reason, AFSA has decided to establish a standing committee on diversity and inclusion that can focus attention in this area, review best practices and recent scholarship, and come up with workable proposals.

We also plan to raise this issue with the Director General and work with Human Resources to revamp the exit interview process to include more specific questions and personal data.

Those who resign are free

### AFSA has decided to establish a standing committee on diversity and inclusion.

to choose not to provide this personal information, or even to participate in the process, but we are hopeful that most will see the benefit for the Service in doing so.

We will keep you informed as this effort unfolds—and we welcome your input. We all want to make the department a better place to work and one that reflects the diversity of America.

We are also tracking the following issues:

**Clinton email investigation concludes.** During the investigation, AFSA assisted more than a dozen members who were contacted by Diplomatic Security about potential security violations resulting from the recent reclassification of emails sent several years ago from the private server of former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Those members received letters stating that while DS found the incident to be a valid security violation, they would not be held culpable. This vague language left many questions unanswered. AFSA requested, and was granted, confirmation from DS that there will be no adverse action of any

kind taken against these individuals.

The recent report to Congress closing the investigation found that while the use of the system for official business increased the risk of compromising classified information, there was no systemic or deliberate mishandling of classified information.

#### **Paid parental leave.**

AFSA is joining the Balancing Act affinity group and others in urging the department to continue to push Congress and the Office of Personnel Management to create a new form of paid parental leave that applies uniformly to birth, non-birth and adoptive parents.

We were disappointed to learn that, in late September, the Senate voted down (by one vote!) House-passed language to authorize paid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act as a part of the FY2020 National Defense Authorization Act.

We have no doubt that paid parental leave is a core issue for productivity, morale and the retention of a diverse workforce. ■



## Never Let a Transformation Go to Waste

AFSA USAID hosted an FSO stakeholder open house on Oct. 10. Thanks to those who attended and those who dialed in. For those who didn't make it (yes you!), please try to come next time, and please share ideas and concerns at *any* time.

The open house was well attended, and we had a great discussion on important issues. Topics included the promotion system, communications, engagement, transformation, the lack of resources for the Office of Human Capital and Talent Management to support staff, the assignments process and the incredible—and sometimes tragically comical—challenges FSOs face returning to Washington (more on this in another column). I intend to hold such open houses quarterly.

Because we are in the thick of the Transformation process, I want to highlight some ASFA concerns. And I'd like to ask *you* to take an active role in asking questions and, in the spirit of the agency's "Leadership Philosophy," fostering a culture of accountability.

I want to make clear that AFSA does not oppose Transformation writ large. Caterpillars transform into beautiful butterflies—but Dr. Jekyll transformed into Mr. Hyde. The agency, of course, has a management right to organize itself. Yet I think we can all agree that shouldn't be the

only reason to make change, and it certainly is not an argument for sustainable buy-in; "Because we're your parents!" never seems to resonate with our kids for long.

So what are some of our concerns?

**Workforce planning.** You hopefully saw my November column on the agency's lack of workforce planning; that concern still stands. Creating new structures, staffing patterns and positions must be based on evidence, data and long-term workforce planning. AFSA will continue to highlight this concern because it is integral to a strong, sustainable institution and to Transformation.

**Staff welfare.** For those of you in the field, I realize there's a risk of losing you with all this pretty Washington-centric Transformation talk. After all, missions aren't being reorg'ed (though some bureaus are adjusting their non-career field staff presence—hopefully to include more FSOs).

I believe one of the biggest missed opportunities in Transformation is the failure to openly address the findings of the 2015 Greenleaf report, "Stress and Resilience Issues Affecting USAID Personnel in High Operational Stress Environments" ([bit.ly/greenleaf-usaid](http://bit.ly/greenleaf-usaid)).

The report opens with an unambiguous statement: "The USAID workforce is currently exposed to severe and

unsustainable levels of stress that (a) are adversely impacting the health of the workforce, (b) very likely are reducing the mission effectiveness of the Agency, and (c) require a coordinated, holistic institutional response."

This is exactly the type of situation that Transformation should address. This report is not just about those in Critical Priority Countries. FSOs will not be surprised by this finding: "Given the consistency of response across Missions and DC, as well as across management levels and employment categories, it is concluded that USAID's stress levels are indicative of systemic, agency-wide challenges that require a coherent, systemic, agency-wide response." So far, Transformation is not responding.

**Bridging bureaucratic cultures.** As FSOs, we know and learn a lot about working in different cultures. It can be exhilarating, fun, challenging and, at times, frustrating. Within the agency, different bureaus and offices have different cultures, as is sometimes the case for different categories of staff hired under the hodgepodge of mechanisms.

Unfortunately, there are some persistent, pernicious bureaucratic culture clashes—these aren't secret; they've been long-standing; and the agency should use Transformation as an opportunity to both create staffing

structures that can help to resolve these clashes and to transparently and openly address them.

There may not be immediate resolutions, but the agency should put in place a plan as part of Transformation to acknowledge and address this.

**Strengthening USAID as an institution.** Transformation is happening bureau-by-bureau, not at an agency-level. Now some might say, "All politics is local" (or, at USAID, "All development is local"). And, of course, local buy-in is important. But USAID is a U.S. government institution and still the world's premier development agency.

Despite the creation of a very small "reorganization management unit" team to implement it, Transformation appears by-and-large to be happening bureau-by-bureau absent a corporate-level system for monitoring, accountability or integration.

My concern is that the whole will add up to less than the sum of the parts; it's not too late to undertake a whole-of-Transformation review.

There is always more to discuss, but I will end here by again asking *you* to raise issues, ask questions and hold yourselves and leaders accountable. We want the agency to improve. We want to strengthen USAID and amplify its impact. We have a great opportunity—let's not waste it. ■



# 10 Steps to Manage Your Retirement

The end of the year is a good time to take stock of where you are and to think about the coming year. Here are 10 steps that I encourage you to take this month to empower yourself to effectively manage your retirement.

**1. Read the official State Department Annual Annuitant Newsletter.** Each November, the Department of State's Office of Retirement posts an updated Annual Annuitant Newsletter on <https://RNet.state.gov> under the "What's New?" tab.

You must access that newsletter if you need a form to change your health insurance during Open Season or to file an earnings statement in January if you receive the Annuity Supplement.

But all retirees should at least skim through the newsletter to remind themselves of key policies governing their federal benefits.

**2. Consult the AFSA Directory of Retired Members.** AFSA will mail retiree members a copy of the 2020 edition of the AFSA retiree directory in January. It includes 20 pages of guidance on retiree issues, along with contact information for AFSA staff members and Department of State offices that serve FS annuitants from all agencies. Review that guidance to make sure you are aware of important rules and procedures.

**3. Brief your survivors.** Because our family members

are often unfamiliar with offices and functions in the foreign affairs agencies, AFSA has created a list of steps to take in the event of the death of a Foreign Service retiree, spouse or ex-spouse.

That list is posted in the Retirement Services section of the AFSA website ([www.afsa.org/retirement-services](http://www.afsa.org/retirement-services)) under "What Surviving Spouses and Children Need to Know." The list is also included in the 2020 AFSA Directory of Retired Members.

Make a copy of the list, show it to your next-of-kin and file it with your will.

**4. Reassess your Thrift Savings Plan.** If your retirement income derives in part from the TSP, an IRA or other financial investments, you should review the risk-versus-reward balance in your investment allocations periodically to make sure that it is still appropriate.

Investing in funds with relatively high average rates of return will increase the chances to generate gains in the coming decades that outpace inflation, but they also put you at risk of short-term losses during stock market downturns.

You may wish to consult with a professional financial adviser to determine what is best for your individual needs.

**5. Check for age milestones.** Are you approaching age 62 and need to decide when to file for Social Security? Are you approaching 65

and need to decide whether to sign up for Medicare Part B? Are you approaching 70 ½ and need to figure out what to do about required minimum distributions?

The Retirement Services page of the AFSA website has information on these topics, including videos of presentations at AFSA by experts on Social Security, Medicare Part B and TSP withdrawals.

**6. Be aware of deadlines.** Post-retirement divorce, marriage or death of spouse must be reported promptly to the State Department. Failure to do so could delay, or in some cases permanently prevent, the benefits adjustment.

Likewise, beneficiary designations for retirement benefits, life insurance and TSP must be updated after marriage, divorce or other relationship change. Failure to do so will preclude the current next-of-kin from receiving those benefits.

For more information, see the AFSA retiree directory or State's Annual Annuitant Newsletter.

**7. Access your annuity records.** Visit the Annuitant Express website to view your monthly annuity statement or annual Form 1099-R, or if you need to change your tax withholding, electronic deposit institution or mailing address.

Logon instructions are in the AFSA retiree directory and State's annuitant newsletter.

**8. Review your FEHB Plan.** This year's Open Season

for Federal Employee Health Benefit Plans ends Dec. 9. Review your FEHB Plan to determine whether it remains the best choice for you.

AFSA can help as you consider your options by affording you access to The Checkbook, a great tool for comparing FEHB plans. Members received an email providing online access in mid-November.

**9. Get questions answered.** Official answers to nearly 300 Frequently Asked Questions can be found at <https://RNet.state.gov> or by emailing State's Human Resources Service Center at [HRSC@state.gov](mailto:HRSC@state.gov).

If those sources cannot resolve your questions or concerns, please contact AFSA's Retirement Benefits Counselor Dolores Brown at [brown@afsa.org](mailto:brown@afsa.org) or (202) 944-5510.

**10. Keep supporting AFSA.** Help AFSA defend both the active-duty Foreign Service and the earned retirement benefits of Foreign Service annuitants by maintaining your AFSA membership.

If your membership depends on you writing a check each year, please consider switching from annual billing to paying dues via annuity deduction. Switching will save AFSA money and ensure that your membership does not inadvertently lapse due to lost or unnoticed mail. ■



# Prosperity, Security and Global Power Competition

As I have shared in my column over the past year and a half, the role of the Foreign Service in keeping Americans and U.S. businesses prosperous has been the messaging theme we have used on Capitol Hill to promote bipartisan support for a forward-deployed Foreign Service overseas. The economic diplomacy works theme was also featured in the January/February 2019 edition of *The Foreign Service Journal*.

AFSA's initiative spurred the introduction of bills focused on strengthening economic diplomacy, such as the Championing American Business Through Diplomacy Act of 2019, and resulted in strong appropriations report language encouraging the State Department to consider moving mid-level Foreign Service officer positions to overseas posts.

As you may recall, many posts were asked to space (give up) economic officer positions in support of the surge into Iraq and Afghanistan, and these positions were never restored to their losing posts.

From Fiscal Year 2018 to FY2019, AFSA's efforts helped yield an \$84 million increase in the appropriation covering the cost of moving FSOs to posts overseas. We expect to see that appropriation increase again in FY2020.

With full financial support and clear intent from Congress in FY2019 and likely again in FY2020, AFSA is determined to work with the State Department to finally get these positions back in the field.

As AFSA solidifies the gains it has made on the economic diplomacy works initiative during the continuing FY2020 funding debates this fall, we are turning our focus to the complementary theme of Foreign Service contributions to national security. Diplomacy is our first line of defense, reducing the need for expensive military intervention.

The national security theme has the potential to develop the same success on Capitol Hill that AFSA found with the economic diplomacy works initiative. It bridges interest across several congressional committees with jurisdiction (Homeland Security, Armed Services, Foreign Affairs/Relations); and it has the ability to appeal to every district or state in the country on a bipartisan basis.

All U.S. foreign affairs agencies can point to a direct impact on different facets of national security. For example, the Foreign Agricultural Service can point to its role in keeping South and Central American cattle herds—critical both to the U.S. food supply and the financial security of several

## AFSA's initiative spurred the introduction of bills focused on strengthening economic diplomacy.

American states—pest-free.

As the Senate stated in its FY2020 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations report: "The United States is not the world's policeman, but we are the glue that holds the world together."

The need for U.S. global leadership is the unifying, broad idea behind AFSA's economic and national security themes. Congress has made clear it is motivated to prescribe and fund methods to face competition to U.S. global leadership.

AFSA sought to help Congress answer its resonat-

ing question: How will the United States compete in this era of great power competition? AFSA answered: by deploying the Foreign Service around the world where it can do the best work for the American people—allowing American business to flourish and keeping Americans safe at home.

Together, Foreign Service contributions to American prosperity and national security under the umbrella of maintaining U.S. global leadership provide the bipartisan solution the Hill craves in a time of global power struggle. ■



## AFSA Governing Board Meeting, October 16, 2019

### AFSA Legal Defense Fund Committee:

AFSA Secretary Ken Kero-Mentz moved that the board approve the creation of the AFSA Legal Defense Fund Committee, consisting of five members. The motion was approved.

**Increased Member Dues:** AFSA Treasurer Virginia Bennett moved to increase AFSA dues, as is done on an annual basis. The motion was approved.

**New FCS Representative:** AFSA Foreign Commercial Services Vice President Jay Carreiro nominated Michael Calvert to serve as an FCS representative. The motion was passed. ■

## The Right Fit: Hiring the Right Person for the Right Job



Tijuana Consul General Sue Saarnio (left), Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs Office Director Suzanne Lawrence and Ambassador (ret.) Rob Jackson speak Sept. 25 at an AFSA panel on best practices in hiring.

Helping hiring managers find the right person for the right job was the theme of a Sept. 25 panel at AFSA headquarters. The panel featured Ambassador (ret.) Rob Jackson, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs Office Director Suzanne Lawrence and Tijuana Consul General Sue Saarnio.

The panelists shared lessons learned from their experiences as hiring managers and answered questions from attendees about how they can improve their hiring management skills. The panel was timed to coincide with the bidding cycle.

In choosing candidates, Amb. Jackson said he focuses on the importance of how interviewees conduct themselves in job interviews. He stressed that it is crucial for bidders to be confident and demonstrate leadership

during the interview, but it is just as important for interviewees to be good listeners and not dominate the conversation.

Ms. Lawrence offered useful advice on how to differentiate bidders at the FS-3 level, since many of the hiring managers attending the panel were hiring mid-level officers and specialists. She underlined the importance of listening to how interviewees talk about their current and previous positions.

Even candidates with limited experience in the Foreign Service, she said, can glean important insights from their experience. The ability to articulate those insights is an important marker of performance potential.

Ms. Saarnio emphasized the need for bidders to apply for a position for the right reasons, not out of personal

preference or with hopes to get promoted but with a genuine aptitude for the type of work the position entails.

When asked how she chooses among candidates, she noted that the best candidate is “someone I want to be in the trenches with me when the shooting starts.” In other words, someone who is resilient and who will be calm under pressure.

All three panelists agreed that family circumstances could be considered in choosing a job candidate, but two panelists advised candidates to wait to see how the interview is going before raising family concerns.

For all three, the first priority in choosing among bidders is whether a candidate meets the position’s qualifications.

All panelists agreed that corridor reputations are more important than 360-degree reviews, which they do not find as helpful as personal endorsements. Far from being about “who you know,” corridor reputations are actually built on “what you have done.”

Sue Saarnio said that personal notes from former bosses make a good impres-

sion—far more than 360s—particularly for more senior jobs. Amb. Jackson agreed that a bidder’s reputation with his or her most recent employer is an important asset when he evaluates candidates.

All three panelists affirmed the value diversity brings into the workplace, including new views and perspectives on challenging issues.

The panelists were asked whether they would have done anything differently. Ms. Lawrence noted that she had the best outcomes when she trusted her instincts about someone—instincts born of years of experience—and that she should have always trusted them.

Amb. Jackson said he would have relied less on 360s and urged hiring managers to use them only in conjunction with other forms of feedback.

Ms. Saarnio recommended that hiring managers pay less attention to pedigree and focus more on the quality and dedication bidders have put into their work as the best way to find “the right fit.”

AFSA members can view a recording of this event at [www.afsa.org/video](http://www.afsa.org/video). ■

## AFSA Welcomes Incoming Classes

On Oct. 2, AFSA welcomed 22 members of the 15th USAID FSO Career Candidate Corps (C3) class to its headquarters in Washington, D.C., for a reception and overview of AFSA's role in supporting Foreign Service officers. The reception was hosted by AFSA President Eric Rubin, and 19 class members joined AFSA.

The next day, on Oct. 3, AFSA again opened its doors for a luncheon to welcome 81 members of the 154th Specialist Class.

The class features 47 Diplomatic Security agents, 11 information management specialists, eight facility managers, four office management specialists, three medical providers, two human resources officers and regional public engagement specialists, and a financial management officer, a regional English language officer, a regional psychiatrist and a security engineering officer.

Eighty percent of the specialist class chose to join AFSA.

On Oct. 9, AFSA welcomed 70 members of the 200th A-100 class for lunch. It is the first A-100 class to feature more women (44) than men (26). The class consists of 15 consular, 12 economic, 10 management, 18 political and 15 public

diplomacy officers. Roughly three-quarters of the group has prior State Department experience. Class members are former civil servants, eligible family members and interns, among others. More than 80 percent of class members have post-graduate degrees. Two-thirds of the class have less than 10 years of professional experience.

Individual members of this class have some unusual distinctions. Among them: having unknowingly been featured in a Korean music video; having gone to Chernobyl for their birthday; having trekked to Everest Base Camp; having done a cartwheel at the Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet; having won a belt buckle for showing a horse at the country fair; and having been one of the first foreigners to learn traditional Korean archery.

Ambassador Rubin hosted the luncheon, and seven other retired ambassadors served as table hosts. Nearly 90 percent of the class chose to join AFSA.

Welcome to the U.S. Foreign Service! ■



Members of the 200th A-100 class are sworn in.



AFSA President Eric Rubin welcomes members of the 15th USAID Career Candidate Corps (C3) class.



Members of the 154th Specialist class enjoy lunch at AFSA headquarters.

## AFSA Dues Change for 2020

AFSA has increased dues for 2020 by 1.7 percent for all individual membership categories. In concrete terms, this amounts to an increase of between six and 28 cents per pay period, depending on an individual's membership category.

In accordance with Article IV of the AFSA Bylaws, the

Governing Board can choose to increase dues by no more than the cumulative increase in the national Consumer Price Index, published by the Department of Labor, since the effective date of the previous dues increase. AFSA last increased its membership dues rate in January 2019.

Active-duty and retired members paying dues via payroll and annuity deduction will see a small increase in the amount automatically

deducted from their paychecks and annuities. Those paying annually will be billed the new rate on their regularly scheduled renewal date. ■

### Active Duty

Foreign Service Grade	2019 Annual	2019 Bi-Weekly	2020 Annual	2020 Bi-Weekly
SFS	\$421.91	\$16.23	\$429.09	\$16.50
FS 1, 2, 3	\$326.20	\$12.55	\$331.74	\$12.76
FS 4, 5, 6	\$186.78	\$7.18	\$189.95	\$7.31
FS 7, 8, 9	\$98.75	\$3.80	\$100.43	\$3.86

### Retiree

Annuity Level	2019 Annual	2019 Monthly	2020 Annual	2020 Monthly
Annuity under \$25K	\$72.45	\$6.04	\$73.69	\$6.14
Annuity of \$25K-50K	\$113.86	\$9.49	\$115.79	\$9.65
Annuity of \$50K-75K	\$152.07	\$12.67	\$154.65	\$12.89
Annuity over \$75K	\$190.39	\$15.87	\$193.62	\$16.14
Retiree Spouse	\$56.93	\$4.74	\$57.90	\$4.82

### Associate

Category	2019 Annual	2020 Annual
Associate Membership	\$116.99	\$118.98

## Governing Board Attends Visioning Retreat



(Left) The AFSA Governing Board participated in a daylong visioning retreat Oct. 1 at the American Horticultural Society in Alexandria, Va. From left are Jay Carreiro, Lillian Wahl-Tuco, Holly Kirking Loomis, Kristin Roberts, Mary Daly, Tamir Waser, Tom Yazdgerdi, Joshua Archibald, Eric Rubin, Lorraine Sherman, Matthew Dolbow, John Naland, Jason Singer, Michael Riedel and Ken Kero-Mentz.



(Above) AFSA USAID Vice President Jason Singer and USAID Representative Lorraine Sherman at the AFSA Governing Board retreat.



## Support for AFSA's Legal Defense Fund



In 2007, AFSA established the Richard C. Scissors Legal Defense Fund, named in honor of longtime AFSA staff member and retired FSO Richard C. Scissors. The purpose of the fund is to provide a resource to our members in cases where AFSA is unable to offer the time or legal expertise that is required. In such instances, the LDF can provide financial support that assists members in retaining outside attorneys with expertise in a particular area of law.

After AFSA solicited donations to the fund in connection with the current legal challenges facing members of the Foreign Service who have been called to testify in the ongoing congressional impeachment inquiry, many people responded. The LDF was covered in several national media reports. We are truly heartened by the positive

reaction and support from the Foreign Service community and beyond.

AFSA is still accepting donations for the fund from members and non-members alike. Those who wish to contribute may donate online via [www.afsa.org/donate](http://www.afsa.org/donate), or send a check, made out to "AFSA Legal Defense Fund," to AFSA, c/o LDF, 2101 E St NW, Washington DC 20037.

Additional information on the fund, including details on eligibility for assistance and how to apply for LDF support, can be found on the AFSA website at <http://bit.ly/afsa-ldf-sop>. Additional questions may be directed to AFSA General Counsel Sharon Papp at [PappS@state.gov](mailto:PappS@state.gov). ■

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# Demystifying & Discovering the U.S. Foreign Service

A unique “immersion” program offers students insight into a career in diplomacy.

BY MARIETTE A. BOUTROS

**O**n Nov. 14, 2018, I arrived in Washington, D.C., with 27 other students for the 2018 Cox-State Department Diplomacy Fellowship, a pilot program of the Una Chapman Cox Foundation in partnership with the Department of State and the CloseUp Foundation aimed at recruiting the best and brightest into the U.S. Foreign Service.

I was the last one to arrive and hadn't met anyone in the room, but I had lots of questions about the Foreign Service, a career I had been considering since the age of 12. Born in Lebanon, I immigrated to the United States with my family in



*Mariette A. Boutros currently works at the Department of Homeland Security in Los Angeles. She holds a B.A. from the University of California, San Diego, in political science and international economics.*



Participants in the 2018 Cox-State Department Diplomacy Fellowship pilot program pose for a group photo.

2003. During a visit to relatives in Lebanon in 2006, the July war with Israel erupted, and I was evacuated from the country by U.S. Marines aboard the USS *Nashville*. Overnight, my passion for international affairs and diplomacy was born.

Now here I was, more than a decade later, chosen to participate in this all-expenses-paid, four-day, one-of-a-kind experience that opened my eyes to the unique career and lifestyle of a diplomat.

We were, in effect, invited into a day in the life of a member of the U.S. Foreign Service.

## Personalized Exposure

We walked through the main State Department building, took part in a podcast during the American Diplomat session, negotiated real-world issues during a U.S. Diplomacy Center simulation, networked with FSOs during breakout

## We were, in effect, invited into a day in the life of a member of the U.S. Foreign Service.

sessions, ate in the State Department cafeteria and listened to ambassadors and other members of the Foreign Service talk about their experiences.

Standing in the grand State Department lobby, with flags of the nations of the world hanging in alphabetical order, was an unforgettable experience. We learned that countries with diplomatic relations with the United States have their flags hung, and those without diplomatic relations are excluded. I could have read a Facebook post to find this out, but it would not have been the same.

Finding out about a diplomatic career in the nation's capital, rather than researching it online, took me out of my comfort zone. In talking with Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Julie Chung in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, we learned that that's what a career with the State Department is all about. Members of the Foreign Service are pushed perpetually to adapt, be leaders, act with integrity at all times, communicate successfully and be resourceful. Some of her experiences cannot be gained anywhere else, or in any other career, PDAS Chung explained, reminiscing about the time she crossed the Korean Peninsula's 38th parallel.

### Getting In

Being in D.C. also meant we received uncensored advice about pay, family life, work-life balance, educational opportunities, life abroad, two-year tours and appli-

cation process quirks, in addition to receiving answers to any questions we had.

We also gained insights into the Foreign Service Officer Test. Our FS interlocutors helped demystify it by sharing their personal experiences with preparation and giving us advice on how to build our diplomatic skills. One thing that really stood out for me was the reassurance that some officers take the FSOT multiple times before passing. We were encouraged to stay motivated, even after one, two, three or 10 rejections!

FS members also reassured us that it is important to keep pursuing our passions and living our lives while preparing for a Foreign Service career on the side, because it can take a very long time from the application start date to an offer, deployment and, finally, service to our country.

### What Diplomacy Is

The great diversity of gender, home state, race, ethnicity, educational background and experience abroad among our group was another important feature of the program. This diversity was most beneficial during the U.S. Diplomacy Center simulation because everyone brought their different perspectives and

experiences to the negotiating table. For instance, those of us who have traveled abroad were more likely to negotiate about large-scale projects. Those who hadn't were more likely to stick to their country's interests and the concise problem presented. The combination made for a more holistic process that looked at all aspects of the issue at hand.

Reflecting on the session afterward, we concluded that "negotiation" was not just something between delegates from different countries. I had gone in with the idea that negotiations are what happens with the "other," rather than among my own team. This experience created a new awareness about what diplomacy is and how it works.

We kept referring back to the term "diplomacy" throughout the fellowship. Prior to this experience, for me "diplomacy" was what ambassadors do in other countries as they travel;



COURTESY OF MARIETTE BOUTROS

The author delivers remarks during a simulation exercise at the U.S. Diplomacy Center, November 2018.

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it was a vague term referring to the job of someone high up in the United Nations or State Department. Now I know that diplomats are not just ambassadors or higher-ups.

Diplomats blend in and are not always in suits. They represent the interests and policies of the United States, but their day-to-day activities vary greatly, and they can come from USAID, the Department of Agriculture or the Department of Commerce, not just the State Department.

Following the advice received during the fellowship, I continue to advance my career with other opportunities and am on the road to transferring to the Department of Justice, Office of Inspector General in Los Angeles. I will take

the Foreign Service online practice test soon, and plan to register on Jan. 2 to take the FSOT in February. I am subscribed to the State Department job opportunities email list, and continue to learn about the plethora of options available.

The Cox-State Department Fellowship Program provided insight about the State Department that I would not have gained elsewhere. It was an incomparable experience in learning about diversity, diplomacy and U.S. foreign policy, and brought together like-minded individuals to converse about international relations, language skills and life experiences. I am so grateful to the Una Chapman Cox Foundation for the opportunity. ■

### For More Information

The Una Chapman Cox Foundation is a nonprofit dedicated to a strong professional U.S. Foreign Service. Established in 1980 by Mrs. Cox, the foundation acts as an independent think-tank that supports the Department of State through a variety of programs designed to promote best practices for recruitment, excellence in professional development and a positive public image of the U.S. Foreign Service. To learn more about the Cox Foundation and its programs, visit [uccoxfoundation.org](http://uccoxfoundation.org). Also, look out for information on upcoming Cox-State Department Diplomacy Seminars at your college career center.



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# All About Internships

Pointers on how to get an internship and make it an effective career-builder.

BY JACOB BORST

## LANDING AN INTERNSHIP

**M**y internship journey began when I was a college sophomore. My goal was simple: get a summer internship so that I could get out of my parents' house, explore what it means to be me and figure out what I wanted to do with my life—no big deal.

### The Search for Internships

“So ... what will you do with a B.A. in international affairs and French?” I was often asked.

My automatic response was “government work,” because that was all I knew. When first looking for internships, I was stumbling around in the dark. Where did I want to intern? How would I find places to apply? How many should be on my list?

Here's what I figured out.

**Talk to professors you trust.** Since I had a general idea of what I wanted—something including both my majors—I went to my French professor. Once I explained my interests, she offered a

suggestion: an internship with a foreign embassy. I did a simple Google search—*et voilà!* The French embassy in D.C. offered internships for American college students. Talking to your professors can be a valuable first step as you begin your research. I was on my way.

**Know your strengths and weaknesses.** When considering where to apply, also think about your preferences. For instance, if you're a strong writer, your best bet might be an editorial internship. Or if, say, math isn't a strong suit, an internship involving statistical analysis probably isn't the route for you. Don't be put off by challenging tasks, though, and don't limit yourself by sticking only with what you know. Apply to internships that will expand your professional repertoire.

**Research the organization.** As tempting as it can be, don't just click on the organization's intern page and start applying. Take a look at the website. Read the mission statement. Understand

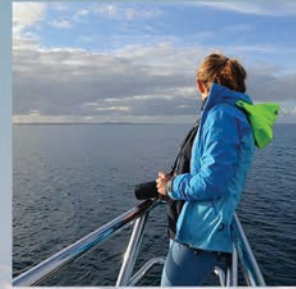


*Jacob Borst interned with the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training in summer 2017, with the Virtual Student Federal Service during the 2018-2019 school year, and with the American Foreign Service Association and The Foreign Service Journal in summer 2018. He also studied abroad in France in 2016. Now a current full-time student in the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Professional French Master's Program, he will complete his mandatory internship in a Francophone country or region in the next academic year. Mr. Borst is also a graduate assistant for international programs at the Wisconsin School of Business.*



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the intern’s responsibilities. Although specifics aren’t always listed, ideally you should know general expectations before you apply.

**Check out USAJobs.gov** (the federal government’s job website) to get a feel for the jobs out there. There’s a place in the federal government for nearly every college degree, not just for political science and economics. You’ll see postings ranging from Army cook to chief policy analyst. Narrow your search by selecting the “students and recent graduates” option. Open an account, and you can save any jobs you find promising.

I applied to my Virtual Student Federal Service internship through USAJobs.gov, and only a statement of interest, résumé and references were required. Since my application was a general one, addressed to all State VSFS programs, the acceptance email from the VSFS team included my placement at the U.S. embassy in Ottawa. I then received an email with project details from the embassy’s VSFS coordinator. There was no interview for VSFS—bonus!

**Utilize AFSA.** AFSA’s website is a great resource for internship seekers. Check out the student resources webpage ([afsa.org/students](http://afsa.org/students))—that’s how I landed my first internship at the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training.

### The Nuts and Bolts of Applying

I knew that applying to any internship would require at least a résumé and cover letter, but I had no idea where or how to begin. And since first impressions are literally everything, I wanted these documents done right—but how?

**Visit your school’s career services center.** Ask the adviser for templates and examples; mine created an individualized format, and now I just follow the pattern. Throughout undergrad, I sent

## There’s a place in the federal government for nearly every college degree, not just for political science and economics.

application materials to my adviser to check for wordiness, formatting and so on. Brevity is key.

What if you don’t have “relevant” experience? If you don’t have previous internships to mention, high school and early college jobs can showcase professional characteristics, such as punctuality, teamwork and leadership. Be specific: “While teaching swim lessons and lifeguarding, I demonstrated leadership, communication, trust and oversight by creating a safe environment.”

Avoid generalizations—“My time as a lifeguard gave me work experience” is not going to cut it. Use what you have: campus organization participation, research projects, part-time jobs and so on. Seemingly unrelated jobs can be relevant if you can draw a connection between them and the internship.

**Get references.** For my first internship applications, I listed my bosses from high school and college jobs and one of my international affairs professors—after having obtained their consent. I still use their names as references, with permission.

**Get help editing your application documents** from a professor, career adviser or writing center staff member. If you are writing in a foreign language (such as for a cover letter to an embassy), make sure to have a native speaker edit it.

**Write a cover letter** that shows you have taken the time to research the organization and its mission. Use it to highlight, in complete sentences, any prior experience. If asked for writing

samples, choose sections from your best research papers (the ones that received top grades), double-check the grammar and attach the file as a PDF. All attachments must be PDFs unless otherwise requested.

**Follow all delivery directions.** Some places have explicit expectations regarding the email subject line, the file names and order for attached documents, for example. Any deviation may land your unread email directly in the trash bin.

Make sure your message is addressed to the proper person, using that person’s full title. It should explain who you are (school and major), state your intention (“I would like to express interest in X internship program with X organization for X semester”), and ask for a response (“I look forward to hearing from you soon”).

Edit your email message, and have someone else do this, too. Avoid exclamation points. Don’t lose your shot at an internship because of hasty writing.

**Prepare to wait.** The immediate, short-term goal of applying is to get an interview, not to get hired. In my experience, it is normal not to get a response to an internship application; an automated response confirming receipt isn’t unusual, and a speedy, non-automated response within a week or so is positively cause for celebration.

When I emailed my statement of interest and the required documents (cover letter, résumé and a writing sample) to ADST, the executive director returned my email the next day and assured me that

# SCHOOLS AT A GLANCE

Go to our webpage at [www.afsa.org/education](http://www.afsa.org/education).

School	Page Number	Enrollment	Gender Distribution M/F	Percent Boarding	Percent Int'l.	Levels Offered	AP/IB*	TABS common application	Accept ADD/LD	Miles to Int'l. Airport	International Students Orientation	Holiday Break Coverage**	Annual Tuition, Room & Board (US \$)
<b>■ ELEMENTARY/JUNIOR/SENIOR HIGH</b>													
Stuart Hall School	IFC	326	168/158	24	23	PK-12	Y/N	Y	Y	143	Y	Y	8,100 (PK)-52,600
<b>■ JUNIOR HIGH/SENIOR HIGH</b>													
Grier School	77	300	All Girls	85	40	7-12	Y/N	Y	Y	120	Y	N	55,900-56,900
St. Margaret's School	IFC	101	All Girls	63	22	8-12, PG	Y/N	Y	Y	50	y	N	41,100-51,400
Wilbraham & Monson Academy	85	415	56/44	49	30	6-PG	Y/N	Y	Y	28	Y	Limited	62,300
<b>■ SENIOR HIGH</b>													
Christchurch School	IFC	210	60/40	70	25	9-12	Y/N	Y	Y	50	Y	Y	56,720
Kimball Union Academy	81	330	55/45	75	25	9-12, PG	Y/N	Y	Y	125	Y	Y	63,750
Milton Academy	87	730	50/50	50	12	9-12	Y/N	N	Limited	8	Y	N	61,920
<b>■ OVERSEAS</b>													
Berlin Brandenburg International School	85	740	50/50	20	65	K-12	N/Y	N	Y	15	Y	N	42,000
Frankfurt International School	78	1,800	50/50	NA	80	k-12	N/Y	N	Limited	16	Y	N	24,600
John F. Kennedy School Berlin	77	1,617	50/50	NA	47	K-12	Y/N	N	Limited	15	Y	N	None
Leysin American School in Switzerland	79	310	50/50	100	85	7-12, PG	Y/Y	Y	Limited	75	Y	N	88,000
St. Stephen's School	79	294	47/53	15	64	9-12, PG	Y/Y	N	Y	12	Y	N	44,380
Woodstock School	81	492	50/50	100	50	6-12	N/Y	N	Limited	150	Y	N	21,000-26,000
<b>■ SPECIAL NEEDS</b>													
The Gow School	78	155	126/29	95	33	6-12, PG	N/N	N	Y	25	N	Limited	68,000
<b>■ OTHER</b>													
Thunderbird School of Global Management	74	388	53/47	13	45	NA	NA	NA	NA	19	Y	Y	12,388-36,425
AAFSW	89	Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide; Publisher of Raising Kids in the Foreign Service. A volunteer organization that supports Foreign Service employees, spouses, partners and members of household. <a href="http://www.aafsw.org">www.aafsw.org</a> . See FSHub.org											
DACOR	89	DACOR Bacon House Foundation offers Dreyfus Scholarships to children and grandchildren of FSOs attending Yale or Hotchkiss. Contact <a href="mailto:dacor@dacorbacon.org">dacor@dacorbacon.org</a> or go to <a href="http://www.dacorbacon.org/scholarships_fellowships.php">www.dacorbacon.org/scholarships_fellowships.php</a> .											
FLO	89	Family Liaison Office: Information and resources for Foreign Service families. Contact <a href="mailto:FLOAskEducation@state.gov">FLOAskEducation@state.gov</a> .											
FSYF	89	Foreign Service Youth Foundation: A support network for U.S. Foreign Service youth worldwide. Go to <a href="http://www.fsyf.org">www.fsyf.org</a> .											
*Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate **Dec. 25-Jan. 1 NA, Not applicable													

## Seemingly unrelated jobs can be relevant if you can draw a connection between them and the internship.

I would hear something in the next few weeks. Five days later I had the internship. I never did get that French embassy internship, but I applied multiple times anyway. I applied for AFSA internships several times before I finally got one; sometimes it takes a few tries to get the desired result. Be stubborn, and don't lose hope. Internships are competitive, and some of it is sheer luck.

### Interview Preparation

These days, interviews can be conducted in person or by phone or video call. My internship interviews have all been by phone.

**Research the organization** (e.g., its mission statement, leadership, hierarchy, projects); have this information with you at the time of the interview. Familiarize yourself with the organization's website; have it open during the interview. Know your interviewer's title, name and position.

You did the initial research when making your list of possible internships; now it's time to delve deeper into the organization. Maybe a notable project is going on, and you'd like to get in on it. Be sure to mention your eagerness "to contribute to X project so that X result can be achieved." Finding a balance between complimenting the organization and highlighting your achievements and qualifications is tricky—it takes practice.

**Know why you want that particular internship.** What do you want out of it? What skills would you like to develop? Have a ready-made statement like what

is in your cover letter. Here's an example: "I'd like to gain a better understanding of how the Foreign Service works, and interning with X organization/office/etc. would help me do this." Talk about yourself, but also talk about the organization and what you can do for it.

**Compile a list of possible questions,** as well as a list of what you'd like to ask the interviewers. For each question, have a succinct answer with proof. For example, if you think they'll ask what

specific experience you have that would contribute to a certain project, be ready to describe a project, paper, event or challenge that showcases a skill or quality connected to the internship. Think about teamwork, independent work, timeliness, writing and research abilities, communication, and so on. The classic "two strengths and a weakness" question is sure to show up—prepare an answer. Keep all prepared questions and answers in a Word document so that you can find them during the phone interview.

Preparing for an interview is time consuming. Accept this challenge, and look at the interview as an opportunity to practice your interview skills. Even if you don't get this internship, it'll help you prepare for the next application.

### Word to the Wise: State Department Internships

If you land a coveted State Department internship, chances are good you'll get a lot out of it. You'll be on the front lines, helping promote U.S. foreign policy from its beginning to execution, overseas and at home. It isn't all positive, however—there are some important factors to consider when deciding whether to accept such an internship.

*Slow security clearance process.* Don't expect to have several months to plan your trip to Washington, D.C., or an overseas post. Last-minute clearances are common. If you don't receive your security clearance in time, I learned, your overseas internship will be canceled, through no fault of your own.

*Many points of contact.* When applying to work at an overseas post, expect multiple people to handle your processing—and be aware they don't always talk to one another. I recommend keeping all parties updated on everyone else's actions, especially concerning the security clearance process.

*You won't get rich.* The costs associated with getting to and living in D.C. or overseas may pose too great a financial burden for students. Currently, the Pathways Program is the only paid internship program that State offers.



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## YOU GOT THE INTERNSHIP: NOW WHAT?

**C**ongratulations! Your hard work has paid off, and you’ve landed the perfect internship. Now it’s time to think about money, housing and all the other things you need to think about to make sure this internship is a success.

### Funding

Transportation, housing and daily living costs are high in D.C., so carefully consider your financial situation.

Universities often have money set aside to help defray the costs of intern-

ships for their students. When I was offered my second D.C. internship, I applied for two scholarships to fund my senior honors project at my university. While the school did not technically pay for the internship, it did help offset the expenses associated with interning in D.C., which was a part of this project. Early on I cultivated a relationship with my project adviser, who helped me win the scholarships that enabled me to intern. Good professors want their students to succeed, academically and professionally. Argue the case of intern-

ships being connected to academics—your favorite professor may just lend a helping hand.

Local organizations such as your K-12 PTOs, Greek life and Rotary Clubs may also be willing to help. Make a call, send an email, reach out to friends and neighbors. Join Facebook groups, create a GoFundMe, get a part-time job. Anything is possible.

### Housing

When it comes to housing, most interns are left to fend for themselves. Do not finalize housing until you’ve received a definitive acceptance. Once you’ve cleared that hurdle, it’s time to consider your housing requirements. Some factors to consider: furnished or unfurnished? Short-term? Your own bath? Location versus commute?

There are three major housing types for interns—university, subletting and corporate—and each has pros and cons.

**University housing** dates are set well in advance, buildings are safe and there are both private- and shared-room options; some universities may offer this program only in the summer, however.

**Subletting** is a mixed bag: dates and cost are flexible and extremely variable, allowing the intern to work out the best and cheapest option. Finding a place to sublet, however, is complex. It’s time consuming, decisions are often made at the last minute, and roommates can be unpredictable. Never pay anything until you’re standing in the apartment and can verify that your roommate/landlord isn’t a scammer.

Don’t try to pull it all together just weeks before you need to be there. You may be left in the lurch because if the roommate/landlord backs out or your search bears no fruit, it will be too late to find university or corporate housing.

## STARTING YOUR HOUSING SEARCH

The following sites can be useful as you start your housing search for a D.C. internship.

### University Summer Housing

George Washington	<a href="https://summerhousing.gwu.edu/individuals-options">https://summerhousing.gwu.edu/individuals-options</a>
American	<a href="https://www.american.edu/ocl/conferences/Intern-Housing.cfm">https://www.american.edu/ocl/conferences/Intern-Housing.cfm</a>
George Mason	<a href="https://housing.gmu.edu/summer-mason/intern-housing">https://housing.gmu.edu/summer-mason/intern-housing</a>
University of the District of Columbia	<a href="http://docs.udc.edu/housing/Housing_Application_Summer_2018.pdf">http://docs.udc.edu/housing/Housing_Application_Summer_2018.pdf</a>
Howard	<a href="https://howardsummerconferences.com/summer-rates-payment/">https://howardsummerconferences.com/summer-rates-payment/</a>
Catholic	<a href="http://conferences.cua.edu/summer/rates.cfm">http://conferences.cua.edu/summer/rates.cfm</a>
Georgetown	<a href="https://residentialiving.georgetown.edu/summer/individual#">https://residentialiving.georgetown.edu/summer/individual#</a>

*Note that university housing in D.C. is subject to the 14.8 percent D.C. housing accommodations tax.*

### Subletting Sites

#### Craigslist

<https://washingtondc.craigslist.org/d/sublets-temporary/search/sub>

#### Facebook groups

[bit.ly/fb-subletting](http://bit.ly/fb-subletting)

[bit.ly/fb-subletting2](http://bit.ly/fb-subletting2)

### Corporate Sites

WISH	<a href="https://internsdc.com/rates/">https://internsdc.com/rates/</a>
Capstay	<a href="https://www.capstay.com/prices/">https://www.capstay.com/prices/</a>
Attache Corporate Housing	<a href="https://stayattache.com/search/results">https://stayattache.com/search/results</a>

Subletting can be the cheapest housing option. If you have specific needs though—your own bedroom and bathroom, a short commute, easy access to a gym—then the cost of subletting can be high. Living outside the city can reduce the cost of living, but for both of my D.C. internships, I stayed in the city: there’s so much to enjoy, and I have no regrets about paying a higher rent than interns who commuted from the surrounding areas.

**Corporate housing** may be the solution if you don’t want the hassle of hauling furniture, bedding and kitchen supplies. But it can be costly. Read the contract carefully: dates are set in advance, so if you only need two months out of a four-month minimum stay, you’re still paying the full amount.

## On the Job

**Add to your skill set.** You’re interning to learn new skills and make yourself more marketable. Compile a list of accomplishments during your tenure, including events you attended and projects you completed. Add these to your résumé or LinkedIn account. When you need a letter of reference, send your list to your internship supervisor who can easily write you a letter.

**Do the work.** Work ethic determines reputation, so fulfill your duties scrupulously. Every action has the potential to shape letters of recommendation and the possibility of future references. Be proactive and show initiative.

**Build relationships.** Check in with your boss and colleagues during the

week. Consider emailing a daily list of what you’re working on: this shows initiative. When you form relationships, it’s much easier to ask for favors, such as requesting to work on a special project or an afternoon off to network.

**Network.** Make connections with people in your line of work and in related fields. When job hunting after graduation, you will have somebody to call and ask for help. Start with LinkedIn. Using the website’s filters, you can find your university’s alumni in your field and in the D.C. area. Contact them, pointing out the alma mater connection. (You can also reach out to them when looking for an internship.)



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Milton’s motto, “Dare to be true,” describes Milton’s culture. Teaching and learning at Milton are active processes that recognize the intelligence, talents, and potential of every individual.

## VSFS: THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S E-INTERNSHIP PROGRAM AND OPPORTUNITY EQUALIZER

Internships are great for professional experience: they build the student's résumé, and they guide the student in determining a job path and/or graduate degree program. But for students interested in working in foreign affairs, there's one big problem: most available internships are in the Washington, D.C., area. And for many geographically challenged students, it simply isn't possible to move here for an unpaid temp job.

That's where VSFS comes in. Launched in 2009 in the Department of State as the Virtual Student Foreign Service program, it allows students to work remotely for a federal agency. In 2017 VSFS changed its name to "Virtual Student Federal Service," to reflect the fact that there are now more than 70 participating organizations, more than 40 of which are federal agencies, including USDA, VA, DHS, DOS, OPM and HHS.

The State Department has led the effort to get American college students from around the world involved in our foreign policy process through this e-internship program. While VSFS interns are unpaid, students benefit by gaining professional experience and marketable skills, increased knowledge about a particular agency, networking contacts and a line item on their résumé showing they have interned for a federal agency or internationally recognized organization.

Entrepreneur Ahva Sadeghi completed two VSFS internships while an undergrad at University of Arizona Honors College. She first interned with the

Office to Combat and Monitor Trafficking in Persons, for which she conducted research to contribute to the 2014 Trafficking In Persons Report. The following year she interned with the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, contributing to the 2014 Human Rights Reports for various countries in the Middle East. In both internships, Ms.

Sadeghi conducted research, completed media analysis and drafted briefing papers and memos—all from her dorm in Arizona.



In addition to gaining professional experience, Ms. Sadeghi received college credit for her internship. VSFS's virtual nature prepared her for the gig economy and working remotely. And VSFS opened doors: she was the summer 2014 legal intern for AFSA at State, allowing her to meet with her VSFS contacts and build her professional network. She also authored one of the most popular articles on AFSA's website, "How to Intern at State from Home." She credits her internships with helping her get into



As a VSFS intern at EducationUSA Spain, I developed and designed a Wordpress website to showcase the Competitive College Club and created related graphics for the program. I couldn't have found a project that was better aligned with all three of my passions: design, education, and technology. It was the perfect way to use and grow my skills for a greater purpose, and I loved working with everybody at the office. Would highly recommend applying!

**An Luong**

VSFS INTERN  
2018/2019



the London School of Economics.

Ms. Sadeghi is now co-founder & CEO of Symba, an all-female tech startup helping to expand virtual internships in order to create opportunities for students of all economic backgrounds to land internships and improve their future job prospects. She was named a Global Entrepreneur Scholar by the U.S. Department of State. Her human rights fellowship with civil rights icon Congressman John Lewis (D-Ga.) is what inspired her to change career tracks from international relations to entrepreneurship.

Ms. Sadeghi has come full circle: her startup is currently collaborating with VSFS via Symba's beta test, resulting in a streamlined internship process and a higher-quality platform to benefit the overall VSFS experience. ■





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- **In the DC Metro Area?** View a listing of local summer camp options on FLO's website: [state.gov/flo/education](http://state.gov/flo/education).

Contact [FLOaskEducation@state.gov](mailto:FLOaskEducation@state.gov) for more information.



## Considering the Use of American Power

### A Foreign Policy for the Left

Michael Walzer, Yale University Press, 2018, \$30/hardcover, \$14.99/Kindle, 216 pages.

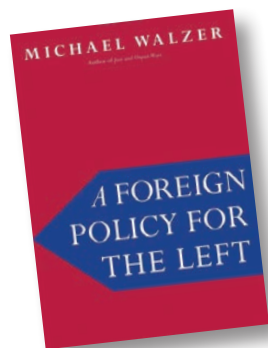
REVIEWED BY ANNIE PFORZHEIMER

Michael Walzer's contributions to political philosophy are deep and lasting; I read his 1977 classic, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, in college. A rebuke of the Vietnam War and (26 years in advance) the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, that book defined limited moral elements of why war might be necessary, with the view that war represents a grave failure of diplomacy and politics that should be avoided if possible.

Walzer's latest book, *A Foreign Policy for the Left*, was published in 2018 and is a compilation of nine essays from the past 16 years, mainly from *Dissent* magazine. Leading up to the 2020 elections, both political parties face an internal battle between their foreign policy traditionalists and those who argue for retreat, contesting many key paradigms of how American power is best used.

These essays review leftist foreign policy failures and successes of the 20th century and explore the current versions of socialist/leftist/progressive ideas regarding democracy, noninterference and human rights. Since his topic is the American left, Walzer does not primarily address America First isolationism, but there are clear areas of convergence between that political viewpoint and today's progressive Democrats who take a strong stand against military intervention.

Attitudes toward national security, especially among millennials, reflect



national confusion and even anger over our goals and aims in “endless wars” and the Arab Spring. Young people without memories of 9/11, much less Bosnia or Rwanda,

are unmoved by schools of thought such as the 2011 “responsibility to protect” doctrine justifying intervention when human rights are gravely threatened, pointing to U.S. government errors of the past with similarly high-minded justifications.

A May 2019 survey by the Center for American Progress shows a divide between citizens and the foreign policy establishment: “At the most basic level, voters want U.S. foreign policy and national security policies to focus on two concrete goals: protecting the U.S. homeland and its people from external threats—particularly terrorist attacks—and protecting jobs for American workers.”

The CAP report continues: “They also support efforts to protect U.S. democracy from foreign interference, advance common goals with allies and promote equal rights in other countries. But these are second-order preferences. In the hierarchy of concerns about foreign policy, terrorism and a strong economy are more immediate issues for voters than are efforts to advance democratic values around the world.”

### Sometimes It Has to Be Us

Admitting the United States' many errors of the past in Central America, the Middle East and elsewhere, Walzer still pushes back at the conclusion that all use of force is wrong and proposes his version of a middle path. Most of the book is an argument against the full-scale retreat

from an international role for the United States; he even offers a justification for sometimes acting alone despite his preference for multilateralism.

People facing security emergencies or grave and urgent violations of human rights still need a champion, Walzer contends; and if the United Nations is unwilling, then sometimes that should be us. He stresses the imperative to avoid overwhelming interventions that are de facto “rescues,” especially when our actions do not empower a local population to take steps to prevent the same problem from recurring. (He gives a number of examples of this that hit close to home for all of us active in the field since 2001, for example our A-to-Z attempt to remake Afghanistan.)

He makes the case, instead, that, within the sovereign state system for the foreseeable future, “good enough” governments that observe basic human rights create the best framework for citizens to solve their own problems. Even if those local solutions (and justice) take longer, he argues, we have ample proof that they will be more culturally appropriate and less resisted, so we should refrain from trying to put ourselves in the place of local authority.

Walzer stingingly assesses those who reflexively attack the United States from the left, at one point noting that “not everything that goes badly in the world goes badly because of us.” He chides them for ignoring their own grave errors during the 20th century and complicity in atrocities by defending so-called “leftist” regimes that were authoritarian and murderous.

Further, he points out, a country or insurgent group does not have an automatic claim to virtue because it is the enemy of the United States. He devotes a scathing essay to those on the left who argue that Islamic terrorists—in one

case, citing an academic speaking about ISIS—are really “anti-globalization” freedom fighters.

### In Defense of Democracy

Passionate in his defense of democracy, Walzer argues that neither side in a conflict should be excused if it employs the tactics of suppressing dissent and speaking on behalf of “the masses,” and that a true leftist foreign policy should base itself above all on the defense of freedom of speech and human rights. A so-called revolutionary vanguard or theocratic elite that must remove individual rights to fight reactionaries will always become an authoritarian nightmare, with corruption a near-certain corollary, he notes.

The correct approach, difficult and thankless as it may be, he argues, is to support the equivalent of the moderates in the French and Russian revolutions—the Girondins and Mensheviks, respectively—as modern-day peaceful dissidents in Iran and Syria fighting a “two-front war” against both reactionary oppressors and radical revolutionaries.

During my own diplomatic career, I was lucky to know people in this category, eternally in the opposition, often in danger and correct in their assessment of the excesses of both sides of the debate. How do we help, he asks? By showing solidarity and asking the dissidents themselves what they need rather than speaking and acting on their behalf (as he accuses the current administration of doing in Iran).

Walzer’s guidelines could prove inspirational to those of any political stripe who still see a robust role for the United States in the world and who want to show isolationists a way forward that advances our ideals and goals, while still reflecting what we have learned from our many mistakes. ■

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*Annie Pforzheimer, a recently retired career diplomat with the personal rank of Minister Counselor, was the acting deputy assistant secretary for Afghanistan until March 2019. From 2017 to 2018, she was the deputy chief of mission in Kabul. She has also served at the National Security Council and in Mexico, El Salvador, Turkey, South Africa and Colombia.*

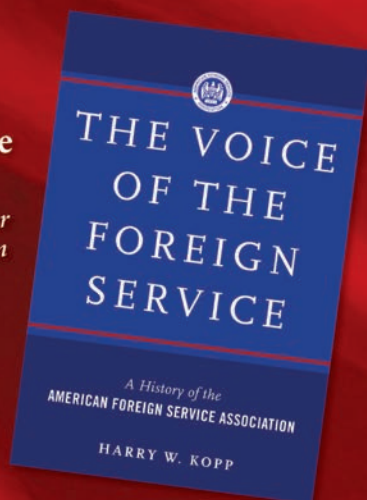
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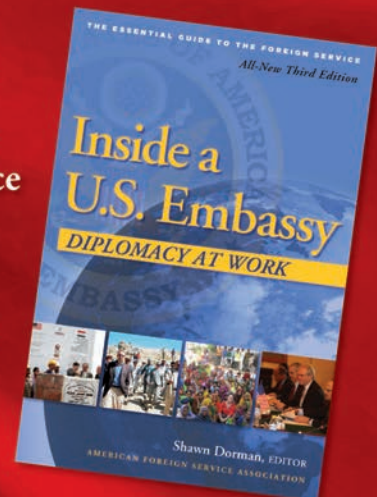
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# Living Two Lives

BY JOSH GLAZEROFF

It's like being in two places at once. That's how I would describe my year serving in Pakistan away from my family. On my mind always is not only what's in front of me but also what's going on far away from here.

Even stranger is trying to wrap my mind around the fact that I am here solely because of work. How can I reconcile what I do every day with being away from those I care about most? Although, like so many others, I have made a commitment to serve, it wears me down and takes a dedication that I sometimes doubt.

My work life is fascinating. I regularly meet cabinet ministers and renowned authors. Senior businessmen discuss Pakistan's prospects with me. We, and the entire mission, had to address a crisis when the country nearly went to war with India. I have senior generals sending me personal messages day and night. The

issues I work on matter in terms of our bilateral relationship and support greater national security. I genuinely feel that I can make a difference in how we do our work, and I focus on developing my staff, both local employees and American officers. I have grown and learned.

My personal life is the harder part. I am not there for my kids' homework or sports competitions or band performances. My daughter's best friend moved away this year. Plus, our 19-year-old cat died. During the holidays, my family went to Costa Rica without me. On Mother's Day, all I could do was send flowers. Skype and FaceTime are great tools, but they don't make up for those important daily conversations about school or work, or for such simple gestures as a hug.

The three visits home were precious, if fleeting—including birthday cakes and Thanksgiving dinner and escape-room fun. A carefully calibrated Costco trip stocked the family pantry with laundry detergent and olive oil. Each time, I left behind homemade soup in the freezer to nourish everyone in the months between visits, and to remind them of me.



The author's family: Melanie Bowen (at center), Jacob Bowen-Glazeroff, and Dora Bowen-Glazeroff at Foreign Service Night at Nationals Park, September 2018.

Watching my kids grow is like seeing snapshots in a photo album—each time I look, something is different. It's hard to imagine that in just the last nine months my son got glasses and braces. And my daughter—well ... she's moved on from her best friend's departure and is now texting with a boy from school.

I did manage to call in as a guest speaker during my kids' Model U.N. conference; that was a great way to combine my professional and personal lives. And I even played a monster in an online game of Dungeons and Dragons. (My kids didn't realize it was me!)

Two lives: One life has electrical, plumbing and gardening problems (normally my responsibility) to which I can now only offer sympathy; the other involves late nights with politicians, bankers and diplomats, as I try my best to build the relationships our nation needs in a very complicated but important country such as Pakistan.

One life has my family.

Is there anything more important?

No. And that is the clearest lesson from my year away. ■



Josh Glazeroff, at right, visiting the National College of Arts in Lahore, Pakistan, October 2018.



*Josh Glazeroff is a member of the Senior Foreign Service whose most recent overseas assignment was as consul general in Islamabad. A consular-coned officer, he has also served in Santo Domingo, Durban and New Delhi, and in a variety of domestic positions. He lives in Arlington, Virginia.*

Well dressed for the weather, this cat stands watch over the red-carpet entrance to its farm home in the far northern county of Maramures, along the Ukrainian border. The region, renowned for proudly maintaining Romanian rural traditions, is home to the world's tallest wooden churches, the colorful Merry Cemetery and Elie Wiesel's Memorial House. We visited the area in December 2016 during the winter festival, which draws residents from surrounding villages together for celebrations of local food, music, clothing and farm life. ■

*Caitlin Hartford is a consular-coned FSO who is passionate about photographing and writing about rural life and landscapes. Accompanied by her husband, Tim, and their cats, she has found amazing opportunities to discover—and photograph—countless small towns during Foreign Service assignments in Romania, Mexico and Colombia. She took this photograph with a Nikon Coolpix S9400.*

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