

# THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

OCTOBER 2014



## THE NEW SPECIALISTS

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IN THE EMBASSY



WORKING WITH WOMEN  
IN AFGHANISTAN



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On the cover: Diplomatic Courier Ed Bent, at right, manages pouches in Frankfurt, July 2009. Photo courtesy of *Inside a U.S. Embassy*, 2011. Below, a school for Afghan refugee children. Photo: Embassy Islamabad.

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# Two Secrets of the Foreign Service

BY ROBERT J. SILVERMAN

**T**his month let's take a look at two institutions of the Foreign Service that deserve wider recognition and appreciation.

The AFSA legal division and the Senior Living Foundation of the American Foreign Service are each important to our careers and our moral well-being.

The legal team at AFSA is an agent for change. In U.S. history, change often begins not through legislation or executive fiat but in case-by-case legal challenges that go beyond the individual context to alter procedures, laws and eventually societal consensus. That has been the way of the AFSA legal team.

Here is one example from recent history. Two decades ago, being gay or lesbian in the Foreign Service could have led to a determination that one was an unacceptable security risk, resulting in the loss of one's clearances and the end of one's career.

The theory was that homosexuals were susceptible to blackmail from foreign spies based on their sexual orientation. This theory perfectly dovetailed with social prejudices, but faced a problem: the lack of factual evidence supporting it in individual cases.

That is where AFSA's legal team came in. It represented employees in security investigations and in grievances before the Foreign Service Grievance Board. AFSA's general counsel filed an amicus brief in the U.S. Court of Appeals on behalf of a gay Foreign Service officer.



## The legal team at AFSA is an agent for change, and the Senior Living Foundation helps retirees in need.

Over the years, AFSA lawyers, alongside representatives from Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies, continued to challenge homophobic biases.

Today societal views have changed, and policies are catching up. At the start of my Foreign Service career, that wasn't the case. Personally, I wondered about the justification for this policy, but like so many others I did nothing, unfortunately. And to be honest, AFSA itself as an organization was not in the forefront of challenging this policy.

AFSA lawyers were. Their role in the system is to advocate for individuals, and they did their jobs well. In the end, they also helped shape policy, under the old common-law approach of one case at a time.

I had never heard of the Senior Living Foundation before starting this assignment one year ago. After working with Executive Director Paula Jakub over the past year, I want to report to you how vital this institution is.

The foundation supports retired Foreign Service members and their families who need financial help and personal care. Here is the reality we are all aware of: spending our lives largely overseas often means we have not built and sustained the family and domestic networks needed in retirement.

The foundation steps into that

gap and helps, from one-time grants for a wheelchair or hospital co-pay to monthly visits from a volunteer and support over the course of one's retirement. The foundation helps a lot of Foreign Service folks, more than 1,200 since it started in 1988.

I have seen it intervene to prevent the eviction of a Foreign Service widow, who was selling her personal possessions to pay her rent and medical expenses. In another case, a retired FS Office Management Specialist needed monthly assistance as her diabetes worsened and she was paying for insulin out-of-pocket.

Here's the problem: the Foreign Service leadership of the foundation, people like Joan Clark, Bill Harrop, Roz Ridgway, Alan Lukens and Bob Blake Sr., are themselves not getting any younger. We need more support from recent retirees and active-duty folks to ensure that the foundation remains healthy into the future.

If you want more information on ways to support this worthy cause, please visit the foundation's website at [www.SLFoundation.org](http://www.SLFoundation.org) or contact Paula Jakub at (202) 887-8170.

These two institutions aren't really secrets, but they do deserve to be better known. Each in different ways keeps us on the straight and narrow.

Be well, stay safe and keep in touch,  
*Bob*

*Silverman@afsa.org* ■

*Robert J. Silverman is the president of the American Foreign Service Association.*

# Specialists Today

BY SHAWN DORMAN

Many members of the Foreign Service community lack a complete picture of the wide variety of critical roles Foreign Service Specialists play. So this month we shine the spotlight on Foreign Service Specialists, both to give a sense of what they do and to illustrate commonalities between life and work for them and the rest of the Foreign Service.

First, some basics. About 40 percent of the current State Department Foreign Service corps are specialists; as of June, there were 5,832 FS Specialists and 8,076 FS Generalists. FS Specialists also make up about 40 percent of AFSA members.

Specialists follow 19 distinct, professional career tracks (as spelled out by State's Human Resources Bureau): Financial Management Officer, General Services Officer, Human Resources Officer, Construction Engineer, Facility Manager, Information Management Specialist, Information Management Technical Specialist (Radio), Information Management Technical Specialist (Unified Communications), English Language Officer, Information Resource Officer, Health Practitioner, Regional Medical Officer, Regional Medical Officer/Psychiatrist, Regional Medical Laboratory Scientist, Office Management Specialist, Diplomatic Courier, Security Engineering Officer, Security Technical

Specialist and Diplomatic Security Special Agent.

Foreign Service language to categorize

members—specialist, officer/generalist, officer, diplomat—can be perceived as perpetuating hierarchies, both between specialists and generalists and among some specialists.

To address these and other concerns, we have tried to bring as many Foreign Service Specialist voices into our coverage as possible, reaching out to them for input through various channels, including an AFSA net invitation.

Still, I am concerned that a number of potential authors were reluctant to write for attribution this month. We lost at least two articles for that reason, and another was not submitted because its authors were unable to get clearance.

One specialist who declined to give his name speculated that specialists may fear that speaking up about professional concerns can hurt their promotion potential, which is already highly limited in many cases. Nonetheless, we hope this focus will open the door to more articles and contributions, both by and about Foreign Service Specialists.

Francesca Kelly's cover story explores the wide world of "The New Specialists": who they are; the critical roles they play at overseas missions and in the United States; how their work has evolved; and what their concerns are. One comment stands out: "Specialists are hired on experience; generalists are hired on potential."

This month's Speaking Out column is a collection of comments getting at "What Specialists Want You to Know." And we close our focus with a compila-

tion of three short commentaries and one to-do list from specialists in various career tracks.

Elsewhere in this issue, Foreign Service Know-How takes an in-depth look at child custody. As if divorce and the related custody issues aren't hard enough, add the FS lifestyle and you get a truly dizzying array of complicating factors. Three experts walk us through how to navigate such a situation.

Sandya Das from the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration writes about "Learning from Women's Success in Afghanistan." And on the lighter side, follow the brave team at Embassy Colombo on a mad-cap adventure in Chris Teal's "Flying Monkeys in the Embassy." And in his President's Views column, Bob Silverman shares "Two Secrets of the Foreign Service."

Finally, a note on style. Bowing to "the pressure of the acronym" (yes, that is a thing) in this month's focus, we have taken some liberties with capitalization. Our usual style (following Associated Press) is to minimize capitalization of job titles unless they come before a name.

But that gets awkward when lower-casing makes them sound generic, so this month we are swinging the pendulum toward the upper case. In other words, we've gone wild with caps! Should this be a one-time exercise, or does it make reading easier? Please weigh in with feedback. ■

*Next month, look for our popular annual focus on books by Foreign Service authors, "In Their Own Write."*



Shawn Dorman is the editor of The Foreign Service Journal.



## The Need for Unvarnished Truth

In the September issue of the *Journal*, Ambassador Kenneth Quinn eloquently asserts the need for unvarnished feedback from younger officers to senior policymakers.

Ken and I joined the Foreign Service at about the same time 45 years ago, when U.S. leadership in foreign affairs seemed paramount and, hence, the State Department was a logical venue from which to make a difference in the world—our mutually held view.

State's Dissent Channel is designed to help do this, but it is not clear that it is getting the job done.

As he relates, Ken was one of the first in or outside of the State Department to report on the ruthless activities of the Khmer Rouge and the fact that they were not subservient to the Vietnamese communist leadership in Hanoi.

For this, Ken deserved more than the AFSA Herter Award; his reporting merited worldwide recognition. More importantly, it should have been factored into State Department policymaking. Instead, Embassy Phnom Penh demanded that Quinn cease reporting!

With my FSO colleague Craig Johnstone, I was co-recipient of AFSA's Rivkin Award in 1976 for dissent in connection with the evacuation of Vietnam.

But my earlier experience with the Dissent Channel related to corruption, which was a central issue in Vietnam. While not unknown in our own federal, state and local governments, corruption is endemic in many other countries, where it is further fueled by the aid money and materiel that the U.S. and other countries infuse.

In Vietnam, the result was that most goods, services and key jobs were for sale. Instead of a meritocracy, the international community unwittingly facilitated



a “de-meritocracy.”

Using U.S. government leverage to prune back corruption was the central tenet of a Dissent Channel paper I authored in 1970 with two Foreign Service colleagues—Basil

Scarlis and Stephen Cummings—who, like me, were serving on detail to the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support program, known as CORDS.

In a six-page secret airgram sent in from Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker's embassy, we were dismissed as young field officers who did not have the big picture.

I hope that today dissent is taken more seriously. I have just subscribed to the *Journal* and rejoined AFSA after a lapse of decades in that hope.

Let's try to make a difference in improving U.S. policies and programs in today's complicated “glocal” world by reinforcing all mechanisms, including the Dissent Channel.

*Lionel A. Rosenblatt*  
FSO, retired  
Washington, D.C.

## Diplomatic Warrior and Embassy Reporting

Setting politics aside, I must express my admiration of former Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton's efforts on behalf of the late Foreign Service officer who was likely our greatest since George Kennan: Richard C. Holbrooke. I wholeheartedly agreed with her proposal for Holbrooke's burial at Arlington Cemetery, and was disappointed to learn that the White House refused to endorse it.

Unlike Ambassador Holbrooke, I served in the U.S. military on active duty in addition to spending 27 years in the

Foreign Service. Like all of my colleagues with similar military experience, I've always seen the State Department's mission as a joint endeavor with the armed forces to defend U.S. interests globally.

On reflection, and with all due respect, it is unfortunate that our current administration does not appear to share this notion of America's defense. Nor do they seem to value the lifelong loyalty of diplomatic warriors like Amb. Holbrooke.

On another note, recognizing that some of my Management Officer and IRM Bureau colleagues may not be regular readers of *The Foreign Service Journal*, I felt compelled to share with them Shawn Dorman's unique Letter from the Editor in the July-August issue on embassy reporting.

I'm sure that many active-duty colleagues can appreciate the outstanding linkage of past tradecraft with modern reporting that it highlighted. For retired colleagues who served with me in Embassy Moscow during the final year of the USSR, the letter invoked nostalgia for that historic time.

In response, nearly all of my email recipients joined me in praising the timeliness and inspirational tone of Dorman's letter. They also agreed with me that it was one of the very best *FSJ* editorials yet. Bravo!

*Timothy C. Lawson*  
Senior FSO, retired  
Hua Hin, Thailand

## Thanks for Guidance

I would like to offer a heartfelt thank you to AFSA for recent help with a tax concern relating to my state of domicile. I was able to successfully resolve the issue by following guidance from AFSA.

*Ed Luchessi*  
Management Officer  
Consulate General Nogales ■

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## Breaking Ground for Diplomacy

On Sept. 3, five former Secretaries of State assembled in the George Marshall Conference Center at the State Department to take part in the official groundbreaking ceremony for the United States Diplomacy Center.

Secretary of State John F. Kerry and former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger, James A. Baker III, Madeleine K. Albright, Colin L. Powell and Hillary Rodham Clinton each made brief remarks at the indoor ceremony. They then broke ground at the construction site at the 21st St. N.W. entrance to the Department of State's Harry S Truman building.

Under Secretary for Management Patrick Kennedy was master of ceremonies for the event. He was joined by Ambassador Elizabeth Frawley Bagley, senior advisor in the Office of the Secretary, who was instrumental in garnering support for the project, and Ambassador William C. Harrop, chairman of the Diplomacy

**Calling diplomacy a “force for good in the world,” Secretary Kerry briefly saluted the “first-ever museum to tell the really remarkable story of American diplomats.” He also used his time at the podium to focus on the “next generation” of diplomats and the current foreign policy debate.**

Center Foundation.

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The 40,000-square-foot USDC has been designed as a museum and



From left: Secretaries of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Madeleine K. Albright, Henry A. Kissinger, John F. Kerry, James A. Baker III and Colin L. Powell break ground for the United States Diplomacy Center at the Department of State on Sept. 3.

educational center featuring interactive exhibits and diplomatic simulations that will explore the history, practice and challenges of U.S. diplomacy.

The \$25 million construction project is

expected to take 18 months. Construction of the museum and fabrication of exhibits will be financed through a private-sector capital campaign. The Department of State will contribute space, staff and security for the center in a public-private partnership with the Diplomacy Center Foundation.

A video of the ceremony can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/usdcremarks>.

—Debra Blome, Associate Editor

## Specialist Blogs, In Particular

A boon to American diplomats, blogging offers a fun and easy way for members of the Foreign Service to keep in touch with extended family, and with each other, as they move around the world representing the United States.

The blogs are also a kind of public service, helping to spread awareness of the work FS members do and the lives they lead more broadly, in and outside the Service (see this month's focus, p. 21).

No less diligent as bloggers than the generalists, Foreign Service specialists also figure in the ever-popular FS blogs list on the AFSA website ([www.afsa.org/blogs](http://www.afsa.org/blogs)).

■ *110 to 220* is by a Foreign Service Specialist who is currently on domestic assignment in Washington, D.C. The writer works on communications and computer systems in U.S. embassies and consulates around the world. According to the blog, “the website's name is an



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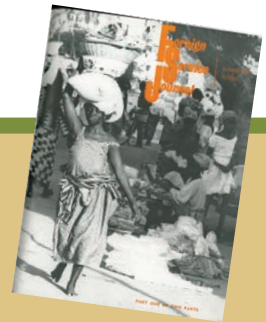


electrical analogy comparing U.S./foreign life. We use 110 volts to power simple devices, whereas most of the world uses 220 volts.”

■ *Are We There Yet?* is a travel blog maintained by a Foreign Service Specialist from Colorado Springs. With 423 posts from 20 different countries, the

blog includes nearly 4,500 photos of the author’s experiences abroad.

■ *My Journey to Join the U.S. Foreign Service* is a photo-blog recording life as a Foreign Service Facility Manager. It offers some amazing photos that depict life abroad for a real Foreign Service family,



### 50 Years Ago

**I**t seems to me that in exercising his freedom and obligation to pick the best man for the job, a president will wish to give as much importance to experience in diplomacy, or in a related field, as he gives to experience when he names a general or an admiral, and that, in the absence of such experience, he will wish to assure himself that the person he names possesses qualities and qualifications that fully compensate for his lack of experience. The possible penalties of failure to select qualified ambassadors are now so great that no president will want consciously to risk them.

From the summer of 1953 to the day Mr. Castro rode a tank into Havana, our ambassadors to Cuba were political appointees, without previous experience in diplomacy, and unable to communicate with the Cuban people because they didn’t speak the language of the country. If we should ask ourselves whether, during those crucial years, we took reasonable advantage of opportunities open to us to try, through the legitimate exercise of diplomacy on the spot, to avert the loss of Cuba to communism, the answer would have to be that we did not. That is a harsh thing to say, in the light of what has happened in Cuba, but it is true nevertheless.

Perhaps the most powerful reason for naming career ambassadors is that unless a high and growing percentage of career men are appointed to top jobs, we won’t have an efficient Foreign Service, and without an efficient Foreign Service our national security will be gravely imperiled.

We need well-trained, effective diplomats as much as we need a well-trained, effective army. Our hope of avoiding a nuclear holocaust depends on our not having to use our military forces, in large-scale war at least; and our ability to stave off large-scale war depends to a high degree on the quality of our diplomacy. The quality of our diplomacy, in turn, will depend on the quality of the men who carry it out.

—From “The Ambassador” by Willard P. Beaulac, FSJ, October 1964.

The article was a chapter from Beaulac’s book, *Career Diplomat: A Career in the Foreign Service of the United States* (Macmillan, 1966).

along with helpful background information.

■ *Gwen's Adventures in the Foreign Service* is a blog chronicling the life and career of an Office Management Specialist. With her husband retired and her daughter out of college, Gwen uses the blog to update family and friends on what is happening in her new life as a Foreign Service Specialist.

■ *In-Flight Movie* is written by a Foreign Service Specialist currently at her second post, in London, with her husband, her preschool-aged son and her "unruly tabby cat," after two years in Belize.

■ *Phenomenal Phnews* is co-authored by two Foreign Service Specialists to update their family and friends on their lives in Phnom Penh. Jeremy and Erica have two additional blogs, *Home Leave Files: Tales from Visits Back to the U.S.* and *Our African Home: Tales from Nairobi, Kenya*.

■ *The Accidental Diplomat* is a newly engaged Foreign Service Specialist of six years, who "became a diplomat quite by accident" and writes about her life in the Foreign Service while planning her dream wedding.

■ *The OpSec Blog* is written by a Security Engineering Officer who has served in many countries around the world and traveled to many others providing security services to U.S. missions overseas.

Are you a specialist who has a blog? Let us know! Email your blog to [fsblogs@afsa.org](mailto:fsblogs@afsa.org), and we will add it to the list.

—Cecilia Dazovi,  
Communications Intern

## U.N. Declares Four Countries in "Level 3 Emergency"

For the first time in decades, the United Nations has declared four of the world's humanitarian crises "Level 3 Emer-

gency," the most dire rating the organization can assign. The four are Syria, South Sudan, the Central African Republic and Iraq, the latter added to the list on Aug. 14.

The "Level 3" designation facilitates "mobilization of additional resources in goods, funds and assets to ensure a more effective response to the humanitarian needs of populations affected by forced displacement," according to Nickolay Mladenov, special representative of the United Nations Secretary General.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee, a team of U.N. and nongovernmental humanitarian organizations, is responsible for making the determination, which is given to countries experiencing civil unrest that causes the displacement or removal of thousands of people. Unlike natural disasters, conflicts put humanitarian workers in the crossfire, making relief efforts that much more difficult.

Iraq became a particular concern after the situation on Sinjar Mountain escalated and thousands of Yazidi families were trapped on the mountain without water, nourishment or any form of sanitation as "Islamic State" fighters surrounded them. Despite numerous Department of Defense airdrops over a weeklong period in August, 1.5 million Iraqis are in need of humanitarian help, according to the U.S. Agency for International Development.

USAID estimates that 10.8 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria; 2.5 million in the Central African Republic, with 900,000 more displaced; and 1.1 million displaced in South Sudan.

"This is the first time in our agency's history that we have been called on to manage four large-scale humanitarian responses at once—in addition to reaching other vulnerable populations worldwide and preparing communities ahead

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### Contemporary Quote

“ It is a great privilege to be here with four other former secretaries of State. We have shared common experiences of the indispensable role of the United States in working for peace and progress in the world, the privilege of working with the Foreign Service—the most distinguished group of public servants that I know—and we also know that we will never do anything more challenging in our lives than to serve these objectives. ...

The essence of diplomacy is to build permanent relationships. It is essential to create confidence so that when the difficult issues come up and the close decisions have to be made, that it's a basis on which the minds can meet. It is essential for diplomacy to deal with people before you need them, so that they have faith in what you're saying when you do need them. ”

—Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, speaking at the U.S. Diplomacy Center groundbreaking ceremony at the State Department on Sept. 3.

of natural disasters,” USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah said.

UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA, UNHCR, CARE USA, World Vision USA, Save the Children, Oxfam America and many other NGOs are currently operating in these four countries. Thousands have been saved from death, and millions of individuals have been helped to get back on their feet.

The U.S. government alone has sent more than \$2.8 billion in assistance to these four countries; but there is still more to be done. With places like Gaza, Yemen and the Democratic Republic of the Congo also heading toward a Level 3 designation, humanitarian aid is needed now more than ever.

—Trevor Smith, *Editorial Intern*

### USAID Caught in Cuba Policy Crossfire

In August, for the second time this year, USAID found itself the focus of controversy as a result of an Associated Press exposé of agency programs in Cuba between 2009 and 2012. Though the

agency is merely a whipping boy in the larger fight over U.S. policy toward Cuba, the revelations have given some pause.

AP reported on Aug. 4 that, beginning in 2009, young Latin Americans were secretly dispatched to Cuba under the cover of health and civil programs to organize political change as part of a USAID project.

USAID contractor Creative Associates International hired nearly a dozen young people from Venezuela, Costa Rica and Peru for as little as \$5.41 per hour to undertake the potentially dangerous operation.

Working clandestinely, often posing as tourists, the visitors in one instance held an HIV-prevention workshop that project memos called “the perfect excuse” for advancing the mission: to recruit Cuban political activists.

As in April, when AP spotlighted another USAID project—the non-declared creation of a “Cuban Twitter” network—the agency has defended the projects as part of its congressionally dictated mandate, stating that they are

neither secret nor illegal.

The exposés have helped draw attention to the Obama administration's policy toward Cuba, which appears to be stalled. At the beginning of the year, relations were at their best in several decades, with cooperation on drug inter-

diction, oil-spill mitigation and immigration, and the president had promised "creativity" in further efforts to "update" the policy.

Yet as Reuters correspondents David Adams and Daniel Trotta reported in February, "President Barack Obama

#### SITE OF THE MONTH: [www.globalpost.com](http://www.globalpost.com)

Just 5 years old, *GlobalPost* aims to redefine international news for the digital age as "the only Internet journalism site devoted exclusively to international news and related content."

The organization's mission is "to help fill the enormous void that has grown up in coverage of the world by U.S. news organizations." *GlobalPost* follows no political line and restricts opinion to the opinion pages.

The site is uncommonly user-friendly, with Breaking News, Business, Photos, Videos and Special Reports plainly accessible. One can also access content by region or subject (Section). An extensive Blog section features "Chatter," written by *GlobalPost*'s regional editors on a daily basis, and "QuickClick," a curated "best of the Web in bite-sized pieces," as well as a score of topical blogs such as "India Explained"; "Pulse," a diverse look at global health issues; and "Holly World," a global take on entertainment.

Among the most-shared items on the home page is a moving tribute to the late James Foley, who worked as a freelancer for *GlobalPost*, a collection of his best writing and background on his life and work.

*GlobalPost*'s aim is "to build a community of top correspondents as well as a community of users of the site who share the need and the desire for quality news about the world."

A for-profit enterprise, the group's business model is based on online advertising, syndication of content to other Web and print publications internationally and, most unusual, creation of an elite community on the site through a paid membership system called Passport.

Led by its founder and president, Phil Balboni, *GlobalPost* has 18 executives and editorial staff at its headquarters in Boston and a network of credentialed journalists around the world who live and work in the countries they cover.

By all accounts this bold initiative is well on the road to success. *Global Post* has partnerships with NBC News, CBS and PBS-TV, among others, and has won a slew of awards for reporting, including a Peabody Award and awards from the Society of American Business Editors and Writers and the Overseas Press Club.

—Susan Brady Maitra, Managing Editor



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seems unwilling or unable to confront a well-organized anti-Cuba lobby and push for further progress.” He has not used his executive power since easing Cuban travel restrictions in January 2011.

Meanwhile, USAID contractor Alan Gross languishes in a Cuban prison, where he has been detained since 2009. He was apprehended attempting to establish a communications network on the island without Cuban government knowledge or approval.

Cuba will not release him without first seeing a U.S. gesture—and the Obama administration insists Cuba must improve human rights and release Gross first.

In April, hardliners in the anti-Cuba lobby rushed to the USAID programs’ support. But by August, even hawks like John Bolton, a former ambassador to the United Nations, had to admit that the failed projects were something of an embarrassment.

Others inside and outside of the foreign affairs community are concerned that USAID’s reputation as a leader in human development and welfare could be sullied because of the Cuba situation.

“It’s another example of the danger of trying to use foreign assistance as a weapon rather than to support the host government,” says Stephen Kaplitt, a former USAID legal department official who is now a consultant to Gilbert LLP, attorneys for the Gross family in pending litigation. “When they drift from their core mission, it substantially impairs trust and credibility.” ■

—Susan Brady Maitra  
Managing Editor



# What Specialists Want You to Know

COMPILED BY FRANCESCA KELLY

## IT Works for You

**D**ecades ago, people used to come in as “communicators”—the guys who loved doing the classified, encrypted stuff, loved being in the box. But it’s changed a lot because technology has changed a lot. Both sides (classified and unclassified) require similar IT work now.

Whether you work on one side of the house or the other, the world still changes. It comes down to this: What can you do to help your customer find the right tools?

*Neeru Lal, Information Resources Management, Public Affairs and Communication*

## Silent Partners

**A** substantial amount of effort goes into the network and system maintenance. Most good IT people do a ton of preventive maintenance and monitoring to keep the systems running smoothly. People tend not to understand or know the amount of work involved in having an operation run well enough that you never have to see the techs.

*Terry Pozcak, Information Management Specialist*

## We Are Well-Qualified

**[T**here is an] ever-increasing demand for nurse practitioners and physician assistants, not only within the State Department but in the United States, as well.

**People tend not to understand or know the amount of work involved in having an operation run well enough that you never have to see the techs.**

*—Terry Pozcak, IMS*

A recent report in the *Dallas Business Journal* states that the demand for PAs and NPs has increased more than 300 percent in the past three years. Both hold masters’ degrees and advanced certification. A number of our NPs hold doctoral degrees.

*Jeri Lockman, director, MED’s Foreign Service Health Practitioners Program*

## We Are You!

**P**art of our unique role comes from the fact that psychiatrists—indeed, all FS medical personnel overseas—live and work among their U.S. diplomatic colleagues, and daily experience the same joys and challenges of overseas diplomatic life and work.

*Kenneth Dekleva, director, MED’s Mental Health Services*

## Overseas Construction Isn’t the Same

**C**onstruction in the United States utilizes more 3-D design software and prefabrication of building systems in factory environments than construction overseas. Contractors working on our projects in underdeveloped countries still tend to focus on minimizing shipping expenses and making use of affordable labor by fabricating more on site.

*Eric Rumpf, Construction Engineer*

## We Are Foreign Service, Too!

**D**iplomatic Security folks have so many different postings, including domestic assignments, and the job changes constantly even within the United States. They can serve anywhere, from a field office to the Secretary of State’s security detail.

I would love for others to realize that serving in multiple domestic positions doesn’t lessen our “Foreign Service-ness.” I actually had someone tell me recently that we couldn’t be “real FS” because we had served a domestic tour outside of Washington, D.C. I think my head spun in eight directions.

*Anonymous Diplomatic Security Spouse*



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## Stable, but Less Than Thrilled

**M**y experience in talking with other techs is they generally are not really happy with the State Department as an employer, but they stick around because they like the lifestyle. This will help the department maintain a stable work force, but not an elite work force. The truly driven and talented will ultimately leave for the private sector or other agencies.

*Anonymous Information Resources Specialist*

## We Secure Your Workplace

**T**he motto of Security Engineering Officers and Security Technical Specialists is "Defend, Detect, Deter." Our job is to technically secure State Department work spaces so that everyone else can succeed in doing their jobs.

*David Zwach, Security Engineering Officer*

## We Are Human Resources

**I**landed at my first post eager and ready to serve. However, within days of my arrival, I was cautioned by colleagues to "get out of HR as soon as possible" due to that bureau's terrible reputation at State.

Rather than run for the nearest exit, I took this as a challenge to help improve that reputation. I remind myself every day that the first word in my position title is "human," and compassion should always come first.

*Jill E. Perry, Human Resources Course Chair/FSI*

**Remember that the Washington-end requirements are often as big a headache for me as they are for you.**

—Hunter Crowder,  
GSO Specialist

### It's All (Tech) Hands on Deck

**T**here are sections of posts with an almost unlimited budget that request highly technical systems that neither they nor the people who work for them understand.

If a system fails or malfunctions, they ask for more systems and more technology. When something breaks, in an emergency they turn to the only technical persons at post.

At many posts where there are no security engineers or technicians, the facilities managers and the locals can wind up working on some very sophisticated—and in some cases, dangerous—systems that no one has training on.

*Anonymous Facility Manager*

### We Are Organized

**O**MSs can organize the hell out of anything we want to.

*Llywelyn Graeme,  
Office Management Specialist*

### We Don't Make the Bureaucratic Rules

**T**o my generalist colleagues: When you are an under secretary or ambassador and in a position to make change, just remember how much you hated the bureaucracy and how difficult it was to get things done within the State bureaucracy.

Remember that the Washington-end requirements are often as big a headache for me as they are for you. Change them, and you'll help us do our jobs better.

*Hunter Crowder,  
General Services Officer*

### There Aren't Enough of Us

**I**'ve only been working with the department for five years now. However, in the last 10 years or so our programs have expanded rapidly.

For example, the English Access Microscholarship came into being worldwide in 2004. This program has grown and grown, and to date it has provided after-school English classes to more than 100,000 students in over 80 countries. In addition, now we have more E-teacher courses, webinars, MOOCs (massive open online courses) and AmericanEnglish.state.gov.

I think the biggest issue for RELOs is still staffing. There are just not enough RELOs, FSNs working on English Language Programs, or Civil Service colleagues in the Bureau of Cultural and Educational Affairs to meet the huge, ever-growing demand for our programs.

I think we currently have 29 or 30 RELOs for the entire world. RELOs in Africa cover 15 to 17 countries each. And with hiring freezes and attrition, we don't have enough D.C.-based staff either. ■

*Diane M. Millar, Regional English  
Language Officer*

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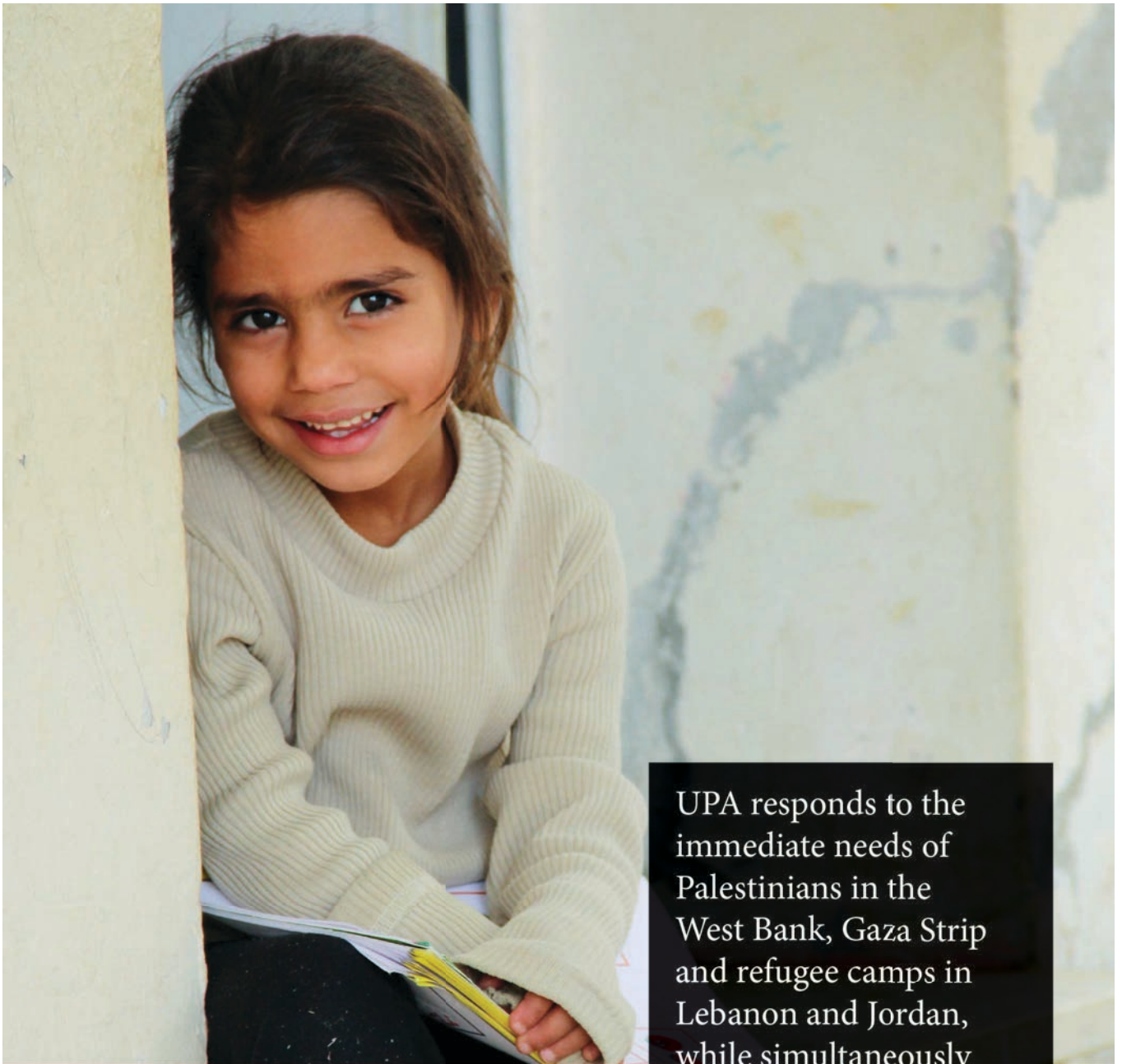


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# THE NEW SPECIALISTS

**Here is a look at the wide world of Foreign Service Specialists. We explore who they are, the many critical things they do, and how their work has evolved with our changing times.**

BY FRANCESCA KELLY

Sitting at his desk in a mid-sized European embassy a few years ago, Llywelyn Graeme, the ambassador's Office Manager, was awaiting word that the Secretary of State's special representative had landed and was on her way to a packed day of meetings. Instead, Graeme got a call from State's Operations Center connecting him directly to the high-level official.

"She was at the airport. At the VIP lounge. There was no sign of any embassy staff to meet her," Graeme recounted. "Keeping her on my desk phone, I used my cell to determine that not only was no one there at the airport, but no one was on the way, either!"

Graeme quickly got the ambassadorial limo lined up. Then, he says: "I dashed down three flights of stairs, hitting the parking lot as the driver came from the lounge at a dead run. We entered the car together and left at speed, clearing the barrier to the embassy by inches. I told him he absolutely could not cause any damage, but that he should drive at his top safe

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*Francesca Kelly is a freelance writer, editor, college application tutor and former AFSA News editor. She is married to Ambassador Ian Kelly, an FSO since 1985.*



Embassy Nairobi

Information Resource Officer Henry Mendelsohn speaks to American Spaces Kenya coordinators during a workshop at Embassy Nairobi's American Reference Center on April 23.

speed to the airport, a trip that normally took 45-50 minutes. That day we managed it in 18 minutes, getting the special representative's bags into the trunk less than 30 minutes after her initial call."

A typical day? No. Then again, specialist heroics are not uncommon, either—and they usually occur behind the scenes, earning few accolades.

Specialists have always been, well, specialized. But in recent years, under the dual drivers of terrorism and technology, their job descriptions have evolved rapidly. And yet, the more some things change, the more others stay the same. A lack of understanding about what, exactly, specialists do has

A lack of understanding about what, exactly, specialists do has plagued the Foreign Service for the past half-century.

plagued the Foreign Service for the past half-century. Even if you are a specialist yourself, you may well have no idea what a specialist in a different field does.

On the careers.state.gov website, specialists are grouped into the following broad categories: Administration, Construction Engineering, Facility Management, Information Technology, International Information/English Language Programs, Medical/Health, Office Management and Security. However, these groupings don't tell a complete story and, in the case of "Administration," for example, can further muddy the waters. The 19 job titles are more telling (see p. 25).

For example, management counselors at missions can be generalists or specialists. General Services Officers can be specialists or generalists, but Financial Management Officers are always specialists. Facility Managers go through the same training as GSOs and act as GSO at some posts. Information Managers are called IM Specialists until they reach the grade of FS-2; then are considered IM Officers—managers, but still specialists. Similarly, Office Management Specialists become Office Managers, or OMs, when they reach FS-3 or FS-4 or are assigned to chiefs of mission, but cannot be promoted any higher.

Confused? Well, this *is* the State Department, after all.

So let's clear the air. It's time to review who the new specialists are and how their jobs have evolved along with our changing times.

## Expertise and Education Are Essential

"Generalists and specialists each make up roughly 50 percent of the Foreign Service," says Terry Davidson, who served, until recently, as Recruitment Outreach Division Chief for the Bureau of Human Resources. "We like to say that generalists tend to be outwardly focused, in work engaging the host country; and that specialists tend to be focused on making the embassy platform work." Davidson, who is currently diplomat-in-residence for the Washington, D.C., metro region, adds: "Information Resources Officers and Regional English Language Officers are the exceptions." (These two positions, originally part of the former United States Information Agency, are focused on outreach to the host country's local population.)

That doesn't mean, however, that specialists do not interact with local citizens. All specialist tracks require good communications skills, which often include foreign language ability. Since the Career Development Program for specialists was launched in 2005 by the Director General of the Foreign Service, foreign language and job-specific training are now requirements for promotion within the ranks of many specialties.

Unlike generalists, specialists cannot enter the Foreign Service without expertise in their field. With a few excep-

tions, specialists hold undergraduate degrees, and quite often, advanced degrees or certification(s), along with years of experience. There's a saying that's gone around the specialist ranks for years: *Specialists are hired on experience; generalists are hired on potential.* There is some truth to that statement: Generalists, who are selected via the multitiered Foreign Service exam, do not, technically, need a college degree or specific expertise to enter the Foreign Service, while most specialists must have a bachelor's degree and relevant experience even to apply.

For instance, the Office of Medical Services. "Many of our psychiatrists have had additional training, or are double-boarded in subspecialty fields such as child/adolescent psychiatry, geriatric psychiatry, addiction psychiatry, consult-liaison psychiatry and forensic psychiatry," says Kenneth Dekleva, director of the Office of Medical Services' Mental Health Department. "Several have MBA, Ph.D. and MPH degrees, as well. Languages spoken by our psychiatrists include Spanish, French, German, Russian, Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian, Japanese, Chinese, Turkish, Dutch, Greek and Hindi."

Or take Diplomatic Security. As Supervisory Special Agent Ronnie Catipon, regional director for Afghanistan and Iraq in DS's Directorate for High Threat Programs, notes: "There are lots of agents who are former military and former law enforcement. Their skill sets and experience are just tremendous. They've often served overseas and speak foreign languages."

In recent years, most FS specialties have seen an upswing in both numbers and qualifications of applicants. This change was mentioned by almost every specialist we spoke with.

And yet, these qualifications rarely lead to the very top levels of the Service. It is unusual for a specialist to become chief of mission, a fact that engenders some resentment. Some specialists, upon reaching the highest grade attainable, have then made the switch to generalist.

## What's In a Name?

If people do not know what specialists do, acronyms might be partly to blame. Saying you are a "political officer" or a "press attaché" is fairly comprehensible to the general public, whereas calling yourself an OMS, an IMS or an RELO conveys very little. Even longtime members of the FS community sometimes have to ask what these acronyms stand for.

It wasn't always this way. Titles such as Foreign Service Librarian or Embassy Doctor—the terms of several decades ago—are dated, but at least they give us a better idea of specialists' work than, say, IRO and RMO (Information Resource



Courtesy of David Jesser

Division Director David Jesser, at left, from FSI's School of Applied Information Technology, discusses curriculum changes for the Regional Emergency & Evacuation class with Instructor Tim Timmons.

Officer and Regional Medical Officer, respectively). And if someone's an FMO, how do we know if she's a Financial Manager or a Facility Manager?

As technology has changed, specialist jobs—the required skill sets—have changed, as well. Often, this is reflected in their new titles. For instance, Information Technology Digital and Telephone Specialists have been combined into a new “unified communications” specialty, ITMS-UC, and Foreign

Unlike generalists, specialists cannot enter the Foreign Service without expertise in their field.

Service Secretaries are now Office Management Specialists.

It was in the late 1990s, says Office Manager Llywelyn Graeme, that “we went from ‘Foreign Service Secretary’ to OMS, which I don’t think many of us liked. I have a heck of a time explaining my job title to host-nation staff.” OM Elizabeth Babroski adds: “A few years ago, they gave us a new job title; I’m still not sure why. So now all administrative support staff at the State Department are called OMSs. I call myself Executive Assistant to the Ambassador, or Personal Assistant, and usually Ambassador’s Secretary to my counterparts, especially in other languages. [Whatever the title,] everyone seems to know what I do.”

Making a title clearer to people of other nations—as well as to U.S. citizens—is also part of the reasoning behind a potential name change for Foreign Service Health Practitioners. Jeri Lockman, director of the Office of Medical Services’ Foreign Service Health Practitioners Program, which oversees both nurse practitioners and physician’s assistants, laments: “We have been struggling for years to find a title that encompasses both professions and one that also clearly defines what we do and who we are.” That may soon change, she says: “The job title ‘Health Practitioner’ is not recognized by anyone outside of the State Department. We are considering ‘Foreign Service Medical Provider,’ so you may be seeing this title in future references to NPs and PAs.”

In the case of Information Resource Officers, not only has their title changed, but the places where they work have been drastically revamped. These former “Regional Librarians” used to be based in American libraries and press/cultural centers in capitals and other major cities around the world. Now IROs work with the newly minted American Spaces, which can take various forms, including American Corners—spaces in remote locations provided in cooperation with the host nation.



# Foreign Service Specialties

## Administration

**Financial Management Officer.** Develop budgets and financial plans, control obligations and expenditures, prepare and audit payment vouchers, administer payroll plans, approve salary and allowance payments and monitor cash operations.

**General Services Officer.** Develop, plan, implement and manage an ongoing program of support that includes contracting, inventory/property, physical facilities, space management, travel and transportation, motor pool, and maintenance and repair schedules.

**Human Resources Officer.** Responsible for recruitment, employee training and development, performance management, employee relations, salary and benefits administration, employee policies and procedures and position classification.

## Construction Engineering

**Construction Engineer.** Monitor and report on contract work overseas to ensure that the construction of new properties and renovation of existing properties are completed properly, on time and within budget.

## Facility Management

**Facility Manager.** Manage the upkeep of buildings, grounds, fixtures and utilities overseas.

## Information Technology

**Information Management Specialist.** Manage and operate worldwide information technology infrastructure, including PC local and wide area networks, telecommunications systems, telephone and UHF/VHF programs, and diplomatic pouch and mail services.

**Information Management Technical Specialist (Radio).** Perform site surveys, installation and maintenance of associated hardware and software for UHF/VHF land mobile systems.

**Information Management Technical Specialist (Unified Communications)** Responsible for the installation, repair and maintenance of a wide range of digital and telephone equipment.

## International Information and English Language Programs

**English Language Officer.** Responsible for all Department of State–sponsored English-teaching activities in a country; or, as a Regional ELO, responsible for English-language program activities in several countries, necessitating extensive travel.

**Information Resource Officer.** Counsel mission officials on effective information program resources and services, assess staff needs, carry out regional training programs, demonstrate and promote U.S. electronic information resources, and

establish contacts with host-country information and library institutions.

## Medical and Health

**Health Practitioner.** Diagnose and treat patients and administer a full range of community health care services, including preventive health education for the official mission community.

**Regional Medical Officer.** Provide primary medical care and appropriate health information and disease prevention program at each post of responsibility, as well as a host of other medical and health-related responsibilities.

**Regional Medical Officer/Psychiatrist.** Provide primary psychiatric care for each post in the supported geographical region, as well as a host of other psychiatric and mental health-related responsibilities.

**Regional Medical Laboratory Scientist.** Perform routine visitations to regional area health units to evaluate and monitor performance of local laboratory technologists. Maintain the laboratory at post of assignment, as well as X-ray equipment.

## Office Management

**Office Management Specialist.** Provide general office management, conference and visitor support, as well as administrative and secretarial support.

## Security

**Diplomatic Courier.** Safeguard and escort diplomatic pouches containing classified and sensitive material between U.S. diplomatic missions overseas and the Department of State.

**Security Engineering Officer.** Provide technical security support and engineering expertise to protect U.S. Foreign Service posts overseas, in Washington, D.C., or Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Responsibilities range from security system design, development and analysis to installation and testing.

**Security Technical Specialist.** Provide support and assist in worldwide technical security programs. Provide overall program management, maintenance and support for protection of Department of State facilities and personnel from technical espionage, acts of terrorism and crime.

**Diplomatic Security Special Agent.** Advise ambassadors on all security matters and manage a complex range of security programs designed to protect personnel, facilities and information. In the United States, protect the Secretary of State and visiting foreign dignitaries, investigate passport and visa fraud, and conduct personnel security investigations.

*SOURCE: Department of State/careers.state.gov*

## Agents of Change

The most compelling reasons for changes in the specialist field in recent years can be summed up in two words: **terrorism** and **technology**.

**Terrorism.** Specialist jobs were greatly affected by the African embassy bombings of the late 1990s, the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and the subsequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, with certain tracks hiring more people and others evolving to reflect needs of the Service.

Specialists employed through State's Overseas Building Office, such as Construction Engineers and Facility Managers, have gone through a sea change in focus that began even earlier. This shift took shape in response to the 1983 bombing of Embassy Beirut and the subsequent release of the 1985 Inman Report on Overseas Security that focused on creating safer U.S. embassy buildings. Those overseas missions deemed too close to the street, or in the middle of a crowded inner-city area, were either given up or reconstructed.

"Since the East African bombings in 1998 in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, Congress placed a much greater commitment towards funding security-driven construction at our diplomatic facilities," explains Eric Rumpf, managing director for the Construction, Facility and Security Management Directorate in OBO. "This support enabled OBO to complete more new embassies and consulates for the department than at any other time in our history."

Diplomatic Security, not surprisingly, has seen a growth in budget and personnel since 9/11. "When I entered the Foreign Service in 1997," recalls DS's Catipon, "there were 600-700 DS agents. Now it's over 2,000." He adds: "DS can be very picky because agent jobs are competitive. We'll have a job opening for, say, a month, and get over 10,000 applicants for just a few dozen positions."

With this rapid growth, Catipon has seen infrastructure and bureaucracy struggle to keep up: "There has been a big increase in all types of specialists, like Security Engineering Officers and Security Technical Specialists. The African bombings and other incidents, unfortunately, served as a catalyst for more funding from Congress for keeping us safe."

One long-serving Diplomatic Courier agrees. "Since Benghazi [Sept. 11, 2012], there's been direction from the very top that safety and security are more important. The evolution is slow, but it's happening."

Terrorism, warfare and other high-threat events have also caused MED to increase the number of Regional Medical Officers/Psychiatrists. Says Director of MED's Mental Health

The most compelling reasons for changes in the specialist field in recent years can be summed up in two words: terrorism and technology.

Services Kenneth Dekleva: "While the RMO/P program began in 1979 following terrorist events such as the tragic assassination of Ambassador Adolph Dubs in Kabul, and the 1979 hostage-taking in Tehran, it has subsequently grown to encompass a larger clinical role, in addition to its traditional roots in crisis/disaster response and consultation to senior leadership." Dekleva notes that the number of RMO/Ps has nearly doubled in the past decade.

Those specialists who reach out to local populations have felt the effects of terrorism, as well. "Before 9/11, I had the feeling that my job was almost 'adjunct' to public diplomacy; i.e., one of several cultural/educational resources provided by the State Department at U.S. embassies worldwide," says recently retired Regional English Language Officer Michael Rudder.

After 9/11, Rudder recalls, there was a meeting of all cultural and press attachés assigned to a large South American country: "The Public Affairs Officer said, 'Our top priority now is English-language teaching.' This comment somewhat startled me, but also made me aware of the new role our office was playing. From that moment, my job seemed to be given more attention and importance in the bigger picture, and the powers-that-be started noticing the work we were doing and its benefits to broader goals."

**Technology.** At the same time, technology advances have greatly affected the work of FS specialists. It's a given that those in information technology must stay abreast of the latest advances, but they can only move as fast as the State Department bureaucracy will let them. While BlackBerries have been State's chosen method of telephony for many reasons, mostly to do with security, more and more iPads are being distributed in lieu of, or in addition to, laptops. As communications are now digitized, "sending in a cable" doesn't actually happen these days, despite continued usage of the phrase.

David Jesser is an IT manager who joined the Foreign Service

in 1988. Currently director of the Enterprise Technology Division/School of Applied Information Technology at FSI, he recalls: “Most of us were fresh out of the military, where we managed telex communications and operated radios. We already had top-secret clearances, and we started as FS-8/9s. I was very happy to transfer my military skill code for a position in the Foreign Service.”

But those days are gone. Jesser, who also serves as a subject matter expert for the Board of Examiners and holds a master’s degree in technology studies, has seen both the work and the caliber of specialists change dramatically. “The move to system networks meant a great change in skill codes, and communications staff members needed to embrace this change if they wanted to be successful in their careers,” he says.

IMS Robert Levay, now in Kabul, has also seen a rapid change in the department’s use of technology, claiming that State “is doing a tremendous job of catching up to the rest of the world.” But he admits that IMS personnel are “running ragged” to accomplish this.

Diplomatic Security is scrambling to stay one step ahead, as well, but at least budget increases have helped beef up both personnel and technology in that domain. DS’s Catipon speaks glowingly of some of the new technologies that both enhance the mission and keep personnel safe, such as Forward-Looking Infra-Red cameras. When attacks did occur in Afghanistan, where he was recently posted, personnel had “great imagery” at their disposal, he reports.

New technology doesn’t only affect information and security specialists. Regional Medical Officers have a growing telemedicine program for use in the field. And digital architectural design and engineering technology has become more sophisticated, aiding FS Construction Engineers and Facility Managers. Says one veteran Facility Manager: “New embassy designs have implemented the latest changes in technology, installing advanced equipment and systems. This has resulted in the need to recruit Facility Managers with technical degrees and experience in facilities with similar technology, and to develop training programs so that existing FM’s can learn the skills necessary to operate our advanced embassy systems.”

OBO’s Rumpf has also observed the intertwined effects



Office Manager Elizabeth Babroski in front of OSCE headquarters in Vienna.

Inside a U.S. Embassy (2011)

of terror threats and technological advances. “In 2000, OBO’s initial response to get our colleagues placed into safer facilities included retooling itself to simplify its construction methodologies and find ways to increase the speed of delivering new facilities,” he explains. There has been an added benefit to the public, too. “The department’s lessons learned and research and development efforts have also really helped the security and construction industries improve the materials and products sold on the

market today.”

Technology has also changed the way specialists (and generalists) receive training. Jill E. Perry, Human Resources Course Chair at FSI’s School of Professional and Area Studies/Management Tradecraft Training Division, explains: “In the past few years, training and development for HR Specialists has moved far beyond the classroom. [FSI] promotes a climate of continuous learning for HROs by offering digital video conferences on demand, animated training clips and online games. The HR Bureau is also reaching out to HR Specialists via webinars to offer a forum for discussion and collaboration.”

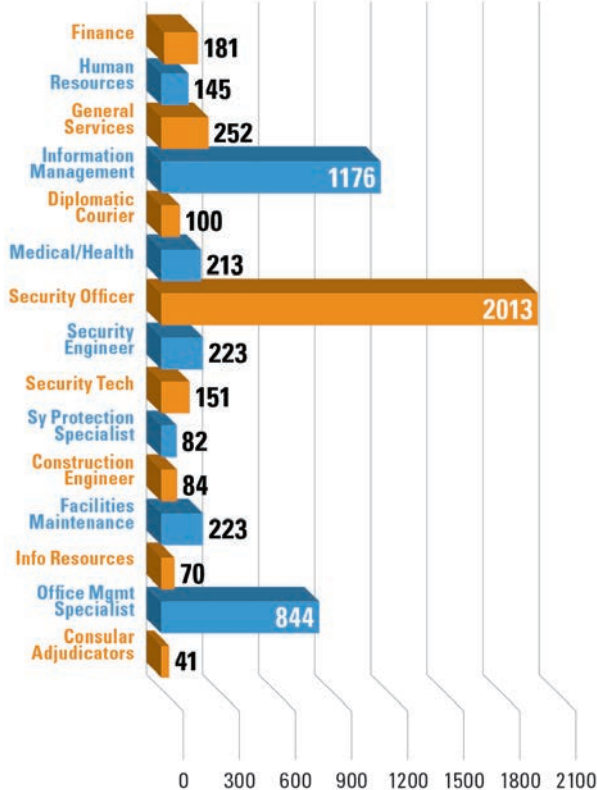
## High-Threat and Hardship Posts

The last decade has seen an increase in FS personnel at the world’s hot spots. In the past, an embassy caught in a sudden war zone might have been shuttered. Now, personnel are not necessarily evacuated unless the situation on the ground descends into chaos. For instance, as of this writing, Embassy Tel Aviv is still open despite hostilities between Hamas and Israel. Other missions, on almost every continent, are in a similar situation: still open, still maintaining diplomatic relations despite an unstable political scenario. This is due at least in part to increased DS specialist presence and resources.

The proliferation of high-threat and greater hardship posts puts pressure on specialists, just as on generalists. Both, after all, are “worldwide available.”

For Human Resources Officers, high-threat posts translate into “high alert,” says Perry. “I was the HRO in Cairo in 2011, and assisted during one of the largest State Department evacuations. So from my perspective, the biggest issue for HROs is maintaining a constant state of readiness for an evacuation at a moment’s notice.” She notes that “accounting for our people and their

## Specialists by Skill Category



Source: Based on statistics from the State Department Bureau of Human Resources, 2014.

and security standards. Despite State Department policies dictating no-smoking zones on transport planes, for example, what does a courier do when he's 30,000 feet in the air, surrounded by a local crew who are all chain-smoking? And who stays with the pouch on a two-person, 10-hour drive when the courier needs a bathroom break, and the driver is a local hire?

### Career Development, Management and Morale

In 2005-2006, the Director General of the Foreign Service issued a series of cables detailing a new Career Development Plan for specialists. In essence, on a specialty-by-specialty basis, certain steps were outlined as prerequisites for promotion. These steps include language and other training, advanced certification and supervisory experience. For specialists, this was, in theory, a means of making the promotion process more transparent. In practice? Results vary.

Many of those in the OMS and IMS tracks—coincidentally, two of the specialties with the largest numbers—find promotion opportunities discouraging, but for different reasons. Some OMSs are particularly frustrated that they cannot be promoted above the FS-3 rank. However, promotion opportunities have improved in the past decade, explains Babroski, currently Office Manager to the ambassador to the Vatican. She points to perks such as mandatory training and a variety of assignments, including in the front office and hardships, over a career span: “I think it’s been a good thing because it provides more training opportunities. And it’s easy to meet the requirements to be eligible for promotion to FS-4, which is the senior tier, over a regular career span.”

While acknowledging that the OMS specialty has “extremely low promotion rates,” she keeps a positive attitude. “The naysayers think it restricts training opportunities, forces hardships and disadvantages those with medical/special needs. I’m living proof that’s not true, and I know I’m not alone. I think the CDP has brought order and reasonable expectations to the OMS career span.”

On a dissenting note, an OMS who wishes to remain anonymous did send *FSJ* a comment on the “horrible promotion rates” within the Office Management specialty. And Teresa Yata, a GSO specialist who started out as an OMS, maintains: “OMSs are still thought of as menial secretaries and are often treated as such.”

Overall, reviews of the CDP are mixed. One Diplomatic Courier says: “The CDP is meaningless; promotion is based on who management likes. Unless the promotion panel sees you sitting in a management/stretch position, you’re not getting promoted.”

Yata, however, sees some good aspects to the new program: “One positive change I have seen over the past several years is

families, making sure they get to safety, and helping reintegrate them at post when the crisis is resolved is a huge challenge, but an incredibly important job.”

Foreign Service Construction Engineers are posted more frequently to high-threat posts, says OBO’s Rumpf. Those are the locations that the department identifies as “[having] the most vulnerable facilities to be replaced,” Rumpf explains. “With the challenges that these difficult environments present (e.g., violence, corruption, unskilled work forces, extreme weather), I consider the FSCEs to be some of the most determined, goal-oriented professionals in the department.”

MED’s Lockman says, “Foreign Service Medical Providers are located around the globe. Eighty percent of the 99 FSMP posts are 15-percent or greater hardship posts. These posts have significant health risks, and the local medical facilities are often inadequate to cope with these health concerns.”

For their part, Information Resource Officers are working with American Corners—small U.S. cultural and information centers often located in remote areas.

Several Diplomatic Couriers have pointed out that working in hard-to-reach locations often involves a degradation of safety

A more prosaic factor that can affect specialist morale at post has to do with the Vienna Convention.

the ability to have language training. When I first came into the FS, specialists very rarely were considered for that. Now almost everyone gets some opportunity for some language.”

But one Financial Management Officer, who wishes to remain anonymous, feels more can be done. “All department personnel must be able to function in the countries they serve in. Language [instruction] has grudgingly been given to specialists, but [it is] still unnecessarily difficult to obtain.”

IMS personnel have strong opinions on promotion opportunities. Neeru Lal serves in the public affairs office within the Bureau of Information Resource Management. She came in as an IMS but is now an Information Technology Manager. When it comes to promotion for IMSs, “you can go all the way to senior FS, but only as a manager.” She adds: “We don’t appreciate highly technical skills—if you want to be a technical innovator, like a programmer, you aren’t able to do that past FS-3. Once you reach FS-2, you must demonstrate effective managerial and leadership skills.”

But Jesser asserts that “if people have really good technical skills, they will be utilized well. If you lead a section, you can still be innovative. I’m a manager, but I still work with technical programs. So I think we value technical skills quite a bit.”

Many we spoke with, especially in security and information specialties, cited bottlenecks in promotion, with few positions offered at the higher grades. One IMS posits, “A lot of people who might have retired by now have not, because of the poor economy.”

IMS Terry Pozcak says, “I have read over the CDP, and like most career things in the department it does a poor job of capturing the difference [between the] IT specialty and other careers.” It might help with promotions over the long term, Pozcak acknowledges, but he’s not optimistic: “It takes an average of 10 years just to get to FS-3 for IMSs. When you compare the FSO promotion statistics to the IMS promotion statistics, it is a very gloomy picture and highlights how [little] the department values IT talent.”

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Diplomatic Courier Ed Bent, at right, manages pouches in Frankfurt, July 2009.

Another IMS, speaking on background, says he's been "surprised by how little focus there is on [teaching] good management skills." An anonymous Diplomatic Courier's management concerns have more to do with security practices: "I'm not able to name one person in management who has received training in logistics management, transportation safety or industrial security."

These promotion issues are not limited to a few specialties. A Facility Manager told us on background: "Unfortunately, the Facility Manager career path is severely constrained when compared to the rest of the Foreign Service. While other specialist and generalist career paths have numerous counselor and minister counselor positions for advancement, the Facility

Manager cone has only one OC position. This is puzzling in light of the responsibilities and resources of the Facility Manager overseas." At a typical embassy, he adds, the FM manages the largest staff and budget.

Yata finds promotion within GSO specialist ranks "complicated by the fact that there are GSO generalists, GSO specialists and, now, ever more people from random cones doing GSO work, much as they were previously required to do consular work. This makes it difficult for specialists to get the 'good' posts as they tend to go to generalists."

And, of course, there's the omnipresent State Department bureaucracy. Although no one wants to think of himself or herself as a bureaucrat, both specialists and generalists roll out

the red tape when needed—but often it’s the specialists who take the heat at post.

### Specialists vs. Generalists

And that brings us to the elephant in the room: the rumored animosity between generalists and specialists. Is it a reality or a myth?

Much of the “caste system” seems to be disappearing, although some complaints of ill-treatment on both sides do pop up. Misconceptions about specialist job descriptions and background are a factor; but another is fueled by management, particularly situations where generalists are in positions where they manage specialists. As one FS community member puts it, “Management-coned people can be specialists or generalists, and there is some friction there.” In informal feedback to the *Journal*, several specialists complained anonymously that they feel generalists look down on them. “Not sure if they are breeding that attitude in A100 [orientation], but it persists,” one remarked.

Much of the “caste system” seems to be disappearing, although some complaints of ill-treatment on both sides do pop up.

A more prosaic factor that can affect specialist morale at post has to do with the Vienna Convention and its vaguely worded stipulation dividing diplomats posted overseas into two categories: those who hold diplomatic privileges and immunity, usually with the title consul or secretary, and “support staff” who do not receive the same privileges.

Explained a specialist who wishes to remain anonymous: “At many embassies [specialists are] not accredited and do



## Cystic Fibrosis Research Community Support

In 1993, NFL quarterback Boomer Esiason learned that his son Gunnar was diagnosed with the incurable, genetic disease cystic fibrosis (CF). Never ones to back down from a fight, he and his wife Cheryl founded BEF and decided right then and there to fight to find a cure for CF. To date, BEF has raised over \$100 million.



"My husband, who has CF, and I are especially grateful for the positivity shown by Boomer and the team. People with CF are fighters, and BEF exemplifies that attitude."

- Jennifer



[www.esiason.org](http://www.esiason.org) | [www.Facebook.com/BoomerEsiasonFoundation](http://www.Facebook.com/BoomerEsiasonFoundation) | [@CysticFibrosis](https://twitter.com/CysticFibrosis) | [info@esiason.org](mailto:info@esiason.org)

BEF is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to supporting the cystic fibrosis community.



not have the same diplomatic privileges as generalists. Without accreditation, specialists are not entitled to the same protection as diplomats. They are also not entitled to certain administrative privileges such as tax advantages, car registration benefits, etc.” Specialists who are managers of sections can sometimes, at the discretion of post management, get on the diplomatic list by being listed as vice consuls.

In 2004 then-IMS David Jesser won the AFSA Representative of the Year award for his work to attain duty-free status for specialists in Pretoria, using reciprocity as justification for the change in that post’s policy. “The one thing that really concerned me was that at many posts there were financial inequities between those on the Diplomatic List and those who were listed as Administration and Technical Staff personnel,” explains Jesser. “For example, as an FS-2 in Pretoria, I had no access to the duty-free stores, while a first-tour generalist automatically had that privilege.”

The Vienna Convention issue was the only one cited by Jesser as fostering a divide between generalists and specialists. He attests that shared activities, such as the scuba diving he has done with other mission personnel, eliminate any feeling of “us vs. them.”

OBO’s Eric Rumpf agrees. “At the end of the day, if one can catch a softball, barbecue a burger, help at an orphanage, or in some way contribute positively to the small communities we find ourselves in, those perceptions and labels fade immediately.” However, Rumpf does see “a lack of understanding between the two, and the expertise and services each provides. That chasm underscores the need for the department to continue investing in our newer Foreign Service cadre through mentorships, training and improved communications.”

Humor helps. An anonymous Security Engineer, who blogs at [opsecblog.wordpress.com](http://opsecblog.wordpress.com), writes in his comic essay, “Nine Things You Need to Accept About Being a FS Specialist”: “In the first couple weeks of my first tour, I knew the RMO made sure I didn’t keel over, the GSO assigned me my housing, and the FMO could make my job immeasurably easier or harder as they controlled the cash. Oh, and I figured out pretty quickly that the OMS was a godsend. The SEO stereotype is ‘the tech guy,’ and gets approached as such. No, I cannot fix your microwave right now.”



Facility Manager Gary Hein stands in front of the chief-of-mission residence and embassy office building in Cairo.

Many specialists don’t notice any tension at all. “I find it interesting that this question continues to surface,” remarks HR Course Chair Perry. “I have not experienced any issues in the 12 years I’ve been with State.”

In fact, there are a number of other divisions, both real and imaginary, at overseas missions that don’t involve specialists and generalists. Military vs. civilian, employee vs. spouse, senior staff vs. junior staff, FS vs. FSN/LES: all are potential minefields. And

yet, most people in the Foreign Service community do, in fact, move past these labels and act as a team, especially when the post atmosphere is imbued with inclusiveness and a sense of mission.

## The Good News

It is much easier now to find information about specialists and what they do, starting with State’s [careers.state.gov](http://careers.state.gov) site (complete with appealing but not overly informative videos of FS personnel in the field) and, for a bigger and more complex picture, through unofficial Internet sites and blogs. More transparency leads to increased knowledge and understanding of different officers’ skill sets—and how they contribute to the team.

Says GSO Crowder: “My personal experience has been that people treat me with the same respect and professional courtesy as they do generalists. Actually, unless the subject comes up in relation to bidding or promotion, it is not something that people generally talk about one way or the other. The focus seems to be on the quality of the work—which I think is a good sign.”

Despite promotion and morale problems, Foreign Service life still offers perks that can’t be found elsewhere, for both generalists and specialists. “I really do enjoy my job and count it as a privilege to be a support to the embassy where I am assigned,” says GSO Crowder.

The new specialists know their worth and have largely lost the old, stereotypical roles of the past century. Says OM Graeme, “I won’t make you coffee because I don’t drink it. Maybe tea?” ■



# SPECIALISTS REFLECT ON THEIR WORK

*The Journal invited AFSA members who are specialists to share stories and thoughts on their own experience in a particular specialty or the career track generally. Here is a selection of the responses we received. We thank all those who responded.*

—Shawn Dorman, Editor

## Best. Job. Ever.

By William Middleton  
Information Resource Officer for  
Bangladesh, India, Nepal & Sri Lanka

As with some of the other specialties, IROs often have shorter Foreign Service careers because prior work experience is a prerequisite. As a result, retirements come fast and turnover is brisk, so there's a steady stream of new, although not necessarily young, IROs. With such a small corps—there are only about 30 of us—staffing gaps can open up if the roster isn't refreshed regularly.

As for the work, if public diplomacy is about the creation of political space, and about influencing public opinion so that a country's leadership has room to move in a new direction, then IROs' role in public diplomacy involves developing and supporting the platforms—in particular the physical spaces—where that political space can be created.

IROs perform this alchemy by working with American Spaces—the generic term for Information Resource Centers,

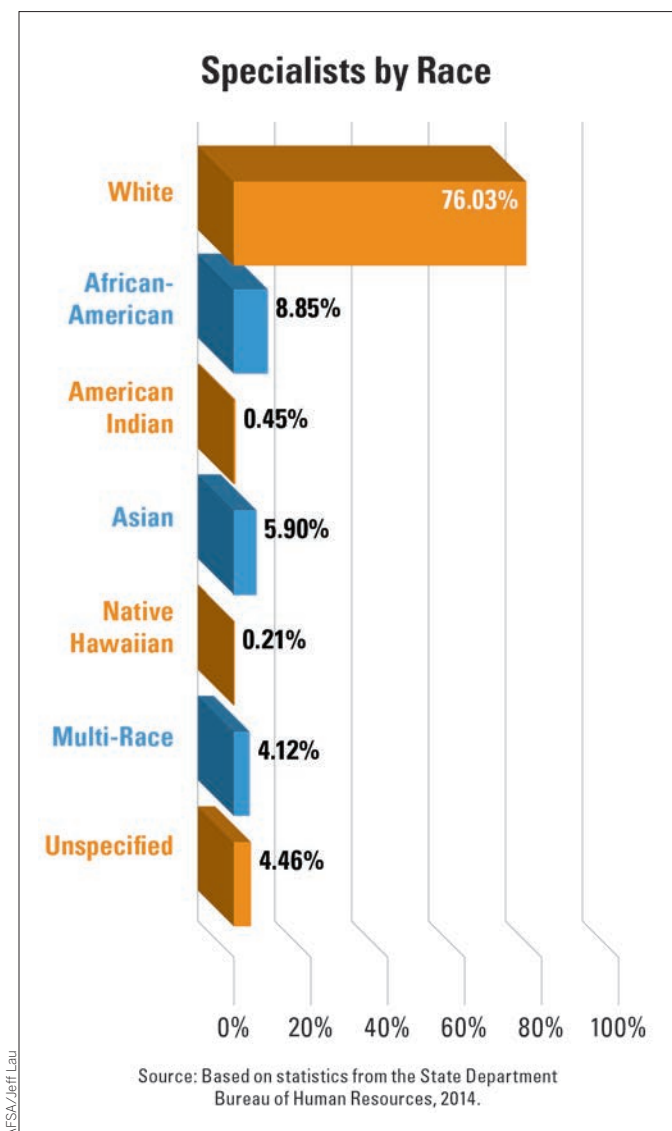
American Corners, American Centers and Binational Centers. Of the more than 700 American Spaces around the world, more than 460 are American Corners. American Corners—partnerships with host-country institutions in which we provide the books and computers and the partner provides the staff and space—are only a decade old, and their rapid growth has had a huge impact on IRO work.

One gets used to cycles in this business. Twenty years ago, our marching orders were to convert all our walk-in public facilities—that is, libraries—to limited access Information Resource Centers, on the assumption that we could do everything we needed to do virtually, influencing public opinion by pushing information out to hand-picked audiences via the Internet. Some of the more clever IROs noticed that the Internet had not yet arrived in their regions, at least not in any meaningful way, and they discretely deferred closing the library doors.

Their foot-dragging seemed prescient when, about 10 years later, the pendulum swung back, and elites were no longer our target audience. The IRC, a surgical tool, was a poor match for the younger, wider, deeper audiences that U.S. public diplomacy now focused on.

Around that same time, an enterprising and visionary IRO serving in a huge country was tasked with creating programming platforms outside of the capital city. His solution, the American Corner, was perfect for reaching this new audience, and the model proved incredibly popular with posts around the world.

IRO jobs have been shaped by our tools. When IRCs were our primary tool, our work leaned toward the press side of an embassy's public affairs section. With the rise of American



Corners, which are cultural programming platforms offering educational advising services, English-language teaching and exchange program alumni activities, the balance has shifted. IROs now seem more closely aligned with the cultural side of the house.

One day, I'm sitting at a table in Ashgabat with 20 American Center regulars. They borrow books, search the Internet, ask reference questions. One young student tells me he used the IRC to learn enough English to get into the Future Leaders high school exchange program (known as FLEX). Another studied here to pass her GRE exams.

One author tells us about the book he wrote using resources

he found in the Resource Center. The room we're in not only has Wi-Fi; it has Turkmenistan's fastest and cleanest Internet connection. Somebody mentions, cautiously, news sources here that can't be accessed anyplace else in the country. And it's all free.

When asked what we might do to improve services, they have only one suggestion: keep it open seven days a week instead of the current six.

Another day, I'm on a panel of judges at the side of the stage in the Kulob American Corner. A Tajik kid—14 years old, with huge ears and a voice so strong and pure and surprising we immediately nickname him Michael, after the King of Pop—is singing Sinatra in the first round of Tajikistan's American Song Competition.

Making these moments possible is what we do.

We were somewhere around Balkanabat, on the edge of the desert, when the realization began to take hold: Best. Job. Ever.

*William Middleton has been an Information Resource Officer since 1993, at which time the specialty belonged to the U.S. Information Agency and IROs were called Regional Library Officers. Currently serving in New Delhi, his previous postings include Lagos, Buenos Aires, Dakar, Vienna, Almaty and Washington, D.C.*

## King for a Day

By W. Paul Margulies Jr.

Diplomatic Security

I'm not sure what Saul Wahl, the so-called King of Poland for a day, did with his time, but my time at the helm (two days) was well-spent. A double absence of the ambassador and the deputy chief of mission in Valletta, Malta, in December 2013, gave me new perspective—coping with a security detail from the principal's point of view as opposed to the DS vantage point.

In September, we had inaugurated a new protective detail for the ambassador. Team Valletta adapted to the addition of a detail sourced by host-nation and locally employed staff, schedule changes and the normal day-to-day operations that affect a chief of mission and her detail. The ambassador and I had many conversations at the start of operations to cover the basics.

We still touch base to make sure her protection needs are as balanced as possible with her need for privacy. On the rare occasion that she leaves Malta, the detail protects the chargé d'affaires, in most cases the deputy chief of mission. He, too, is familiar with the requirements of having a protective detail in place and is good-natured about having them around.

My stint as chargé was a real eye-opener. Over the past 12-plus years with Diplomatic Security, I have worked on a protection

detail or two, but I had never been the principal. I often tried to visualize the impact of a security-related rule or regulation on a post or an individual. In most cases, since I live by these same rules, it was pretty easy for me to understand other people's perspectives. But, I have to admit, I never gave too much thought to protection; it comes with the job—mine as the occasional practitioner and the principal as someone who needs to be protected.

When the Front Office announced that I would be the chargé in December 2013, the Assistant Regional Security Officer said, somewhat tongue in cheek, "Are you going to keep the detail?" I have to admit my initial thought was to ditch the protection, but it was only a fleeting thought. A leadership conversation ensued in my head: Malta's chief of mission, and the chargé d'affaires in her absence, has a dedicated Ambassador's Protective Detail. I am a rule-follower. If the deputy chief of mission asked not to use the detail, my response would be a simple "no."

So I embraced the idea in spite of a little ribbing from my colleagues in the process. I announced, a bit sheepishly at first, that the detail would carry out their normal duties.

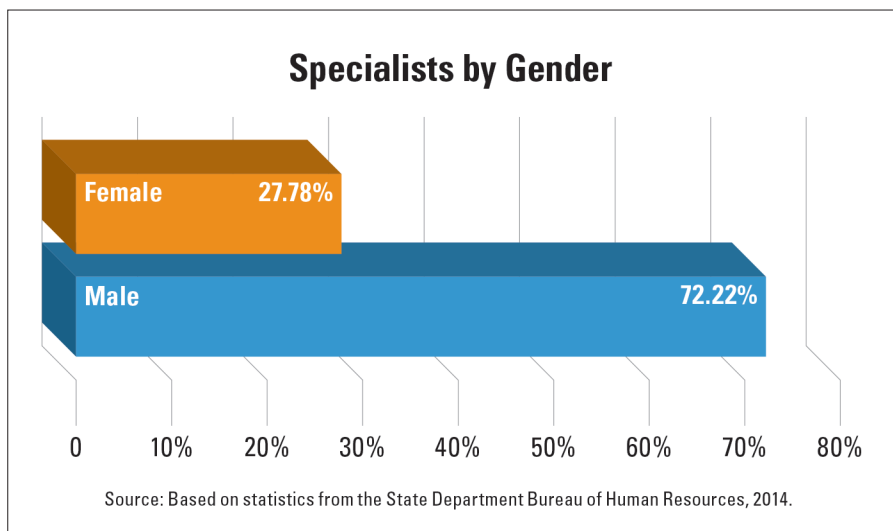
A few things stand out from the experience. My schedule was no longer my own. I was used to sharing my calendar with my staff, the front office and a few others, but knowing I needed to be mindful about last-minute changes was new to me. I adapted.

I liked being picked up for work. I got to sit in the back of the limo and read through emails unencumbered and unconcerned about the traffic gridlock around me.

I did not, however, like having the detail shadow (sometimes literally!) me during my not-so-daily afternoon run. The thing I really like about running is the solitude—no emails, just me and the road for 30 minutes. This time I had two runners, the limo and the follow, and a little claustrophobia! We live on a small island, about 19 miles long by 7 miles wide at its widest; but it was the detail that made me feel penned in.

Spontaneity was out the door. That quick run to the pharmacy looked very different when four minders and two cars became part of the equation. That controversial movie I was thinking about going to? Not this week. There were many more pros—and cons—of being in that position.

My biggest takeaway from the experience was just that—the experience. My two days at the helm won't go down in history



like it did for Saul Wahl, but the experience will stay with me. And the new insights will no doubt improve my management of the Ambassador's Protective Detail, ensuring it functions as smoothly as possible.

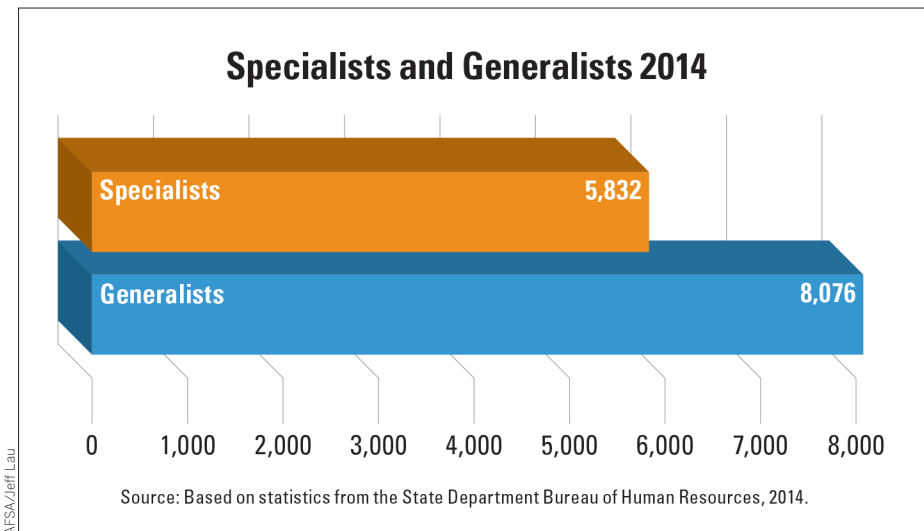
*W. Paul Margulies Jr. departed Embassy Valletta as Acting Deputy Chief of Mission in August. He is the new Regional Security Officer for Embassy Bishkek. He joined the Foreign Service in 2002 and is also a Lieutenant Commander with the U.S. Coast Guard reserve. In addition to Valletta and Bishkek, his Foreign Service assignments include Kabul, Belgrade, Bucharest and Washington, D.C.*

## A To-Do List from a Financial Management Officer

By an FMO at an Asia Post

I am happy to see the State Department return to the care and development of the Foreign Service Specialist corps. What can I say after 15 years of service? I've been fortunate to serve in fascinating places, and the trajectory of my career leaves nothing to complain about. As my time with the State Department is nearing its natural end, I offer some suggestions for consideration—in the form of "A To-Do List for Management"—in the hope that things will continue to improve for future employees.

- Increase the number of Senior Foreign Service positions. When one gets to the FS-1 level, especially while serving out of



cone, the employee is typically firing on all cylinders, doing some of his or her best work across a range of issues and utilizing greater depth of skill/knowledge.

- Survey the 17 Financial Management Officer specialists currently serving out of cone to find out why they are serving out of cone. Ask them why many FMOs leave their specialty and do not return. As someone who served out of cone, I confess it was an exceptional experience; but I was told that I should either return to my specialty or try to convert, because promotion opportunities would be nonexistent from there.

- Develop a specialist designation cone, which allows FMOs (and other specialists) to serve out of cone without being disadvantaged for promotion purposes. Consider something similar to classwide promotions on the generalist side.

- Increase opportunities for specialists to convert to generalist if they so desire.

- Develop a senior leadership seminar for specialists during years of service between FS-1 and, potentially, FS-OC. While many do not cross the threshold or perhaps choose not to open their window at all, serving at the 01 level can be a long stretch in a career. Once you have taken the current 01 leadership course, it could be years before you return to FSI for training, if at all. Consider developing an experiential seminar focusing on real-life events that participants can dissect and share among peers.

- Provide mandatory (fast) language training for all specialists! FSI language training is humbling (to put it nicely); but in the end the challenge of learning a language always serves us well. A basic foundation of everyday survival words and phrases from FSI would be useful. All department personnel must be able to

function in the countries they serve. Language has grudgingly been authorized for specialists (less grudgingly than when I started), but it is still unnecessarily difficult to obtain.

After so many years in the department, I realize that gaps can and are managed at post, and there are very few world-ending situations that arise if the employee shows up in October as opposed to August. Language ability will make the years of service more positive and productive.

Fortunately I served under several top leaders and was always treated as a respected partner and contributor to the team. However the “Us” (specialists) vs.

“Them” (generalists) divide still remains, with disdain flowing from generalists more so than the other way around. It seems to notch up or down depending on the front office attitude and how post leadership develops the entire team.

As I prepared this note, several colleagues revealed longstanding resentment about treatment received at the hands of generalist colleagues who acted as if they were superior—as if, in the middle of incoming fire, a bullet would know to swerve and hit the specialist instead of the generalist.

We’re a team, each providing valuable contributions.

## Despite Challenges and Change, We Make a Difference

By Henry Mendelsohn

Regional Information Resource Officer, Public Affairs Section  
Embassy Nairobi

I’ve been a Foreign Service Specialist and Regional Information Resource Officer for 20 years. I started with the United States Information Agency in 1994 and have been overseas since 1995 serving in mostly hardship and greater hardship postings.

One of the best pieces of advice I received during my first assignment is that I could easily do the job of a generalist, but a generalist could never do my job. I’ve found this to be consistently true. The specialized information science skills I’ve brought to my work complement and support the work of the State Department

and, in my opinion, add to our abilities to achieve U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives.

I've served as both as a regional consultant and a manager of American Spaces. My work has become more complex over the years as we introduce new information technologies, applications and services—especially Web-based technologies and applications—to how we provide accurate and authoritative information about the United States to local audiences, who often lack access to such information or the skills to access it.

Security concerns have also made public diplomacy work more complicated. The introduction and dramatic expansion of the American Corners program after 9/11 has tripled my workload, but it's also allowed me to travel to many locations outside the capital cities where our embassies are located. While initially responsible for working with and training locally employed staff in our embassy Information Resources Centers, I now have in my portfolio numerous American Corners staffed by non-U.S. government staff, often poorly educated and trained, and located in remote cities that can be difficult to reach. Needless to say, this is challenging.

Nonetheless, I believe Information Resource Officers and

our American Spaces fill a critical role in promoting U.S. foreign policy, society and values, and in many parts of the world they offer positive alternatives to youth at risk of falling under the influence of actors hostile to the United States.

Although I initially underestimated the challenges and sacrifices involved in living and working overseas—my family has been through three evacuations, we've survived terrorist attacks, and we've had friends killed in attacks—I also know I've touched lives, changed some attitudes about the U.S. for the better and, by doing so, helped make the world a little safer for American citizens.

*Henry Mendelsohn is the Regional Information Resource Officer at Embassy Nairobi, where his responsibilities include direct supervision of the embassy's American Reference Center and he serves as a regional consultant for U.S. Embassy and Consulate Information Resource Centers and American Corner libraries in Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Somalia, Tanzania, and North Sudan. Mr. Mendelsohn's previous postings include Cairo, Abuja, Abu Dhabi, Islamabad and New Delhi. ■*

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| <p><b>Saturday, Oct 4, 2014</b><br/><b>10am to 3pm</b><br/><b>at Oakwood Falls Church</b></p>   | <p><b>Description:</b><br/>This is for parents and teens considering their overseas experiences as they prepare for the college search &amp; application process. This is a rare opportunity to meet with Becky Grappo and Josh Stephens in person!</p> <p><b>Topics to include issues specific to the Foreign Service Community</b><br/>Come with Questions and Leave with Answers!</p> |  |
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# Learning from Women's Successes in Afghanistan

**Sensitivity and technical know-how are at a premium when working in these fragile and insecure environments.**

BY SANDYA DAS

**A**fter spending several years in Iran as a refugee, an Afghan teenager named Rafiqa was finally able to return to her hometown in 2002—only to be forced within months to marry a much older man. Robbed of her childhood, she endured an abusive relationship with her husband for several years in hopes of giving her daughter a brighter future.

In 2009 Rafiqa used a program funded by the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration to take classes on Afghan family, property and inheritance law. Those courses, taught by a nongovernmental organization that partners with PRM, changed her life.

Equipped with knowledge about the legal age of marriage, marriage contracts and the accountability of both sides in a contract, Rafiqa was empowered to prevent her family from marrying off her young daughter, which would end her daughter's education and leave her vulnerable to domestic violence and early or unwanted pregnancy.

## Helping Other Rafiqas

Far too many of the six million refugees who have returned to Afghanistan since 2002 still face similar hardships. But fortunately, the United States has stepped up as the leading international donor in terms of humanitarian assistance and protection there. During Fiscal Year 2014 alone, Washington has programmed more than \$175 million in humanitarian assistance to international and NGO partners that operate in Afghanistan and assist Afghan refugees in the region.

PRM also addresses the needs of internally displaced persons and other victims of conflict in Afghanistan, working closely with Afghan government officials, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and various international and nongovernmental organizations that prioritize women's protection and needs. These programs deal with health care; access to education; water, sanitation and hygiene; employment; and gender-based violence prevention.

Embassy Kabul's Refugee Coordinator leads a team that monitors and evaluates PRM's assistance projects in Afghanistan, and frequently meets with our NGO partners to review project benchmarks. For instance, in 2011 that office identi-

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*Sandya Das is an Afghanistan assistance program officer in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. She previously served in Juba, Mumbai and the Executive Secretariat.*

fied serious shortcomings in the performance of an organization that focuses on Afghan women's education and advises them of their legal rights. The embassy documented systemic flaws in the program's implementation, particularly in terms of following up on legal cases and referring participants elsewhere for additional services.

Based on this feedback, the NGO adjusted its operations to focus on using radio programming to explain sharia law and women's rights at the local level.

Responding to recommendations from the Refugee Coordinator and its own evaluation of a decade of programming in Afghanistan, PRM has gradually shifted its programming to build individual and community capacity to address returnee needs.

Through the NGO-sponsored program in Rafiqa's community, for instance, we successfully provided access to information and free legal assistance to more than 7,000 returning refugee and internally displaced women and girls. The training raised awareness of their legal rights with respect to housing, land and property through a community information campaign that reached more than 600 women. Several participants went on to serve in appointed leadership positions in their communities, defending the rights of women on a larger scale.

### Paying It Forward

Applying her newfound knowledge, Rafiqa reached out to help other women in the same position. She was soon appointed the head of 21 shuras, or local councils, in her district and used the position to educate women about the negative consequences of early marriage and of "baad," the practice of marrying a woman to someone as compensation to resolve disputes between families.

Inspired by Rafiqa's example, a social worker named Hamza was deeply committed to defending women's rights and was soon handpicked by her district governor to be the head of the



A school for Afghan refugee children.

Embassy/ Islamabad

district's Women's Civil Council. In this role, she argued cases, particularly those related to domestic violence, in front of the jirga, a tribal council. Since there were so few female officers and lawyers in her district, Hamza assisted local authorities in interviewing women who were brave enough to go to court but needed assistance with their cases.

In both Rafiqa and Hamza's situations, strong networks of local NGOs, community leaders and civil society actors expanded the project's reach to rural areas in an effort to ensure that vulnerable women and girls have access to information and services. They have brought gender-based violence issues into the public discourse, rather than leaving them as private issues marked by social, cultural and political stigma.

NGOs often struggle to initiate projects in communities where people are not sensitized to GBV, and are not yet willing to discuss those issues in public. In this case, PRM's partner managed to gain the support of community leaders, engaging both men and women not only to attend trainings but to actively engage in discussion and consult on the specific design of GBV programs. Assuring survivors that their cases will be kept confidential has been critical to gaining ground.

The success of PRM programs is largely due to our NGO partners' efforts to collaborate closely with community leaders by incorporating them into the decision-making and coordination process—and, of course, to the courage of the women who participate in the programs. Encouraging men, who typically make up leadership councils in communities, to participate



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in discussions on social attitudes and gender roles is another critical component in enhancing Afghan women's empowerment and protection in a conservative environment. These discussions have led to men being more willing to allow their wives and daughters to acquire basic literacy skills and to be more accepting of the important role that women play in the community and household.

It is also important to bear in mind that a lot of this work is done in very fragile and insecure environments, where a great deal of sensitivity and technical know-how is required. Our partners are likely putting themselves at additional risk in Afghanistan—where civilian casualties and kidnapping of aid workers are on the rise—by working directly with the U.S. government. These sensitivities make it more difficult to give credit where it is due, especially to those who risk their lives every day to serve the Afghan people.

## A Role Model

Promoting lives of dignity and prosperity for women and girls is a top priority for PRM in all of our interventions worldwide, but it is especially urgent in Afghanistan. Since 2002, we have provided health services with a focus on reproductive, maternal and children's care; supported efforts to combat GBV; trained women in agricultural and animal husbandry techniques, marketing and business development; and supported literacy programs to help returnee families rebuild their lives.

Between 2011 and 2012, a PRM NGO partner provided vocational training to 1,000 women and men; 75 percent of the graduated trainees found employment or apprenticeships, and 50 percent of the small enterprise groups were functioning three months after the project's completion. We expect this number to grow. Monitoring reports show PRM's programs have significantly improved the role of women in decision-making at the household level and their awareness of economic possibilities outside the home.

Rafiq continues to be a strong advocate in her community for women's rights. She has referred several cases to one of PRM's partner legal units, and has persuaded some men to allow their wives and daughters to attend basic literacy courses. She even persuaded a court to annul a marriage contract between a 15-year-old girl and a man 30 years her senior, which the girl's family had drawn up when she was just 3 years old.

Stories like Rafiq's remind us that while PRM's work in Afghanistan is challenging, even dangerous, it is making a real difference in the lives of women and girls there. ■





Christopher Teal

# FLYING MONKEYS IN THE EMBASSY

**For 24 hours,  
the most heavily  
fortified building  
in Colombo was  
compromised  
by a monkey.**

BY CHRISTOPHER TEAL

**T**he embassy was on the verge of being overrun. Sri Lanka had not seen activity like this since the Tamil Tigers were defeated a few years back. Everyone had hoped for a return to normalcy, but now this.

The details were sketchy, as they always are in the fog of war. All that anyone knew was that an intruder had entered the chancery. At first it wasn't clear if it was just one, or there were many. The Marine Security Guards were on high alert. General Services and Regional Security Offices set up a rapid-reaction task force to poke through closets and rip out ceiling tiles to find a trail and look for clues.

Should everyone be evacuated? RSO rapidly banged out an embassywide warning message: "Ground Floor Locked Down—Please Exit/Enter thru Post 2."

As the brave GSO and RSO team continued their search and peered into the darkness of the ground floor ceiling, a closet door behind them swung open. Out the intruder casually strolled, not one bit surprised to see a team of men standing at the base of a ladder in the hallway. They turned

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*Christopher Teal is an FSO and a former member of the FSJ Editorial Board. Aside from Colombo, he has served in mostly monkey-free environments, including Santo Domingo, Lima, Guadalajara and Washington, D.C. He is now consul general in Nogales, Mexico. He is the author of Hero of Hispaniola: America's First Black Diplomat, Ebenezer D. Bassett (Praeger, 2008).*



At left, the veterinarian readies his tranquilizer gun. On previous page, the tranquilized monkey takes a breather at the opening of the air duct before making a daring escape from the waiting net.

just quickly enough to see him smirk, and the RSO swears that he shot them a middle finger before scampering up the ladder and into the now-gaping hole of the ceiling tiles. The monkey was loose, back into the bowels of the building.

The RSO message continued: “The ground floor doors are locked down right now because there is a monkey trapped on the ground floor. Until further notice please enter/exit the building thru Post 2.”

It was a full-blown crisis. Now we were getting sit reps. There was discussion of standing up an embassy task force, setting up shifts.

Questions raced through the mind of everyone in the country team meeting. Was this an ordinary monkey? It was smart enough to have made it into the most heavily fortified building in all of Colombo. Maybe it had been trained? Maybe it was a spy monkey? Maybe it was a flying monkey—how else could it have gotten in?

### A Full-Blown Crisis

By now it was late afternoon and everyone wondered if we should just send the staff home. The guards outside Post One had left the door open, vainly hoping that the monkey would see daylight and dart out. But by now he moved through the ventilation shafts. This guy was smart, and seemed to know where he was going.

The GSO/RSO team was augmented with additional staff. Homemade monkey catchers were quickly assembled. Someone grabbed an extra-large, empty bag from the diplomatic pouch. Maybe they could corner him, and throw the bag over his head? But the ambassador was on leave and the country team was not sure that it was authorized to place mail bags over monkeys’ heads and conduct renditions. Washington wouldn’t be awake for

The unthinkable had happened—the monkey had not only made it behind the hardline, he was now moving up into the classified area.

now moving up into the classified area. This was clearly no ordinary monkey; espionage was now a very real concern.

Try as they might, ripping out ceiling tile after ceiling tile and opening closets to pull wiring, no one could get ahead of this beast. As night fell on Colombo, everyone uneasily began to drift home. It was no use fighting him at night, we all knew that. Meanwhile, Valium-laced bananas were strategically placed throughout the building. A hungry political officer may have accidentally eaten one, but guards continued to place the rest of the bunch throughout the embassy as the staff anxiously awaited the dawn.

With the new day, a local veterinarian was called in. The guard force managed to find the creature once again as he scampered into one of the air ducts that led to the roof. Though it was barred from the outside, facilities maintenance managed to block his return path so that he could not make it back down the shaft. This might be the moment.

### A Crack Team

Quickly, a crack team assembled to accompany the vet. RSO, Management, DAO, even Public Affairs descended onto the scene. They all trekked up to the roof with the vet, who was clearly nervous by being surrounded by such a large contingent of Americans armed with broomsticks, mailbags and bananas. Making it to the roof, they found the air shaft in question. Though it was dark inside, they could make out the fingers occasionally twirling the blades of the ventilation fan from the inside.

The vet calmly opened his briefcase and removed his large

hours, so no one was certain about the proper course of action.

Thankfully, the deputy chief of mission jumped into the discussion. Find some bananas, he ordered; we will lure him out!

While warehouse staff ran out to purchase bananas, the nurse cracked open the medical kit. We will have to spike them with Valium, she said. He’ll grow tired, and then we can just scoop him up. Valium was passed around to other worried staff, as well, to reduce the stress.

Then another sit rep. The unthinkable had happened—the monkey had not only made it behind the hardline, he was



Monkey on the loose at Embassy Colombo.

dart gun. Loading the gun, he took aim through the bars of the vent, and pulled the trigger as everyone held their breath—click. He'd forgotten to load the CO<sub>2</sub> canister for the airgun.

We shuffled anxiously as the monkey continued to spin the blades of the fan from behind the bars, toying with us. Finally, now fully loaded, the vet took aim once again. Pop! This time he struck his target with an accuracy that only two feet of distance will give you.

Enraged, the monkey removed the tranquilizer from his arm and began to chew on it. Then the GSO staff began to carefully remove the front grate of the air shaft, placing a net before the duct as the vent was removed.

How long before the dart takes effect? someone asked.

About 15 minutes.

Hmm, maybe we should have waited a little longer, was the collectively unspoken thought just as the monkey flew from the confines of the crawl space and into the waiting net. But his acrobatics confirmed our spy theories when he managed to untangle himself and escape to scurry along the rooftop.

He weaved and dodged and evaded capture for several more minutes, making his way through the grates on the outside of the building. It was at this point that it occurred to everyone that a drugged monkey was not likely to hang on for very long to the side of an embassy.

Quickly our courageous assistant RSO rushed to the ground level, where he spotted the increasingly drowsy primate clinging to a drainage pipe. The warehouse crew brought over a large

piece of Styrofoam and our A/RSO stood four floors underneath where he “thought” a heavily sedated monkey “might” fall. This is undoubtedly beyond the normal security training offered by DS, but monkey catching might not be a bad thing to add to an expanded curriculum.

It didn't take long, and as the creature's grip loosened from the pipe alongside the building, he fell to earth. Maybe he wasn't a flying monkey after all. Seeing our now sleeping “spy” begin to fall, the reflexes of our A/RSO took over, and the monkey gracefully went right into the net (after only a small bounce).

The vet and his embassy entourage quickly gathered downstairs to examine the poor beast. He lay completely still, but the deep rhythm of his breathing and an absence of any visible signs of massive bleeding or broken bones led the vet to declare, “He's going to make it.”

Twenty-four harrowing hours later, the crisis ended. The compound was secure, and management sent out a triumphant email: “The monkey saga has successfully concluded.”

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# Child Custody Issues in Foreign Service Divorces

**Here is a primer on the custody issues involved in Foreign Service divorces and how to approach them.**

BY SUSAN KEOGH, ANN LA PORTA AND DIANE HOLT

**A** Foreign Service parent, whether male or female, who seeks to take a child or children overseas in the case of an established joint physical custody situation or a new custody situation can be disadvantaged in the courts.

Although laws regarding custody and divorce differ among jurisdictions, more often than not judges lean toward primary custody for the parent who is not moving. The non-posted parent can make arguments that overseas life is not good for the child; citing dirt and disease, crime and insecurity, unfamiliar culture and schools, and loss of friends and activities. In short, living abroad is unhealthy and unfamiliar and destabilizing for the child.

An excellent argument that this is *not* true can, of course, also be made. But it is important to realize that jurisdictional laws place a high value on stability, and this is the principal barrier that needs to be overcome for an FS parent seeking custody.

We offer the following concrete recommendations for actions to take and information to gather to establish your case, then discuss some of the legal considerations involved. Our recommendations are based, among other things, on the experience of one of the authors, who successfully changed joint to primary custody and moved overseas with her child in 2001.

First and most importantly, make sure you are represented by a family lawyer who is familiar with the Foreign Service or “ex-

pat” way of life. If your (ex) spouse is represented and you are not, you are at a distinct disadvantage. Money spent on a competent lawyer is well spent. Further, hiring a lawyer enables you to distance yourself somewhat, emotionally, from the proceedings and allows the professional to help you make decisions. This is true even if you have a law degree and a practice.

If you choose to represent yourself, depending on the jurisdiction, there are generally “self-help” centers in the court where you can get assistance to file motions and organize exhibits. These centers cannot, however, give legal advice.

## Reasonable Access Is Key

Laws regarding custody and divorce differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. But most venues recognize the “best interest of the child” as the determining factor in custody cases. This means that the judge will look at a dozen or more factors to determine what placement would be in the best interest of the child. These factors include the child’s wishes; the wishes of the parents; the child’s interaction with parents, siblings and others with whom he or she has an emotional bond; the child’s adjustment to home, school and community; potential disruptions to the child’s social and school life; and so on.

Jurisdictional laws place a high value on stability: Disruptions, changes and distant relationships can make a strong case for the parent staying in the area. In addition, unless one parent is deemed unfit, most states’ laws lean toward the parent who is most willing to grant reasonable access to the other parent. Your

willingness to offer fair and reasonably frequent visitation rights to the other spouse should be carefully documented, because this is often a key consideration in what constitutes a child's best interests.

Here are some things that may influence a judge and enable cooperation with your ex-spouse:

- You agree to pay for some or all of your child's visitation costs (e.g., airfares), particularly if the child is close enough to go home for one weekend a month.
- You accompany the child on the airline, especially at the beginning of the arrangement, or arrange for "unaccompanied minor" status with the airline (up to age 14).
- You agree to send your child for almost all long holidays to the noncustodial parent (e.g., summer vacation, alternating Christmas and Thanksgiving), and make other efforts to ensure a fair division of time between both parents.
- You facilitate your child seeing the other parent at post, should that parent wish to visit.
- You facilitate interconnectivity through Skype, phone calls or emails.

In our experience, the Foreign Service is generally helpful in working assignments that enable an FS parent to take a child under joint legal custody overseas if the FS parent is in the same or nearby time zone as the residence of the other parent (i.e., Canada, Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean) and within reasonable flying distance from Washington, without multiple plane changes. Similar time zones and reasonable distance are definitely factors that contribute to a favorable court decision.

Here are some actions to take, arguments to make and information to muster to help demonstrate that your child will do well in a new environment. While you are collecting this information, you should work with your lawyer to make sure

that each item meets the legal criteria for evidence, so that the judge will be permitted to review it in connection with your case.



istock.com/RyanLane

*Susan Keogh was a political officer in the Foreign Service for 24 years, serving in New Delhi, Asmara, Quebec and Washington, D.C. After retirement, she worked for State on contract and as a When Actually Employed annuitant. Currently, she is on the staff of the Institute of Higher Studies at the University of Laval. She has been widowed and divorced, and is now happily remarried and commuting between Quebec City and Washington D.C., keeping up with work, eight children and 12 grandchildren.*

*Ann La Porta followed her Foreign Service husband around the world for 38 years, working as a lawyer whenever she could, including dealing with Maori river rights issues in New Zealand and designing a Rule-of-Law program in Mongolia. She now volunteers as a guardian ad litem for children in contested custody cases in D.C. Superior Court. She lives close to her two grown children and enjoys being with her three grandchildren.*

*Diane Holt followed her diplomat husband around Europe, working as a transactional and commercial lawyer in Central Europe and as a mergers and acquisitions lawyer for the former Italian electric monopoly, Enel. She and Ann met in Naples, Italy, when they began volunteering, first with the International Committee of the D.C. Womens Bar Association and then as children's lawyers in the D.C. Superior Court. Diane now serves as editor of international and transactional law in the Bloomberg Law division of Bloomberg BNA.*

For a child to be on an employee's orders, the divorce decree must show that he or she has primary or joint custody of the child.

### **Actions to Take to Build Your Case**

- Take pictures, if possible, of where you are going to live—the house, the neighborhood, the embassy environment.
- Provide photos and documentation about the school and the curriculum. (If possible, choose an English-medium school. While it may be true, do not say: “It would be advantageous for my child to go to school in another language.”)
- Provide assurances that the school will send duplicate school progress reports/testing scores, etc., to the other parent.
- Provide airline schedules and other reassuring travel information.
- Agree to provide information in case of a travel delay of any kind, and be scrupulous in ensuring that the noncustodial parent is in the loop and minimally inconvenienced.
- Agree to take the cat, the dog or whatever makes life comfortable for the child.
- Provide pictures and information about the natural environment (e.g., parks, ocean) and give information about sports, music and extracurricular activities that are available to your child at the potential post.
- If possible, offer assurances that you will hire a good household helper to be with your child after school. (One of us made it clear, in our own case, that even in a senior position, we would not be routinely out in the evenings at representational events.)
- Provide information about medical care and dentistry available while at post, and agree to provide all medical information and to consult on major issues should they occur.

(Note: If successful in taking the child to post, you must ensure that you provide the other parent with a notarized document allowing him/her to travel with the child and vice versa. He or she will also have to sign off on passport documents.)

### **Arguments to Make**

- Rather than destabilizing children, exposure to life overseas can encourage adaptability, engender more ability to cope with

changing circumstances, and open them up to a better understanding of the world—all powerful life tools.

- The Foreign Service experience benefits young people enormously when they apply to college.
- Different food, sports, TV programs, etc., are not necessarily a disadvantage. (In our experience, children get used to all of these within a few months and learn to like what is available.)
- On leaving friends: children in the United States move frequently and have to make new friends. Overseas, the embassy community can be like a village where you have a ready-made group of friends. Plus, in international schools, you meet children from diverse backgrounds who can remain close friends even when you move, thanks to the Internet.

### **Useful Information: Allowances for Joint Custody**

The State Department offers several allowances for children of Foreign Service families, some of which are pertinent for divorced or separated parents seeking custody. To understand these allowances, begin with the Family Liaison Office's publication *Divorce and the Foreign Service*. Generally, the allowances pertain to education and travel for the child. More detailed information and post-specific information can be found on the State Department's Office of Allowances Web page (<http://aoprals.state.gov>).

Please note: most of these allowances apply only if the child is on the employee's orders. And to be on the orders, the divorce decree must show that the employee has primary or joint custody of the child.

Education allowances exist primarily to supplement education that is available in the United States and may not be available at post. This may include allowances for correspondence courses in, for example, U.S. history or government. Allowances for boarding schools may be available if the school at post is not adequate. However, if the child goes to a boarding school in the United States, and the noncustodial parent resides in the United States, the education allowance will not pay for the school. There may be an exception only if the noncustodial parent is unfit for some reason. Special-needs allowances and allowances for home schooling are also available.

The education travel allowance will pay for one round-trip per year to post for the child who is in college or a post-secondary education program up to age 23. For children in grades 9–12, the education allowance may be used for travel to and from post.

The travel allowance for separated families will also pay for one round-trip a year for the child to visit the other parent—but not in addition to the educational travel allowance. One free trip

a year is all a child gets, in other words. The allowance does not pay for an adult to accompany the child. However, it will pay the fees an airline may charge for unaccompanied minors. The separated families' travel allowances generally exist until the age of 21. Age limits do not apply to a disabled child. (See *Travel of Children of Separated Families*, 3 FAM 3750.)

A child on the employee's travel orders will receive the medical benefits available at the post. This may include evacuations for medical emergencies.

If a tandem couple is divorced, the situation may be different. The child can only be on one parent's travel orders. Custody may change according to the posting, the schools at post and whether one of the parents is on an unaccompanied tour assignment.

The Foreign Service parent seeking custody should be familiar with the allowances so he or she can inform the judge about these means to enable the child to have a more stable life, even if living overseas.

## Evidence and Its Rules

Once a party to a court proceeding collects information along the lines of the actions, arguments and information given above, each piece of information (including documents, photos, email messages, text messages and so on) must be entered into evidence before the judge may review it. In many cases, rules of evidence require that documents or records be authenticated, meaning that you may have to obtain either testimony or a certificate from an administrator before the document may be reviewed by a judge or moved into evidence.

For example, a photocopy of a school record or a medical record may need to be "authenticated," requiring either testimony or a certificate from a school administrator. For documents, you may have some in a foreign language that will need to be super-notarized or translated—or both. Your lawyer will know how to do this (although many good family lawyers are not accustomed to dealing with non-U.S. documents or languages other than English).

Similarly, most courts require that each party to the court proceeding list his or her witnesses in advance and demonstrate why each witness is relevant to the hearing. Because these rules are complicated, your lawyer will take the lead in this process, and ensure that Rules of Evidence are followed according to the law of the jurisdiction.

There may be a pre-trial conference during which all the physical and documentary evidence to be presented at trial is listed and presented as numbered exhibits, and witnesses must be named together with a preview of their expected testimony

and how it proves your case. As a result, both parties will know what the other party will be using as evidence before the trial date. If you attempt to enter new evidence at the trial stage the judge may deny it.

Expert witnesses may be needed. For instance, if the child has a learning disability or an allergy, you may need medical or educational testing experts to testify that his or her needs can be met at post. If you have a nanny you are taking with you, she may need to testify. If you intend to hire someone at post, you should be able to show that such caregivers are available and competent. Your lawyer will know how to qualify the experts or conduct a deposition and then move their testimony into evidence for the trial.

A parent cannot be denied custody of a child merely because he or she does not earn as much as the other parent. However, the Foreign Service parent should be able to show that he or she can support the specific and potentially expensive arrangements that a long-distance relationship involves. This might include international transportation several times a year to the other parent and to extended family or close friends, private schools, after-school tutoring or sports or other activities, summer camps, household help and communications such as mobile telephones, or a Web-based telephone account like Skype, to ensure regular contact with the other parent.

This evidence could be copies of your wage and pay statements, your income tax returns or the support considerations entered into at the divorce; all these should be moved into evidence. Also, if there were custody considerations in the original divorce decree that the (ex) spouse is now trying to modify, the original decree should be entered into evidence.

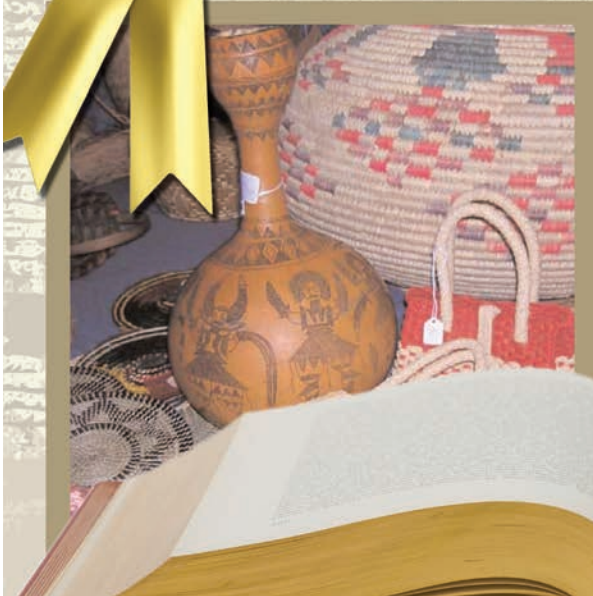
In addition, it is important to work with your lawyer to ensure that you have the proper consent from the child's other parent when you cross an international border. This consent can be something as simple as a consent letter; but it must be current and cover the specific travel that is actually occurring. In other words, if the itinerary changes and the consent letter no longer covers the actual travel that will occur, the other parent may need to be informed and asked to sign a revised consent letter.

It is often useful to reach a general agreement about how consent letters will be handled in a joint custody agreement, or ask the judge to include such terms in a court custody order. As you are likely aware from your Foreign Service work, the consequences for taking unilateral action when traveling with your child or children are significant and could involve charges of child abduction or kidnapping.

The final piece of advice is an old, trite-but-true saying: "The lawyer who represents himself has a fool for a client." ■

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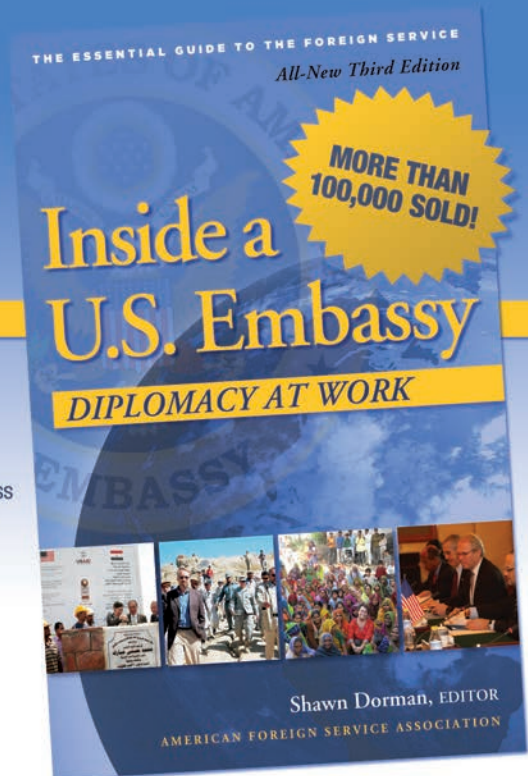
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## Celebrating the Life of Career Ambassador Terence A. Todman



From left: Terence Todman Jr., James Dandridge, chairman of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and Ruth A. Davis, vice president of the Association of Black Ambassadors and a former director general of the Foreign Service.

On Aug. 28, the American Foreign Service Association and seven other organizations co-hosted a memorial service to honor the life of Career Ambassador Terence A. Todman, who died on Aug. 13 in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.

During a career that spanned nearly 50 years, Amb. Todman served as ambassador to Chad, Guinea, Costa Rica, Spain, Denmark and Argentina. He also served as assistant secretary of State for Inter-American affairs, now Western Hemisphere affairs.

The service was led by Ambassador Ruth A. Davis,

vice president of the Association of Black Ambassadors and a former director general of the Foreign Service. Friends and colleagues shared their recollections as they paid tribute to Amb. Todman.

Many of the speakers highlighted the ambassador's perseverance and integrity at a time when few African-Americans served in the State Department.

When Terence Todman entered the Foreign Service in 1954, the United States was still 12 years away from officially ending segregation, Ambassador Thomas Shannon noted.

"He broke the assignments color barriers," said Amb. Davis. Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield reiterated, "We are all the beneficiaries of his trailblazing."

Under Secretary for Management Patrick Kennedy described some of Amb. Todman's specific achievements, as well as his extraordinary abilities in foreign languages. "His was a career of global reach, one of direct engagement and power," said Amb. Shannon.

Ambassador Edward Perkins, president of the Asso-

*Continued on page 54*

## CALENDAR

October 1  
12-1:30 p.m.

**Luncheon:  
The 179th A-100 Class**

October 1  
2:30-4 p.m.

**AFSA Governing  
Board Meeting**

October 2  
12-1 p.m.

**AFSA Foreign Affairs Intern  
Brown Bag Series: "Social  
Media and Diplomacy"**

October 5-10  
**AFSA Road Scholar Program  
in Chautauqua, N.Y.**

October 9  
2-3:30 p.m.

**"Why Professional  
Ethics Matter"**

October 13  
**Columbus Day:  
AFSA Offices Closed**

October 27  
2-3:30 p.m.

**AFSA Book Notes:  
More Than Just Diplomacy**

November 1  
**AFSA National High School  
Essay Contest Launches**

November 5  
12-2 p.m.

**AFSA Governing  
Board Meeting**

November 6  
**Applications for AFSA Merit  
Awards and Financial Aid  
Scholarships Available**





## Conversions and the Foreign Service

The Foreign Service Act of 1980 finds that a “career Foreign Service, characterized by excellence and professionalism, is essential in the national interest” ([www.bit.ly/USCode3901](http://www.bit.ly/USCode3901)). The Act affirms a merit-based Service with officers appointed by the president, with the advice and consent of the Senate, and other members appointed by the Secretary of State, with promotions according to the principles of “a regular, predictable flow of talent upward through the ranks” with “effective career development patterns to meet the needs of the Service.”

With this in mind I turn to this month’s focus on conversions of people or positions into or from the Foreign Service. Conceptually, it is useful to think about conversions of **people** or **positions** of a **temporary** or **permanent** nature.

Each conversion has its own impact on promotions, professional development opportunities and the overall integrity of the system. The number of promotion opportunities is derived from the anticipated projected vacancies over the next couple of years normalized to ensure the “regular, predictable flow.”

The permanent **addition of people** to or the **removal of Foreign Service positions** from the system, in excess of a certain number, will reduce the number of promotions available to existing mem-

bers. AFSA is concerned by conversions into skill codes and at grades that are not in deficit, as such conversions will disadvantage at least one individual in the existing pool.

At the same time, the temporary conversion of a domestic Foreign Service position (known as blue-sheeting)—or the limited non-career appointment of a non-Foreign Service employee to an overseas Foreign Service position—removes an opportunity for a member of the Foreign Service to accumulate professional development experience as called for in our career development plans.

Unlike the Hard-to-Fill Program, which occurs after members have had a chance to bid on positions, the pilot Overseas Development Program may remove positions before members have had a chance to bid on them.

The stated goal of the ODP is to give Civil Service employees opportunities to work and learn about the department’s work overseas, so that they can return and apply those experiences to their continued professional development within the Civil Service.

Because the ODP may take Foreign Service positions out of the bidding process, AFSA closely reviews each position for uniqueness, language designation, and policy and supervisory responsibilities before approving its inclusion in the program.

AFSA has currently

approved 20 positions for inclusion in the pilot program. However, we remain concerned that some employees see the ODP as a conversion program, and not a developmental program as originally envisioned.

AFSA is also concerned about several changes to conversion programs piloted by the department that weaken the integrity of the Foreign Service’s merit-based personnel system.

Specifically, in 2012, pursuant to the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, State revised the conversion program to create two separate competition pools for those employees interested in converting into the Foreign Service.

Whereas previously the best-qualified employee, regardless of personnel system, was selected to convert, now two distinct conversion pools have been created, one for Foreign Service and one for Civil Service personnel.

AFSA is concerned that the conversion program no longer selects the best-qualified overall employee for conversion, and that this practice may violate the act’s merit-based principle.

Moreover, AFSA is concerned by the increase of conversions at the FS-2 and FS-1 levels resulting from the changes to the conversion programs, particularly in light of the “pig in the python” problem. The previous staff-

ing deficits at the O1 and O2 levels are being eliminated as the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative and Diplomacy 3.0 cohorts rise through the ranks.

The department has an obligation to ensure that career personnel have predictable flow-through and career paths. It appears irresponsible to continue to accommodate non-deficit conversions at the upper mid-levels given the projected slowdown in promotions and increasing time in class for existing personnel.

While AFSA agrees that it is important for employees to have professional development opportunities for temporary and permanent conversion, such opportunities must take into account the Foreign Service Act’s requirements for a career Service governed by merit-based principles with regular, predictable career paths up to and through the senior ranks.

AFSA will be considering these principles when it sits down later this year to negotiate the regularization of these pilot conversion initiatives.

I encourage each of you to think about them prior to proposing any temporary or permanent conversion of a Foreign Service position. ■

*Next month: Retention and Attrition—Are We Keeping Our Best and Brightest?*



## Member Survey Identifies Needed Changes

The June AFSA survey of Foreign Agriculture Service officers went beyond the general assessment of employee morale in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and identified specific policy changes that AFSA can work with FAS management to implement.

The topics included Washington assignment policies, promotion and time-in-class/time-in-service rules, and employment opportunities for retirees. For the first time, employees were also asked to assess the relative performance of the main program areas in FAS.

Washington assignments have been a long-standing issue, because Foreign Service officers are expected to spend a third of their career in Washington.

While not perfect, the current policy of having officers compete with Civil Service employees for rotation assignments at grade received the most support from survey respondents.

There was very little support (only 11 percent) for a proposal by Civil Service employees to expand this process beyond rotations to offer promotion opportunities for Civil Service employees.

FAS TIC and TIS policies have evolved differently from those at State, so there was interest in moving in the direction of State's policies in some cases. In particular, employees supported adopt-

ing the State policy of giving a TIC/TIS extension to employees in long-term language training.

There was also support for allowing officers who retire due to mandatory TIC or TIS limitations to depart during the regular summer rotation to the extent possible.

One of the proposals with greatest support was changing the current promotion rules to require the FAS administrator to set the number of promotions at each grade prior to the deliberations of the promotion boards, rather than determining the number of promo-

tions after seeing the board rankings.

Equally popular was the proposal to increase the use of retirees for temporary assignments by establishing a reemployed annuitant program in FAS.

For the first time, members were given the opportunity to assess the relative performance of the Washington program areas that support them overseas.

Overall, members were reasonably happy, with most program areas receiving a median score of 7 or 8 (on a scale of 1 to 10).

The Office of the Chief

Operating Officer, which provides budgetary oversight for the agency, was a notable exception with a median score of 3. The comments indicated dissatisfaction with delays in receiving budgetary resources and with micro-management of how the funds are spent—problems that AFSA has raised with management.

We were very pleased with the high participation rate in the survey (75 percent) and will be working with management over the next months to implement the changes identified. ■

### DEPUTY SECRETARY BURNS MEETS AFSA GOVERNING BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS



Deputy Secretary of State William "Bill" Burns met with AFSA Governing Board and committee members at a breakfast held at AFSA headquarters on July 31. After more than three decades in the Foreign Service, Deputy Secretary Burns is retiring this fall. He is the second serving career diplomat in history to become Deputy Secretary. Above, from left: AFSA President Robert J. Silverman, Burns and AFSA State VP Matthew Asada.



## USAID Must Weigh Cost of Longer Critical Priority Country Tours

Thank you to all who responded to AFSA's call for feedback after hearing the news that last-minute changes to bidding instructions were in the works. The most dramatic change was the doubling of the length of service required, from one year to two, in a critical priority country before an employee is eligible for priority bidding status.

Many FSOs plan their bidding strategy around family needs such as children's schooling, spousal employment and proximity to aging parents; the timing of priority bidding opportunities plays high in that strategy. AFSA used your thoughtful responses to stop this sudden change and allow for an essential impact analysis.

The agency declared that it will engage with all stakeholders to identify incentives, options and other potential changes to our CPC service package to better meet its continuity objective of having more officers serve for two consecutive years to improve program implementation. For now, priority consideration remains a Foreign Service benefit for eligible employees completing a full CPC tour of 12 months.

Postponing the change will allow agency leaders with different functional backgrounds, including those most affected by the decision,

### Organizations say many things, but the way they treat their own people is what demonstrates true integrity.

to think through its full impact and likely consequences and then, importantly, to ensure that the change is managed appropriately.

In the feedback AFSA received, one concern surfaced numerous times: post-traumatic stress disorder and its symptoms. PTSD is a likely consequence of extended CPC tours that must not be ignored. Many Foreign Service members suffering from PTSD don't realize it at first, only that they cannot focus or sleep and are constantly irritable—to name just a few symptoms.

AFSA recently hosted Ron Capps for a Book Notes talk (see p. 59). He read from and discussed his memoir, *Seriously Not All Right: Five Wars in Ten Years*, which provides a unique perspective from a Foreign Service officer (and reserve military officer) who faced PTSD.

It is widely accepted now that one does not have to participate in combat to experience PTSD, and Capps vividly describes the cumulative effect of his experiences.

A 2007 State Department survey revealed that 17 percent of FSOs serving in stressful environments acknowledged displaying

some symptoms of PTSD. PTSD does not develop overnight, and the effects of working in CPCs are showing up in various ways within USAID. For example, some officers returning from CPCs find language training impossible (many cannot focus and need time to decompress after such high-stress posts).

Clear best practices, analysis and guidance are lacking. It is time to step back and revisit the effect that serving in a CPC can have on our employees and their lives.

We must address the stigma and shame associated with PTSD, which are exacerbated by the fact that PTSD is a very personal experience and does not affect everyone the same way. In addition, people fear that PTSD can

affect security clearances.

A 2010 State Department inspector general report on unaccompanied posts stated that "Many returnees experience problems adjusting to their follow-on assignments," and suggested that more counseling services may be needed.

USAID's vision statement suggests: "Nations and communities must increasingly be able to meet the needs of their citizens, whether by providing health care, education or economic opportunity."

Organizations say many things, but the way they treat their own people is what demonstrates true integrity. If, after weighing whether to encourage lengthened tours in CPCs given the negative consequences and the associated costs, USAID decides to move forward, it must be prepared to deal with the mental health aftermath. Someone's life may depend on it. ■

### NEWS BRIEF

#### MEDIA DIGEST FOR AFSA MEMBERS

AFSA's latest member benefit is a daily email digest of news items (articles, opinion pieces, blogs, etc.) related to the Foreign Service. Each day, we send out a list of five to 10 news items that we believe our members might find of interest. If you would like to sign up for this service, please send a request to [mediadigest@afsa.org](mailto:mediadigest@afsa.org). Remember, this service is available for AFSA members only.

## A USAID History Lesson

On July 14, the U.S. Agency for International Development hosted the daughter of one of the first African-American Foreign Service officers to serve in its ranks.

Dorothy Davis, daughter of Griffith J. Davis, made a presentation at a brown bag lunch on USAID's history from the perspective of someone who served at the time of its creation.

The event was sponsored by USAID's Office of the Administrator and the Office of Civil Rights and Diversity, in partnership with the Blacks in Government Employee Resource Group.

Griffith J. Davis joined the U.S. Foreign Service in the early 1950s, becoming one of the pioneers of President Harry Truman's Point Four Program for foreign aid,

the forerunner of the present-day USAID.

Dorothy Davis spoke about her father's work, drawing from a report he wrote at the conclusion of his four-year mission to



Dorothy Davis at USAID.

Liberia in 1957. Griffith Davis was also a skilled photojournalist and had worked as a correspondent for *Ebony* magazine, among other publications. He used this talent in his Foreign Service career to convey information on situations in the field.

In addition to serving

in Liberia, Davis's career included posts in Tunisia and Nigeria. He retired from the Foreign Service in 1985, and died in 1993.

Ms. Davis presented USAID Administrator Dr. Rajiv Shah with a vintage photograph her father took while in Liberia (which tied for second place in the 2011 USAID/*Frontlines* 50th-anniversary

photo contest). The photo depicts a Liberian woman walking alongside an iron ore train; the railroad system in Liberia was supported by the Point Four Program.

Also attending the event were USAID Counselor Susan Reichle and AFSA Vice President Sharon Wayne. ■

—Chioma Dike,  
USAID Staff Assistant



Griffith J. Davis took this photo when he served in Liberia in 1952. The iron ore railroad was supported by President Truman's Point Four Program.

Griffith J. Davis

### NEWS BRIEF

#### AFSA HOLDS TOWN HALL MEETING FOR STATE CONSTITUENCY

AFSA's priorities, plans and progress were presented to AFSA's State Department constituency in a town hall meeting with AFSA President Robert J. Silverman and State Vice President Matthew Asada.

The "AFSA Mid-Term Review," held on Aug. 21 at AFSA headquarters, gave active-duty State members the chance to hear from their constituency vice president and president over lunch. Silverman opened the well-attended meeting, possibly the first of its kind ever held at AFSA, and encouraged the audience to ask questions and participate in the discussion, as the event was also an opportunity for AFSA to solicit feedback and comments.

Asada then took the floor and outlined the agenda for the meeting. He began with AFSA's 2013-2015 Strategic Plan, which outlines priorities and guides AFSA's efforts. Silverman followed with remarks on advocacy and a review of AFSA's work on a number of issues, including overseas comparability pay and the ambassadorial confirmations.

Asada concluded with a discussion of AFSA's outreach efforts, including the annual report, the quarterly State VP updates and surveys and webinars. A lively question-and-answer session followed. To see a video recording of the entire event, visit [www.afsa.org/video](http://www.afsa.org/video).

## CFC #10646: SUPPORT AFSA'S FUND FOR AMERICAN DIPLOMACY

Each year, AFSA partners with our 501(c)(3) nonprofit Fund for American Diplomacy in an appeal for donations to a worthy cause. The FAD helps tell the story of the Foreign Service to the American public in a variety of ways. The FAD is CFC #10646 and is listed under the name "Diplomacy Matters–AFSA." Through a tax-deductible donation to the Fund for American Diplomacy, you will be supporting:

- The AFSA Memorial Plaques and annual ceremony at the State Department to honor our colleagues who died in the line of duty.
- Awards programs recognizing FS employee and spouse achievements, and particularly those who have had the courage to dissent.
- AFSA's High School Essay Contest, where students can earn college scholarship money by writing an essay on a topic related to foreign affairs.
- The AFSA Minority Intern Program, which places deserving minority students in a summer internship at the State Department.
- *Inside a U.S. Embassy*, our popular book providing insights into the Foreign Service to individuals preparing for the FS exam, students in college courses on diplomacy and international relations and FS family members and relatives, as well as military and corporate personnel interacting with our missions abroad.
- Road Scholar (formerly Elderhostel) programs on foreign affairs for retired Americans.
- AFSA's Speakers Bureau, where FS retirees draw on their real-life experiences in addressing business and community leaders and regular Americans across the country.

No dues support the activities of the Fund for American Diplomacy, so AFSA relies on your direct donations to the Fund to allow these vital programs to continue. For further information on the Fund and its activities, please contact AFSA Executive Director Ian Houston at (202) 944-5505 or [houston@afsa.org](mailto:houston@afsa.org).

*Continued from page 49*

ciation of Black American Ambassadors, commented on Amb. Todman's commitment to the Foreign Service, saying: "Being an FSO, to him, was being a great citizen."

In concluding remarks, Amb. Todman's son, Terence Todman Jr., elaborated: "He loved diplomacy, he loved his job and he loved traveling the world."

Dr. Alison Bazala Kim, a renowned cellist, played selections from Bach and Beethoven in honor of Amb. Todman's love of classical music.

The memorial was

co-hosted by The American Academy of Diplomacy, the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, the Association of Black American Ambassadors, the Council of American Ambassadors, DACOR/DACOR Bacon House Foundation, the Diplomacy Center Foundation, the Thursday Luncheon Group and AFSA. ■

—Brittany DeLong,  
Assistant Editor

## FSI JOB SEARCH PROGRAM GRADUATES ENJOY AFSA RECEPTION



On Aug. 29, AFSA hosted the graduation reception for the most recent Job Search Program group at the Foreign Service Institute.

AFSA was pleased to honor the 106 Foreign Service employees who were retiring from diplomatic service with champagne and hors d'oeuvres.

Larry Cohen, AFSA Retiree VP, gave a toast congratulating them on their accomplishments and wishing them luck as they begin a new chapter in their lives. AFSA looks forward to welcoming them as retiree members of the association and continuing to work on their behalf to protect their Foreign Service legacy.

## ADAIR MEMORIAL LECTURE:

# Exploring the Relationship Between Diplomacy and Development

On Aug. 27, AFSA presented the Eighth Annual Caroline and Ambassador Charles Adair Memorial Lecture at American University's School of International Service.

Ambassador Thomas Miller spoke on "The Nexus Between Diplomacy and Development" to a packed hall at the Kay Spiritual Life Center on A.U.'s D.C. campus.

During his 29-year Foreign Service career, Miller served as ambassador to Greece and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as special coordinator for Cyprus with the rank of ambassador. He is now the president and CEO of the International Executive Service Corps, a nonprofit that furnishes business expertise to the developing world.

Drawing on his experi-

ence as both a diplomat and development professional, Amb. Miller explored the relationship between the two fields. He called for increased coordination, but cautioned the audience to understand the difference between diplomacy and development.

"It is far too easy to launch into a criticism of either area without genuinely appreciating that we start from fundamentally different perspectives," he said.

He also criticized the tendency of administrations (from both parties) to "reinvent the wheel."

Amb. Miller also discussed the emergence of the "counter-bureaucracy," which is responsible for oversight and compliance, calling the clash between the compli-

ance and the programmatic sides of assistance programs "one of the most powerful and disruptive tensions in the development field today."

He noted that some of the most transformative programs can be the hardest to measure, but warned that focus is being taken away from these programs in favor of more easily quantifiable efforts.

Amb. Miller closed with encouraging words for those contemplating a career in government or international affairs.

"[These problems] can be reversed," he said. "To do so

will take the efforts of your generation, preserving the focus of doing good that was the reason why so many of us came into this profession." A question-and-answer session followed the address.

The Adair Memorial Lecture program is part of AFSA's national outreach to elevate the profile of diplomacy and development. The series is endowed by the family of former AFSA President Marshall Adair through a perpetual gift to AFSA's Fund for American Diplomacy, in memory of Charles Adair, a retired ambassador who spent 35 years in the Foreign Service, and Caroline Adair.

AFSA partners with American University's School of International Studies and the School of Professional and Extended Studies to host the lecture at the start of each school year.

To see the full recording of the Adair Lecture visit [www.afsa.org/video](http://www.afsa.org/video).

—Debra Blome,  
Associate Editor



Amb. Thomas Miller delivering the Eighth Annual Adair Lecture at American University.

AFSA/DEBRA BLOME

## CHARLES ADAIR: A FOREIGN SERVICE LIFE

Ambassador Charles Adair, for whom the lecture series is named, joined the Foreign Service in 1940. He served as ambassador to Panama from 1965 to 1969 and as ambassador to Uruguay from 1969 to 1972. He also served in Mexico, India, Brazil, Belgium, France and Argentina.

His son, retired Foreign Service officer and former AFSA President Marshall Adair, notes that Amb. Adair did not have the typical background of a diplomat from that time. He was from a small town in Ohio—a place, Marshall Adair says, where most didn't even know what the Foreign Service was, but "he made it his life."

The Foreign Service Act of 1946 was passed during Amb. Adair's career, and he was a strong advocate for the professionalization of the Foreign Service. "Having a lecture series that helps to tell about the Foreign Service and diplomacy is very appropriate," says his son.

Amb. Adair died in 2006. His wife of 49 years, Caroline Marshall Adair, died in 1996.



COURTESY OF MARSHALL ADAIR

Caroline and Ambassador Charles Adair take part in a festival in Panama in the mid 1960s.

## ACTIVE AFTER ACTIVE DUTY

## FSO Boly Bikes Across the United States to Celebrate Retirement

FSO Richard Boly retired in August 2013, after 19 years in the Foreign Service. The very next day, he started a new job at the World Bank. But he was itching to have the “big chunks of time” that retirement can afford—something rare in the workaday world. So when his World Bank contract came to an end, he decided to do something he always wanted to do: Ride his bike across the country.

Boly kept a blog on Tumblr about his adventure called “Pedal Quicker, Time Is Catching Up!” ([www.bikingboly-richard.tumblr.com/](http://www.bikingboly-richard.tumblr.com/)). In his first post, dated April 27, 2014, he outlines the 10 reasons he embarked on the trip.

They ranged from nostalgic (“My mother was born in rural Kansas, my father in rural Missouri. I would like to have a glimpse into the country and people they came from”) and reflective (“Short of becoming a monk, I can’t think of a better way to plumb your depths”) to quixotic (“I am a volcano of ideas, but not a dreamer.... Until I dip my front tire in San Francisco Bay, I am just another Don Quixote”).

Boly rode about 75 miles a day, primarily on back roads, through Virginia, Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, Utah, Nevada and California. He encountered two tornadoes along the way and persevered through



Richard Boly reached San Francisco Bay after 65 days on the road.



Left: Boly’s route took him through the Ozark Mountains. Right: He entered Colorado in early June.

crosswinds and headwinds in the Plains. “You can have a headwind all day long,” Boly says. “That doesn’t mean you are going to get a tailwind the next day.”

Boly’s cross-country trek ended 65 days after he started out from his home in Bethesda, Md., when he dipped his bike’s front tire into San Francisco Bay on July 6.

The ride completed, Boly is now back in Bethesda, Md.

Richard Boly retired as director of the Office of eDiplomacy. He also served in Italy, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Paraguay. Before joining the Foreign Service he did a variety of things, including establishing and running a shrimp hatchery in coastal Ecuador and help-

ing to launch the first Apple Macintosh computer.

Now he has embarked on what he calls a “portfolio” career, one that allows him to combine his creative talents with his technical and diplomatic skills. He is working with the U.S. Institute of Peace on a new initiative called the Peace Tech Lab, which Boly describes as an “accelerator for innovation in peace.”

He is also active in the Mind the Bridge Foundation, an organization he got involved with while posted in Italy that serves to help grow the “entrepreneurial ecosystem.”

And he is in the process of launching an enterprise he calls “Bethesda Visual Creatives,” an outlet for creative talent to meet and share ideas and work together. This is the kind of venture that, he says, his cross-country bike trip prepared him for in a way.

He had been thinking about doing BVC for a long time. Like his bike ride, Boly says, “Sometimes you just have to say you’re going to do it.”

He recalls the familiar saying that 90 percent of life is just showing up. “Well, 90 percent of biking across the country is just getting up early and getting on your bike.” ■

—Debra Blome,  
Associate Editor



## Congressman Seeks Insight on Foreign Service Life

Representative Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) met with a diverse group of Foreign Service officers and specialists at AFSA on July 29 for an off-the-record conversation on life in the Foreign Service.

Schiff, who sits on the House Appropriations Committee and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, was, as he said, looking for insight on what a career in the Foreign Service looks like today.

AFSA set up the meeting for Rep. Schiff with a group of 18 members, officers and

specialists from all ranks, many of whom had previously served in Priority Staffing Posts and other high-threat, high-risk posts.

Rep. Schiff opened by urging the group to tell him “what you want members of Congress to know about either life in the Foreign Service or in the places you’ve been posted.”

Discussing career paths, hardship posts, tandem assignments and unaccompanied tours, the participants shared their experiences, and their frustrations, in detail.



From left: AFSA President Robert J. Silverman, Representative Adam Schiff and AFSA State VP Matthew Asada.

Members reiterated the importance of being able to engage safely overseas and the value of language and security-awareness training as part of their preparation for doing so.

The congressman closed

by thanking members for their service and promising to help share their stories on the Hill with his colleagues. ■

—Debra Blome,  
Associate Editor

## Foreign Service Youth Foundation Presents Annual Awards

The Foreign Service Youth Foundation presented its annual awards on June 27 in a ceremony at the State Department hosted by Acting Foreign Service Director General Hans Klemm and the Family Liaison Office. The event also recognized awardees of the Associates of American Foreign Service Worldwide Scholarship

Merit Award program as well as children whose parents are serving or have served at an unaccompanied post.

In 2006, the department began sending medals and certificates of recognition to children whose parents were serving or had served at an unaccompanied post. To date, some 5,000 children have

been recognized.

To learn more about the FSYF awards, visit [www.fsyf.org](http://www.fsyf.org). For more about the AAFSW awards, visit [www.aafsw.org](http://www.aafsw.org). And for additional information about FLO's Unaccompanied Tours program, see [www.bit.ly/UCmedals](http://www.bit.ly/UCmedals).

### ART CONTEST:

#### Ages 5-8

**FIRST PLACE:** Sabra Goveia, Chisinau, Moldova  
**SECOND PLACE:** Abigail Bills, Jakarta, Indonesia  
**THIRD PLACE:** Annika Bitner, Jerusalem

#### Ages 9-12

**FIRST PLACE:** Melody Reynolds, Ottawa, Canada  
**SECOND PLACE:** Jacob Newman, Mbabane, Swaziland  
**THIRD PLACE:** Soliana Doutrich, Ciudad Juarez, Mexico

#### Ages 13-18

**FIRST PLACE:** Alison Dominguez, New Delhi, India  
**SECOND PLACE:** Samuel Mitchell, Seoul, South Korea  
**JOINT THIRD PLACE:** Eliana Silver, Madrid, Spain  
**JOINT THIRD PLACE:** Helen Reynolds, Ottawa, Canada

### ESSAY CONTEST:

#### Middle School

**FIRST PLACE:** Madilyn Abbe, Jakarta, Indonesia  
**SECOND PLACE:** Liam Rathke, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
**THIRD PLACE:** Daisy Bailey, Manila, Philippines

#### High School

**FIRST PLACE:** Alison Dominguez, New Delhi, India  
**SECOND PLACE:** Emma Hannan, Washington, D.C.  
**THIRD PLACE:** Elka Sterling, The Hague, Netherlands

### KIDVID CONTEST:

**FIRST PLACE:** Elan Albalak, Bridgetown, Barbados  
**SECOND PLACE:** Howard Brown, Reykjavik, Iceland  
**THIRD PLACE:** Hugo Goddard and Sophie Goddard, Conakry, Guinea

### COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD:

Alice d'Aboville, United Kingdom  
Alison Dominguez, New Delhi, India

### MERIT SCHOLARSHIP:

**FIRST PLACE:** Alexander Robinson, Salvador, Brazil  
**SECOND PLACE:** Sumika Davidson, Tokyo, Japan

### FSYF 25TH ANNIVERSARY LOGO CONTEST:

Tyler Feeken, Stafford, Virginia

### AAFSW SCHOLARSHIP

#### MERIT AWARDS:

**HIGH SCHOOL/GAP YEAR MERIT AWARD:** Alexander Robinson  
**COLLEGE MERIT AWARD:** Natalie Hernandez  
**BEST ESSAY AWARD:** Amelia Smith  
**JUDY FELT MEMORIAL VOLUNTEERISM SCHOLARSHIP:** Margaret Hale

## AFSA PROGRAM FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNS

## Ambassador John Limbert on Life in the Foreign Service

On Aug. 13, AFSA welcomed foreign affairs interns to the second Brown Bag Series event “Life in the Foreign Service.”

The event featured former AFSA President and Ambassador John Limbert, who retired with the rank of minister counselor after 33 years in the Foreign Service. Amb. Limbert holds the Department of State’s highest award—the Distinguished Service Award—as well as other awards including the Award for Valor, which he received after 444 days in captivity in Tehran during the Iran hostage crisis.

Ambassador Limbert explained how people interested in the Foreign Service prepare, both academically and professionally, for the profession; what being an FSO is like; and how to determine if the Foreign Service is the right



Amb. John Limbert spoke to interns about life in the Foreign Service.

career path.

After a five-year hiatus, AFSA reestablished its “Brown-Bag Series for Foreign Affairs Interns” this summer. The program is intended to provide all Washington, D.C.-based interns working on foreign affairs issues—whether at a federal agency

or in nongovernmental organizations—an opportunity to discuss hot topics with foreign affairs practitioners and professionals, as well as to network with their peers.

On July 24, the program was launched with a presentation on energy politics and the Middle East by

retired FSO Molly Williamson, whose 30-year career focused mainly on the Middle East. She served as deputy assistant secretary at three agencies: State, Commerce and Defense. In her talk, “The Politics of Petroleum,” Williamson gave an expert opinion on the challenges for U.S. foreign policy in the area.

On Oct. 2, Vinay Chawla, director of Digital Engagement at the Department of State, will speak at the third event, on the subject of “Social Media and Diplomacy.”

The series will continue throughout the year. Interested students and interns should check the AFSA website for upcoming events. ■

—Debra Kim and  
Julian Steiner,  
AFSA Interns

## AFSA HOSTS BACK-TO-SCHOOL HAPPY HOUR

On Sept. 4, AFSA welcomed members and guests to a Back-to-School Happy Hour at our headquarters building.

More than 150 guests, ranging from members of the current A-100 class to individuals who retired decades ago, mingled and shared experiences over drinks and snacks. AFSA President Robert J. Silverman led the group in a toast to the Foreign Service.

Look for one more AFSA happy hour this year, at some point during the holiday season.



AFSA/MATT SUMBAK

## AFSA BOOK NOTES

## Writing As Therapy: Retired FSO on Coping with PTSD

On July 25, AFSA welcomed retired FSO and 2007 Rivkin dissent award winner Ron Capps to discuss his new book, *Seriously Not All Right: Five Wars in Ten Years* (Schaffner Press Inc., 2014). The memoir details his experiences as a wartime observer during his 14-year Foreign Service career and as a senior Army Reserve officer.

Capps began the talk by reading a passage about seeing war casualties from a Serbian infantry attack on a town in Kosovo. He recalled feeling helpless as an observer, a “tourist among victims.”

Capps was witness to many harrowing events during his years of service: Rwanda from 1995 to 1998, Kosovo from 2000 to 2002, Afghanistan and Iraq from 2002 to 2004, and Darfur from 2004 to 2007. Haunted by the brutality, he developed depression and started having violent, graphic dreams.

While in Afghanistan, Capps says, he realized he needed help. He sought treatment and, for a time, got better. However in 2005, while on a United Nations mission in Sudan, he relapsed significantly, spiraling into a deep post-traumatic stress disorder episode. He began to drink heavily and even attempted suicide.

Capps read an excerpt about that period: “I was filled with a sense of failure and

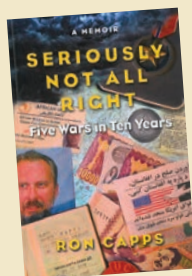
frustration, a sense of conclusion. It felt as if I had reached a logical place in my life to end it.”

A well-timed phone call from his wife interrupted the attempt. He realized that he was “seriously not all right” and needed more help. He returned to the United States and retired in 2008 to seek treatment for PTSD.

Throughout his struggles in some of the most dangerous places in the world, one thing remained constant: writing. Separate from the crisp, value-neutral reports he regularly sent to Washington, Capps filled journals with uncensored notes of what he was seeing and experiencing. He used these notes and journals to write his book.

“I found a way to write my way home when medical treatment wasn’t working for me,” he said. An excerpt from his book speaks on the healing process of writing: “It was the first time I let my guard down about how messed up I was, because of what I had been a part of, and had witnessed firsthand.”

Inspired to help other veterans cope with PTSD and shed light on the disease, Capps created the Veterans Writing Project ([www.veteranswriting.org/](http://www.veteranswriting.org/)) in 2011 and is currently the organization’s director. The nonprofit pro-



gram offers free writing workshops and seminars to veterans and their family members.

In a question-and-answer session after the talk, Capps discussed how he’s dealing with his PTSD today: “I haven’t had any ‘seriously not all right’ days in quite a while.”

He also touched on his work at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., where he teaches weekly writing classes to active-duty service members with PTSD.



AFSA/JULIAN STEINER

“There’s a stigma attached to asking for mental health care,” he says. “The whole idea really, for all of us, is to get beyond the idea that mental health care differs from health care. It’s just health care.”

To view Capps’ talk, please go to [www.afsa.org/video](http://www.afsa.org/video). ■

—Brittany DeLong,  
Assistant Editor

## AFSA WELCOMES FIRST HECFAA INTERN



In early August, the first intern in a new joint program offered by AFSA and the Hispanic Employee Council of Foreign Affairs Agencies came to Washington to begin her internship. We are thrilled to welcome Gabriela Cardozo, whose internship is in the Office of Environment, Water and Conservation within the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs.

The AFSA/HECFAA internship is modeled on a program AFSA and the Thursday Luncheon Group have collaborated on since 1992. Each summer, it brings a minority college student to the Department of State for an internship.

Cardozo graduated this past June with a master’s degree in public policy from the University of California-Los Angeles Luskin School of Public Affairs, with a focus on environmental and international policy.

## DACOR Keeps Foreign Service Community Connected

DACOR considers itself the home of the Foreign Service community. Founded in the 1950s by a group of FSOs concerned about retirement issues, DACOR has grown into an organization that offers a rich array of programs serving the professional and social needs of the broader international relations community.

Often seen as tradition-bound and, let's face it, "older," DACOR is embracing change and proving that it hasn't been around for more than 60 years by accident.

The organization is led by volunteer members who are keenly aware of the challenges of life in the Foreign

Service. They are also mindful that with each decade DACOR has adapted to provide the programs and services needed.

Despite all the ways people now stay connected electronically, bringing people together is a top priority at DACOR. Executive Director Susan Cimburek says, "With the elegant DACOR Bacon House as a meeting place, why not get together here?"

To encourage this, from June through August DACOR hosted Thursday cocktail hours on the Bacon House patio, where members and guests could relax in this private oasis in the middle of



DACOR's Bacon House in Washington, D.C.

the city and enjoy the almost perfect weather Washington experienced this summer.

DACOR also hosts post reunions to help the foreign affairs community remain connected. So far this year, more than 200 active-duty and retired Foreign Service members have attended reunions for Turkey, Central America and sub-Saharan Africa. Cimburek says to watch for reunions for Germany, Mexico and China in the coming months.

DACOR has also been expanding its programs to keep members connected professionally. Most remember the Bacon House for two things: the A-100 class reception held there shortly after receiving their first post assignment, and the luncheon co-sponsored by DACOR and AFSA following the Job Search Program.

This year, DACOR began hosting receptions for newly

appointed deputy chiefs of mission and principal officers. DACOR sees these programs as important elements in its efforts to support Foreign Service members and it hopes to become a go-to network at critical career junctures.

Cimburek acknowledges the importance of virtual communities, and the recently launched DACOR website ([www.DacorBacon.org](http://www.DacorBacon.org)) includes a members-only section to foster connections. Through an online directory and member blog, DACOR is enabling members to find lost colleagues, catch up, and share news and views.

Whether you are active-duty or retired, posted abroad or in Washington, DACOR urges you to take a look at what it has to offer. Next time you're in Washington, why not stop by for a visit? ■

—Compiled by Debra Blome,  
Associate Editor



DACOR members and guests gather in the Bacon House garden at the Turkey Post Reunion on June 5.

WRITING IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE

# A Conversation with Author Matthew Palmer



FSO Matthew Palmer and AFSA Communications Director Kristin Fernekes.

Writing and publishing in the Foreign Service can be a challenge. AFSA hosted FSO Matthew Palmer on Aug. 21 for a conversation on the nuts and bolts of the process.

Palmer, a 22-year veteran of the Foreign Service, currently serving as political counselor at Embassy Belgrade, has just published his first book, a thriller titled *The American Mission* (Putnam Adult, 2014).

Answering questions from AFSA Communications Director Kristen Fernekes, as well as the audience, Palmer expounded on inspiration, the publishing process and how his experience as an FSO informs his fiction.

For prospective writers Palmer had words of advice. "Just do it. Write. Don't be too goal-oriented. Write because

it's fun," he says. Palmer notes that it took 10 years to complete his first book and along the way he wrote "a lot of awful stuff" which didn't make it into the final manuscript.

"You need to be confident enough that you can recognize what's awful," he says.

His second book, which will be published and has a working title of *Secrets of State*, took only 11 months to complete. He has recently signed a contract to write two additional books.

He urged would-be authors to persevere and not get discouraged. "Fortitude," he says, "is an essential part of this process."

A recording of the complete conversation can be found at [www.afsa.org/](http://www.afsa.org/) video. ■

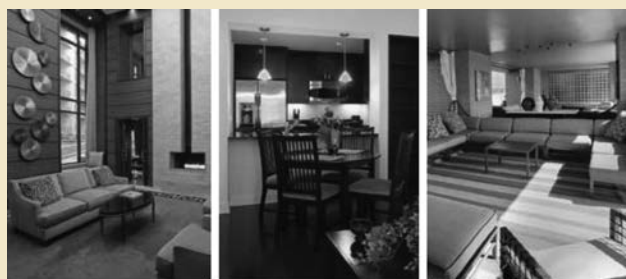


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## FAMILY MEMBER MATTERS

## Letter to My Global Nomads

BY HEATHER HARPER-TROJE

Our time in Costa Rica is nearly done and we're headed for Honduras, which has left each of us feeling variously excited, nervous, curious and grief-stricken.

Lately I've been thinking of some things I hope our kids are soaking in, about being a Foreign Service family and life in general.

The challenges we face as nomads are some of our most important teaching tools—something I'm trying to remind myself of more often. Our upcoming move has gotten me thinking of some of the lessons I think are important for our children, so I decided to sit down and write them a letter.

My Darling Children,

I know our lifestyle is unusual, and it brings us unique challenges, I want to share some things with you that are important to remember as we continue on our journey.

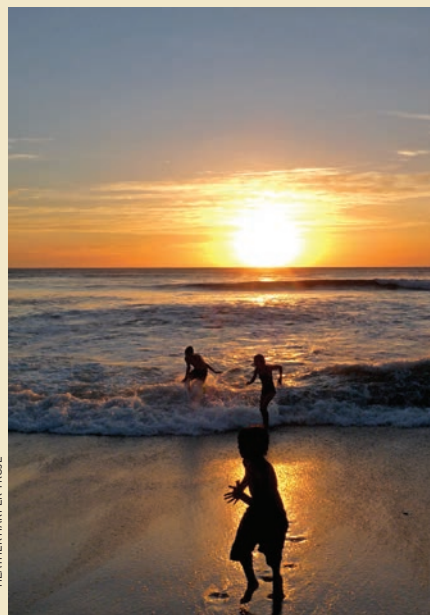
*1. Try your best to go into each host country with an open mind.* I don't have to tell you that moving is tough, and it's even tougher when you're leaving a country you love. Leaving Ireland was painful for all of us. I've learned over the past two years that expectations can sometimes be harmful and it's better to accept a country for what it is.

*2. Do not compare your host country to other countries, especially the ones you love the most.* Boy, was I bad about this when we moved here, and I'm sorry because I know that rubbed off on the three of you. It accomplishes nothing and only leads to feeling resentful toward the country that will never live up to the favorite

*3. Be open to the unique gifts each country can give you.* Every country, even the toughest to live in, has gifts to give, and if you're not open to receiving them, you'll never know what they are. All the hours we've spent body boarding in Jaco, the monkeys that have shaken trees around us, hikes we've taken in the rainforest at night—these are all gifts, and incredible ones at that. So remember to be open to receiving!

*4. Try to find something beautiful in your host country every day.* Keep your senses open and be conscious of the world around you.

*5. Find the humor in the eccentricities.* It's easy to get frustrated when things don't work properly or when you're dealing with an infrastructure that could use some help. And it's ok to be frustrated by those kinds of things—they're frustrating! But try to see the humor in those experiences.



HEATHER HARPER-TROJE

being frustrated or upset. It's just part of being human.

*9. Remember that you are you, no matter where you have landed in the world.* Hold on to your core and your beliefs. I'm not saying don't be open to change (it's important to grow), but your core, along with our family, gives you stability. So stay true to yourselves, always.

*10. Remember that our roots are portable. We live kind of a weird life.* I know that sometimes it feels like there are parts of you scattered all over the globe, but we always have each other and we have proven time and again that our roots are like steel. Above all else, remember that your dad and I love each of you with our whole hearts, and as long as we are together we will always be home.

All my love,  
Mom ■

*6. As your dad and I tell you, you represent the United States.* This is an honor, so remember to be a positive example of our country. All three of you have been amazing at this, I am beyond proud of you. Keep up the good work!

*7. Find a way to give back to your host country by volunteering or helping out in some way.* It's always good to bring more kindness and compassion to the world by giving the gifts each of you has to offer.

*8. Living in a foreign country isn't always easy, and it's rarely simple, but people who don't live the kind of life we live don't always realize that.* So when people look at you cross-eyed if you are venting a frustration, try to remember that not everyone understands the unique challenges that go along with living overseas. But don't ever be hard on yourself for

*Heather Harper-Troje is a stay-at-home mom to three precocious children and the wife on an FSO. Her husband's assignments have included Conakry, Dublin, Baghdad (unaccompanied tour), and San Jose. Their next assignment is Tegucigalpa. Her blog can be found at [www.mom2nomads.wordpress.com](http://www.mom2nomads.wordpress.com).*

## AFSA Awards Nearly \$200,000 in Financial Aid Scholarships



From left: Ian Houston, AFSA executive director; Ambassador Lange Schermerhorn, chair of the Scholarship Committee; Avery Smith; and Lori Dec, scholarship director.

AFSA has granted \$199,300 in financial aid scholarships for the 2014-2015 academic year.

Avery Smith (third from left, above), a sophomore at Oberlin College, and his sister, Amelia, a sophomore at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, are two of the 54 recipients of the this year's AFSA Financial Aid Scholarships.

The need-based scholarships are awarded to children of AFSA members for undergraduate study at a college or university.

Fall semester checks totaling \$100,650 were sent on Aug. 1 to the students' schools, with individual

awards ranging from \$3,000 to \$5,000.

AFSA's \$5.4 million endowment funds 59 perpetual scholarships (some students received more than one); in addition, there are seven AFSA annual and trust scholarships donated by individuals and organization such as AAFSW and DACOR.

Applications for the 2015-16 scholarship will be available Nov. 15, at [www.afsa.org/scholar](http://www.afsa.org/scholar), and more information on the scholarship program can be found at the same site. ■

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## What Goes Around Comes Around

### Sting of the Drone

Richard A. Clarke, *Thomas Dunne Books*, 2014, \$25.99, hardcover, 298 pages.

REVIEWED BY STEVEN ALAN HONLEY

Unmanned aerial vehicles, more familiarly known as drones, have become so ubiquitous that it is hard for many Americans to recall a time when they were not a key component of our counterterrorist strategy. In fact, the debut of drones as a U.S. foreign policy tool dates back to 1959, when the Air Force began using planes to overfly the Soviet Union.

The Department of Defense continues to administer America's "overt" drone program, which for the most part is noncontroversial. But in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the George W. Bush administration authorized the Central

**The novel's resolution is not as pat as you might expect—in keeping with the complexity of the moral and ethical questions the author thoughtfully addresses throughout the book.**

Intelligence Agency to run a "covert" drone program that has killed thousands of foreign militants—as well as many noncombatants and some American citizens. And that latter application is the subject of Richard A. Clarke's timely new thriller, *Sting of the Drone*.

Few people are better versed in this subject than Clarke, whose 30 years in federal service included a decade at the White House as special assistant to the president for global affairs, special adviser for cyberspace, and national coordinator for security, infrastructure

protection and counterterrorism.

Before retiring from government service in 2003, he also held various positions at State and Defense, including assistant secretary for political-military affairs. (Full disclosure: I worked for Clarke from 1990 to 1991 while serving as a third-tour Foreign Service officer in PM. His management style would never be described as warm and fuzzy, but he was always on top of his brief.)

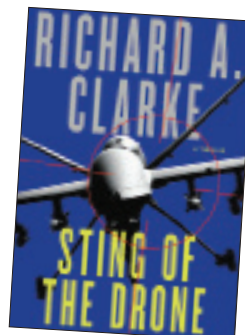
Written in the style of a screenplay, the plot cuts back and forth between the White House Situation Room, where targets are identified by an interagency "Kill Committee," and the Nevada air base where hotshot pilots execute those directives remotely.

We also travel from the mountains of

Afghanistan, where a group of extremists hatch a scheme to fight back against the drones and teach America a lesson it won't soon forget, to several European capitals and other locations.

As the clock ticks, Clarke weaves an alarmingly realistic drama in which his heroes scramble to thwart interlinked plots they're only vaguely aware of. Will they be able to track down their anonymous enemies before it's too late?

I wouldn't dare risk a drone attack by giving away the answer to that question here, but I can say that the novel's reso-



lution is not as pat as you might expect—in keeping with the complexity of the moral and ethical questions the author thoughtfully addresses throughout the book.

Though no one is likely to mistake it for literature, *Sting of the Drone* is a refreshingly

well-written page-turner (something one cannot take for granted in this genre, alas). That said, the sex scenes seem rather gratuitous, mainly calculated to increase the novel's marketability as a film rather than to advance the plot or make the characters more sympathetic.

Most of the protagonists, both Americans and foreigners, come across as believable characters—not just one-dimensional wonks, bureaucrats and action figures, though we do meet some of those along the way.

It is a particular pleasure to read a novel in which State Department employees are portrayed as professionals, rather than weenies. But I wish Clarke had resisted the temptation to settle scores by depicting journalists and members of Congress as misguided and naïve at best, if not self-serving and vindictive.

Foreign Service readers are presumably already keenly aware of the foreign policy dilemmas Clarke explores in *Sting of the Drone*. But it is still useful to be reminded of their intractability. As several of his characters ruefully observe, "There will always be bad guys out there." What matters is how we deal with them as a nation and a society, and how well we learn from the mistakes we will inevitably make along the way.

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Steven Alan Honley is The Foreign Service Journal's contributing editor.

## A Unique View of the Middle East

### The Good Spy: The Life and Death of Robert Ames

*Kai Bird, Crown Publishers, 2014, \$26.00, hardcover, 430 pages.*

REVIEWED BY ÁSGEIR SIGFÚSSON

After winning the Pulitzer Prize for his 2005 biography of J. Robert Oppenheimer, *American Prometheus*, author Kai Bird turns his attention to a much less known but no less worthy subject: CIA agent and Middle East hand Robert Ames.

Bird, the son of a Foreign Service officer, paints a vivid picture of Beirut, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iran and the wider Middle East during the tumultuous years of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. He also provides a truly excellent primer on the early years of the Palestinian struggle for independence, going into the world of Fatah and Black September in great detail.

Bob Ames grew up in Philadelphia and played basketball at La Salle University; he was on the team that took the NCAA championship in 1954. Following a stint in the Army—he was a member of the Signal Corps in what is now Eritrea—he took and failed the Foreign Service exam and then applied to the Central Intelligence Agency, into which he was quickly accepted.

He proved himself a gifted intelligence officer and chose to specialize in the Middle East, which at the time was not a highly sought-after area. His first CIA posting was to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, where his cover was that of a commercial officer in the Foreign Service.

Bird—whose father was posted in Dhahran during this same period—describes life in a small desert post wonderfully, and includes a highly amusing vignette in which Ames and Vice Consul (and later Ambassador) Patrick Theros fly to Bahrain, where Theros' duty was to bring back a suitcase full of alcohol into dry Saudi Arabia. This did not go off without a hitch.

Following his years in Dhahran, Ames had a succession of postings in the Middle East—Aden, in what was then South Yemen, Beirut, Tehran—as well as back in Washington, D.C. It was during this period that Ames exhibited his enviable ability to make friends in the Middle East, and often turn those friends into unofficial sources for the CIA. His fluent Arabic and deep knowledge of Middle Eastern history helped tremendously.

It was during his years in Beirut that he became embroiled in the Israel-Palestine issue, and got to know two individuals who would change his life: Mustafa Zein and Ali Hassan Salameh. Through them he gained unparalleled insight into the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the creation of Black September. The latter was responsible for such atrocities as the massacre of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics and the 1973 killings of U.S. Ambassador Cleo Noel and Deputy Chief of Mission George Curtis Moore in Khartoum.

Ames's relationship with Salameh opened a window into this world and created a back channel that then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger never acknowledged publicly.

During the 1970s and early 1980s, Ames' career had some successes and some setbacks. A great success was the

PFLP's promise to not target Americans as long as the back channel remained open and the U.S. provided some support to the Palestinian cause. Those who know this period in the history of the Middle East are aware that Salameh was assassinated in 1979; Mossad is believed to have been responsible.

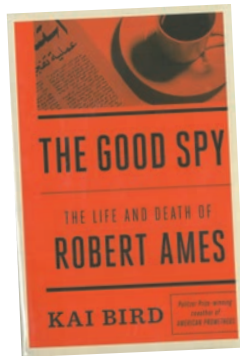
The book's subtitle gives away the fate of Bob Ames. He was among the 63 people killed in the terrorist attack on Embassy Beirut in April 1983. The life of a "good spy" ended at the age of 49. He was survived by his wife Yvonne and six children.

Bird is a master storyteller, and fleshes out a large swath of recent history through Ames' life. A fascinating protagonist, almost a Forrest Gump of the intelligence world, Ames is seemingly involved in every consequential event of the Middle East during that period. The narrative is heightened by Bird's meticulous and prodigious research, and his access to an astonishing number of people who knew Bob Ames personally and professionally.

Foreign Service readers will enjoy cameos of a large number of individuals from the diplomatic community: Hume Horan, Patrick Theros, Steve Buck, Frank Carlucci, Ryan Crocker, John Gunther Dean, Herman Eilts, Harriet Isom, Bruce Laingen and Henry Precht are among those who make an appearance.

Bird is sympathetic to his subject—perhaps slightly *too* sympathetic—and is muted on criticism of the CIA's questionable dealings with unsavory characters and the agency's fluid allegiances to the various sides of an issue.

But there is no denying the power of the story, which is only enhanced by the fact that it is true. ■



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# Refugee to Diplomat: A Journey

BY TONY HORNIK-TRAN

I was born in Tuyhoa, a small city in Vietnam. My father was a high school principal and my mother was a home economics teacher. My parents gathered their life savings and paid for my brother and me to escape to a free country.

Before we left, my father said: “Education will be the key to your future success. Use it to help yourself and others.”

In May 1982, we set out from Vietnam on a small fishing boat with 37 other people. After five days and six nights at sea, we finally made it to a small town named Mariveles, at the southern tip of the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines.

We were transported to the Vietnamese Refugee Asylum Camp in Palawan, and later transferred to another camp called the Philippine Refugee Processing Center.

During 11 months at the camps, I met numerous international organization workers from all over the world. I was deeply touched by their generosity, commitment and dedication. They were a great help to my brother and me. I promised myself that someday I would come back to help other refugees in need as they had helped me.

In America, I was placed with an adoptive family in Madison, Wisconsin, for a few years. This family took me in with unconditional love, treating me as if I were their own son and facilitating the transition to my new country.

---

*Tony Hornik-Tran is the Regional Security Officer/Security Attaché for Embassy Bratislava. He previously served as the area desk officer in the Office of International Programs/East Asian Pacific Islands from 2010 to 2012. Since joining the Foreign Service in 2002, he has served in the New York Field Office and overseas in Angola and China, with short-term assignments in Yemen, Namibia, Mongolia and Vietnam. Tony speaks fluent Vietnamese, good Chinese, decent Slovak, and very limited French, Portuguese and Tagalog. He has been married for 21 years and has one daughter.*



Courtesy Tony Hornik-Tran

RSO Tony Hornik-Tran meets with law students during an official trip in Slovakia.

I had promised my father that I would educate myself, so I attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I knew what I wanted to do, but there were many obstacles along the way, especially since English was my second language. But I knew that I could accomplish anything to which I set my mind.

I graduated with a bachelor’s degree in social welfare and criminal justice in 1990, and was recruited by the International Catholic Migration Commission/Joint Voluntary Agency, an organization that assists uprooted people, refugees and migrants worldwide. I was assigned to one of the refugee camps in the Philippines where I had lived eight years earlier.

As a caseworker, my duties included counseling and crisis intervention services for refugees who had a variety of psychosocial problems. These Southeast Asian and Amerasian people had suddenly been torn away from all that was dear and familiar to

them—homes, jobs, personal dignity and place in the world. I knew how they felt!

Assisting them was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life—especially since I met my wife there—and I extended my contract to three years. I encouraged people to follow their hearts, as I did, and always remember the importance of helping your fellow man.

In 1994, I returned to the United States, settling in San José, California, eager to continue working with the Vietnamese community. I also spent six years with the San José Police Department. Eventually, I joined the State Department’s Bureau of Diplomatic Security as a Special Agent in 2002.

As a former refugee from Vietnam, serving in the United States Foreign Service for 12 years has been a humbling experience and a privilege. If it were not for America, I would never have had a chance to do what I do today.

So I would like to conclude my story with my favorite line in a famous speech by President John F. Kennedy: “My fellow Americans: Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.” ■



Every tourist to Paris eventually winds up on the Montmartre hill, a haunt of the Impressionists, and hangs out in the cafes around the Place du Tertre. Paris is famous as a city for lovers, and here a bride and groom gaze into each other's eyes. No, wait: she is looking into her dish of ice cream, and he into the endless depths of his phone. Somehow, however, love still transcends technology. ■

*Ed Malcik joined the Foreign Service as a management officer in 1984 following a tour in the Peace Corps, and served in Douala, Mumbai, Bridgetown, Dakar, Abidjan, Djibouti, Berlin and Stockholm. He retired in 2010 and now relishes his role as a trailing spouse, following his wife, Susan, to Paris and Chennai. The photo was taken with a Nikon 300s and 24mm lens.*

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