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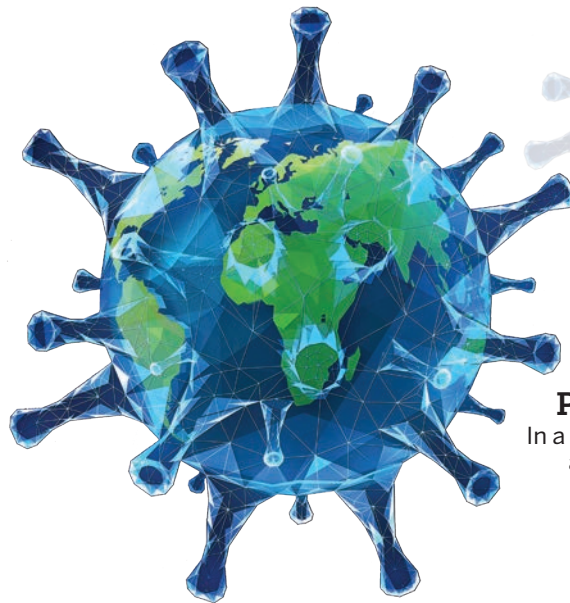
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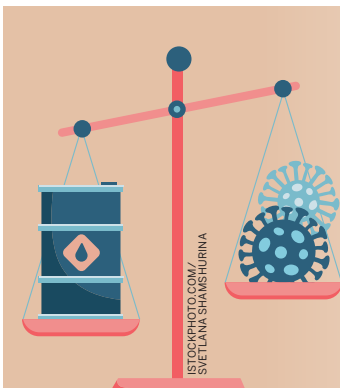
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Living Up to Our Ideals

BY ERIC RUBIN

As I write this, cities across the United States are burning, and the world sees the image of an America that is angry, unstable and divided. We can do better, and I believe we will. But we need to face our failures and confront our weaknesses.

There is no question that America has been a force for good on human rights and progress. But we have failed to address our own problems. And we have been guilty of arrogance and self-importance. Should U.S. diplomats really be writing human rights reports every year on Norway, Canada, Switzerland and Finland (for example), when our country's own record is far from ideal?

Being a U.S. diplomat has never been simple. Until the 1960s, Foreign Service officers needed to represent a country that was based on a post-Civil War settlement that included segregation and Jim Crow laws. While the United States fought Hitler and then challenged Stalin's Soviet Union in the Cold War, we had realities at home that can only be described as racist and wrong. And yet we persisted in fighting for a better world.

The United States designed and built the postwar institutions that shaped the modern world. We (mostly) supported decolonization and the independence of

the new nations of the developing world. We opposed apartheid in South Africa (eventually) and the imposition of racial segregation and white rule in Rhodesia.

But we also fought a war in Vietnam that in historical retrospect was a big mistake. We adhered to the famous line by our great president Franklin Delano Roosevelt that "he may be a son of a bitch, but he is our son of a bitch." While Roosevelt was describing Nicaragua's Somoza, the sentiment also describes our relationship to the shah of Iran, and to the murderous military dictatorships in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s.

And yet we also fought for freedom. World War II was a fight for human liberty. The Cold War, despite our many mistakes and overreactions, was about a vision of human civilization that was based on democracy and human rights.

We can be proud of many successes—the creation of NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; our support for European integration that led to creation of the European Community and, later, the European Union; the development of the family of United Nations organizations that have been responsible for so much progress in the daily lives of millions of people; and the many bilateral and multilateral alliances that have undergirded world stability.

As Americans, we can and should be proud of this record. The U.S. Foreign Service can be proud of its role in advancing peace and prosperity across the

globe. But there have been big mistakes, from the invasion of Iraq to our failure to secure the future of Afghanistan.

U.S. diplomacy must focus on how we can make a difference in advancing our national interests, security and prosperity. The post-Cold War era is ending, and the international challenges before us demand a new, coherent foreign policy vision. But the need for America to have strong representation abroad remains critical.

The United States must get back to the concepts enshrined in the Foreign Service Act of 1980, with professional diplomats at the center of our policy-making process.

And the United States must return to our commitment to the security, prosperity and stability of the world. No other country is going to replace us. No other country can do so. It is not wrong or presumptuous for us to believe that we have a special role to play. We have played it for the past 75 years, and the world is mostly the better for it, despite our mistakes.

As former Assistant Secretary for Democracy and Human Rights Harold Koh said in the June *FSJ*, "The United States is founded on the simple, radical idea of universal human rights." Our country has failed to fully live up to its own promise of freedom and justice for all, but it is our country's founding purpose and ideals, and our willingness to fight for them, that make us uniquely qualified for global leadership. ■



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

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We're Listening

BY SHAWN DORMAN

I write the Editor's Letter near the end of the production process each month. That way, we have a fighting chance to frame the issue in a way that is close to current. These days, every day brings major upheaval, new developments.

In late May, the tragic killing of George Floyd at the hands of police in Minneapolis ignited protests nationwide—and later, worldwide—against police brutality and discrimination against Black people.

Slowly, and then all at once, over the past month our country has reawakened to the deeply rooted problem of racism in the United States. And so, too, has the Foreign Service. There is an opening up about the realities for people of color in the Service.

From the viral blog post by entry-level FSO Tianna Spears, who resigned due to racial discrimination (in particular connected to repeated harassment by Customs and Border Patrol agents at the U.S. border), to the June 18 resignation of Mary Elizabeth Taylor, the *only* senior-level Black official at State, we are listening.

From former FSO Chris Richardson's June 23 *NYT* op-ed to the U.S. Government Accountability Office reports

on steps needed to identify barriers to workforce diversity, we are listening.

Shawn Dorman is the editor of The Foreign Service Journal.



This month's Speaking Out, "Changing Mindsets on Race at State," is surely a conversation starter. Ambassador (ret.) P. Michael McKinley brings to the fore a personal account of discrimination at State as witnessed over the course of a 37-year Foreign Service career. He challenges the community to have an open dialogue about racism at State.

Our next edition, September, will focus on race and diversity in the Foreign Service, with the aim of not only describing the problem, but also offering perspectives on what can and must be done to make "inclusion" in the Foreign Service real.

This month's focus is on the Foreign Service response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including a collection of voices from inside the efforts that brought more than 100,000 Americans home as countries closed borders to fight the spread of the disease.

This global health crisis is still very much with us. More than half of U.S. states report rising cases as of late June. Success in some countries is accompanied by surges and resurgence of cases in others.

Setting the scene for our coverage is Ambassador (ret.) Leslie Bassett's "Waking Up to a Pandemic: H1N1 in Mexico, 2009." Her portrayal of the response to H1N1 in 2009 resonates today.

"There's a Playbook: From Ebola to COVID-19" captures our conversation with Jeremy Konyndyk, who led the U.S. response to the 2014 Ebola outbreak as head of USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance. He shares lessons

on what the United States must do to end the current pandemic.

Another powerful voice on the U.S. role in fighting the pandemic is Ambassador (ret.) Jimmy Kolker, who offers practical recommendations for global health governance.

Veteran diplomat Donald Bishop looks at "Disinformation Challenges in a Pandemic" and, from a different angle, Professor Jian Wang makes a pitch for "Rethinking Public Diplomacy for a Post-Pandemic World."

The photo essay from Monica Rojas, "Luanda to Ohio," illustrates her family's COVID-19 evacuation story, giving a glimpse of what Foreign Service life has been like during the pandemic.

A compilation of 18 dispatches from the field show how the U.S. Foreign Service works for the American people during a global crisis. In the mix are vivid photos and even haikus from northern China. The Reflection, by Ambassador (ret.) Walter Cutler, takes us back to 1976 Zaire and the first known cases of Ebola.

In the Feature, "Russia's Return to the Middle East," Russia expert Angela Stent surveys the landscape of that country's foray into a volatile region.

AFSA President Eric Rubin reflects on the unrest in our country in "Living Up to Our Ideals."

We're listening, and we want to hear from you. Please respond to this edition and share your ideas for how the Foreign Service can better live up to its ideals. ■

Attention to Nuclear Policy

I'm a fan of the *FSJ* and grateful for what has become a much more sprightly product while focusing smartly on that perennial topic—what the heck is diplomacy?

I am writing now with particular thanks for the May *Journal's* focus on nuclear diplomacy. I've spent a chunk of my career not only working on these issues but also seeking to bring greater attention to the issue of nuclear policy and other arms issues (particularly since retiring from the Foreign Service).

These primal issues are too often ignored in public discourse as being wonky, boring, technical or distant from everyday life. They are not. The Foreign Service itself ought to give a fresh look at how to recruit, train and retain FSOs in the arms control field, where their role has been diminishing over the years.

I was therefore delighted by both the decision to devote an issue to nuclear policy and the high quality of the content. You offered a great trifecta in Tom Countryman, an FSO practitioner; Rose Gottemoeller, an expert who has shuttled between public service and the think-tank world; and Joe Cirincione, a preeminent advocate from the nongovernmental organization community.

They represent the best in their fields, and I've had the pleasure of working with all three. I also appreci-

ated the accompanying selection of articles from your diplomatic treasure trove, the *FSJ* Archive.

Many thanks for the critical mass you achieved in a superb issue.

Laura E. Kennedy
Ambassador, retired
Washington, D.C.

FSOs Should Not Be Specialists

Christopher W. Smith's Speaking Out column, "The Diplomat and the State" (May), raises some interesting points, but confuses the issues discussed.

Although popular these days, comparing FSOs to military officers is like comparing apples to oranges. The vast majority of military officers are specialists, committed to one of the specialty fields of their branch (e.g., infantry, artillery, armor for the Army).

Once they learn the functional requirements of that specialty, their training understandably focuses on leadership responsibilities. Few military officers other than the Special Forces have to gain familiarity with foreign cultures or learn languages, unlike FSOs who spend significant time on "training," albeit often in situ in the case of area training.

Suggesting, as Smith does, that FSOs should be "experts," focusing on one country, rather than generalists, implies abandoning the principle of worldwide availability. Smith's proposal would only expose us once again to charges of clientitis.

Michael W. Cotter
Ambassador, retired
Chapel Hill, North Carolina



The Foreign Service Honor Roll

Bravo. The May article, "The Foreign Service Honor Roll," by Retiree VP John Naland was both justifiably extensive and exceptionally well written.

The expanded knowledge and understanding of the origins and objectives of the memorial plaques in State's lobby are, and should be, of considerable importance to members of the Service, as well as to others (especially, but not exclusively, family members and friends of the deceased honored on them).

As a professional organization with extensive global responsibilities, the Service is well advised to inform its members of the background and intent of the activities launched well before many of the current membership came aboard. Mr. Naland and the *Journal* have done an excellent job.

Edward Peck
Ambassador, retired
Washington, D.C.

An Unusual Plaque Entry

John Naland's "The Foreign Service Honor Roll" (May) mentions CIA names on the AFSA Memorial Plaques. I offer this background regarding one CIA name cited, Mackiernan.

As a new FSO and aspiring China officer in 1980, I was curious about this plaque entry: Douglas S. Mackiernan, Killed by Gunfire, Tibet 1950. I researched the story and wrote about it in the April 1985 *FSJ* ("Overland From China").

It was also the story of Consul General John Hall Paxton. Paxton had led a party of 40 people and 60 animals overland from Ürümqi out of northwest China to India in late 1949, a two-month trek for which he received a Superior Service Award.

Vice Consul Mackiernan was to follow Paxton. He did so in the company of three White Russians, two of whom were killed alongside Mackiernan, and Fulbright scholar Frank Bessac, a retired anthropology professor whom I've visited in Missoula, Montana.

In 2006 Douglas Mackiernan was officially acknowledged by the CIA as their first casualty. His name was then added to their Book of Honor next to the existing 1950 black star. I was told that a classified CIA study noted my article as having "preserved cover."

The Mackiernan and Paxton story is told in *Overtime in Heaven: Adventures in the Foreign Service*, by Peter Lisagor and Marguerite Higgins (1964), and Bessac gave an account to *Life* magazine.

Chapter One of *The Book of Honor: Covert Lives and Classified Deaths at the CIA* by Ted Gup (2000) is devoted to an encyclopedic account of Douglas Mackiernan, an even more complicated story than the one I wrote.

(I never made it as a China officer.)

Fred Donner

Former FSO

Falls Church, Virginia

Discovering ConGen Calcutta History

Moises Mendoza's fascinating article about Consulates General Matamoros and Ponta Delgada in the April *FSJ* ("Discovering Our Consulate's History, We Discovered Ourselves") reminded me of the history of another post—ConGen Calcutta (now Kolkata). Its origins preceded Matamoros and Ponta Delgada.

The State Department states that Ponta Delgada has been operating continuously since its founding in 1795. Technically, the claim that it is the oldest continuously operating U.S.

consulate could be accurate, because in the beginning Calcutta was not termed a consulate but rather a "commercial agent."

On Nov. 19, 1792, President George Washington nominated Benjamin Joy of Newburyport, Massachusetts, as the first American consul to Calcutta. With the advice of Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, and consent of the U.S. Senate, the president commissioned Joy to that office on Nov. 21, 1792.

Joy reached Calcutta in April 1794. He was not recognized as consul by the British East India Company but was permitted to "reside here as a Commercial Agent, subject to the Civil and Criminal Jurisdiction of this Country."

While the East India Company refused to let his post be called a consulate, Joy remained there until 1795 and formally resigned on Jan. 24, 1796. On Feb. 22 of that year, William James Miller of Pennsylvania was commissioned consul at Calcutta, where he was issued an exequatur by the British government.

Equally interesting is the reason the infant U.S. government established an official presence in Calcutta. During the American Revolution, the British ceased exporting tea and spices from Calcutta to the American colonies, so New England traders decided to pick up the business.

To pay for their voyages, which took an average of six months each way between Boston and Calcutta, the traders exported a unique commodity. One might assume it was coal. But no, the nawabs of Bengal had enough fossil

fuel of their own; they wanted something the Yankees had in abundance in winter—ice, mostly carved out of New England millponds.



While there was plenty of ice and snow in the nearby Indian Himalayas, it melted on pack animals and carts before it could reach the nawabs, who loved ice cream and other frigid delights. Amazingly, the shippers lost only about 15 percent of

their icy weight during the long voyages around Cape Horn from New Bedford to Calcutta in large sailing vessels, with the ice packed in pine straw in deep hulls.

I was head of the political section in Calcutta from 1969 to 1972, which is when the leftist state government decided to change the name of our consulate address from Harrington Street to Ho Chi Minh Sarani, just as we were in the midst of the Vietnam War.

We wrote up a history of the post at that time, and years later, in 1993, I collaborated with Dennis Kux on his book, *India and the United States: Estranged Democracies, 1941-1991*.

As deputy business coordinator with Paul Cleveland under Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, I used the ice-from-New England-to-India story to illustrate to political officers why knowledge of business and politics is critical for the Foreign Service around the world.

Keep up the good work.

George Griffin

FSO, retired

Blue Ridge Summit, Pennsylvania

In Support of Inspectors General

Kudos to Senator Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) for blocking two executive-level appointments the administration wishes to make after President Donald Trump fired two inspectors general.

The president removed the two from their posts without providing Congress a 30-day notice, including the reasons for their removals, as required by the federal Inspector General Act.

Grassley would now like to know the president's reasons for their removal as a condition for unblocking the appointments of Christopher Miller as director of the National Counterterrorism Center and Marshall Billingslea as under secretary for arms control and international security at the State Department.

Intelligence Community IG Michael Atkinson was dismissed on April 3 for having forwarded a whistleblower complaint to Congress—as required by statute—an action that ultimately resulted in Trump's impeachment in the House.

State Department IG Steve Linick was given the sack on May 15 by Trump at the request of Secretary Mike Pompeo, who chafed at the IG's inquiries into his approval of arms sales to Saudi Arabia, contrary to the objections of Congress.

It seems unlikely that even a loyal Republican like Sen. Grassley, who is a strong supporter of inspectors general, will be satisfied by the president's responses—that is, in the unlikely event that any reply at all will be forthcoming.

Fred Kalhammer

*USAID Senior FSO, retired
Sun City Center, Florida*

Amend the 1980 FS Act

As a member of the Charlie Bray AFSA Governing Board in the early 1970s, and having helped lead the State Department

FSO campaign that added the role of a labor union to that of professional association for AFSA, I was interested to read USAID AFSA VP Jason Singer's March AFSA News column on the Foreign Service Act of 1980.

I admit to being among the many who have never read the 1980 Act, which was supported by an AFSA board dominated by mid-career officers in the late 1970s while I was serving in revolutionary Iran.

I didn't even focus on Section 601: Promotions, which Jason Singer highlights, prodding his colleagues. And like many others, I was surprised to learn that "up or out," a doctrine borrowed from the military, had been inserted to guide future FSO promotions.

Of course, the 1980 Foreign Service Act includes a provision for exceptions in particular cases, on which I relied: The line for promotions was drawn just above my name after my return from Beirut and Tehran, despite my having served in "stretch" assignments above my grade of FSO-2 (counselor) at both those posts.

I was aware that promotions get rarer as one nears the top. But I was to learn that no exceptions would be made in the year that my time in class ran out, while I was serving as an emergency chargé d'affaires in between ambassadors at two African posts.

Perhaps it takes unique circumstances like those currently ravaging the senior ranks of the Service to inspire a reconsideration of current up-or-out policy. I suspect

that a bipartisan Congress would have no objection to such a reconsideration.

Useful arguments in favor of finally dumping our up-or-out experiment can be found in *FSJ* articles I wrote in 2011, 2013 and 2014 that also call for more professionalism and greater teamwork in the Service (and are reproduced in my recently published memoir, *So You Want to Be a Diplomat?*).

I offer the blessings of an ancient retiree for a more effective Foreign Service.

*George B. Lambrakis
FSO, retired
Pornic, France*

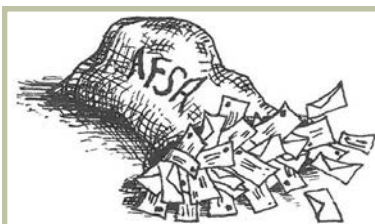


There in Spirit

We don't really have a story about responding to COVID-19. We are retired, staying home, trying to keep track of real news. We wish we could be "there" helping the Foreign Service meet all the challenges no one else hears about.

We have been there when we were working, and we know and appreciate the unsung heroes of the Foreign Service. Bless all of you. ■

*Phil and Jill Lundy McClendon
FSOs, retired
Weatherford, Texas*



**Submit letters
to the editor:
journal@afsa.org**

The Management of Power

BY JAREK BUSS

I agree wholeheartedly with many of Christopher W. Smith’s suggestions for improving the profession of diplomacy, including acquiring expertise, expanding training and research, and creating standardized doctrine.

For such changes to be more than superficial, however, his comparison with the military profession should be pushed further to highlight two fundamental differences between the State and Defense systems: the concentration of agency and control over the mission.

Only by understanding the root structural challenges within State will we be able to make changes with a real, long-term impact.

Agency and Control

First, at the most basic level, State and Defense have an inverse concentration of agency. In military affairs, actual events are carried out by soldiers on the ground, who are empowered to act within the rules of engagement. When U.S. troops come under attack, they don’t draft, clear and submit an action memo back to Washington for approval before firing back.

Many critical decisions are made in Washington, of course, but their success or failure depends entirely on those at the front lines. The entire Defense structure is essentially oriented toward supporting the field. Thus, Samuel Huntington’s definition of the military profession as the “management of violence” will resonate with even the rawest recruit.

Not so with the State Department. Here, Mr. Smith’s definition of the diplomatic profession as “the management of

power” has no relationship to the immediate lived existence of an A-100 graduate, and will not for, perhaps, 15 years or more. The actual art of diplomacy—managing national power to advance U.S. interests abroad—is practiced by only a select few, many of whom are political appointees from outside the diplomatic corps. The rest of the department exists, more or less, to support these principals, whether they be a chief of mission or a deputy assistant secretary. Ironically, State is oriented inward.

True, the Bureau of Consular Affairs could be the happy exception, where “boots on the ground” do the work of issuing visas, visiting prisoners or putting American citizens on planes, all with support from Washington. But this outlier only accentuates the fact that most of those we call “diplomats” are something more complex: a collection of facilities managers, reporters, visa adjudicators and speechwriters. Each provides essential support to the department’s mission. But how is each managing national power? Often, the answer is unclear or, at best, tangential.

This reverse dynamic—State has few agents but massive support staff, while Defense’s power is relatively more diffuse—is all the more interesting given that Defense spends most of its time and effort in *preparation* for operations. State, in contrast, engages in global diplomatic operations every day, around the clock.

State is always in action, yet our current culture sometimes makes us hesitant to do anything without 10 layers of Washington approval, slowing our responses



or generalizing them into vague platitudes beyond all hope of stirring an international audience. We need more FSOs empowered to *practice* diplomacy, more of the time.

Second, State’s mission is to manage national power to advance U.S. interests abroad—yet most national power is outside its control. Military force, sanctions, tariffs, market access and so on all belong to other agencies and departments. Even the coordination of these levers has been reassigned to the National Security Council, leaving State with foreign aid, visas, name-and-shame reporting and good old-fashioned persuasion.

State can often feel adrift, desiring that “premier role in U.S. foreign policy” yet eating a much smaller slice of the pie. To truly take the lead in U.S. foreign policy—i.e., to influence the levers of national power outside its direct control—State must convince the rest of the U.S. government to listen. Our diplomatic influence abroad depends on the success of our diplomacy at home.

Critical Recommendations

To sum up, most American diplomats do not actively engage in diplomacy defined as “the management of power,” but instead support the few who do. Of these principals, many come from outside the State Department, and even they

are limited in their influence to only a few levers of state power. How, then, to build diplomacy as a profession for our Foreign Service officers?

In this context, Mr. Smith's recommendations to achieve expertise, expand training and research, and create standardized doctrine are especially critical:

- *Acquiring expertise.* Considering the host of actors in U.S. foreign policy, State's influence is linked inevitably with the perception of its expertise. To remain relevant and shape issues over which it has little formal control, State must leverage its institutional advantage—an overt global presence—to derive expertise on host-country history, context and current events. Our credibility as nonpartisan foreign policy experts will also be the determining factor in our ability to gain the trust of our politically appointed principals.

- *Expand training and research.*

Research goes hand in hand with acquiring expertise and building credibility. Enough said. Training, meanwhile, has a critical role to play for FS-2 and FS-1 officers. These officers have considerable experience supporting the department and are beginning to touch or engage in the “management of power.” Expanded general training can help pull together the disparate elements of a career into preparation for an actual diplomatic role.

- *Standardized doctrine.* Mr. Smith convincingly argues for a codified, official doctrine of principles, concepts and informed professional guidance. Beyond the benefits he cites, an accepted body of doctrine can rebalance the department toward the field. Clear doctrine allows for greater autonomy at the local level—more FSOs would be able to actually practice diplomacy, and earlier in their careers, by taking initiative within the doctrinal bounds Washington endorses.

Empowering our FSOs may lead to

an occasional diplomatic faux pas, but overly centralized management hasn't prevented those either. Doctrine can set the guide rails and then unleash the dynamism in our talented workforce.

Everyone at State seems to agree that the United States faces a challenging and changing international environment, and that the department needs to rise to the occasion and advance U.S. foreign policy for a better nation and a better world.

The State Department will only ever be as good as its people, so building

diplomacy as a profession per Mr. Smith's recommendations will be central to that effort.

Jarek Buss is a first-tour officer in Guangzhou, China, though due to COVID-19, he has also spent months working with Overseas Citizen Services and the Coronavirus Global Response Coordination Unit in Washington, D.C. He served in Chengdu, China, and in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs as a Pickering Fellow. He hails from Wyoming.

The Profession: It's All about Peace

BY PETER LYDON

This retired Foreign Service foot soldier is glad to see from AFSA a renewed interest in its role as the professional association of U.S. diplomats.

Part of that must clearly be continuous introspection about what the profession of diplomacy is. In the May *Journal*, Christopher Smith, after comparisons with the military and a good deal of leaning on Samuel Huntington, holds that it is “the management of U.S. national power in the conduct of the nation's foreign affairs.”

I'd say this statement is an extraordinarily dilute and undemanding, not to say trivializing, characterization of our profession, which mainly expresses complacency during what is in fact a very dangerous time. Its acceptance as the standard of professional work would be a severe retreat by our professional association.

Contrarily, I would define the profession of diplomacy as the specifically

peaceful management of international tensions and conflicts of interest. The State Department and Foreign Service should redevelop and reassert a professional commitment to work among international differences and antagonisms with the purpose of avoiding war.

We should recruit the very best people we can for this task. It is to be recognized that that is a higher standard, and one that we will not always meet, in a potentially tragic domain in which there are failures as well as successes. Nonetheless, it is a professional standard that more genuinely distinguishes us among other professions and government occupations. It is an aspiration we should not give up.

Reevaluation Needed

In a late 1976 piece in the *Open Forum Journal*, “Diplomacy as a Profession: Recovering from Vietnam,” I stated that the State Department and Foreign Ser-

vice should not let themselves off easily after doing very badly in the murderous and disastrous Vietnam War. A serious reevaluation and self-definition were in order.

That article asserted we should put aside conceptions of ourselves as managers (by implication, maximizers) of American power, and also as faithful executors of presidential policies (even when those policies are wrong, as Lyndon Johnson's were in Asia). Rather we should reaffirm as our professional purpose the nonviolent, nonmilitary management of international disputes (short-, middle- and long-term).

Further, we should understand that the advocate of a peace-preserving approach in National Security Council deliberations will never lack for adversaries there, and on the bad days would involve a lot of hand-wringing.

These issues have arisen again since our domestic political system, probably in some distress, put into the White House in 2016 a right-wing populist whose personal characteristics and international policy impulses are too much like those of a very dangerous bull in a china shop.

I suspect that many FSOs who think seriously about our country's foreign relations and the present historical moment are very troubled. Rightly so. If there is anxiety during the Trump administration and if there are conflicted consciences among diplomats, there should be. There is certainly real peril for our country in specific steps that Mr. Trump has taken, such as withdrawing from the Paris climate change accord, the Iran nuclear deal and several arms control agreements.

Broader, more general policy orientations are also squarely in the wrong direction, such as the long-term drift

toward major conflict with China—laying for our grandchildren's lifetimes the foundations of a new Cold War, instead of the war we and China should be waging cooperatively against climate change.

A Deeper, Truer Conviction

In a sense, we can do nothing about these large-scale historic decisions that take place on our watches but are far above our pay grades. Many good State Department people have resigned (or been forced out), but it's not always clear that getting out is the best solution or, indeed, that there is any good solution at all.

Taking the liberty of giving advice from the old dilemmas to people embroiled in the present one, the most constructive approach is intellectual self-preservation, keeping oneself from being swamped mentally by convenient, pervasive and seductive conventional outlooks (primarily, for Americans today, the moderate military, nationalist mindset in our foreign affairs).

Diplomats should hang onto the deeper, truer conviction of how bad war is and how difficult to control once unleashed, and hold steadfastly that peace really is what their profession is all about. That is true whether they can do anything overt about it at any given moment, or not.

The trick is to studiously avoid feeding conflict and to always be alert for moments when a contribution in the right direction can be made. ■

Born in Boston and educated at the University of Toronto, Yale University and MIT, Peter Lydon joined the Foreign Service in 1962, serving in Leopoldville, rural Laos, Vientiane, Calcutta and Dhaka. He chaired the Secretary's Open Forum from 1975 to 1976, and retired to California in 1988.



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Diplomacy Strong: Getting Back into the Field

As summer approached, the coronavirus pandemic continued to cause massive disruptions to the Foreign Service.

All of the foreign affairs agencies have severely restricted travel since mid-March, and most personnel have been working from home. Only mission-critical personnel have been allowed to work in embassies and other State Department facilities.

On May 1, the Office of the Under Secretary for Management released “Diplomacy Strong: Phased Approach to Adjusting COVID Mitigation,” comprehensive guidelines for reopening, including permanent change of station (PCS) plans, which have been on hold for several months.

And in early June, the department announced it would gradually resume PCS travel beginning June 15, depending on the gaining and losing post as defined by the Diplomacy Strong guidelines.

Following guidance from the White House and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Diplomacy Strong provides steps and conditions for getting

Department of State employees back out into the field while prioritizing the safety and health of all employees, especially the most vulnerable. It follows a conditions-based approach, phased to balance speed and risk.

Conditions for return are being evaluated at the individual post level. Chiefs of mission, emergency action committees and local management are to make decisions in conjunction with the State Department’s Office of the Under Secretary for Management.

Diplomacy Strong spells out three phases of return, depending on the condition of the post or location in question. It envisions up to 40 percent of people returning to offices and embassies in Phase I, up to 80 percent in Phase II (possibly in alternating teams), and 80 percent or more in Phase III.

Fourteen days of improved conditions, spelled out in the plan, are required to move from one phase to the next.

Mission-critical employees may begin PCS travel to countries or locations under

Phase I, but must bring a telework-ready device in case of travel delays. Family members can accompany these employees only with the approval of the chief of mission and the Office of the Under Secretary for Management.

Under Phase II, more employees may transfer to new posts, and family members may accompany these employees with chief-of-mission approval, depending on available services and transportation options. In Phase III, full PCS travel resumes.

Under all three phases, vulnerable employees are advised to continue to telework. The plan also calls for various levels of social distancing when people do return to the office.

USAID has developed a similar three-phased plan, called “Roadmap to Return.”

“USAID’s approach to returning officers and their families to post is incremental, conditions-based and location-specific,” the agency stated in a letter to FS family members. “It is not time-based. Each post will move through three phases of return, with each transition responsive to evolving data, information and guidance from local authorities.”

The U.S. Commercial Service plans to follow State Department guidelines to get people back out into the field, and the Foreign Agricultural Service expected to send one employee to Beijing in June whose job it would be to lay the groundwork for other FAS staff to return to consulates in China.

U.S. Embassies Address George Floyd Killing

U.S. embassies and ambassadors in many countries around the world took the unusual step of issuing statements in the wake of the May 25 police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis calling for law enforcement accountability.

Contemporary Quote

“George Floyd’s brutal killing, hundreds of thousands of the world’s most vulnerable people succumbing to a global pandemic, the crushing economic cost of lockdowns borne by the poorest among us, remind us that we cannot wait for justice or to recognize each other’s humanity. ... As an African-American, for as long as I can remember I have known that my rights and my body were not fully my own. I have also always known that America, conceived in liberty, has always aspired to be better—a shining city on a hill—and that is why I have dedicated my life to her service. ... Americans will continue to speak out for justice whether at home or abroad. We can meet the ideals of our founding; we can change this world for the better.”

—Brian A. Nichols, U.S. ambassador to Zimbabwe, in a statement issued following a meeting with Zimbabwean Foreign Minister S.B. Moyo, June 1.

ity in the United States. U.S. embassies rarely weigh in on U.S. domestic affairs.

"We are deeply troubled by the death of Mr. George Floyd in Minneapolis. The U.S. Department of Justice is conducting a full criminal investigation as a top priority. Law enforcement officials must be held accountable in every country," U.S. Embassy Nairobi tweeted on May 29.

U.S. Mission Uganda and U.S. Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo Mike Hammer made similar statements.

On June 2, U.S. Ambassador to Kenya Kyle McCarter tweeted: "I hear you. Voices of the American people, mine included, reflect their horror & anger at the repugnant acts of these officers. Justice will prevail."

The U.S. embassy in Tanzania on May 29 tweeted a joint Justice Department and FBI statement announcing a criminal investigation into Floyd's death.

Officials placed a Black Lives Matter banner on the exterior of the U.S. embassy in Seoul on June 13 and tweeted: "Our #BlackLivesMatter banner shows our support for the fight against racial injustice and police brutality as we strive to be a more inclusive & just society."

But on June 15, the embassy removed the banner after President Trump and Secretary Pompeo expressed displeasure about it, Reuters reported.

Association of Black American Ambassadors on George Floyd

The Association of Black American Ambassadors released a statement on June 9 on the deaths of George Floyd and other Black Americans at the hands of the police. Nearly 60 ambassadors signed the statement.

Excerpts follow:

"We spent our careers looking beyond

America's borders, but these shocking events call us to look inward and join with others in opposing discrimination and oppression in all its forms. We join our fellow citizens, brothers and sisters in demanding an end to inhumane police practices; we call for accountability, fairness, transparency, and transformation in our national, state and local institutions, including legal, judicial and law enforcement systems, to prevent future violence of this kind. ...

"As the organization representing the country's most seasoned Black American diplomats, we believe strongly that equal rights and complete pursuit of justice is but the first step needed to rebuild our own citizens' confidence in our democratic system and values. But, it is also

needed to help restore our country's global human rights authority. We will work with like-minded organizations to demand the development and implementation of policies that put an end to injustice, repression, and violence in our great democracy. We all want an equitable society where each of us has the right to breathe."

NatSec Professionals Respond to Use of Military on U.S. Streets

On June 5, a statement addressed to U.S. national, state and local leaders—signed by more than 500 (and rising) former high-level U.S. diplomats and military officials—decried the use of the U.S. military to put down peaceful protests at home. Excerpts from the

Podcast of the Month: *Modern American Diplomacy*

In this new podcast, Foreign Service Economic Officer Jeremy Beer interviews some of America's most influential diplomats, capturing the sacrifice, professionalism, humor, heroism, wisdom and triumph of modern-day American diplomacy.

Through personal anecdotes, guests explain what they were trying to achieve with a given foreign policy, how they tried to accomplish those objectives, and where things went right (or wrong).

Beer, an FSO since 2003, is currently on a sabbatical fellowship at the Una Chapman Cox Foundation, a nonprofit working to support the effectiveness and professional-



ism of the U.S. Foreign Service. He is writing a book, *Modern American Diplomacy: A Field Guide to Success in the Foreign Service*, featuring interviews with top diplomats.

The podcast conversations to date include retired ambassadors John Negroponte, Bill Burns, Bob Blake, Maura Harty and a host of similarly accomplished U.S. diplomats. Seven episodes have been released, the first on Dec. 5, 2019.

In the Feb. 20 podcast, Ambassador Thomas Pickering shares tips on managing an embassy, serving in hardship posts, developing foreign contacts and navigating a life and career in the U.S. Foreign Service.

Visit bit.ly/diplomacy-podcast.



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statement, “The Strength of America’s Apolitical Military,” follow.

“We deplore the brutal killing of George Floyd by police officers in Minneapolis which has provoked more widespread protests than the United States has seen in decades. ... We are alarmed by calls from the President and some political leaders for the use of U.S. military personnel to end legitimate protests in cities and towns across America.

“Many of us served across the globe, including in war zones, diplomats and military officers working side by side to advance American interests and values. We called out violations of human rights and the authoritarian regimes that deployed their military against their own citizens. Our values define us as a nation and as a global leader.

“The professionalism and political neutrality of the U.S. military have been examples for people around the world who aspire to greater freedom and democracy in their own societies. ... We condemn all criminal acts against persons and property, but cannot agree that responding to these acts is beyond the capabilities of local and state authorities. ...

“Misuse of the military for political purposes would weaken the fabric of our democracy, denigrate those who serve in uniform to protect and defend the Constitution, and undermine our nation’s strength abroad.

“We urge the President and state and local governments to focus their efforts on uniting the country and supporting reforms to ensure equal police treatment of all citizens, regardless of race or ethnicity.”

Taxpayer-Funded Madison Dinners

Secretary Pompeo came under fire in May for hosting two dozen elite but unofficial dinners at the State Department

over the past 18 months, funded by taxpayers, according to a May 19 NBC report.

The so-called “Madison Dinners,” held in the State Department’s public reception rooms, featured dozens of Republican donors as well as billionaire CEOs, several conservative Supreme Court justices, members of Congress (Republican only), conservative media leaders and a few foreign ambassadors. The events were not recorded on the Secretary’s official schedule.

State Department officials involved in the dinners said they had raised concerns internally that the events were essentially using federal resources to cultivate a donor and supporter base for Pompeo’s political ambition, NBC News reported.

The chairs of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, and the House Foreign Affairs Committee, concerned over “potential abuses,” demanded extensive documents from the State Department about the Madison Dinners, NBC News reported on May 21.

USAID Restricts Purchase of PPE

Even as the United States has committed \$900 million of pandemic assistance to 120 countries, USAID has informed grant recipients that they may not use federal money to buy personal protective equipment (PPE) without specific approval, according to a May 13 National Public Radio report.

In February, the United States had sent 17.8 tons of donated medical supplies, including masks and gowns, to China, NPR reported.

But in an April 7 press conference, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the United States would no longer ship PPE out of the United States.

“Right now, given the great need for PPE in our own country, our focus will be

on keeping critical medical items in the United States until demand is met here,” Secretary Pompeo said on April 7.

Trump Fires State Inspector General

On May 15, President Donald Trump fired State Department Inspector General Steve Linick. It was the latest in a series of firings of federal inspectors general.

Congressional Democrats responded by opening an investigation into what they said “might be an illegal act of retaliation.”

On May 18, in a telephone interview with *The Washington Post*, Secretary Pompeo confirmed that he asked the president to fire Linick because the IG “wasn’t performing a function in a way that we had tried to get him to, that was additive for the State Department.” He said he did not know that the inspector general’s office was investigating him on other matters.

On June 3, Linick testified before the House Foreign Affairs and the Oversight and Reform Committees in a closed-door session. Linick told lawmakers that Under Secretary of State for Management Brian Bulatao, a close friend of Secretary Pompeo, repeatedly tried to “bully” him to drop his investigation into the Secretary’s use of an emergency declaration to push through an \$8.1 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia, Politico reported.

Linick testified further that several senior aides to Secretary Pompeo were also aware of an OIG investigation into his use of State Department resources for personal errands, ABC News reported June 3.

“I have not heard any valid reason that would justify my removal,” Linick testified, according to Politico.

A career government official, Linick was appointed State Department inspector general by President Barack Obama in 2013. President Trump replaced him with

Comments on Bipartisan Resolution Praising State

The men and women of the Foreign Service and civil servants at the State Department have demonstrated their commitment to supporting the American people. In the midst of this unprecedented pandemic, they were at the front lines of efforts to bring stranded Americans home, often risking their own safety, to reunite families.

—Senator Chris Coons (D-Del.)

I applaud our dedicated State Department officials, both at home and around the world, whose tireless efforts brought hundreds of Utahns and their loved ones safely home.

—Senator Mitt Romney (R-Utah)

HEARD ON THE HILL



As the world faces unprecedented challenges amid the coronavirus pandemic, our State Department officials in the U.S. and abroad continue their tireless efforts to help Americans stranded overseas return home safely.

—Senator Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

COVID-19 has placed unimaginable strains on our State Department, especially the Foreign Service and Foreign Service Nationals serving globally on behalf of the American people.

We salute their dedication and personal sacrifice during the emergence of this pandemic.

—Senator Ben Cardin (D-Md.)

Stephen Akard, who was serving as head of the State’s Office of Foreign Missions and planned to continue in that job while serving as IG.

Akard, who was an FSO for eight years and previously worked for then Governor Mike Pence in Indiana, began work as inspector general on May 18. Although the standard grace period is 30 days, Linick was out immediately.

Several Republicans also voiced concern over the Linick firing. “The President has not provided the kind of justification for the removal of IG Linick required by this law,” Senator Susan Collins (R-Maine) tweeted May 18, referring to a 2008 law that requires presidents to provide detailed reasons for removing inspectors general.

Senator Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), a longtime advocate of inspectors general, agreed. “As I’ve said before, Congress requires written reasons justifying an IG’s removal. A general lack of confidence simply is not sufficient detail to satisfy Congress,” he wrote in a statement, the *Wall Street Journal* reported on May 17.

U.S. to Withdraw from Open Skies Treaty

The United States will withdraw from the Open Skies Treaty, an arms control pact designed to reduce the chance of military miscalculations between signatories, CNN reported on May 21.

The pact, which entered into force on Jan. 1, 2002, allows its 35 signatories to

conduct reconnaissance flights over each other's territory to monitor military activity and arms control compliance.

"Russia didn't adhere to the treaty, so until they adhere, we will pull out," President Trump told reporters outside the White House on May 21, adding: "There's a chance we may make a new agreement or do something to put that agreement back together. I think what's going to happen is we're going to pull out, and they're going to come back and want to make a deal."

Russia, meanwhile, vowed to main-

tain the treaty, the *Financial Times* reported on May 22. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov warned that the United States withdrawal from the pact "would undermine global security" and means that there is little hope that the last remaining defense pact between the United States and Russia, New START, would survive. If not extended, New START will expire on Feb. 5.

In a joint statement released May 22, foreign ministers from 10 European countries said that while they regret

Washington's decision, they shared American "concerns about implementation of the Treaty clauses by Russia," the *Financial Times* reported.

"You reach a point at which you need to say enough is enough," Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control Marshall Billingslea told *The New York Times*. "The United States cannot keep participating in this treaty if Russia is going to violate it with impunity."

Several Democratic lawmakers criticized the United States' withdrawal from the pact.

50 Years Ago

An American Foreign Policy Imperative: Responsible Restraint

I submit that there is now in our national psyche a set of general convictions that make a deemphasis of our international role as much a certainty in the decade ahead as was its expansion in the aftermath of World War II. Those convictions are:

- At home, we face an urgent and imminent threat to our national well-being. Our domestic crisis probably transcends in seriousness and is in any event more immediate in its impact than the dangers which face us in the international arena. The first order of American business is to come to grips with our domestic problems.
- The operations of the United States Government in the field of national security have got somewhat out of hand. Our expenditures for the defense establishment, our maintenance of military forces abroad, our commitments to the defense of other countries, all seem out of proportion either to the need for or the benefits which accrue from such operations.
- Our impact on world affairs is no longer as effective and as decisive as it once was.



It is a mistake to consider these attitudes as the result of the Vietnam war. For that implies that the attitudes are transitory, and will change once the Vietnam trauma is behind us. Such a reversion is highly unlikely. Indeed, without some unifying event of transcendent importance, such a reversion is inconceivable.

... In any event, we have come as a nation to a point where it is inevitable that we shall have a change of emphasis in our national policy. For good or ill, the United States is in for a period of restraint in international affairs, and of concentration upon our domestic problems.

It is incumbent upon the internationalists among us to accept and preside over this process with the courage which Hemingway defined as grace under pressure. For it is essential to our national security and well-being that the process of restructuring our international role be performed with a delicate instrument and with a wise discrimination between the necessary and the merely desirable. Surgery is inevitable—and surely it is better that it be performed by professionals with a scalpel rather than by amateurs with a hatchet.

—Former FSO Marshall Wright, excerpted from his article with the same title in the July 1970 FSJ.

“The dangerous and misguided decision to abandon this international agreement cripples our ability to conduct aerial surveillance of Russia, while allowing Russian reconnaissance flights over U.S. bases in Europe to continue,” said Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), a member of the Armed Services and Foreign Relations committees, according to a May 21 Politico report.

Supreme Court Rules Sudan Must Pay Terror Damages

The U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled on May 18 that under the terrorism exception of the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act, victims of the 1998 al-Qaida bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania are entitled to punitive damages from Sudan.

The bombings, allegedly carried out by al-Qaida and supported by Sudan, killed 224 people and injured thousands.

On May 19 the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the State Department is nearing a deal with Sudan to resolve the claims, though this plan is controversial and opposed by some of the survivors, particularly because of the disparate amounts provided to victims of the attacks based on nationality.

Sudan is led by a transitional government after a coup d'état overthrew Omar al-Bashir, whose 30-year reign included charges of genocide. U.S. officials told the *Wall Street Journal* that they expected the impoverished country would not be able to pay the full amount.

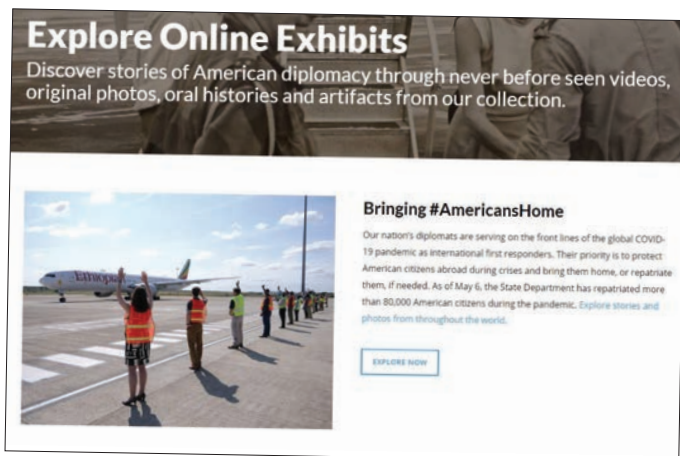
Sudan is one of four countries the State Department has designated a state sponsor of terrorism, and the country's new government hopes to be removed from the list.

According to a congressional aide, victims would receive more than \$300

Diplomacy Museum Celebrates Bringing Americans Home

By early June, the State Department had repatriated more than 100,000 Americans from 136 countries and territories and responded to more than 75,000 calls during the coronavirus pandemic. The National Museum of American Diplomacy has put together an online exhibit, *Bringing #AmericansHome*, chronicling these efforts.

Visit the exhibit at bit.ly/bring-americans-home.



million. Victims' lawyers say the American plan "would pay \$10 million for each U.S. government employee who was an American national when killed, but only \$800,000" for each Foreign Service national, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.

Half of the victims would get nothing at all under the Supreme Court ruling "because it requires Sudan to pay surviving family members only if they were American citizens on the day of the attack," Doreen Oport, who worked for the embassy in Nairobi and now lives in Texas, wrote in a June 8 column in *The Washington Post*.

A State Department official told the *WSJ*: "While no amount of money can compensate for the loss of life and injuries that were suffered in the attacks on our embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, the agreement under discussion would secure significant compensa-

tion for both U.S. national and non-U.S. national victims of those attacks."

A Federal District Court in Washington, D.C., found in 2011 that Sudan had "provided crucial assistance to al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden" in carrying out the embassy bombings.

Senate Approves Foreign Service Day Resolution

In the May Talking Points, we reported on a Senate resolution celebrating Foreign Service Day, introduced by the co-chairs of the Foreign Service Caucus, Senators Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska) and Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.).

We are pleased to report that on June 11 the full Senate passed that resolution (S. Res. 556), which recognizes the men and women who have served, or are presently serving, in the U.S. Foreign Service, by unanimous consent.

SFRC Resolution Praises Repatriation Efforts

U.S. Senators Jim Risch (R-Idaho) and Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, respectively, introduced a bipartisan resolution to commend State Department professionals for their dedication repatriating United States citizens and legal permanent residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The resolution, which was passed unanimously by the SFRC on May 21, moves on to consideration by the full Senate.

The State Department's Repatriation Task Force, along with U.S. embassy staff around the world and in collaboration with the United States Transportation Command, have helped bring home more than 100,000 Americans from 136 countries and territories.

Cosponsoring the resolution were Senators Tim Kaine (D-Va.), Chris Coons (D-Del.), Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), Ben Cardin (D-Md.), Ed Markey (D-Mass.), Cory Booker (D-N.J.), Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), Mitt Romney (R-Utah) and Ted Cruz (R-Texas).

The text of the resolution follows.

Commending career professionals at the Department of State for their extensive efforts to repatriate United States citizens and legal permanent residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented disruption in global commerce and travel;

Whereas foreign governments around the world have limited and restricted commercial travel arriving and departing from their countries to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 by closing airports, seaports, and borders;

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting travel restrictions abroad left

tens of thousands of United States citizens and legal permanent residents overseas without a direct way to return to the United States;

Whereas it was an extraordinary challenge for the Department of State to help so many Americans seeking repatriation from around the world at the same time;

Whereas on March 19, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the mounting repatriation demand from United States citizens and legal permanent residents living abroad, the Department of State created a Repatriation Task Force to facilitate the repatriation of these Americans and to notify Congress and any Americans needing repatriation assistance of these efforts;

Whereas career professionals at the Department of State, with exemplary contributions from the members of the Department's Repatriation Task Force and embassy and consulate staff around the world, in partnership with commercial airlines and the United States Transportation Command, brought home more than 78,000 Americans on 833 flights originating from 128 countries and territories during an 18-week period;

Whereas Department of State officers, their family members, and locally engaged staff faced personal risk, long hours, and rapidly changing local circumstances to assist Americans needing transportation to the United States;

Whereas Department of State officers and contract employees across the United States have worked to ensure that vital visa and passport services remain operational, including for tasks critical to the support of our national security, health care systems, and food supply chains; and

Whereas at least 450 Department of State personnel were diagnosed with COVID-19, including 5 who died from the illness: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) Commends the tremendous work done by Department of State career professionals—(A) to address the extraordinary challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic; and (B) to bring home more than 78,000 American citizens during a time of crisis;

(2) Thanks Department of State career professionals who volunteered to work at all hours to meet the Department's highest priority, which was helping fellow citizens in a time of dire need and stress;

(3) Commends the Repatriation Task Force for their efforts to facilitate the repatriation of United States citizens and lawful permanent residents;

(4) Thanks the employees at United States embassies and consulates throughout the world, particularly career consular officers, for their work to identify flights and execute the departure procedure of thousands of individuals, despite difficult operating conditions on the ground;

(5) Thanks the United States Transportation Command for its assistance in securing flights for United States citizens and legal permanent residents;

(6) Recognizes the efforts made by partners overseas to help United States embassies and consulates secure the flights and ground transportation need to allow these Americans to return home;

(7) Expresses its condolences to the families, friends, and colleagues of those Department of State personnel who died as a result of COVID-19; and

(8) Urges the employees of the Department of State to continue the important work of bringing home United States citizens and legal permanent residents who remain stranded in foreign countries. ■

This edition of Talking Points was compiled by Cameron Woodworth, Shawn Dorman and Susan Maitra.

Changing Mindsets on Race at State

BY P. MICHAEL MCKINLEY

Even at a moment like this, when multiracial crowds demonstrate across the nation for an end to police brutality against Black Americans, daily new incidents underscore how pervasive racism is in America, and how much further we have to travel on the path to self-awareness.

Mindsets need to change; and we need to change how we speak about race. We can start with the places where we work, including the State Department. The testimonies that are now appearing of the experiences of Black Americans at State indicate how insidious the environment can be, even in a building that prides itself on diversity.

It is insidious. I have never wanted to discuss my personal experience in public, and it is difficult to do so now. I am a white male, but I have dealt with prejudice all my life through the experiences of my loved ones and the people I have worked with during a 37-year career with the State Department.

The exposure began early. My mother was an accomplished woman from Puerto Rico who spoke English with an accent and faced prejudice because of where she was from. It marked me. As

Legislation and workplace regulations are one thing; coming to terms with how deep the waters of inadvertent bias run is another.

I grew older, and even though I deeply admired my mother, I tended not to mention her origins simply to avoid the silence that would follow when people realized the WASP they thought they saw was someone else. I have long regretted what I did.

Difficulties at State

Things actually became more difficult inside the State Department. My wife, Fatima, is of multiracial background, and our marriage has been peppered from the start with incidents of prejudice and insensitivity from both liberal and conservative colleagues. Most were not obvious or even intentional; some were. I remember vividly, as we stood in receiving lines at events we hosted for embassy communities, how some white officers or their spouses would walk by Fatima's outstretched hand without acknowledging her greeting or her existence.

Not everyone was like that, but over the years we found more in common with those who sought to live across racial boundaries, or simply relied on socializing outside the missions where we worked. Fatima worked outside the embassies for more than two decades on behalf of women and minorities. Few ever asked what she did.

We did not entirely "escape" the race question, however. One of our children, now a grown woman, has faced racial insults from childhood, at school and at university, including the proverbial "go back to the jungle" and racially motivated physical attacks.

In a defining moment for us, Fatima was "detained" at her workstation in an embassy where I served as ambassador. It was during a security drill after hours. She had permission to work; notwithstanding, three white American guards, with guns pointed at her, yelled at Fatima to get on the ground, put a knee in her back, tied her wrists with zip ties, pulled her up by her underarms and shoved her against a wall. She was humiliated and physically bruised. She did not want to identify herself as the spouse of the ambassador, and she did not. The only other person treated similarly that night was a Black American.



P. Michael McKinley served as a Foreign Service officer for 37 years until his resignation in October 2019. His last position was as senior adviser to the Secretary of State. He served as the U.S. ambassador to Brazil, Afghanistan, Colombia and Peru, and as deputy chief of mission in Mozambique, Uganda and Belgium (Embassy Brussels and USEU). At the State Department, he was deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. He is now with The Cohen Group in Washington, D.C.

This time the conversation has to be *explicitly* about racism if it is not to be another temporary and, frankly, reactive response to what is happening in our country.

We were taken aback by the inability of some of our colleagues to see what had happened as anything more than an unfortunate incident. Fatima is strong, outspoken and independent: At that moment, however, we chose to leave it in the hands of the system to decide how to improve procedures; and it did so, quietly.

My unease only grew across my career, and not just because of my family's experiences. I listened to Black colleagues speak in veiled terms of how they felt they were viewed as somehow less capable. I witnessed the efforts of Black, Latino and Muslim colleagues to respond to a sometimes difficult environment. I saw how difficult it was at times for some to have genuinely color-blind reviews of candidates for positions, although I never saw outright prejudice at play.

Many of my white colleagues would never willingly engage in a conversation about race. Kasi Lemmons says it more clearly than I ever could in describing this mindset: "You can live your whole lives without really considering how we live ours."

Finding a Way Forward

It is legitimate to ask what I did in response, as a person in authority, to what I perceived in the workplace. Across my career I sought to create a nondiscriminatory work environment, but the fact is that the vast majority of

State's employees would not consciously discriminate against their colleagues on the basis of race, which is why it is so difficult to address the underlying mindset.

To the best of my knowledge, mission leaders worldwide implemented department guidelines or instructions against discrimination, and they supported updated training as it became available. Black History Month events are central to every embassy I know. None of these actions, however, have been fully successful in addressing the question of the mindset on race.

In finding a way forward now, it is important to acknowledge the efforts made at State over the years to create a better working environment and to expand recruitment of minorities and women. The Academy of American Diplomacy's latest recommendations on reform are an important addition to the debate on additional steps that should be taken.

But legislation and workplace regulations are one thing; coming to terms with how deep the waters of inadvertent bias run is another. Diversity candidates appear on lists for senior and ambassadorial positions as a deliberate policy. Yet today only three career diplomat ambassadors worldwide are Black American ... a reflection of the unconscious bias the department now says it wants to address?

The sixth- and seventh-floor leadership of the building also reflects the

challenge: The Secretary, Deputy Secretary and counselor are white males; of dozens of under secretaries and assistant-secretary equivalents, the overwhelming majority are white and male. None are Black. There are few women. Most special representatives and special envoys are white and male. It is worth asking why this happens in the context of the repeated statements, even today, of the commitment to diversity and inclusion.

And so now we are at another moment of definition for the State Department. The Director General of the Foreign Service and Deputy Secretary are taking an important lead in launching new initiatives to address discrimination and the pain of the moment.

A Genuinely Open Conversation

We need, however, to go beyond well-intentioned appeals to dialogue and our better nature and the all-encompassing calls for greater diversity and inclusiveness. These calls are not enough. Perhaps one of the most difficult questions to come to terms with is how, in an institution that prides itself on recruiting the most qualified professionals and promoting diversity, and where most employees do not consider themselves to be part of the problem, we can still see attitudes on race that fall below the standards we want to have as a society.

We could be more pointed in addressing the race question. All discrimination is "unacceptable." The State Department has been calling for an end to all forms of discrimination since I joined in 1982. This time the conversation has to be *explicitly* about racism if it is not to be another temporary and, frankly, reactive response to what is happening in our country. The Association of Black

American Ambassadors' unequivocal condemnation of "our society's stubborn resistance to addressing institutionalized racism" makes this clear.

Our military is showing the way—the June 3 online conversation between airmen and then U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff General David Goldfein and Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Kaleth Wright is an example we could emulate at State. The candor of the new Air Force Chief of Staff General Charles Q. Brown Jr.'s highly personal June 5 statement is searing about what the challenge is. Both videos should be required viewing on how to start the conversation.

This is a moment of great hope that things can change in America. That is why Fatima and I joined an early Black Lives Matter street protest over the death of George Floyd. Let's be honest with ourselves, however: Would State be taking any additional steps on race had there been no video of George Floyd's death?

The answer is probably not; but now that it is, let's go further. Let's call what we are dealing with what it is: racism. We have the problem like every other part of American society. Use the word. Let's have the genuinely open conversation about racism at State that we need. ■

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WAKING UP TO A PANDEMIC **H1N1 in Mexico,** **2009**



SARI HUELGA/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

On April 26, 2009, during the swine flu pandemic, people gather at Metropolitan Cathedral in Mexico City.

Waking up to a pandemic is like walking toward a beautiful garden and hitting a plate glass door. Without any warning, the expectations you never questioned are violently disrupted. Your brain reels, unable to process the brutal warping of reality.

The British call this “gobsmacked.” A health crisis professional might describe this as the prelude to a “pandemic response.”

At the end of April 2009, Mission Mexico was anticipating a brief respite from months of high-impact diplomacy. Thousands of American spring-breakers had come and gone across Mexico’s white, sandy beaches. Newly appointed Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton had made a very successful trip, inaugurating a new consular pavilion and holding wildly popular people-heavy events in two Mexican cities. She was followed on April 16-17 by President Barack Obama, on a historic visit to Mexico City accompanied by a large Cabinet and congressional delegation. We were happily returning to our routine obligations—visas, American citizens services, trade initiatives, environmental programs, law enforcement operations and, for State Department folks, evaluation season. It felt good to be back to normal.

On April 24 I sent my daughter down the steps to get on the school bus and began to pack up my briefcase and head to work. My personal goal was to steal an hour during the day to face the multipage checkout list that detailed all the things I had to get done before we could move in just a few weeks. As I reached the front door, my daughter walked back in, a big smile on her face and a letter in her hand. All schools in Mexico City were closed for an indefinite time because of a public health emergency. Gobsmacked.

Random newspaper reports of occasional flu deaths over past weeks had morphed into a new, unknown strain of swine flu called H1N1, confirmed through tests of Mexican samples

conducted in Canada. With the results in, the government of Mexico informed the Pan-American Health Organization and World Health Organization and, overnight, implemented dramatic protocols to impose social distancing, first in Mexico City and then across the country.

By the following Monday we had dramatically curtailed public services, procured masks and gloves for embassy team members, and redirected anyone we could to supporting the waves of CDC experts who began flooding in to expedite pandemic response. Colleagues who only weeks before had been mapping out presidential motorcade routes were now donning full protective gear and accompanying CDC doctors into labs to act as translators, procurement specialists and helping hands. Their contributions were vital.

Within days Mexico City—and shortly thereafter all of Mexico—evolved into what we see now across the globe during the coronavirus pandemic. Empty streets, closed venues, masked citizens maintaining “social distance,” and elbow bumps instead of the traditional warm abrazo. Confer-

ences, concerts, sporting events and cruise ships fled to other destinations. The economic and social costs were enormous.

Then as now, the CDC scientists both with us in Mexico and on endless conference calls with Washington, were categorical about following the science. No two pandemics are alike, they insisted, and they would not make educated guesses about anything until they had data. Dozens of scientists came to Mexico despite the risk, and across the globe experts began pooling knowledge, sharing insights and reporting new developments. They worked days and nights alongside exhausted Mexican counterparts.

That global cooperation was central to the successful management of the pandemic. As hard as they all worked, the pace still felt slow to those of us anxiously awaiting news on when our lives could return to normal.

The uncertainty was—and is—the hardest to manage. Today I sit at home and watch news loops about coronavirus deaths, and better appreciate how anxious our housebound community felt in 2009. We held Emergency Action Committee meetings almost daily, but we found our planned pandemic tripwires were completely irrelevant to our H1N1 reality. Borders were open and commercial flights kept moving,

Beyond the shock, no two pandemics are alike, explains the FSO who was deputy chief of mission in Mexico City in 2009, when swine flu swept the world.

BY LESLIE BASSETT



Leslie Bassett retired in 2017 from the Senior Foreign Service. She is a former U.S. ambassador to Paraguay. Ambassador Bassett also served as deputy chief of mission in Seoul, Manila, Mexico City and Gaborone, among other overseas assignments.

Colleagues who only weeks before had been mapping out presidential motorcade routes were now donning full protective gear and accompanying CDC doctors into labs to act as translators, procurement specialists and helping hands.

so we did not go on authorized or ordered departure (nor did we close our border with Mexico).

We piloted web-based American virtual town hall meetings during which, in English and Spanish, I shared what we knew and what we were planning to do. This was a real breakthrough for that time, made possible by our creative public affairs and information technology teams. But after every virtual town hall, I took multiple calls from enraged family members who had cabin fever in a foreign country and wanted answers I didn't have. Moreover, after the United States also declared an H1N1 public health emergency, embassy community families looking to finish the academic year in the United States found they weren't welcome. This was another blow to morale.



The author and then Mexican Under Secretary for North American Affairs Carlos Rico during a panel focused on H1N1 cooperation, May 2009.

Crucially, we were fortunate that few in our community fell sick, giving us the grace of time to see how the situation evolved. In one instance the child of a same-sex couple became infected, and our MED unit was not initially authorized to provide the nonemployee parent with prophylactic support. Thanks to Management Counselor Isiah Parnell we overcame that, anticipating reforms in department policies that were still a few years away.

Within months, however, a new normalcy evolved. CDC, Mexican and global experts collected enough data to establish disease transmission rates and verify mortality rates—both were better than initially anticipated. Medical facilities across the country (and around the world) were soon equipped to identify and respond to the disease. As more facts became known, schools in Mexico reopened, with masked teachers taking the temperature of every child before they were admitted onto the campus. Step by step, we recovered our newly appreciated normal lives.

Looking at our world today, I am reminded yet again of the one lesson CDC officials seared into my brain then: *No two pandemics are alike*. It is impossible to “fight the last war,” as the military is often accused of doing, because public health experts understand that every single pandemic is unique.

The H1N1 virus was first identified in the United States in April 2009 and spread rapidly through the Americas; it also affected Western Europe, several countries in Africa, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, India, China, Australia and parts of Southeast Asia. The pandemic lasted for a year, until April 2010. According to CDC estimates, in that year there were 60.8 million cases, about 274,000 hospitalizations and 12,469 deaths from the virus in the United States. There were 151,000 to 575,000 deaths worldwide, with 80 percent of the deaths occurring in people below age 65.

The impact of the H1N1 pandemic was less severe globally than previous influenza pandemics, states the CDC. During the 1968 H3N2 pandemic, mortality was 0.03 percent of the world population, and global mortality was 1 percent to 3 percent during the 1918 pandemic. By contrast, the 2009-2010 pandemic had an estimated mortality rate of 0.001 percent to 0.007 percent. The H1N1 virus that caused that pandemic is now a regular human flu virus and continues to circulate seasonally worldwide.

What the medical experts hope to count on across pandemics is the integrity of scientific evaluation, the strength of institutional relationships, the shared commitment to fact-based recommendations and the globally heroic effort required to tame disease. Our experience in 2009 Mexico exemplified the best of pandemic cooperation, and the Mission Mexico team, as well as their social-distancing, housebound families, played a key role. ■

THERE'S A PLAYBOOK From Ebola to COVID-19

An Interview with Jeremy Konyndyk

Jeremy Konyndyk mines his experience leading the U.S. Ebola pandemic response effort to offer insights into meeting the challenge of COVID-19 today.



Jeremy Konyndyk led the U.S. response to the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa while serving as director of USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance. He is currently a senior policy fellow at the Center for Global Development.

The FSJ had an opportunity to interview Mr. Konyndyk on May 5. The interview was conducted over Zoom by USAID Career Minister (ret.) Jim Bever, a recent FSJ Editorial Board member who was USAID mission director for Ghana during the Ebola crisis.

The following is an abridged version of the 50-minute interview.

Jim Bever: *As the head of USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance during the Ebola crisis in West Africa, what was it like for you to lead and be part of the leadership team for the American people's global response?*

Jeremy Konyndyk: There was a very clear sense of purpose and ownership with Ebola, from the president on down; the U.S. government was going to do whatever was necessary to end this outbreak. One of the difficult things about outbreaks is that they require a really uncompromising approach.

In normal day-to-day activities of governance, we're used to a certain amount of compromise. You're never going to get everything you want. In an outbreak, you have to stop every case. Your job has ended when the last person who has the disease does not pass it on to another person.

It takes this immense and uncompromising discipline, rigor and sustained commitment to defeat an enemy like this. Our normal systems of governance are not set up for that, and it takes an adjustment.

By definition, because it's a novel situation, no one has turf that covers all of what needs to be done, so everyone has to go outside their comfort zone and do things that are unusual.

One of the challenges is that it's not just a health issue. As we see today with COVID, it becomes a political issue with implications for all sectors of society, the economy and security.

And that takes presidential leadership, at the end of the day. To get the government to do things it's not used to doing, to push the bureaucracy outside of what it's built to do, that doesn't happen organically. Bureaucracies don't do that organically. It takes leadership, so we were fortunate that we had that.

JB: *Focusing on the U.S. interagency, where resources and policy decisions flow from and then project out to the field, what is the role of U.S. diplomats, the State Department and the field presence that comes with our USAID missions and embassies in most countries? How did that play into the Ebola response? Would you share with us lessons learned there?*

JK: At the Washington level, the State Department really struggled at first, because they couldn't figure out things like who would they send to the deputies meeting. Who's the right policy lead on this in the department? Is it an Africa regional issue, a health issue, a science issue, a multilateral outreach issue? Because it's all of those things.

Eventually what they did do was set up a special Ebola unit within the State Department, and they brought back [Ambassador] Nancy Powell and, later, [Ambassador] Steve Browning. Once they went to that format, it really helped, because it gave the State Department a senior-level focal point who could bring together all the different strands of what the department had to do.

One of the important, innovative things they did was set up a medical unit that organized medical evacuations. They took the lead on identifying one of the only companies in the world that had a medevac capability that could handle the biosecurity containment standards that were required for Ebola patient transport.

They locked those two planes down on a contract; and in a show of global solidarity, they opened that up to the world. Americans had the right of first refusal, but it was something the whole world could buy into. If it were a choice between American and non-American, the American would take precedence; but we didn't then just keep it for ourselves.

JB: *What role did our diplomats play in mobilizing support in West Africa?*

JK: Globally, the State Department was very involved in reaching out to other countries and encouraging them to join the fight. This was a very big priority for the president; he didn't just want us to go in and do our part, but also to galvanize global action.

It really started with President Obama convening world leaders at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2014. He organized and led, along with [then U.N. Secretary-General] Ban Ki-moon, a kind of impromptu world leaders' summit on Ebola. He spent countless hours on the phone talking to foreign leaders to encourage them to join the fight. The State Department played a huge role in facilitating that whole process.

If we were going to make a specific ask of a country, which we often did, the State Department and the embassies had the role of formulating what they thought that country might be able to do, facilitating the call between the heads of state, and then following up to make sure that the country was actually moving to deliver on what they had committed to do.

There was also the constant demarching to other countries that this was a U.S. priority, especially in the early stages.

The embassies in the affected countries also played a major role. In Liberia, President Johnson-Sirleaf set up something called the President's Advisory Committee on Ebola, and U.S. Ambassador [to Liberia] Deborah Malac joined those meetings, but so did the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the USAID rep, and they were allowed to speak and give their expertise. Ambassador Malac did a masterful job of keeping everyone aligned, allowing everyone to speak and making sure all the different components that had been deployed in her country were staying in sync, but enabling them to share and speak their expertise—which not all ambassadors necessarily do. She did a fabulous job.

One of the challenges with this kind of novel outbreak is that it's not just a health issue. As we see today with COVID, it becomes a political issue with implications for all sectors of society, the economy and security, so all those channels need to be engaged. The ambassador has an important role in doing that, facilitating that dialogue and that engagement, and doing that in a way that also is respectful to and enabling of public health expertise.

It's always a matter of how to balance the science and the public health guidance, and navigating the political reality of the country. That relationship between the outbreak responders, the ambassador and the embassy is just extraordinarily important.

JB: Do you have any takeaways about the role of the World Health Organization during the Ebola crisis?

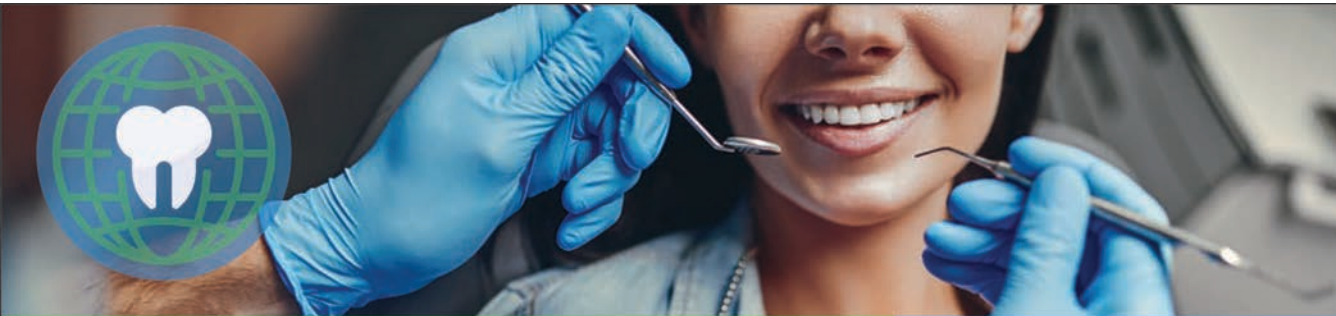
JK: During the Ebola outbreak we saw some of the worst and, eventually, some of the best of WHO. Early on we saw a combination of downplaying the risk in deference to some of the sensibilities of the affected member states and failing to have the robust emergency team needed—because in the past member states had wanted WHO to play the role of a normative organization rather than an operational organization. WHO's performance in the later phase of the Ebola response showed their potential and emphasized what they could have done had that posture and capability been institutionalized at the beginning of the outbreak.

What we then worked on for the next few years—and what I've been involved with in a personal capacity since—was a major overhaul within WHO to create a new emergency response team. In the four years since those reforms were passed we've seen a really significant transformation.

WHO has come in for a lot of criticism during COVID-19,

and I think most of it is misplaced. There are shortcomings, one of which is that they are too deferential to member states, which diplomats will recognize is simply how we've built the multilateral system today. Every U.N. institution is deferential to its member states, and that is by design because that is how the member states have traditionally wanted it.


Within the parameters allowed it by the member states, WHO's been pretty accurate. Within three weeks of the notification of this novel disease no one knew anything about, they were able to provide a pretty reliable characterization of the virus, how transmissible it was, how dangerous it was—and it holds up pretty well now. WHO has also done a lot of operational work they would not have been capable of years ago. For instance, they've set up an air bridge to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) for the developing world in partnership with the World Food Programme's logistics capabilities and UNICEF's procurement capabilities. That sort of partnership would not have been something WHO would have been involved with five years ago.




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We are not learning from and applying the lessons from other parts of the world. There are some states that are trying to do that, but it's a hard thing to do at a state level. It has to be done and led at the federal level.

Some of the most telling work is what they've done with Ebola in the [Democratic Republic of the] Congo in the past three years. In eastern Congo, in an active war zone, there has been an Ebola outbreak. It has been contained through a partnership between the Congolese government, WHO, the wider humanitarian community and, most importantly, the frontline communities themselves. What is most notable is that there is no big U.S. deployment, no large CDC deployment. The U.S. involvement and posture has been exponentially smaller than it was in West Africa. That is partly because the security environment is so forbidding, and WHO is willing to take risks the U.S. government would not in deploying its own personnel.

At its peak WHO had 800 to 900 international personnel deployed into eastern Congo and hundreds more Congolese staff working with their operation. The fact that they could do that meant the world could still contain this outbreak even without the state-based capacity of the U.S. and the U.K. that had been deployed during Ebola in 2014. So I think the investment has paid off in a substantial way.

JB: *In your view, what should the role of U.S. diplomacy be in protecting the American people's safety and well-being?*

JK: Without getting too political in this forum, I think there's a real contrast in the level and trajectory of global engagement by the United States today in comparison to the Ebola outbreak in 2014; you get nowhere near the sense that the United States is attempting to lead a global movement on this today.

The United States seems much more concerned about its own domestic issues. For instance, just yesterday [May 4] there was a global pledging conference for vaccine development and the U.S. refused to take part. That's just extraordinary. It's indicative of the fact that the posture the U.S. is showing the world is an "America First" posture, and while that's a questionable signal for the world in the best of times, it's just not feasible for a pandemic.

A pandemic does not have a passport; it does not respect borders. If your priority is focused on containment at home, for a country like the United States whose economy depends on trade and engagement with the rest of the world—even from a narrow self-interested point of view, in order for us to get back to the kind of economic prosperity we all urgently want to get back to, we need to end this at a global level, not just domestically. We will not end it domestically unless we end it at a global level. We don't see that fundamental insight reflected at the global level, which puts our diplomats in a bit of a tight spot.

China is making a big show of donating PPE to all sorts of countries, even European countries, at the very same moment that the U.S. government is going around competing with those countries and trying to buy PPE out from under their noses.

We will be suffering for years, if not decades, from the reputational damage we're incurring right now. It's difficult for frontline diplomats to know best how to handle that. What the country you're in wants, and what they have been conditioned to expect from all past emergencies, is U.S. leadership and U.S. support. Instead, what they're seeing is U.S. retrenchment and U.S. competition.

JB: *If you were briefing at a high level within the U.S. government today, what would your main talking points be?*

JK: The way that we will defeat this outbreak is by means of fundamental public health measures taken to scale. To defeat this takes a global effort. There are times when American exceptionalism is good and times when it can hamper us. I think what we're seeing here is a reluctance to learn from and apply the measures that have been used in other places.

The countries that have done the best on this are those that acted early and utilized aggressive public health tactics like testing, contact tracing, targeted quarantine and isolation. Countries that did that early and robustly are the ones that brought the outbreak under control quickly and then were able to begin reinitiating their economies.

We are not learning from and applying the lessons from other parts of the world. There are some states that are trying to do that, but it's a hard thing to do at a state level. It has to be done and led at the federal level. We need to be learning the lessons from the rest of the world and acknowledging and being humble. We have a hard time being humble on the world stage, but we need to say we have done worse than just about any other developed country, and we've done worse in part because we're not applying the lessons.

There's a playbook here, and it's an at-scale application of

basic public health practices using modern tools. The countries that have done that have been most successful, even at a low-tech level. Vietnam does not have nearly the capability the United States has, but they've way outperformed us even despite their proximity to China. They have been aggressive and disciplined, and so the first thing we need to do is look at what the rest of the world has done and apply that at home. We have yet to do that in a serious way.

And the second thing, even *if* we're able to control this at home—I would've said *when* a month ago, but I'm starting to say *if* now because I'm not sure we have the political commitment to handle this in a serious way—even if we can get it under control at home, we will continue to be at risk as long as it is burning in another part of the world.

We have to be vigilant over the next several years until there is a vaccine, because we cannot keep the economy sealed off indefinitely, and we cannot keep people in their homes indefinitely. We have to reopen ourselves to the world and the global

economy in order for our economy to work, and we have to do that in a way that doesn't expose us to undue risk from the virus. That doesn't just mean readiness and protective gear at home; that means doing everything we can to suppress it abroad.

Our greatest protection is keeping this suppressed everywhere in the world. There's really no one who can lead that fight as well as the United States can, if we choose to.

JB: *Anything else you'd like to add about the team role U.S. diplomats play overseas?*

JK: I think one of the challenges for diplomats in this kind of situation—where it's kind of an inherently multidisciplinary, multisector response—is balancing how to facilitate those connections between interagency partners and their foreign counterparts, versus trying to control them. I've seen that done well, and I've seen that done poorly. Where we're most effective is where our diplomats are facilitators and enablers, rather than adding bureaucratic layers in between. ■

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COVID-19 AND Global Health Governance

A career FSO with extensive experience in global health diplomacy discusses the practical problems—all solvable—in bringing the current and future health crises under control.

BY JIMMY KOLKER

Controlling the spread of infectious diseases requires multilateral cooperation. The objective of the first International Sanitary Conference in Paris in 1851 was to reduce to a safe minimum the conflicting and costly maritime quarantine requirements of different nations. Possibly the first binding international convention of the modern era addressed cholera. It came into force in Venice in 1892.

At the same time, health systems and health care have always been, and remain, national (and, in many cases, subnational) responsibilities. The novel coronavirus—SARS-CoV-2—has high-

lighted this dichotomy. Countries have taken widely different approaches to preventing and treating the spread of the disease it causes, COVID-19, while the U.S. administration publicly blamed the United Nations agency responsible for global health, the World Health Organization, for failing to provide timely and accurate information on COVID-19 and abetting China in covering up key developments.

Every pandemic is different, and the new coronavirus crisis is unprecedented in many ways—not least in the speed and intensity of the virus' transmission around the entire world and, as a result, its exposure of weaknesses in leadership and institutional structures at the international and national level everywhere. But lapses notwithstanding, a multilateral approach remains fundamental in meeting the current challenges. It is essential that the United States engage diplomatically at a senior level in global health governance, decision-making and emergency response.

In the following, I discuss some of the problems we face and suggest practical solutions.

The WHO We Have Is Not the WHO We Need

The World Health Organization was the first technical agency established under the United Nations in the late 1940s. It is an awkward creature of its time, governed by an annual weeklong



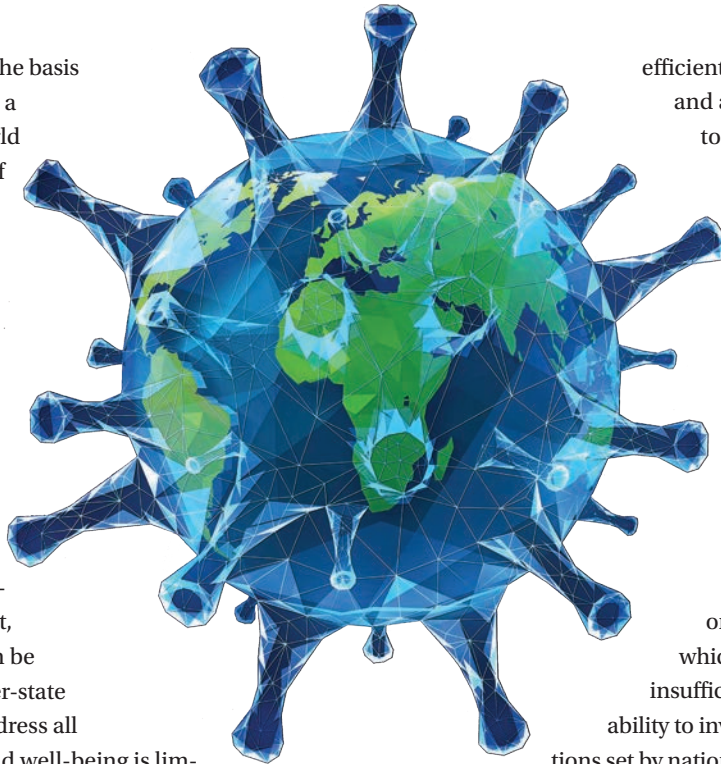
Ambassador (ret.) Jimmy Kolker's 30-year Foreign Service career included five posts in Africa and three in Europe. He was U.S. ambassador to Burkina Faso (1999-2002) and Uganda (2002-2005). He then served as deputy U.S. global AIDS coordinator and, after retiring from State, as head of the HIV/AIDS Section at UNICEF's New York headquarters (2007-2011) and in the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Global Affairs. From 2014 to 2017, he was assistant secretary for global affairs at HHS.

assembly of member states on the basis of presumed consensus around a rules-based, science-based world order. Because of the prowess of our biomedical research and epidemic surveillance, as well as our world standing, the United States has historically been WHO's most influential member, and its global accomplishments, such as the eradication of smallpox in 1980, have been significant.

But COVID-19 demonstrated that WHO's strengths are also its weaknesses. Requiring an implicit consensus to act, decision-making processes can be slow and deferential to member-state sensibilities. Its mandate to address all aspects of worldwide health and well-being is limitless, but the organization's budget of under \$4 billion per year is a tiny fraction of what bilateral donors such as the United States or major new players such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation spend on global health. By comparison, the annual outlay of the Maryland state Department of Health is three times larger than WHO's annual budget. The organization's main roles are, therefore, to set norms and provide technical assistance to governments, not deliver health programs or clinical care itself.

The United States took a leading role in revision of WHO's International Health Regulations in 2005. Politically binding, but without enforcement authority, the IHR require member states to "detect, assess and report on" outbreaks that might endanger international health. Dozens of such reports are submitted to and evaluated by the WHO Health Emergencies program (WHE) every year and, in rare instances, referred to expert committees to determine if they should be declared "Public Health Emergencies of International Concern." On Jan. 30 this year, the novel coronavirus was so designated, with recommendations for action by China and other states and actors.

WHO leadership undertook important reforms following the 2014-2015 Ebola epidemic in West Africa, in which the organization initially performed poorly. They strengthened the WHE, merging two WHO divisions under a deputy director general. The deputy director general, in turn, is informed by an Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee (to give WHE more



efficient governance and reporting) and a Global Preparedness Monitoring Board. The latter issued a prescient report in 2019, highlighting actions that political leaders, national governments and the U.N. system should take to prepare for a pandemic.

The WHE performed well over the past four years in confronting Zika, yellow fever and the Ebola outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It remains dependent, however, on emergency funding appeals, which for COVID-19 have been insufficient. And, as we saw in China, its ability to investigate or act outside restrictions set by national governments is limited.

Vaccines, Treatments and Equity

The COVID-19 pandemic makes clear what the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board pointed out—current international structures for global health lack incentives for member states to take early action, rationalize supply chains for necessary tests, coordinate development of vaccines and treatments or, in particular, adjudicate or regulate how poor people and poor countries might gain equitable access to them.

China, the United States and several other countries and consortia launched crash programs to develop coronavirus vaccines and COVID-19 countermeasures. Unlike all other recent epidemics, the entire populations of rich countries are at risk, and thus the market for these vaccines and countermeasures would be huge, immediate and lucrative. The competition to develop safe and effective vaccines or cures was spurred by governments wanting priority access to these products for their own populations, and by corporations and laboratories that could profit enormously by being first to offer an approved vaccine.

Issues of equity arose immediately. There is no "World Vaccine Development and Distribution Agency." No international mechanism has existing authority or the practical ability to take control of a product shown to work, equitably determine which countries or populations (e.g., health care workers) would derive maximum benefit from being treated first, or determine the price or condi-

Without some sort of agreement or formula, there are formidable obstacles to scaling up vaccine use around the world.

tions under which the product would be made available.

But there are some principles that might influence these decisions or agreements. WHO convened a conference in April to develop an “Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator” agreement—a global collaboration to accelerate the development, production and equitable access to new diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines—and the European Commission and United Kingdom co-chaired a follow-on conference in May to raise billions of dollars to implement it. Governments, such as the European Union, and nongovernmental sources, such as the Gates Foundation, pledged to fund a mechanism, possibly a pooled purchasing agreement, to, they hope, guarantee that when a vaccine or cure is developed, there will be global access to it based on need, reasonable cost and evidence of greatest potential impact.

The United States, India and Russia were not involved in these efforts, and China participated only at a low level. China subsequently announced that vaccines it develops would be treated as a “global public good,” implying collaboration with these ad hoc arrangements; but details are unclear.

The U.S. National Institutes of Health finances about 50 percent of the publicly funded biomedical research in the world. And the U.S. pharmaceutical and bioresearch industry pays for an equal disproportion of private-sector research and development (R&D) for drugs and vaccines. The grant and partnership model on which this research depends does not align with a global top-down product development and distribution blueprint proposed by WHO and the ACT Acceleration project.

So the United States’ hesitancy to join such grand schemes is understandable. In the past, however, other stakeholders have recognized the centrality of U.S. efforts and accommodated them. Agreements on information sharing about our parallel processes, product-sharing formulas or foreign manufacturing based on royalties have been reached, either by formal negotiation or private-sector initiatives.

Can We Avoid the Coming Train Wreck?

The stakes in the coronavirus case are unusually high and, at the same time, there is an unprecedented refusal by the

U.S. government to engage in the kind of planning, negotiations and problem-solving that has characterized global health collaboration in the past. Without some sort of agreement or formula, there are formidable obstacles to scaling up vaccine use around the world.

These include, in particular: (a) governments’ power to “nationalize” and thus hoard production of scarce vaccines and the reciprocal power of countries where the initial outbreak occurs to, in the future, declare “viral sovereignty” and refuse to share pathogen samples from which vaccines or countermeasures can be developed; and (b) the intellectual property and market exclusivity rights of the vaccine’s developer and/or manufacturer, recognized by regulatory bodies such as the Food and Drug Administration, that allow pricing of in-demand, life-saving cures beyond the reach of the majority of the world’s population.

Rules governing international trade and intellectual property (TRIPS) allow countries unable to access medicines needed for health emergencies to issue a “compulsory license” requiring the manufacturer to permit their local firms to produce the patented product, in principle based on a fair royalty payment.

If the United States should succeed in developing the first successful SARS-CoV-2 vaccine, and no other global agreement is in place, the compulsory licensing scenario could be nightmarish. The COVID-19 pandemic surely meets the definition of a health emergency in every country. But there would be a finite supply of an initial FDA-approved vaccine, with virtually infinite demand. Countries will insist on compulsory licensing to manufacture the vaccine, even to the extent of pirating versions if the patent holder does not offer generous terms. If the NIH or U.S. government paid for a major part of the vaccine’s development, the question of price and availability in low- and middle-income countries will be even more challenging and politicized.

The lack of any “command and control” system for global health and the weakened state of WHO as a convenor, arbiter or facilitator of access to scarce health products is likely to produce chaos, ill will and, most importantly, barriers to vaccine access for those who badly need it.

This is not unsolvable. But to reach a solution, the United States needs to engage quickly and fully with the global community. That means the World Health Organization, the Group of Seven and other major powers, the private sector, large philanthropies and other multilaterals, such as, in the vaccine space, the Global Vaccine Safety Initiative and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovation.

Even more than in other sectors, a large number of countries have looked to the United States for technical and operational

leadership on global health. Access to the vaccine for the new coronavirus will be the most consequential global health challenge of our lifetimes. Will the G-7, NATO allies, Latin America and the Caribbean, African beneficiaries of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, and Mideast and Asian security partners need to go elsewhere for countermeasures, information and solutions to meet the needs of their own populations? What are the consequences for U.S. public diplomacy and "soft power" standing in the world?

Toward a Solution: Practical Recommendations

The World Health Organization, the International Health Regulations, the U.S.-led Global Health Security Agenda and the global standing and leadership of our USAID, NIH, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and FDA can be the basis for improved global health governance.

Here are six recommendations I think we should consider—and implement:

First, the WHO Health Emergency program should have a separate governing authority (a strengthened Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee, for instance) that reports to the WHO director general, not directly to the World Health Assembly of member states. WHE should also have a budget that is independent of WHO's biennial program budget and thus not competing with other mandated programs for annual share. Further, WHE should have the ability to raise money from emergency appeals to philanthropies and private individuals, as, for instance, UNICEF and the Red Cross do with considerable success.

Second, WHO should convene a review conference to update and improve the International Health Regulations, giving WHO representatives "on-demand inspection" authority (based on International Atomic Energy Association precedent) and clarifying both the concept of a public health emergency of international concern and what border and trade controls might be appropriate at different levels of threat.

Third, WHO's assessed contributions should be tripled and the assessment shares by country updated every two years to reflect the economic growth of emerging economies. The United States should pay its assessments, which are nearly two years in arrears.

Fourth, the U.N. Secretary General should appoint a permanent senior Global Health Security Adviser, who would also have the responsibility to inform and support the Security Council to take a more active role in dealing with global health emergencies. The Japanese government has in the past offered

Even more than in other sectors, a large number of countries have looked to the United States for technical and operational leadership on global health.

to pay for this position. Whoever is appointed should be a well-respected global figure.

One role this UNSG Global Health Security Adviser could have is to convene a **Coordinated Health Products and Equity Forum**, which would bring together WHO, the World Trade Organization and other U.N. agencies, the G-7 and other governments, multilaterals such as GAVI—the Vaccine Alliance, and The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, private-sector R&D and philanthropies, such as the Gates Foundation, for the purpose of sharing information and aligning research and development of vaccines, treatments and essential supplies for novel or severe outbreaks, and assuring that distribution adheres to equitable principles that respect both market incentives and public health exigencies.

Fifth, the U.S. government should reestablish a senior directorate within the National Security Council to coordinate an all-of-government approach to health security and revitalize and adequately fund the Global Health Security Agenda.

Sixth, the State Department should, likewise, appoint a full-time assistant secretary-level "Ambassador for Global Health Security and Diplomacy" to supervise the existing global health and biosecurity and global health diplomacy staffs. Health diplomacy requires skills and perspective beyond biomedical knowledge and health as a development issue. The United States needs to engage diplomatically at a senior level in global health governance, decision-making and emergency response.

Lapses in U.S. leadership, the United Nations system, WHO and institutions of global health governance all proved costly to preventing, responding to and controlling COVID-19 around the world. But pretending these institutions are not necessary, or trying to start over with a replacement for the World Health Organization, is delusional. We have governance building blocks in place for global health security. Let's find a way to make them work better. ■

DISINFORMATION Challenges in a Pandemic

A recharged public diplomacy needs to join whole-of-government policy deliberations at the highest level.

BY DONALD M. BISHOP

The medical and economic dimensions of the COVID-19 emergency are grave enough, but the crisis shouts another wake-up call. The challenging environment of a contested global information space, where facts, logic and even science compete with disinformation, malign narratives, conspiracy theories and propaganda, is on full display. This is public diplomacy's arena.

Candor requires us to first acknowledge that these are domestic challenges, too. American factions argue. Talking heads spin. Think-tanks advocate different policies. Friends tweet hearsay medical advice and rumors. Social media users click on conspiracies. Others create memes to suit their biases. Every press conference by the president, governors and city mayors is put through the wringer.

All this is amplified by America's current political and social polarization. Decades in the making, it has become

acute in an election year when the record of a loved and hated president is so vehemently contested. Public diplomacy (PD) practitioners know that all our domestic disputes are exported and repackaged by the world's media; the theme of their rewrites can range from dismay to delight.

I am confident that the enduring strength of America's constitutional structures—separation of powers, federalism, advice and consent, and elections among them, with journalists, editors, policy experts and scholars playing their own roles—will enable us to weather both the crisis and the current distempers on our own. But for U.S. public diplomacy, there's more.

Many countries are “weaponizing” information, especially through social media. They craft narratives that support authoritarian rule, stoke nationalism to deflect discontent with their own governance and seek to weaken the United States in several ways—to discredit America's international leadership, erode its soft power, undermine confidence in American democracy and subvert the cohesion of U.S. society.



A Foreign Service officer for 31 years, Donald M. Bishop led U.S. public diplomacy programs in China, Afghanistan and other nations. He is now the Bren Chair of Strategic Communications at Marine Corps University in Quantico, Virginia. This article is also available on the website of the Public Diplomacy Council, with full citations.

Chinese and Russian Disinformation

In this charged information environment, many states and nonstate actors are in motion, but Russia and China are the pacing threats.

Secretary of State Michael Pompeo reacted sharply when

Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian tweeted two manufactured conspiracy theories—that Patient Zero was an American soldier who visited Wuhan to participate in the October 2019 Military World Games, and that the virus broke loose from the U.S. Army’s laboratory at Fort Detrick, Maryland. The Secretary expressed “strong U.S. objections” over China’s efforts to “shift blame” for the virus to the United States, and he told the director of the Office of Foreign Affairs of the Communist Party of China, Yang Jiechi, that this was not the time to “spread disinformation and outlandish rumors.”

After the Secretary and the White House started using the terms “China virus” and “Wuhan virus,” Chinese reactions departed from the usual measured phrases of diplomacy. Another Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying, tweeted that Secretary Pompeo should “stop lying through your teeth.”

The Chinese party-state is now using all its information tools to advance three propaganda lines. First, it was China’s—meaning the Chinese Communist Party’s—superior system of governance that brought the medical crisis to a quick end. Second, the resolute Chinese response “bought enough time” for other nations to respond. (This narrative theme has two bonuses—to mute domestic anger over how the Chinese government and the Communist Party suppressed early evidence of the disease outbreak, and to shine light on American delays.)

Third, China is pushing the narrative that it is the global leader against the pandemic and is generously sending aid to other nations still grappling with it. China’s domestic and international media sing these same three songs. In China’s foreign ministry and at its embassies, a new generation of “Wolf Warrior” diplomats (taking their label from the Chinese action films) assertively spread them on social media.

For years the Russian media have seeded a general “infodemic” on infectious diseases. *The New York Times* recently summed up how President Putin has “spread disinformation on issues of personal health for a decade.” *EUvsDisinfo* has documented how state-funded Russian broadcasting networks, RT and Sputnik, have spread conspiracy theories.

Public Messaging, Hidden Disinformation

These dueling interpretations, narratives and accusations have at least been attributed. Alas, there are other nasty things going on. In February, the State Department’s Global Engagement Center shared its analysis of “the full Russian ecosystem of official state media, proxy news sites, and social media personas” with the media.

Agence France Presse’s Feb. 22 report provided details: “Thousands of Russia-linked social media accounts” are engaged in “a

coordinated effort to spread alarm.” Russian “claims that have been circulating in recent weeks include allegations that the virus is a U.S. effort to ‘wage economic war on China,’ that it is a biological weapon manufactured by the CIA or part of a Western-led effort ‘to push anti-China messages.’ U.S. individuals including ... Bill Gates ... have also been falsely accused of involvement in the virus.”

Since August 2019, ProPublica has tracked more than 10,000 suspected “fake,” “hijacked” and “zombie” Twitter accounts “involved in a coordinated influence campaign with ties to the Chinese government.” The wide-ranging report by Jeff Kao and Mia Shuang Li revealed the use of social media, fake profile photos and usernames, “changed handles,” bots, hacking of accounts, disinformation, an “interlocking group of accounts,” conspiracy theories, spamming, use of contractors and “a chorus of approving comments from obviously fake accounts.”

Edward Wong, Matthew Rosenberg and Julian Barnes of *The New York Times* provided more details: “Intelligence agencies have assessed that Chinese operatives helped push the messages across platforms ... the disinformation showed up as texts on many Americans’ cellphones.”

Strategic Designs

The Chinese and Russian informational offensives draw from the same model—the use of internal and external propaganda in the 20th-century communist party-state. (The role of the Comintern in shaping the Communist Party of China in the 1920s is too often forgotten.) Understanding the two nations’ strategic designs and methods is a necessary first step for public diplomacy.

During the Cold War, the Soviet party-state launched many hostile “active measures” campaigns that trafficked in crude lies: the AIDS virus was created at the U.S. Army laboratory at Fort Detrick and was engineered as an “ethnic weapon”; the 1978 mass suicides at Jonestown, Guyana, were a CIA plot; Americans adopted children from Central America in order to harvest their body parts; among others.

The Kremlin’s continuing use of “active measures” also draws on centuries of Russian military thinking on deception—*maskirovka*. The Center for European Policy Analysis reports that Russia uses “disinformation, incitement to violence and hate speech to destroy trust, sap morale, degrade the information space, erode public discourse and increase partisanship.” Oscar Jonsson of the Stockholm Free World Forum adds that Russian leaders conceive information warfare as having two parts: information-technical and information-psychological, perhaps parallel to “cyber” and “influence” in American thinking.

From the time of Sun Tzu, China has had its own history

From the time of Sun Tzu, China has had its own history of integrating deception and manipulation into its strategic thought.

of integrating deception and manipulation into its strategic thought. During the Korean War, it accused the United States of conducting “germ warfare” in North Korea and northeast China. (The campaign was decisively debunked when historians gained access to Soviet copies of the communications among North Korea, China and Russia after the end of the Cold War.) In this century, the Chinese concept of Three Warfares—psychological warfare, media warfare and lawfare—frame Beijing’s strategic use of disinformation.

Although China and Russia, over the years, worked from different templates, the *NYT*’s Wong, Rosenberg and Barnes reported that China has now “adopted some of the techniques mastered by Russia-backed trolls, such as creating fake social media accounts to push messages to sympathetic Americans, who in turn unwittingly help spread them.” According to Senator Angus King (I-Maine), the goal is “spreading division.”

The Way Ahead

Disinformation about COVID-19 is today’s challenge, but every future administration will also face disinformation. In the past, many thought of U.S. public diplomacy as an instrument of soft power. It now must counter what the National Endowment for Democracy labels “sharp power” that “pierces, penetrates or perforates the political and information environments in the targeted countries.” The surge of malign disinformation suggests PD needs to be recharged, and it must join whole-of-government policy deliberations at the highest level.

Cyber operations and ideas. Every government department, organization and social media company is now intensely focused on cyber security, defending (or attacking) networks, channels of transmission and data. What is popularly called “hacking” is a form of espionage, extracting intelligence—from war plans and financial data to confidential emails—or manipulating perceptions of such data. Still, this is only one side of what’s going on.

The other side is the ideas that flow on the networks, whether digital or through social connections. Ideas embrace logic, argument, theory, beliefs, judgment, interpretation, premises, norms

and values. It is ideas that make the case for other nations to partner with the United States to address global issues like terrorism or climate change; the benefits of trade and development; security of the sea lanes; and many others. Public diplomacy’s traditional media and exchange programs must, then, continue, even expand. They advance understanding of the United States, its government and society, and American ideas.

Few individuals have the specialized education bridging both the cyber operations and the ideas realms. This means that a comprehensive response to disinformation requires the collaboration of cyber experts and those who know foreign—especially Chinese and Russian—societies, cultures, languages, foreign policy and strategic concepts. Foreign Service officers at the Global Engagement Center model this kind of collaboration, and when they again are posted overseas, embassy country teams gain from their firsthand experience combating disinformation.

The need for speed. Marine Corps Deputy Commandant for Information Lieutenant General Loretta Reynolds emphasizes: “In the win/loss analysis of the Information Age, what matters is not the big that eat the small; it’s the fast that eat the slow.” Public diplomacy is well aware of the insight that “lies sprint while the truth walks.” On the pandemic, the Bureau of Global Public Affairs is giving embassies and consulates more and faster guidance to allow them to recognize and respond to disinformation, without having to pre-clear every tweet or statement with Washington.

An informational “enterprise.” Enterprise thinking is “the practice of considering the entire enterprise in decision-making, not just a given group or department,” according to Adam McClellan in “The Art of Enterprise Thinking.” Many departments and agencies—State, Defense, Homeland Security and the U.S. Agency for Global Media, among them—have roles to play in the coming information contests. And the government’s instruments of informational power are also divided by function—public affairs, public diplomacy, international broadcasting and the armed forces’ operations in the information environment.

State’s Global Engagement Center has a statutory mandate to “lead, synchronize, and coordinate efforts of the Federal Government to recognize, understand, expose and counter foreign state and non-state propaganda and disinformation efforts aimed at undermining United States national security interests.” Four regional threat teams (for China/North Korea, Russia, Iran, and Counterterrorism) are complemented by two more teams for analytics and research and for digital outreach. The GEC’s active program of grants and cooperative agreements supports local independent media, gathers examples of disinformation and propaganda, analyzes foreign information warfare and provides support.

Still, the different departments, agencies and functions all have different tasks, boundaries, authorities and funding streams, so achieving unity of action—or an even more modest “alignment” of activities—is and will be a work in progress. The need will only become more acute as artificial intelligence makes chat bots and deepfakes more effective, as use of the disinformation playbook proliferates, and as big data facilitates micro-targeting of messages to individuals.

Enterprise thinking can address this problem. Initial “enterprise” initiatives could include sending students from the different corners of the enterprise to each other’s schoolhouses and conferences. Role players from all four informational communities should join exercises, wargames and simulations. In the long run, the informational enterprise must have a champion on the National Security Council staff.

Enterprise thinking can be local, too. At an embassy implementing the goals in its Integrated Country Strategy, an “enterprise” approach would help assure cooperation among all the embassy sections with information, awareness, outreach, education and exchange programs.

“The last three feet” overseas. A wise PD mentor once told me, “When in doubt, just explain.” It’s still good advice for practitioners at embassies and consulates, and COVID-19 is a good subject. Citizens of other nations often learn of the United States from television and social media clips—some sensationalized, some partisan, all too short. Providing facts and context can temper conjecture. Explaining how the executive and legislative branches both play roles, how power is divided between federal and state governments, how social distancing works in different places, how the media communicate best practices, how Americans value privacy and how not every speech or press conference becomes a law, for instance, hopefully conveys confidence in America’s democratic responses.

Francesco Sisci, an Italian journalist in Beijing, says bluntly, “The ongoing pandemic has also started a massive propaganda war.” It “could spin out of control with unfathomable consequences.” It’s time to understand the new information environment, the pacing threats, strategies, and the roles of cyber operations and ideas. It’s time for speed, cooperation and enterprise—and for leadership. ■

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RETHINKING PUBLIC DIPLOMACY FOR A **Post-Pandemic** WORLD

In a fast-changing world with tensions and needs exacerbated by the pandemic, the practice of public diplomacy demands a swift reconfiguration.

BY JIAN (JAY) WANG

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus will be remembered as one of the worst global crises in modern history. As the damage and devastation continue to unfold, the world we live in is getting more stressed by the day. The basic contours of the calamity are now familiar enough. Yet international cooperation to defuse and defeat the COVID-19 pandemic is elusive, at best. Every nation fends for itself in the battle, while our fates are decidedly intertwined. As the world is watching, the reputation and credibility of each nation, through its words and deeds, are also put to the test.

This disruptive reality forces a question about the future of global affairs: While maintaining a stable world demands an ever more nuanced multilateral approach, will a broad

spectrum of the public succumb to the siren call of resurgent nationalism? These tensions are, of course, not new, but the current pandemic will exacerbate them. And, as a result, public diplomacy is becoming a more, not less, significant component of every nation's international relations and influence, serving as it does as a critical, collective linkage between policy and people, domestic and international. Because the "soft power" that public diplomacy helps generate is now an indispensable currency in global affairs, effective PD assumes new urgency.

How will this crisis be a catalyst for reshaping a nation's public diplomacy resolve and capability?

Transformative Trends

While the pandemic does not alter the fundamental dynamics already underway that are disrupting our thinking and practice concerning public diplomacy, it is poised to accelerate the change once the turbulence of the crisis simmers down. As the practice of public diplomacy is essentially a set of communication-centric activities, we see several overarching transformative, interwoven trends along every key aspect of the enterprise.

First and foremost, the broader geopolitical and geoeconomic



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context for communication and engagement on the global stage is fast changing. The rise of China and other major emerging economies are engendering tectonic power shifts in world affairs. At the same time, there is sharpening domestic discord, especially in the West, on the nature and extent of a nation's global commitment and engagement. Meanwhile, global economic growth in the coming decade will be driven by regional markets like Asia; and the COVID-19 pandemic has not changed that trajectory. So uncertainties abound as the global political and economic order continues to evolve and the primacy of the United States continues to be contested.

Likewise, the audiences for public diplomacy are also changing. Much of the change is evidenced in the tides of demography, from population aging in developed economies to a "youth bulge" in developing countries. Overall, the audience is becoming more urban. And the population mix in many Western nations is undergoing ethnic remapping due to migration patterns. We now have more people than ever in human history joining the global middle class, and they turn to digital platforms for news and information and for social interaction. Many more are living transnational lives facilitated by wider access to transportation and communication across national borders.

Concurrently, we also face an impassioned and polarized public at home and abroad, as nations experience crises of identity in light of an increasingly culturally diverse daily existence. In this respect, what's old is new again: The rising populist fervor in many parts of the world is the latest manifestation of the tensions between the two fundamental human forces of interest and identity in social decision and human action.

Admittedly, digital technology is transforming the tools and platforms for public diplomacy. Digitization and advanced analytics are changing the way people seek information and stay connected. Virtual reality and augmented reality tools are redefining how people experience their worlds. Artificial intelligence and automation are set to reshape the future workforce and alter the meaning of work and leisure. This also includes automated communication placements with better targeting. The acceleration of digital technology has dissolved the boundaries between domestic and abroad, making the interaction of national concerns and international engagement ever more dynamic and interdependent.

Another important aspect of the disruption is that the stakeholder communities on the global scene have broadened. Nonstate actors and diverse institutions, such as cities, multinational businesses and civil society organizations, are increasingly engaged in confronting local and global challenges. The

stakeholder communities for public diplomacy have not only expanded; they are also greatly empowered by digital technology.

The COVID-19 pandemic will likely further expose the fault lines between national and cultural communities, heightening the existing tensions in globalization manifested in the mobility of goods, information and people. Decades ago, in his *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932), theologian and social critic Reinhold Niebuhr made this observation: "A technological civilization has created an international community so interdependent as to require, even if not powerful or astute enough to achieve, ultimate social harmony. While there are halting efforts to create an international mind and conscience, capable of coping with this social situation, modern man has progressed only a little beyond his fathers in extending his ethical attitudes beyond the group to which he is organic and which possesses symbols vivid enough to excite his social sympathy."

While we may be humbled by our own fragilities in the face of a pandemic, this crisis has also revealed the weakness of our imagination to transcend the politics of negativity and to expand social cooperation. These conditions and dynamics point to the basic reality of growing diplomatic fluidity and a fast-changing communication landscape for public diplomacy. The disruptions are sweeping. So how should we rethink and reconfigure the practice of PD? Here are some suggestions.

Rethinking PD: Some Suggestions

Take a network view. Nowadays, individuals and organizations can easily develop networks of interactions through digital technology, potentially reaching a large and even a global audience. Focusing on relationships rather than merely messages, a social network approach allows us to see a nation's position in its operational environment, and to identify and mobilize key influencers both online and offline to achieve scaled and sustained impact.

Granted, relationship-building has always been a cornerstone of public diplomacy. The difference is that when relationships are viewed as isolated entities, we emphasize one pair of actors and their relationships at a time. In contrast, a "network perspective" represents a more holistic approach by considering multiple pairs of relationships simultaneously and by attending to how relationships influence the change and evolution of other relationships.

To design effective public diplomacy programs, it becomes ever more important to view the sprawling complexity of the information ecosystem as a global web of communication networks. Take the example of international exchange. Formal and informal networks established through exchanges have strategic value. But building, maintaining and sustaining such networks

While we may be humbled by our own fragilities in the face of a pandemic, this crisis has also revealed the weakness of our imagination to transcend the politics of negativity and to expand social cooperation.

and unleashing their value all require a solid understanding of the nature and performance of these networks. This is both a strategic and an empirical question. A comprehensive mapping and reevaluation of these relationships using social network analysis is the first step.

Integrate the digital and the physical. As one's digital life interacts ever more with the physical realm, we must not only build a distinct digital voice and digital identity into PD programs, but also maintain the human touch through direct person-to-person contact. The COVID-19 pandemic makes it apparent to us that, despite the ease of communication through digital tools, something fundamental is missing when we are removed from our physical environment.

In our tech-infused world, there seems to be a craving for a sense of place and a sense of conviviality that an in-person event like the World Expo provides, for instance. After all, physical presence still represents a more elemental form of communication and a transcultural human experience. As a major public diplomacy program, the World Expo begins as a place-based attraction; but, at the same time, advancements in digital technology are upending how people experience and enjoy the event. The fairground is no longer a controlled physical space, but a fluid, expansive one where visitor experiences are transmedia and can be instantaneously shared beyond Expo grounds. So, we need to seek a balance between the digital and the physical to ensure effective PD engagement and prepare for the integration of digital and in-person strategies when social distancing requirements are loosened.

Expand city diplomacy. City diplomacy is a powerful tool for international engagement at the local level. It provides a much-needed anchoring mechanism to generate goodwill and reciprocity between cities and peoples across national boundaries. Its value has risen steeply at a time when national-level actors face or create political and bureaucratic gridlocks. City

leaders around the world are embracing international relations as it relates to a host of urban priorities, from economic development and cultural engagement to addressing mounting, shared challenges such as climate change, migration and emergency preparedness. A prime example is C40 cities, a network of megacities committed to addressing climate change. During the COVID-19 pandemic, cities are on the front lines of crisis response. Their international networks provide a platform for sharing knowledge and practices, obtaining critical resources, forging collaborations and partnerships, and demonstrating solidarity and a sense of community.

To thrive in a globalized society, our citizens and local communities must understand the necessity of a city's—and, indeed, a nation's—international engagement to advance their interests and to enhance national security. In an increasingly networked world system, trust between nations may best be built from the ground up at the local level. U.S. cities play a consequential role in building bridges between America and other nations, and in sharing with the world facets of American life and core values.

Invest in PD reskilling and upskilling. Capacity-building is essential to advance public diplomacy, especially in key functional areas such as audience analysis, visual and social storytelling, integrative community management, and analytics and impact. Contemporary PD demands communication approaches on a range of platforms that are compelling in content, style and placement. In this age of information abundance and mobility, communication attributes, such as transparency, authenticity, exclusivity and convenience, have greater prominence. Cultivated capability in understanding PD problems in computing terms and through data science not only enables strategy planning but also facilitates implementation with agility and versatility.

Indeed, the COVID-19 crisis has accentuated the need for practitioners to acquire broad-based digital skills and to learn new models of engagement. Based on the evolving and continuous assessment of current and future practices, the skills and capabilities required for effective global engagement need to be constantly reexamined and refreshed.

Public diplomacy provides collective linkages between national self-interest and the international common good. Reflecting a nation's enlightened self-interest, it is a vehicle for building coalitions and demonstrating leadership to advance policies. It moderates extreme tendencies and fosters empathy and restraint in dealing with other nations and societies. Today profound, influential societal shifts are reshaping public diplomacy. They compel us to rethink the fundamental assumptions underlying current practices, creating new openings and possibilities. ■

LUANDA TO OHIO

A Family Journey

**A COVID-19
evacuation
story in photos.**

BY MONICA ROJAS



◀ **August 7, 2019 | Dulles International Airport**

Getting from the Foreign Service Institute to Angola was a year in the making. Here we are at Dulles International Airport, ready to embark on our three-year assignment in Luanda. We were prepared, we were excited, and we were together.

▼ **September 2, 2019 | Kwanza River**

Our family wasted no time getting out and exploring our host country. Our first outing was a sunset cruise along the Kwanza River.



Monica Rojas is an American photojournalist posted in Luanda, Angola, with her husband, Regional Security Officer Pablo Rojas, and their 7-year-old son, Alex. Not pictured are Monica and Pablo's daughters, Briana (28) and Brooke (26), who live stateside in northeast Ohio.



▲ March 18, 2020 | Homeschool Begins

As reports of COVID-19 grew, Alex's school transitioned to online learning. Because our plan was to ride out the pandemic in Luanda, we set up a home classroom and embraced our new normal. Shortly after this photo was taken, Angola closed its borders to commercial flights.

▼ March 20 | Decision to Depart Luanda

Following an Emergency Action Committee meeting, Pablo called me to discuss the idea of me and Alex heading back to the States. Though Angola's borders were closed to commercial flights, Chevron offered their assistance to our embassy, providing seats aboard their chartered flight. We were given two days to pack; but, thankfully, delays bought us a few extra days together. The night before our voyage, we spent the evening building a LEGO sports car.



▲ March 29 | Quatro de Fevereiro International Airport

Americans lined the entrance to Luanda's international airport. Our consular affairs section was there to process departing American citizens, and our management team was there to ensure we were well taken care of.



▲ March 29 | Saying Good-bye to Dad

The caption I used when sharing this image on social media was: "In our line of work, being essential sometimes means having to say good-bye to your best friend." And while many will argue that it's not really good-bye, that's difficult for a 7-year-old to process.

▼ March 29 | On the Tarmac

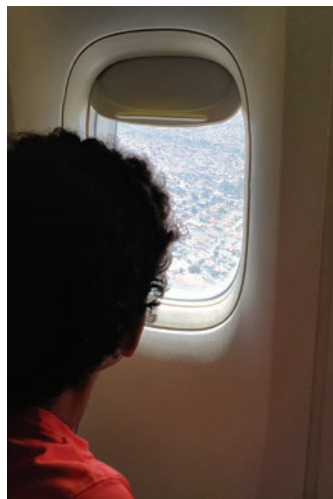
The vibe moving from the tarmac onto the plane was polite yet hurried. Regardless of how I was feeling, I did my best to outwardly project a sense of adventure. Alex wasn't feeling it, however. I had just crossed into the world of single parenthood, and it was up to me to set the tone.



▲ March 31 | Ohio Shocks

After checking into the Marriott in Warren, Ohio, Alex and I set out to stock our cupboards. Empty store shelves that once held toilet paper presented a surprising photo op. We spent the remainder of the day unpacking and putting away all our provisions. The next morning, we received a call from the front desk informing us that our Marriott location would be closing. We had to repack—and find a new place to stay.

▼ March 29 | Last Look at Our House



As the plane climbed away from Luanda, Alex stared out the window, trying to spot our house.

▶ March 30 | Houston Airport

As we made our way to customs, I was in awe of how barren this usually teeming airport was. The children in our group loved having a wide-open area to race and stretch their legs. We spent the evening in Texas before continuing to our safe haven in Ohio.



▲ April 3 | Putting Stress Aside

Stressing over dwindling lodging options, I looked at Alex, who had been so patient and understanding the entire trip. I decided suddenly to put our lodging issues aside and make the day about him, starting with an activity he had been begging me to try: Pancake Art! Later that day, we found a beautiful historic home to rent.



▲ April 8 | Working Side by Side

Prior to departing Angola, I had begun working as an office management assistant in our embassy's pol-econ section. I continue to telework in that position, and Alex is finishing up the first grade online. I'm not sure I'll ever be able to strike the right balance, but what I do know is that working side by side helps us both stay connected.

▼ April 20 | Brain Break

When we need a break from school and work, we draw a wooden stick from our Stuff-to-Do jar, and do whatever activity is written on it. On this day we drew "5-minute Dance Party," so we turned on some silly music and broke out giggle-inducing dance moves.



▲ April 21 | Virtual High Five with the Ambassador

Our CLO (community liaison office coordinator) organized a virtual Take Your Child to Work Day that took place over Microsoft Teams. It was a huge morale boost for the children to see their friends, as well as to ask Ambassador Nina Maria Fite some great questions. Alex took the opportunity to give the ambassador a virtual high five.

▼ April 28 | Building Memories, One Day at a Time



My focus throughout this absence from post has been my love for this little guy. His happiness and well-being are what keep my spirits up and give me energy. I suspect that once we return to Luanda, we'll miss all the unhurried quality time we've had together. For now, we'll continue to take it one day at a time, looking for opportunities to build on the memorable experiences we've made so far. ■



Executive Director Washington, D.C. Teaching Site

The **Bush School of Government and Public Service of Texas A&M University** invites applications for the full-time position of an Executive Director for its new Washington, D.C. teaching site where courses will be offered toward professional master's degrees in the fields of international affairs, and national security and intelligence. The executive director will lead the standup and subsequent operations of a fully-implemented Texas A&M teaching site, including managing the accreditation and licensing processes. The executive director will be responsible for all business and administrative operations, oversee academic operations and curriculum, and supervise faculty and staff at the site.

The position requires a candidate to have had at least ten years of management experience in the fields of government, higher education or equivalent areas. Candidates with a master's degree, J.D. or Ph. D. are preferred. The successful candidate will have extensive experience in the Washington policy world and demonstrated management skills in a policy and/or academic environment. Additionally, the successful candidate will have a vision of how to develop and grow professional master's degree programs in international affairs and national security geared toward government professionals and those aspiring to be government professionals. Teaching experience in an appropriate academic field is encouraged but not required. The Executive Director will report to the Dean of the Bush School.

Salary will be commensurate with experience and nature of the responsibilities of the position. The start date for this position will be as soon as available.

Applications should include a resume, letter of interest, and complete contact information for three references uploaded online at <https://bit.ly/BushSchoolDC>. Point of Contact: Ms. Rane Cunningham bushschoolgbs-search@tamu.edu

Review of applications will begin immediately and will continue until the position is filled.

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Bush School
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TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY 

WASHINGTON, D.C.





THE FOREIGN SERVICE **Responds to** COVID-19

Dispatches from the field show how the U.S. Foreign Service works for the American people.

One Long Day

Alan Eaton ■ Chengdu

The novel coronavirus has presented a unique challenge to the U.S. Foreign Service. The virus spread widely before being officially recognized as a global threat and pandemic.

As Washington scrambled to develop guidance and manage the response, U.S. embassies around the world had to improvise and come up with appropriate plans of action. Foreign Service personnel posted overseas and in Washington, D.C., worked on an emergency basis to bring stranded American citizens back to the United States safely, while at the same time dealing with the need to protect themselves and their families.

We reached out to the field to ask how the Foreign Service is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and what impact it is having on individuals, posts and work. Here is a selection of the stories and photos we received.

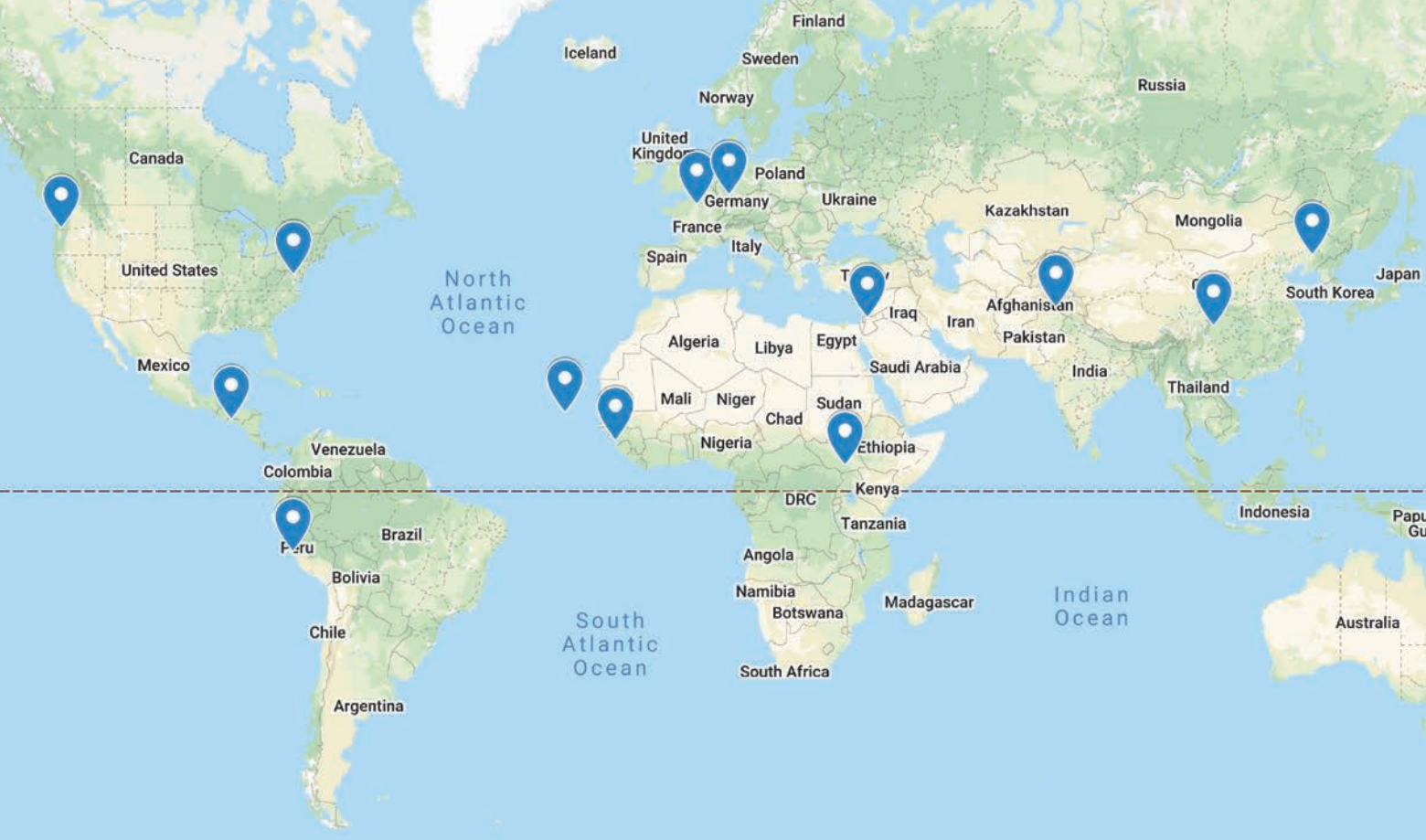
—Shawn Dorman, Editor-in-Chief

My husband and I heard the call for consular volunteers to assist with evacuating American citizens out of Wuhan. We were already in Chengdu and hopped on a plane to Seoul to meet the evacuation team and plane. In the first and only planning meeting we attended, Dr. William Walters of State's Office of Operational Medicine said: "It is a privilege to get to do the hard things."

For the next 96 hours, we transited from Seoul to Wuhan and on to Travis Air Force Base, California, and then back to Seoul; to Wuhan again, and on to Vancouver and Miramar Joint Base in San Diego. We crossed the international date line three times in just 30 hours, effectively experiencing the longest Feb. 4 of anyone on the planet.

We assisted in repatriating more than 800 people, including 40 Canadians. During the flight, we had to be consular officers, Chinese-language translators, customs negotiators, baggage handlers, flight attendants and medical assistants. On landing in the United States, we entered quarantine for two weeks and were grateful for the time to catch up on sleep.

Interestingly, of the 10 consular officers on the Wuhan rescue mission, four were from the 196th A-100 and on first tours as



Pinpoints on this world map mark the locations of the contributors to this collection of stories.

MAP DATA ©2020 GOOGLE MAP



First-tour FSOs Alan Eaton (Chengdu) and Jessica O'Neill (Beijing) of the 196th A-100 meet again on the tarmac at Travis Air Force Base, California, between back-to-back Wuhan evacuation flights repatriating more than 800 Americans.

Tandem Foreign Service Officers Alan Eaton and Timothy Reifenberger from U.S. Consulate Chengdu, part of the Flyaway Consular Team in Wuhan, China, right before the boarding of more than 200 passengers on the first COVID-19-related repatriation flight, Feb. 3.

Alan Eaton is a management-coned officer posted to Chengdu, China. He previously served in Port Louis, Mauritius, as general services officer, and in the Civil Service as a procurement analyst in the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs.

consular officers in China. We had been assigned to Mission China and had all gone through the uniquely intense life that is learning Chinese at the Foreign Service Institute.

On arriving in Seoul, I knew the mission would be successful because those in my cohort had also leapt at the opportunity to go into Wuhan. I knew if I were going to fly into a pandemic to rescue Americans, I would want to do it with fellow members of the “Unlikely” 196th A-100 (so named for starting in late 2018 following the end of the hiring freeze).

My husband and I took this picture of ourselves [far left] after a fit of laughter over getting on a plane mid-mission without knowing to what country we were flying.



Been Here Before

Gary Gray ■ *Washington State*

As my wife and I stroll through the idyllic Fort Vancouver National Historic Reserve near our home in Southwest Washington state, I find myself instinctively going into 360-degree mode, constantly looking around and behind me.

But now, during the COVID-19 pandemic, instead of watching out for Maputo bandits, Securitate and KGB surveillants in Cold War-era Bucharest or Moscow or, more recently, rapacious soldiers in Juba, my eyes are peeled for runners, cyclists and skateboarders who could come upon us suddenly, violating the six-foot distancing rule.

I'm struck by how familiar the current circumstances seem, by how reminiscent they are of my previous Foreign Service and United Nations peacekeeping lives. Reading all the accounts of wildlife appearing on now-deserted city streets, I can't help but recall our first months in 2000, setting up the U.S. mission in devastated Dili, Timor-Leste, when liberated animals were everywhere.

Goats, hogs and cute piglets were frequently underfoot, inducing my wife to swear off pork forever. We gave water to a group of emancipated horses grazing on the grass in front of our office/residence. From among the hundreds of canines wandering around, we adopted a bedraggled puppy who would become the unofficial U.S. mission dog.

In the first anxious weeks of Washington state's lockdown, as we delved into the inner reaches of our pantry for some well-past-the-sell-by-date peanut butter and beans, I felt fortunate to have overcome any qualms about consuming expired food while serving in Bucharest and Moscow. There, in the 1980s, our embassy shops featured a variety of expired jars and cans discarded by U.S. military commissaries in West Germany.

The challenge of filling the hours when our usual leisure activities no longer exist evokes a long 1992 temporary duty (TDY) post-

ing to help set up the U.S. embassy in Minsk, then still very much a Soviet provincial town offering few diversions outside work hours. Anticipating this issue, I brought along my long-neglected copy of *War and Peace*, finished it in two weeks, and remember feeling rather disappointed that the book wasn't longer.

Dealing with disease threats is also all too familiar. Seeking some context, it's been interesting to look at the relative degrees of lethality of the more serious maladies my wife and I contracted during our Foreign Service years, including dengue, chikungunya and Shigella, to name just a few.

Without doubt, we FSOs and ex-FSOs may be among the best prepared for the current challenges. But I'm finding that the template for assessing hazards that I employed in places like Timor, Indonesia and Mozambique—that the risks be clearly defined and reasonably low, and the objectives worthwhile—is not quite working in this present situation.

This is more like being in South Sudan in 2013, dispatching people on fact-finding missions to isolated locales with only the scantest, mostly outdated intelligence on which amorphous murderous armed groups may be operating in those areas.

A military colleague commented then that it was the worst situation he had ever seen; at least in his previous experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, there was a systematic method of assigning a quantified risk score to every sector.

Most frustrating of all in this present situation is the unknowingness—not being able to define the risks of entering the potentially perilous supermarket (are the odds of infection one in a thousand, one in a hundred?), realizing all the while that our Foreign

Service friends throughout the world must be confronting such uncertainties many times over.



Among the many abandoned animals wandering around Dili in the wake of the September 1999 destruction of the city were these horses grazing outside the U.S. mission and residence. At the time, Presidential Management Intern Erik Rye, standing at back, was the only mission staff member other than the author.

Gary Gray is a retired Foreign Service officer who served in Bucharest, Pretoria, Moscow, Maputo, Jakarta, Dili and Kuala Lumpur. He also served with U.N. peacekeeping missions in Timor-Leste and South Sudan.



Thirty-six U.S. citizens and six U.S. legal permanent residents board an Ethiopian Airlines flight at Juba International Airport on April 10.

Embassy Juba Mobilizes

Eric Wright ■ South Sudan

South Sudan had plenty on its plate before the pandemic. Burdened by years of conflict, its people were focused on their new transitional government, the training of unified security forces and the slow progress of their peace process. The emergence of COVID-19 has threatened these gains, as well as the livelihoods of a vulnerable population.

The entire Embassy Juba team has mobilized to assist the people of South Sudan, the transitional government and, most important, American citizens. To illustrate the extent to which ours is a whole-of-government effort, I'd like to introduce you to three members of the Embassy Juba Country Team.

Tina Yu is the lead for USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Team (known as DART). Once during training at the Foreign Service Institute, a guest speaker from USAID explained that the agency harbored a few distinct workplace cultures, including some employees who are "cowboys." I learned what that meant when I met Tina.

At 5:30 a.m., you can find her scrutinizing printed copies of emails while going all out on the treadmill. As for the rest of the day, she never slows down from that running start. She is a tenacious defender of humanitarian access and assistance to vulnerable populations.

For example, the U.S. government just approved \$13.1 million to address COVID-19 in South Sudan, supplementing the hundreds of millions of dollars in life-saving assistance we contribute to the country every year. The unmatched passion, attention to detail and urgency Tina brings to her work ensures that that money has the greatest possible effect.

Dr. Sudhir Bunga has been the country director for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at Embassy Juba since September 2017. He and an interagency team manage the President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) program, as well as supporting Ebola preparedness in South Sudan. As the COVID-19 epidemic grew into a pandemic, he quickly pivoted to this new threat.

One of the most knowledgeable people I have met, Dr. Bunga has brought badly needed epidemiological expertise to the

COVID-19 response in South Sudan. He has given presentations and recommendations directly to the government's high-level task force, including First Vice President Riek Machar. He has the offices of key decision-makers on speed dial.

Always rational, with data on hand to prove his points, Dr. Bunga has helped to inform the decisions of both South Sudan's government and the Embassy Juba Country Team. He also has to be the calmest person ever to stare down a pandemic.

Master Sergeant Kevin Hanly, normally the Defense Attaché Office's operations coordinator, has been acting defense attaché since January. Proof that a knack for diplomacy is an integral trait for our Department of Defense colleagues, MSG Hanly has been a crucial link to decision-makers at Juba International Airport. When he rolls up to the airport in his aviator sunglasses, he is warmly welcomed by the military, intelligence and civil aviation officers who wield veto power over every flight.

The credibility that MSG Hanly brings and the strong relationships in which he's invested have resulted in the approval of weekly special commercial flights. These flights are the only semi-reliable option out of the country. As a bonus, these commercial flights have allowed us to avoid requesting a charter flight at a time when finite resources are stretched so thin worldwide.

This is a whole-of-government effort for every embassy around the world and every federal agency back home. There is no greater calling than helping fellow citizens in need.

As of early May in Juba, repatriation flights organized by our embassy team had carried 101 American citizens and eight legal permanent residents home to the United States. Our small consular section had also processed 31 repatriation loans worth \$89,741, enabling destitute Americans to return to their loved ones amid the pandemic.

There have been some long days and nights, but the effort is well worth it every time we wave across the airport tarmac at Americans walking toward the plane taking them home. When they wave back, most will never realize the diplomacy needed to get that plane into Juba. But the mission is rewarding, especially when your embassy colleagues are as outstanding as the team we have in Juba.

Eric Wright is an economic officer at U.S. Embassy Juba. He previously served as a staff assistant and consular officer in Beijing. He is from Yuba City, California.



Foreign Service Kids Show Resilience

Kelly Cotton ■ Washington, D.C.

As a tandem couple, my political officer husband and I, an office management specialist, have each experienced exciting careers for more than 15 years—most of that time with two kids in tow. From posts such as Nairobi, where transnational terrorism was a daily reality, to Dhaka, where freedom of movement consisted of a four-mile radius, ask the Cottons; most likely, we have either experienced it ourselves or know someone who has.

Yet many do not stop to think about the ideas and thoughts of the Foreign Service children who are along for this ride. We tend to try to soften the blow or keep the fairy-tale life going, not realizing how resilient they really are. Take our children, 14-year-old Zinzi and 15-year-old Zora, as examples. They have been out of the United States pretty much their entire lives, and can hold an impressive conversation about the importance of understanding host-country cultures.

Around age 9, however, Zinzi began complaining about the constant changes associated with our lifestyle, including losing friends with every permanent change of station. Realizing that the Cotton kids had never had a genuine American experience beyond an R&R, we decided to bid on tours in the United States and have been in Washington, D.C., for the last three years.

With all the hardship, disease, danger and other unexpected life events we have ducked and dodged as a family overseas, who would have ever thought we would be facing an invisible death threat called COVID-19 at “home,” in the land of “the beautiful and the free”?

Surprisingly, Zinzi and Zora did not react as one might expect. Neither blinked an eye when we told them that schools were closing across the nation for the remainder of the year, including their

own. In the same breath of acknowledging they would miss their friends, they asked about next steps.

After we truthfully answered their questions about the coronavirus, they both went into Foreign Service mode and developed a plan. Monday through Friday, in the morning, they would have breakfast and get started with school assignments.

After school, they would complete chores, and then have relaxation time and activities of their choosing. Once online schooling had been established, they immediately got connected, participated in virtual school meetings and got down to business.

They have adjusted better than one would expect from adolescents. For instance, Zora asked if she could attend a friend’s birthday party. When we

asked her about social distancing, she explained that the birthday party would be virtual. She even made a birthday banner and baked a small cake to “eat” with the rest of the kids. They all sang songs, ate their respective cakes, played games—and two hours later, she couldn’t stop talking about all the fun she’d had.

Realizing that Foreign Service children are used to change just like we are as officers and specialists is the first step in creating a stable environment during uncertainty. From our experience, they are often willing to go with the flow and take on unforeseen challenges with the hope for a brighter future.

Under stressful circumstances, we must also challenge our children to act as leaders and team players by encouraging them to bring forth and share their unique talents, which can be as simple as singing for the family to help keep spirits up, or baking a cake for a friend in need of a birthday celebration.

As we have seen (in this situation and others), Foreign Service life can build brave and resilient children.



The Cotton family.

COURTESY OF KELLY COTTON

Kelly Cotton is an office management specialist in the USOAS Mission at the State Department. Employed at State since 2006, she joined the Foreign Service in 2009 and has served overseas in Islamabad, Nairobi, Dhaka and Lilongwe, and in Washington, D.C., at the Foreign Service Institute. Prior to the Foreign Service, she served in Ecuador and Nicaragua as a Peace Corps volunteer.

A Small Post in Action

Jean Monfort ■ Conakry

Conakry is a small post, so when COVID-19 hit and the airport shut down, the whole mission came together to help get American citizens home. I was pulled from the Regional Security Office to work on the consular team. As the embassy started drawing down and going to shifts (which would eventually turn to full telework), we were using new technologies and coordinating over new telework platforms, with no time to waste being confused or unsure.

Our acting defense attaché reached out to the Guinean government on airport procedures, the general services officer (GSO) coordinated with airlines, and the regional security officer (RSO) worked on getting airport security in place. The embassy was a hive of activity.

Promises of breathing room evaporated as Ethiopian Airlines first delayed the evacuation flight arrival, and then pushed the arrival date up. Our consular section stayed in constant contact with American citizens to keep the shifting information from becoming overwhelming. The last days before the flight took off were long ones, and the stress was palpable. Lists were checked and rechecked. The government-imposed curfew loomed in the evening hours as we applied labels and verified passport numbers and phoned passengers, so they knew to be at the airport.

We handled the joyful, the frightened and, oddly enough, the indifferent. When hard decisions had to be made (How many attempts to reach a person before moving down the list? Should we reopen a previously closed file, just in case?), we made them and supported one another. And when things got tangled, we gave one another space to be frustrated. That was key, I think—we never forced teammates to ignore their emotions. We had confidence that the task would get done, and it did.

At the airport, the line was long; many showed up early. We had designed a flow chart, with stations and measures to prevent clustering (for passengers' health). We set clear guidelines with the airline representatives. From the GSO to RSO to Facilities, basically any office that could spare someone to help did so, setting up copiers, cordoning off sections of the terminal and coordinating with the tarmac crew. Ambassador Simon Henshaw walked the entire line, stopping to speak with just about every passenger.

It was impressive to see it all come together in a short time, in a courteous and professional way. We had to alternate between French and English, and when there were miscommunications, no one got upset or combative. Everything was handled with—and forgive me for being on the nose—diplomacy. Those who



U.S. EMBASSY CONAKRY/KENYA JAMES

(Above) Embassy Conakry's team after completion of the evacuation flight. More than 120 American citizens were successfully evacuated from Guinea.



U.S. EMBASSY CONAKRY/KENYA JAMES

(Left) A young passenger waits to check in with her family for the Conakry evacuation flight in April.

were not allowed on the flight were treated with grace by the processing station, then by consular officers and finally by the RSO team. Never once, from when we started processing passengers to when the last passenger tearfully turned and went back to the city (unable to “abandon” her life), did our team falter.

I am profoundly proud of the work we did that day. Our small team at our small post successfully sent more than 120 passengers out on one of the last flights leaving Conakry.

Each office brought something to the effort, and that sort of camaraderie really affected me. This is my first tour. If the State Department is capable of achieving this kind of work, then I know I've chosen the right profession.

Jean Monfort is a first-tour office management specialist in the Regional Security Office in Conakry, Guinea. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, she worked as an English professor, legal administrative assistant and occasional stage performer. Her husband, also a teacher, joined her at post last year and helps make sheltering in place less awful.



A Different Kind of Crisis

William Bent ■ San Salvador

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the government of El Salvador took extraordinary steps to contain the virus, including banning the entry of foreigners, closing the airport and implementing a monthlong stay-at-home order. As you can imagine, these measures significantly affected U.S. citizens in the country, many of whom found themselves stranded because of the airport closure.

As events unfolded, the consular section faced numerous difficulties attempting to respond to requests for assistance while contending with our own staffing shortages as a result of the host country's quarantine and our effort to maintain social distancing.

I am proud of how U.S. Embassy San Salvador responded to these challenges. As of this writing in late May, we have repatriated more than 7,000 U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents without, I should add, the availability of U.S. government-funded charters.

It was truly an all-embassy effort:

- The political section obtained flight clearances for commercial repatriation flights.
- Department of Homeland Security/ICE officials allowed us to use their aircraft.
- Management section staff helped us with transportation and other logistics.
- Public affairs section staff helped ensure that U.S. citizens were informed of their options.

One of our vice consuls, while assisting our citizens at the airport during the crisis, told me that this was the most rewarding experience of her life. I could not agree more: It is an honor to serve the American people in their time of need.

The crisis led to amazing cooperation and sharing of best practices between posts. As leader of the San Salvador consular team, I depended heavily on the advice of colleagues in Guatemala and Honduras, who were dealing with similar challenges in repatriating U.S. citizens. Meanwhile, we were developing our own best practices, which I was able to share with colleagues as far away as India and Ghana via WhatsApp and other social media platforms.

One of our stellar Locally Employed staff members, Ingrid Hernandez, developed a web forms-based method to gather information from U.S. citizens seeking assistance; it saved hundreds of hours of labor and significantly reduced what had become an overwhelming number of phone calls. The Bureau of

Consular Affairs then adopted our innovation and, after a slight modification, pushed it out to the field as a best practice.

This isn't my first go-around assisting U.S. citizens during a crisis. In 2006, I traveled to Turkey where my consular colleagues and I facilitated the evacuation of Americans fleeing military action in Lebanon. In 2010 I helped lead an effort in the Dominican Republic to evacuate U.S. citizens from Haiti after the earthquake struck.

More recently, I coordinated U.S. Embassy Bridgetown's consular response during the 2017 hurricane crisis, when thousands of U.S. citizens sought evacuation after three hurricanes in quick succession cut a destructive swath through the Eastern Caribbean.

But this crisis is different, both because of its global impact and because of the way it affects us all individually. I am here, as are many of my colleagues, serving in a country with limited capacity to respond effectively to a major health crisis or offer proper medical care should one of us fall ill. Separated from family and friends who are in the United States, I worry about their safety, too.

I nevertheless remain more determined than ever to stay here, serving the American people as a U.S. Foreign Service officer. This is what I signed up for.

William Bent is a Senior Foreign Service officer currently serving as acting consul general in El Salvador. He is accompanied at post by his wife, Jennifer Smith.



Acting Consul General Bill Bent and Locally Employed Staff Member Ingrid Hernandez assist U.S. citizens at El Salvador International Airport in March.

U.S. EMBASSY SAN SALVADOR/CLAIRE DENNIS

Corona Haikus

By Sylbeth Kennedy ■ Shenyang

'Bye, last month's issues!
There's a new virus in town
Bringing us all down

A zombie movie
A sense of dread in the air
Where's everybody?

It's a whole new world
One filled with fear and panic
I don't like the news

There's tunnel vision
Thinking only viruses
And not other things

I wish the fireworks'
Loud noises and bright colors
Could fight the virus

It is spreading fast
Along with the ignorance
Neither fight easy

Social distancing
Not for the shy anymore!
It's doctor-approved

Masks for everyone
But not fun Halloween ones
This is scarier

The unmasked people
Shock me with their nakedness
Feels too intimate

Unmasked elderly
Have lived through horrible times
No virus scares them

My tones are *bu hao*
And speaking through my cloth mask
Ain't helping a bit

Watching TV ads
Seeing what was filmed before
People with people

Nothing seems to change
Days blend into each other
I feel I'm drifting

My Shenyang? Spit globs
And scooters on the sidewalk
I miss it all now

Fit February
Was off to a horrid start
But it's not my fault

Is it wrong to think
About cheap tickets, hotels
Once it all calms down?

It is all too much
I want to play ostrich
And ignore the news

We are home schooling
Supplies are non-essential?
The kids need paper!

My new work outfit
Is all about comfy pants
Leggings and PJs

Own your undyed hair
On trend is COVID color
Don't cover grey roots

A blue-skied Shenyang
It's an impossible dream!
Hope for the future

Spring is for rebirth
But now, all we hear is death
Bad seasonal start

Being resilient
Is taking care of yourself
While you're freaking out

Welcome back, heroes!
Buses of doctors, nurses
Who helped in Wuhan

My happiest time
Was cheering for the returned
Combated COVID

The unseen people
Deep-fry cooks and janitors
Have become heroes

Find joy in small things
Clean air, working internet
Seek your happiness

So many hashtags
Alone Together, All In
These Uncertain Times

We are together
No matter where we live now
Always in our hearts



In front of a jewelry store, this ad says "Beauty has no fear," or as the author calls it, "Love in the Time of Corona."

"We're thinking of you at this time"—a sign with safety measures workers and customers must follow at a tea shop.



Sylbeth Kennedy is an FSO serving in Shenyang. She has served previously in Lima, Osaka-Kobe, Beirut and Seoul. She joined the Foreign Service after teaching in a Japanese exchange and teaching program for five years. An active traveler, she has been to all seven continents and 104 countries. She stayed at post when Mission China went on ordered departure in January and hopes her colleagues can return soon.



Putting Learning on the Air in South Sudan

Jeremiah Carew ■ Juba

On March 23, South Sudan's school children joined a billion others around the world when the country's ministry closed schools indefinitely to slow the spread of coronavirus.

South Sudan already had one of the weakest education systems in the world, with 72 percent of its children and youth not in school, according to a 2018 UNESCO report. Many obstacles explain that figure—from poverty and conflict, distance to school, untrained teachers and poor-quality education, to some parents' beliefs that girls are more valuable for the cattle dowry they bring at marriage.

As USAID's education officer in Juba and co-chair of the education donors group, I have been working with the ministry and donors to craft a response to COVID-19. While my USAID counterparts in many other countries are working on distance education using TV, smartphones or the internet, here the discussion is solely about radio distance learning. Even with radio, only 60 percent of the country is within range of an FM transmitter or has a radio in their home.

At the outset we wondered, what do we have to work with? We rediscovered a widely loved USAID-funded program from the early 2000s called "South Sudan Interactive Radio Instruction," which many South Sudanese remembered from before independence in 2011.

We pulled apart an old radio for the memory card containing the audio files used in that program. We shared the files with another donor's project that seemed ready to put the programs on the air, and then presented our plan to the ministry.

The ministry and a new minister were excited—about their own plan. Last year, they had launched a new curriculum and accompanying textbooks. They were concerned that children would be confused hearing lessons from the old radio program. They wanted teachers to record lessons from the new curriculum, yet they were starting from zero to develop their plan. It was going to be challenging, especially with all the restrictions on work and movement imposed by the pandemic.

This was the development professional's classic dilemma:



In normal times, class sizes, especially in lower grades, number over 100 because students are eager to learn, and schools and teachers are scarce. This is a first-grade classroom at a school USAID is assisting in Rumbek, South Sudan, in October 2019. The adult to the right is the author's counterpart at UNICEF who accompanied him on the trip.

Does one support the direction of local actors or take a less risky, more technically sound approach? The question goes to the heart of our business and how we do our work.

In an April 2020 interview on NPR, then USAID Administrator Mark Green expressed strong opinions about USAID's approach to development: "It's listening carefully to our partner country leaders on the ways that we can respond to the needs that they identify. ... We're not transactional. We build relationships. We strengthen leadership, and we respond to those with identified needs."

The donor community is highly aware of the cycle of aid dependency in South Sudan, and a frequently cited analysis shows that after each shock (e.g., drought, flood, locusts), the amount of assistance households required has increased. If our mission as an agency is "ending the need for foreign assistance" and facilitating a country's "journey to self-reliance," how do we do that in our day-to-day jobs? I wrestled with this dilemma and consulted my managers and other donors in figuring out our response.

As I write this, we have agreed to tightly coordinate with the ministry's direction, offering ancillary assistance such as providing radios and taking surveys to see how many are listening and whether they are learning. We are nudging them to turn their ideas into implementation: workplans, budgets, task assignments.

We are suggesting that the old program, with its songs and counting games, might be helpful in bolstering the new content. And, perhaps most personally rewarding, I have built a relationship with my counterpart at the ministry. I'm on call via his WhatsApp for help and advice.

Another watchword from Mark Green's tenure has stuck with me: "They have to want it more than we do." The problem with ignoring local actors and dictating the solution is that the host country never owns that solution, meaning they will neither sustain it nor learn lessons from it.

My greatest aspiration for the work we are doing now is that because this vision was the ministry's, it will turn into a sustained radio distance learning education program that the ministry leads after the COVID-19 crisis is over.

Jeremiah Carew, who joined the Foreign Service with USAID in 2004, is the education officer in South Sudan. He has served previously in Peru, Afghanistan (two tours), Uganda, Washington, D.C., and Vietnam.

Work-Life Balance? Not a Chance

Christopher Merriman ■ Frankfurt

Work and life comingle in the Foreign Service. We're told achieving the mythical "work-life balance" is key to longevity in this career. Months of lockdown during the pandemic, however, have obliterated my understanding of what that means. For me, adjusting to this crisis didn't start to happen until I abandoned all preconceived notions about how to get through stressful circumstances.

When the stay-at-home order was issued, my wife and I were quick to focus on the potential advantages of the situation. We thought having two teleworking parents would give us the flexibility to cover child care for our 2- and 4-year-old daughters—at home once the preschool closed—and let us both thrive in our jobs. We'd been managing work-life balance in difficult



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COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER MERRIMAN

Two-year-old Charlotte plays with blocks while her father, FSO Chris Merriman, drafts an email on May 28 in Frankfurt, Germany.

How do you maintain balance when your office is also a child care center in a corner of your toddler's bedroom?

situations for years, and we assumed we were ready for this new challenge. How wrong we were!

Efforts to categorize our time into “work” and “life” boxes quickly unraveled. How do you maintain balance when your office is also a child care center in a corner of your toddler's bedroom?

Only thin walls separated the working parent from all the stomping, laughing, crying and yelling that two preschool-aged sisters generate when trapped inside together all day. Sometimes there wasn't even a wall. The door would open, and one of the girls, desperate for some alone time, would sheepishly ask to come in. I knew we weren't doing well when I heard my wife tell her, “Yes, you can play in your bedroom, but don't talk to Daddy. He's working.”

It was always painful to pretend not to be home—often

impossible. There's no way to stay out of the fray when one kid is having a meltdown and the other (the one working on potty training) doesn't quite make it to the toilet in time. One ear is always stretching out into the apartment, sensitive to signs that the other adult has had enough and needs a break.

Similarly, keeping work out of one's turn at child care was not feasible. As is apt to happen during a crisis, there were plenty of urgent emails and phone calls at all hours of the day and night. “Yes, I know I promised to play superheroes with you, but I have to talk on the phone with someone on the other side of the planet right now.”

Many in the mission have labored to make this less difficult for everyone. I'm especially thankful to my managers for strongly supporting a flexible schedule

and to our community liaison office coordinator for fostering a virtual sense of community.

Similarly, we have remained immensely grateful that, so far, our extended family has been unaffected by both illness and job loss. We know that our experience with the pandemic has been easier than for many millions of families worldwide.

A pivotal moment in our path to acceptance, however, was realizing that “easier” doesn't mean “easy.” Putting on a fake smile and thinking we should be happy that we didn't have it worse only amplified our anxiety.

The stress started to lift when we gave up trying to achieve “balance” between being workers and being parents. My wife and I can take turns emphasizing one aspect or the other, but both work and life will remain inseparably mixed as long as the lockdown continues. Life is work, work is life, and we won't be at our best at either until this crisis ends. Accepting that fact is what is getting us through.

Christopher Merriman is currently assigned to the Regional Support Center in Frankfurt, Germany, as a regional general services officer. His spouse is a freelance editor who works from home. He joined the Foreign Service in 2013 and has previously served in Moscow and Cairo.

Silver Linings in the Pandemic

Mariya Ilyas ■ Amman

When I was considering the U.S. Foreign Service, a mentor recommended I read *Inside a U.S. Embassy: Diplomacy at Work* (AFSA, 2011), a collection of narratives giving insight into the life and work of diplomats serving overseas. I read stories about the challenges of raising a family abroad, essays about pride and humility in serving our great nation, anecdotes of making friends from different cultures and expanding the concept of family and home, tales of travels in new and unfamiliar places—but the most poignant stories were diplomats' reflections on responding to a crisis.

An immigrant from Pakistan, I started my dream career in September 2018. Yet never once during A-100 orientation or tradecraft training did it occur to me that I would be plunged into responding to a crisis myself during my very first tour.

Jordan was one of the first countries to implement a strict nationwide lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 14, its government announced the closure of airports and borders, shut down the public and private sectors (except for essential services) and enforced a strict curfew that prohibited movement of people and vehicles.

The Jordanian government's measures significantly helped contain the spread of the virus in a country of nearly 10 million people. The results speak for themselves: As of June 1, there were 739 positive cases and nine deaths.

When the health crisis became a global pandemic and airports shut down, U.S. citizens in Jordan began to panic. Emails and calls poured into the embassy, as people ran out of food, money, medication and—as the crisis dragged on—patience and hope. Our consular team worked long hours to log and respond to more than 4,000 inquiries. Some problems were harder to solve than others, but no plea for help went unnoticed.

While communicating with citizens and gathering data were the



Consul General Bob Jachim oversees Embassy Amman's consular reception station, which checks in Americans boarding buses to the airport for late-night repatriation flights.

first steps in determining the need for repatriation assistance, the repatriation process had many moving parts and multiple stakeholders beyond the consular section. Embassy Amman successfully organized eight repatriation flights, helping more than 1,000 U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents reunite with families and loved ones back in the United States.

As an entry-level officer, I have found being a part of the COVID response team a professionally rewarding experience. Yet the long hours eventually led to physical and mental exhaustion.

The curfew forced us to rely on grocery delivery services and enjoy the sunshine and fresh air only from our windows or balconies (if we were lucky to have one).

And while home confinement meant greater responsibility and heightened awareness for self-care, I found my health deteriorating. Exercise was no longer inherently built into my routine. Rather, I found myself hunched over my laptop, sometimes not leaving the couch for hours. I experienced a loss of appetite. The stress was compounded by a sense of loneliness as a single person in the Foreign Service.

But *Alhumdulillah*, praise be



Mariya Ilyas celebrates another successful round of consular efforts helping Americans board repatriation flights in Jordan with colleagues Olivia Sumpter (left) and Diana Madanat (right).



As an entry-level officer, I have found being a part of the COVID response team a professionally rewarding experience. Yet the long hours eventually led to physical and mental exhaustion.

to God, I am grateful for the support network at the embassy before these bad habits took a negative toll on my well-being. My supervisors supported flexible working hours, the deputy chief of mission frequently checked in with the first- and second-tour officers, the chargé d'affaires held town halls, the management section shared resources such as resilience workshops, and the Regional Medical Unit offered therapy consultations.

I took advantage of the counseling sessions and began to reconfigure my priorities by making time for hobbies such as

reading and writing poetry. This alone time provided for space to pray, meditate, reflect and contemplate, luxuries in an otherwise hustle-and-bustle lifestyle.

We marked Ramadan, the holiest month in the Islamic calendar, a time for Muslims to fast and become closer to God, under strict social distancing rules. Ramadan is about community and charity, about selflessness and generosity. For the first time in my life, I broke my fast and ate iftar alone at the dining table each evening.

Recognizing that calamities can be a time for personal and spiritual growth, I found strength from communal reflection and prayer at the weekly “Halaqa Circles” that I hosted online. My faith keeps me going. I believe that while a dark cloud still lingers above us, and although we might not see it yet, there is a silver lining.

Mariya Ilyas joined the Foreign Service in 2018 and is currently a vice consul at U.S. Embassy Amman, her first tour. She speaks Arabic, Urdu, Turkish and Spanish. She hails from Alexandria, Virginia, and enjoys solving sudoku, writing poetry and baking.



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Getting the Job Done in Peru

Charles Sewall ■ Lima

When we started the workday on March 16, few of us in Embassy Lima fully grasped what was coming our way and the new roles we would be taking on. The night before, the president of Peru had implemented a state of emergency, instituting a strict nationwide lockdown, closing the borders, and halting air and land transportation—effective immediately.

The vast majority of our Locally Employed (LE) staff had no way to get to work in the morning. With some U.S. staff returning home on authorized departure in the following days, the greatly reduced U.S. Embassy Lima workforce quickly discovered a new challenge: repatriating thousands of our fellow citizens trapped across Peru.

It was in this context that I raised my hand for the role of mission volunteer coordinator, which gave me a unique window into the different responsibilities our people took on, and the impressive and enthusiastic way our community came together.

We had to invent a system that would transport thousands of Americans stranded across the country to Lima, conduct regis-



USAID Officer Michelle Jennings assists a U.S. citizen preparing for his repatriation flight at U.S. Embassy Lima.

tration and administrative processing in the embassy parking lot, bus them to a restricted-access military air base, facilitate further screening by Peruvian officials and, finally, help them onto U.S. government-chartered aircraft.

It quickly became apparent that this would require more hands on deck. The answer was volunteers. We reached out across the whole mission, sorting volunteers by language skills, ability to physically get to the embassy and willingness to do public-facing jobs that would potentially expose them to thousands of people. Over 180 people signed up, and we matched their skills, situations and risk tolerance against the work required.

The more labor-intensive roles were crowd control, passenger screening and moving luggage, both at the embassy rally point and at the air base. We needed people who had a car with diplomatic plates for access through security checkpoints, and were willing to work with the public. Though this narrowed the field of candidates, more than 70 people stepped up for these jobs.

We set up three embassy-based teams (Condor, Jaguar and Llama), with each team working two out of three days. Drug Enforcement Administration agents, military personnel, Foreign Service officers, personal service contractors and eligible family members worked in the hot sun, wearing face masks and gloves, and doing heavy physical labor. At the air base, our military and consular colleagues and a few civilian staff ran a similar operation without rotational breaks.



Chargé d'Affaires Denny Offutt stands by to greet as U.S. military personnel assist a passenger at the Grupo Ocho Peruvian Air Force Base in Callao (Lima).



Not all jobs were outside and public facing, but all were critical. Approximately 15 volunteers staffed a consular call center to guide Americans through the process and ensure they were ready to travel to avoid empty seats on buses and planes. On-call volunteer drivers supplemented our motor pool, which was nearly wiped out by state-of-emergency restrictions. Officers and LE staff from throughout the embassy—some by telework—supplemented management, consular, public affairs and the front office. We even had a volunteer social-distancing monitor.

The dedication and willingness to serve of so many members of our community were impressive. The embassy rally point operation team lead was a U.S. Marine Corps major who was in Peru as part of a one-year regional orientation program for foreign area officers. His specialty was combat logistician, so this role fit him like a glove. He kept the teams motivated and the buses running on time. Both he and his wife volunteered, and many other households had several family members participating.

The DEA regional director, responsible for all Southern Cone operations, was out there every day, along with his teenage daughters, moving luggage for elderly U.S. citizens. Two LE staff members from the Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement who could walk to the embassy took on leadership roles at the consular call center. One family member worked outside with the embassy rally point team and spent her days off working at the call center.

A DEA information technology officer provided technical support for public affairs section video messaging. An INL officer coordinated all the movement of intraregional and metropolitan Lima chartered buses and INL aircraft, moving more than 2,000 U.S. citizens from around the country to Lima.

When we needed folks to spend the night at the embassy to meet buses arriving before the government-mandated curfew, I didn't think we would get anyone. But multiple volunteers came forward, more than we needed.

There are many more of these stories. In the end, Embassy Lima moved more than 8,000 U.S. citizens from across Peru to the United States over the four-week initial crisis period in an impressive demonstration of resilience and teamwork. People put their day jobs and their egos aside to get the job done. I am proud to have been part of it.

Charles Sewall is director of the Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement at U.S. Embassy Lima. An FSO, he previously served in Mexico City, Dar es Salaam, Kabul, Addis Ababa, Guadalajara and Havana. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, he was a U.S. naval officer for 21 years.

DS and MED Team Up

Stephen Donovan ■ Cabo Verde

Although the COVID-19 pandemic initially had a limited impact on the Diplomatic Security Service's Diplomatic Courier Service, we anticipated that something more widespread and hazardous might happen given the nature of the crisis. DCS reached out to our longtime partner in crisis management logistics, the Office of Operational Medicine, to determine if there were any mutual airlift needs or opportunities.

As it happened, OPMED had COVID-19 testing equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE) to deliver while we had a cache of mission-critical material to distribute. Together, we organized an ambitious plan to deliver material to more than 24 posts in West Africa and Europe using OPMED aircraft based out of Cabo Verde.

We also coordinated complex courier/OPMED itineraries for missions to East Africa, Asia and the Middle East based out of Diego Garcia, an island in the Indian Ocean, and service to South America based out of Miami. Overall, we delivered much-needed material to 77 posts around the world.

On arrival in Praia, Cabo Verde, our six-person team encountered our first hurdle when a Cabo Verdean colonel demanded that we leave the tarmac without our classified pouches—something a courier never does. Working in tandem, DCS and OPMED personnel convinced the colonel to allow the team to take possession of our material and to transfer our classified storage and operations center to the small conference room of a nearby hotel. After several shuttles with a police escort, we unloaded the vehicles and lugged the material up the stairs to the hotel that would serve as our home for the next eight days.

U.S. Embassy Praia did an outstanding job preparing for our arrival and coordinating the necessary support to move between the hotel and the airport. We were grateful for their help, particularly as we were busy until 3 a.m. finalizing inventory, making arrangements for the next day's flights and setting up a 24-hour classified pouch watch schedule. Amazingly, at 6 a.m. the next day, every member of the team was awake, alert and ready to go.

Each day, four team members were on the traveling detail—a courier and OPMED member on each of two separate aircraft—and would work a grueling 18-hour day, delivering medical equipment, PPE and mission-critical classified pouches throughout West Africa. One team member would maintain communications with posts receiving service that day, in addition to coordinating the itinerary and service for



Casey Roberts (at right, front) and the author under the wing of an aircraft during a torrential downpour in Monrovia.

the following day. Nightly huddles in the improvised storage and operations center in Praia typically wrapped up late, with one team member, who drew the short straw, assigned the midnight-to-6-a.m. security shift to stand watch over the pouches. We all played every role, and the missions made for extremely long hours.

We began dispatching couriers and OPMED personnel on round-robin flights, servicing up to four posts per day and making adjustments on the fly. In one case, as our flight approached Niamey, Niger, we were waved off by the control tower who abruptly—and mistakenly—told us that we did not have landing clearance. With fuel running low, we had to change our course and head to our next destination and refuel. We then confirmed that U.S. Embassy Niamey had indeed secured permission to land before convincing the tired and reluctant flight crew to make another attempt.

Lessons were learned daily, and relationships were forged within the team. We worked together to solve not only DCS problems when issues were related to classified material but also



In Cabo Verde at the makeshift secure storage/operations center. Left to right: Steve Donovan (DCS), Joseph Kazacos (DCS), Jared Strom (DCS), Laurean Pope (OPMED) and Casey Roberts (OPMED). Not pictured: Travis Wildy.

OPMED concerns when the problem involved medical equipment or repatriation. Local officials grew more comfortable with us each day as we demonstrated a high level of professionalism and respect for the Cabo Verdean protocols put in place to ensure the safety of local staff.

The experience gained during this inaugural mission validated a road map for subsequent missions based out of Diego Garcia, Naval Support Activity Souda Bay, Boca Raton and Ramstein Air Base, facilitating the eventual support of more than 150 diplomatic posts worldwide.

The combined DCS/OPMED effort managing these colossal challenges saved lives, provided comfort and reassured our global diplomatic colleagues that they were not alone in a time of crisis. DCS and OPMED have worked together through several crisis situations in the past. But it appears the present collaboration, planned to continue for the next few months, feels like, as Humphrey Bogart puts it in the film *Casablanca*, “the beginning of a beautiful friendship.”

Stephen Donovan is regional director of the Washington Regional Diplomatic Courier Division. A diplomatic courier with the Department of State for 21 years, he was deputy director of the Diplomatic Courier Service, responsible for classified pouch operations worldwide, from 2016 to 2019. He served previously as the supervisor of diplomatic courier hubs in Pretoria, Manama and Seoul, and also served in Bangkok and Frankfurt. He is married to Dessislava Donovan and has a son and two daughters.



Ashley Hayes, on evacuation from Mexico, “shopping” at the Junior League of Washington’s Tossed and Found.

COURTESY OF ANN LA PORTA

Evacuees Shop Free

Ann La Porta ■ Washington, D.C.

When the State Department announced a global authorized departure for some posts and an ordered departure for others, families flooded into the Washington metropolitan area with suitcases in hand and toddlers in tow. Some traveled to their safe haven addresses since they could telework from anywhere, while others stayed locally, crammed into small, sparsely furnished apartments and forced to shelter in place along with everyone else in the region.

As chair of the Evacuee Support Network of the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide, a volunteer organization that has been supporting foreign affairs families for 60 years, I was soon contacted by the Junior League of Washington. Their

Although the warehouse has been packed up now, those families who “shopped” are eternally grateful.

chief fundraising event, a huge rummage sale called Tossed and Found, had to be canceled because of the pandemic, and they were left with a giant warehouse filled with goods. The Junior League was offering access to these goods for free to foreign affairs families who had been evacuated.

All we had to do was find the customers, a task easier said than done. In February, our support network had been able to contact the China evacuees because some of our AAFSW members knew the community liaison office coordinators there. We had assisted about 30 families, but this was now a global undertaking, and we were unsure how to connect with evacuees in from other posts.

Fortunately, Jenny Kocher, who monitors our social media and is also co-chair of the AAFSW Foreign Born Spouse group, found a Facebook group dedicated to evacuees and those wishing to help. Bingo. We were in business.

Kelly Hunter, co-chair of Tossed and Found, daughter of State Department employees and granddaughter of an FSO, together with her very busy and dedicated committee welcomed more than 130 families into the Junior League’s Crystal City warehouse.

Bikes and exercise equipment were in high demand. Kitchen supplies and gadgets flew off the shelves. Children’s toys, games, puzzles and books were almost depleted—anything to keep little ones occupied during isolation.

Although the warehouse has been packed up now, those families who “shopped” are eternally grateful. The AAFSW Evacuee Support Network has about 100 volunteers who stand ready to help more evacuees if they still have wish lists.

Ann La Porta is a member of the board of the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide, AAFSW co-liaison to AFSA and spouse of Ambassador (ret.) Alphonse La Porta. She has been chair of the AAFSW Evacuee Support Network since its founding in 1984 (with time off for foreign postings) and is a member of the Special Needs Education Allowance Task Force and a volunteer for the DC Volunteer Lawyers Project.

Visit aafsw.org to find more ways AAFSW supports the FS community and to join.



Black belt world champion Hanshi Darren Cox with the author (right), also a black belt in karate.

Karate for FS Kids

Alix Bryant ■ Gainesville, Virginia

On March 30, when Governor Ralph Northam announced a stay-at-home order for Virginians, our kids had already been home for two weeks (Virginia was the second U.S. state to close its schools for the remainder of the school year). Our two boys were quick to provide “research” on the mental health benefits of playing video games on a daily basis, and our daughter petitioned us for access to the House-party app (we said yes) and to TikTok (nope, still too young for that).

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and more and more authorized departures were announced, I was prepared to help Foreign Service families cope with their new realities and adjust to their routines at home. I had already been homeschooling my kids until just this year, and had created a business around providing online resources for kids.

Since many FS families were struggling to find the balance between too much academic online learning and the alterna-

tive—too much screen time—I invited families to participate in an online karate program I had recently developed. More than 500 FS kids signed up within two weeks! Karate has been a passion of mine since childhood, and the overwhelmingly positive response from parents—most of them grateful for an outlet that allowed their kids to burn off a lot of pent-up energy—made me happy to share this course with the young members of our community.

I also gave away nearly 1,000 PDF copies of *My Life as a For-*

Foreign Service Kid, an activity book I created for FS kids, with fill-in-the-blank pages to write about the places they’ve lived, their unique experiences, their favorite foreign foods and souvenirs, their goals and their dream destinations.

While I’m not on the front lines, as a Foreign Service family member I’ve been

uniquely positioned to assist our FS community in my own way. By offering FS kids a creative outlet, families might see this time as a gift rather than a challenge.

Karate has been a passion of mine since childhood, and the overwhelmingly positive response from parents made me happy to share this course with the young members of our community.

Alix Bryant is the wife of Foreign Service specialist Trent Bryant, the mother of three kids, a serial entrepreneur and a self-proclaimed dessert critic—in that order.



Helping Americans Living Abroad

William Jordan ■ Paris

On the morning of March 12, big news hit Paris, where I've lived since retiring from the Foreign Service in 2011. A few hours earlier, President Trump had announced from the Oval Office a ban on all travel to the United States from the European countries in the Schengen Area.

As France and other European Union states were still struggling to follow Italy's lead in ordering lockdowns of the population, it was a bolt out of the blue, and stunning both in its lack of nuance and absence of detail.

A number of questions struck me: Were American citizens now banned from returning to their own country? When is this ban going into effect? Swirling in my head were visions of thousands of panic-stricken tourists and long-standing residents in France streaming to the airports to get home, whatever the cost. (That is exactly what happened.)

During my Foreign Service career, I had been a political officer. My first assignment, however, was as a vice consul in Saudi Arabia, and it marked me indelibly, especially realizing that, almost every day and even in small ways, my actions could dramatically affect someone else's life.

This same spirit led me two years ago to join the Association of Americans Resident Overseas, a nonprofit organization based in Paris that advocates on behalf of American citizens living abroad. With a paid membership of just over 1,000 in 41 countries, AARO focuses on taxation, voting and citizenship issues. On the board, I would serve as a liaison with the State Department regarding consular services.

I immediately queried the consul general in Paris as to what was going on. He responded that the president's announcement had caught everyone by surprise, and that the embassy was still waiting for official instructions. Informally, however, he stressed that American citizens, legal permanent residents and their legal dependents would be allowed to travel to the United States. He asked me, as he would other American organizations in France, to spread the word through our respective channels.



COURTESY OF WILLIAM JORDAN

The author, at his computer in Paris, holds a virtual meeting with his Association of American Residents Overseas team to discuss the most recent Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) message from U.S. Embassy Paris.

With that mission, I contacted Christine Cathrine, AARO's invaluable office manager, and Pam Combastet, AARO's secretary and informal liaison to many of the other American organizations in Paris, and proposed that AARO set up a crisis communications task force. The task force would prepare and send out urgent messages to our members, asking them to share the information with other Americans, including visitors. We also urged those who had not done so to register with the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program.

Per the "confinement" order in place throughout France, we hunkered down and adapted to operating virtually. AARO has sponsored webinars dealing with tax issues, like the implications of the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act. And we continue to send out "warden" messages, sharing information from the embassy and providing updated information on travel restrictions, the executive order suspending immigration visas, and the most recent caution to Americans overseas about how COVID-19 might affect their ability to vote by absentee ballot, to name a few. Emulating our consular colleagues, AARO members are Americans helping Americans abroad.

Retired FSO William Jordan was a political officer for 30 years, mostly working on the Middle East and North Africa. He resides in Paris and, in May 2020, became president of the Association of Americans Resident Overseas (aaro.org).

Retirees Spotlight Role of Diplomacy in Pandemic Response

Charles Ray ■ Washington, D.C.

From the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, our Foreign Service colleagues, at home and abroad, along with our Civil Service colleagues and foreign national staff, have demonstrated their value to U.S. national security time and time again. Retired members of the Foreign Service have also contributed to the effort in a number of ways, from writing op-eds to participating in symposiums to highlight what is being done now, and what needs to be done in the future to cope with such tragedies.

I have been working with Professor Yonah Alexander, director of the Inter-University Center for Terrorism Studies, on a project to highlight the role of diplomacy in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism for the past several years. When the pandemic put a crimp in face-to-face events, Prof. Alexander proposed we use our project to address the role diplomacy plays in crises of this nature. With the assistance of Professor Don Wallace, director of Georgetown University's International Law Center, and his technical staff, we organized two symposiums via Zoom.

The first, "Combating Global Coronavirus: From Isolation to International Cooperation," was held on March 26 and featured presentations by medical experts. My capstone presentation

emphasized the need to increase international cooperation through diplomacy to deal with global crises, using the international response to the 2014 Ebola crisis as a model.

On April 14, we held a second symposium, "Combating Global Coronavirus: A Preliminary Assessment of Past Lessons and Future Outlook." The presentations from medical experts included one from retired FSO Ambassador Jimmy Kolker, who served previously as assistant secretary for global affairs at the Department of Health and Human Services and chief of the HIV/AIDS office at UNICEF in New York. [See Kolker's article on p. 34.]

Amb. Kolker and I stressed the need for creative, visionary leadership at the highest levels of American diplomacy to work our way out of the current crisis and prepare for the next one. We highlighted the heroic efforts of our Foreign Service and Civil Service colleagues under arduous conditions, and their dedication to duty despite not always receiving the support of our senior political leadership. Just another example of what the U.S. Foreign Service, active and retired, does to protect U.S. national security interests.

The symposiums can be viewed on YouTube at <https://bit.ly/IsolationCooperation> and <https://bit.ly/PrelimAssessments>.

Ambassador (ret.) Charles Ray served in the U.S. Foreign Service from 1982 to 2012, with assignments as consul general in Ho Chi Minh City, deputy chief of mission in Freetown and ambassador to Cambodia and Zimbabwe. He also served as deputy assistant secretary of Defense for POW/missing personnel affairs and director of the Defense Department's POW/Missing Personnel Office from 2006 to 2009.

Rip Van Winkle in Islamabad

Michael Nehrbass ■ Pakistan

Given Pakistan's location and population, there was never a question of whether the country would be affected by the pandemic—only a question of when. Many COVID-19 cases in Pakistan are linked to Pakistanis returning from a pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia and Iran. Alas, at least one case stems from a diplomat.

In early March of this year, after a leadership conference in Washington, D.C., I was traveling back to Islamabad and stayed overnight in London. There, with the number of coronavirus cases on the rise, I tried to limit myself to roaming



Author Michael Nehrbass takes a selfie after his second COVID-19 test.

around Kensington Gardens. Inevitably, however, my desire for cask ale and Malaysian cuisine led to my downfall.

I returned to Islamabad on Friday, March 13, worried about work and our family cat, Boi, who had fallen deathly ill while I was away. I felt healthy but under pressure to get to work. International crises bring out the best in the U.S. government; USAID is no exception. Through inter-agency cooperation, USAID/Pakistan had managed to secure \$1 million of health funding from supplemental COVID-19 resources and was making a case for more

funding (as of early June, it was managing more than \$20 million of COVID-19 response funds). U.S. Embassy Islamabad, while always very occupied, seemed exceptionally busy.



I could no longer take a deep breath without coughing; my reduced lung capacity scared me. Now I had no qualms about being away from work—I felt useless. I looked like hell, and so did the cat.

On Tuesday, March 17, my telephone rang. The health unit had learned of my stopover in London and placed me on self-quarantine. Suddenly, I found myself at home trying to set up telework, fuming at the inconvenience when there was so much work to be done at the office. At least I could get a local veterinarian to examine our cat, who began a regimen of medications.

When I reported a mild temperature to the health unit, a team in full protective gear came to test me. On Friday, March 20, I learned of the result: I had tested positive for the coronavirus.

Fortunately, because of the health unit's quick work, my limited time at the embassy prevented the virus from spreading. Over the weekend, I told everyone that it felt like I had a mild cold. The health unit called me periodically to ask if I had any trouble breathing, which was disconcerting. By Monday, my temperature climbed to 102 degrees, and my muscles and joints ached. I felt weak and had no sense of taste; eating was a chore.

The reality of COVID-19 sank in when I became out of breath after walking upstairs slightly fast. I could no longer take a deep breath without coughing; my reduced lung capacity scared me. Now I had no qualms about being away from work—I felt useless. I looked like hell, and so did the cat.

My veterinarian had to go into quarantine. Before he did, he dropped off an alarming amount of injectable medicines.



MICHAEL NEHRBASS

Michael Nehrbass and his cat, Boi, who are both healthy again.

Amid my illness, I had to embrace distance medicine for felines by learning how to administer injections. I kept the cat company by taking my own array of medications. Time in quarantine passed slowly. Every day, I connected with my spouse in Takoma Park, Maryland, by video call, fielding numerous questions about the cat from my children.

The embassy's circumstances changed quickly over the next two and a half weeks as American staff began to telework or leave on authorized departure. Most Pakistani employees went on administrative leave or began teleworking.

Finally, the cat and I recovered our health. After a second

COVID-19 test on April 10, this time negative, I was free to go to the embassy. When I arrived, I felt like Rip Van Winkle, having awakened to a time far into the future. The compound seemed eerily empty as it operated with reduced personnel. A skeleton USAID staff continued to manage projects, contribute to embassy reporting and successfully obtain more COVID-19 supplemental funds.

Colleagues dressed more casually, and some had cut their own hair, as dry cleaners and the barber had both closed. We compared notes and commiserated over hardships while dealing with our families' anguish at home. Like me, everyone seemed to know someone who had a canceled graduation ceremony, kids frustrated by the sudden transition to online classes, or friends

and family hating the lockdown.

Disappointments and aggravations abound, but there is also hope. Now I am working again, enjoying our esprit de corps at post and supporting the COVID-19 response. I am grateful to the health unit, which enabled my recovery while protecting our embassy community.

Michael Nehrbass is USAID deputy mission director in Islamabad. He graduated from the National War College in 2019 and has served overseas on every continent where USAID operates.

Waiting for Takeoff

Stephanie Allen ■ Arlington, Virginia

I was a newly hired diplomatic courier who had just finished training when the COVID-19 stay-at-home orders and change-of-station (PCS) hold began. My courier class, which was five strong, was excited and ready to start our careers, and then, almost overnight, we went from full steam ahead to full stop.

Having lived in Cambodia for many years, I was no stranger to “going with the flow.” What has struck me the most about this experience, however, is the feeling of isolation. Staying alone day after day in a temporary apartment—my fiancée and cats 8,000 miles away—has been a challenge. I miss them very much.

I have been combating this confinement with gratitude. I am thankful that I remain employed, that I have a safe place to weather the crisis, and that my older parents and brother are safe and healthy, as well.

Although my time here at the State Department has not really started yet, I know that when we all return to our roles we will be doing so in a changed world. I am grateful that I will be part of that effort.

I tell myself that staying healthy and being ready when called is my job right now. I often refer to the “United States Department of State Professional Ethos,” which I was given during my SOAR class (Specialist Orientation and Readiness; the 155th), and pay close attention to the line: “As a member of this team, I serve with unfailing professionalism in both my demeanor and my actions, even in the face of adversity.” Reading this ethos, particularly that line, gives me added purpose during this unusual time when I feel disconnected and less than useful.



Stephanie Allen working in temporary quarters in Arlington, Virginia.

Having lived in Cambodia for many years, I was no stranger to “going with the flow.” What has struck me the most about this experience, however, is the feeling of isolation.

The second weapon in my arsenal against the loneliness of quarantine is technology. The department’s quick pivot to telework has allowed me to keep the new information I have learned during my training (but haven’t had the opportunity to use yet) fresh in my mind. Technology has helped me stay connected to my family and my fellow couriers. My courier class has had a video chat facilitated by our operations officer in Washington, D.C., and not a day goes by that I don’t hear from colleagues.

It helps that my future post in Bangkok invited me to join in their video conference training, as well. This camaraderie really makes a difference and goes a long way in keeping a new hire, who’s stuck in limbo, feeling part of the team.

I know that at some point this stressful and tragic crisis will be behind us. I know that we all will be stronger on the other side of it. I hope

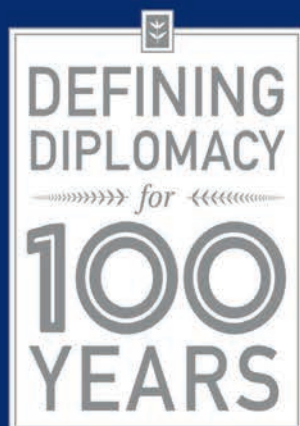
to meet you during my eventual travels as a courier. Until then, stay safe and healthy, and I’ll see you out there soon. ■

Stephanie Allen is a newly hired Foreign Service diplomatic courier at the Department of State, having onboarded in January 2020. Assigned to the Bangkok Regional Diplomatic Courier Division, she writes from Arlington, Virginia. Her prior career was in aviation. Based in Southeast Asia as a pilot, she also owned and operated an art gallery in Cambodia that sold local Khmer art and handicrafts. She is an FAA-licensed airline transport pilot and flight instructor.

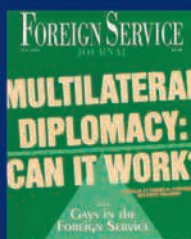
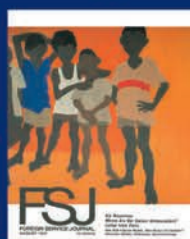
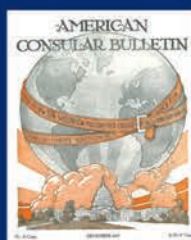
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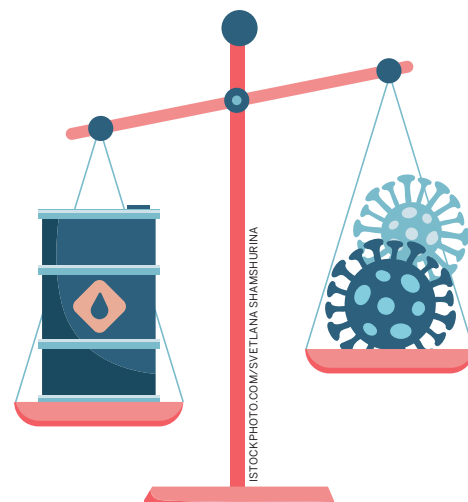
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Russia's *RETURN TO THE* Middle East

The COVID-19 pandemic has not constrained Russia's activity in the Middle East, but it is unclear whether Moscow has a longer-term strategy for the region.

BY ANGELA STENT

The COVID-19 pandemic has largely diverted media attention away from the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East. Yet the war in Syria continues, with its devastating human toll; and, as the recent Saudi-Russian spat over oil prices reminds us, the pandemic has exacerbated tensions in the volatile region.

As the United States pulls most of its troops out of Syria and is gradually withdrawing from the region, Russia has moved in to fill the vacuum and has reinforced its presence in Syria while its relationship with Turkey has become more brittle. Moreover, Russia's most recent foray into Libya, where it supports a rebel leader challenging the United Nations-recognized government, is creating new tensions with both the United States and Turkey. What are the longer-term prospects for Russia in the region?

Russia's return to the Middle East is one of the major successes of President Vladimir Putin's foreign policy. After the USSR's collapse, post-Soviet Russia did not have the wherewithal to sustain previous commitments in the region, and largely withdrew. But when Putin came to power 20 years ago and the Russian economy began to recover, Russia gradually ventured back into the region.



Angela Stent directs the Center for Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies at Georgetown University. She has served in the State Department's Office of Policy Planning and as national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the National Intelligence Council. Professor Stent is the author, most recently, of Putin's World: Russia Against the West and With the Rest (Twelve, 2019).

Russia is the only major power that talks to all sides in all the conflicts in the region.

The turning point came in September 2015, when it appeared that Moscow's ally President Bashar al-Assad was losing the civil war, and the Obama administration made it clear that its involvement in Syria would remain limited. Russia began a bombing campaign to support Assad and used this initial foray to establish ties with all major players in the region in pursuit of Putin's broader goal of restoring Russia as a great power.

By returning to the Middle East, Putin was able to escape the isolation that the West sought to impose on Russia after the 2014 annexation of Crimea and launch of a war in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Unlike in Soviet times, Russia's involvement in the Middle East today is nonideological, pragmatic and flexible. Russia is the only major power that talks to all sides in all the conflicts in the region. It has close ties to Iran, to all the major Sunni states—and to Israel. Indeed, its newest partners are two close U.S. allies, Saudi Arabia and Israel. Both countries believe that Russia can act as a restraining influence over their chief adversary, Iran.

Russia has managed to dissuade Iran and Hezbollah from taking certain actions against Israel. And Russia and Saudi Arabia formed an alliance in 2016 to restrict oil production and keep oil prices as high as they can—until it broke down in March 2020. Many governments and groups in the Middle East now view Russia as an honest broker in the region, while U.S. policy is largely focused on containing Iran and promoting regime change there.

The U.S. withdrawal from Syria has presented Russia with new opportunities. Indeed, some argue that Russia is the “winner” in Syria as the United States retreats from the region. But that may be a premature assessment.

Domestic Determinants

Russian policy toward the Middle East has deep domestic roots. Russia's population is declining overall, but its Muslim population is growing; and the demographic balance between Muslims and Slavs will shift significantly over the next 30 years. Since Russia itself has faced challenges from domestic extremism and terrorism, a major goal is to ensure that no outside power in the Middle East exacerbates these problems. Moreover, the second-largest contingent of foreign fighters for ISIS

in Syria came from the Russian Federation—either Russian citizens or Central Asian migrant workers living in Russia who became radicalized. Vladimir Putin has tied Russia's involvement in Syria directly to the desire to defeat terrorists in Syria rather than having to deal with them at home.

There are also economic reasons for Russia's return to the Middle East. At a time of domestic economic difficulties caused by the failure to modernize the economy and exacerbated by Western sanctions and falling oil prices, the Middle East is an attractive market for Russian exports of military hardware, nuclear power plants and hydrocarbons.

Putin has also used Russia's return to the Middle East to reinforce his popularity domestically. The Russian population is increasingly feeling the effect of the country's economic challenges, and the Kremlin appeals to its citizens by evoking their pride in Russia's role as a great power that once again has a seat on the global board of directors. But, in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, the mobilizing effect of Russia's role in the Syrian civil war has declined as Russia's economic situation has deteriorated. More Russians ask why resources are being expended for foreign military campaigns when they could be better deployed domestically. Nevertheless, public opinion data show that the majority of Russians do believe that Russia is a great power once again.

The Syrian Opportunity and Challenge

During the Obama administration, American and Russian policies in Syria were not aligned. Washington insisted that Bashar al-Assad must go and supported forces fighting the regime in Damascus, while Russia was determined that Assad stay in power. Russia was, in fact, less concerned about defeating ISIS than defeating anti-Assad groups. However, since the Trump administration came in, promising to extricate the United States from wars in the Middle East and not insisting that Assad must go, American and Russian goals have not diverged as in the past.

The United States and Russia have been deconflicting their air operations in Syria since the beginning of the Russian bombing campaign, one of the few remaining regular channels of communication between the two countries. Indeed, before the United States bombed Syrian chemical weapons facilities in early 2018, it coordinated with Moscow to ensure that no Russians were hurt. And in February 2018, when U.S. forces came into direct conflict with Russian mercenaries from the Wagner Group, who were trying to take over an oil field in Deir al-Zour, and reportedly killed up to 200 of them. The Russian official response was muted.

When President Trump announced in October 2019 that the United States was withdrawing its forces from Syria—later amended to a commitment to maintain a few hundred troops to guard the oil fields—Russian troops immediately moved into an abandoned U.S. base. Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan agreed to jointly patrol the area from which Kurdish fighters have been driven. Putin has always claimed that Russia was in Syria legitimately because it was invited in by Assad, whereas the United States was there illegitimately, trying to effect regime change against the legitimately elected leader in Damascus. So Russia welcomed the partial U.S. withdrawal, although American troops and Russian mercenaries continue to have tense encounters in northeast Syria. Indeed, in March U.S. Special Envoy for Syria James Jeffrey accused Moscow of trying to challenge the U.S. presence in northeastern Syria by violating the terms of a deconfliction agreement and escalating the fighting in the northwestern province of Idlib.

The ongoing battle in Idlib province has also strained relations between Moscow and Ankara. The Russian-Turkish relationship has become more brittle as Putin and Erdogan support different sides in the Syrian civil war. Moscow has benefited from the growing strains in U.S.-Turkish relations and has recently sold the S-400 air defense system to Ankara, a major challenge for NATO. But Russian-Turkish relations came under great strain after an airstrike by Russian-backed Assad forces killed at least 33 Turkish troops in northwest Syria. Erdogan reacted very strongly against Russia, even traveling to Ukraine in February and telling President Volodymyr Zelensky that Crimea is Ukrainian.

There was concern about a possible Russo-Turkish military confrontation, but in the end Erdogan went to Moscow and the two sides signed a cease-fire and agreed to joint patrols. The COVID-19 pandemic appears to have slowed down the fighting, but the situation remains tense: Turkey is determined to continue to occupy its zone around Idlib; and Assad, backed by Russia, is committed to subduing Idlib and declaring the civil war over.

Now that Russia is the predominant external actor in Syria, is it really the winner? Once the civil war ends, Moscow will largely be responsible for the reconstruction of the country. Russia does not have the wherewithal to pay for the enormous costs of reconstruction, and it has already appealed to the European Union and other countries to contribute, so far with little success. Moreover, although Russia and Iran have so far worked together during the Syrian conflict, with their joint aim of keeping Assad in power, it is not clear, once the war is over, that their goals will coincide. Russia has been convening differ-

Now that Russia is the predominant external actor in Syria, is it really the winner?

ent groups designed to reconcile the various political factions in a postwar Syria, and has managed to persuade adversaries Turkey and Iran to sit at the same table. But so far it has proved a major challenge to persuade the contentious Syrian groups themselves to sit together. Recently, the Kremlin has reportedly been insisting that Assad show more flexibility in talks with the Syrian opposition on a political settlement to end the conflict.

Russian and Saudi Arabia: Is the Oil War Over?

At the 2019 Valdai International Discussion Club meeting in Sochi in September, OPEC Secretary General Mohammed Barkindo said that the 2016 alliance between Russia, Saudi Arabia and OPEC had “saved” OPEC, and Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak likewise praised the agreement for bolstering Russia’s oil industry. A mere six months later, when Riyadh tried to impose much deeper production cutbacks ahead of the expiration of the current arrangement, Russia abandoned its agreement with the Saudis, oil prices collapsed and relations between Moscow and Riyadh soured. Rosneft CEO Igor Sechin had been critical of any arrangement limiting Russia’s ability to produce oil. “If you give up market share,” he warned, “you never get it back.” Angered by U.S. sanctions against the Nordstream 2 gas pipeline and against Rosneft subsidiaries exporting Venezuelan oil, and hoping to put U.S. shale producers out of business, Russia refused to further cut oil production.

However, Putin had not reckoned with the devastating effects of COVID-19 on the Russian economy and on global oil demand, which fell precipitously. Russia lacked storage capacity for the extra oil. Eventually, under pressure from U.S. oil producers, Donald Trump intervened. After a series of phone calls with the Saudis and Russians, he persuaded the OPEC+ countries to agree to production cutbacks. Indeed, Trump and Putin pledged that this could open up a new period of U.S.-Russian cooperation.

The monthlong Russian-Saudi oil “war” and its resolution showed that relations between the two countries involve more than oil. Moscow and Riyadh have developed an economic and security partnership that the Kremlin will continue to pursue as it seeks to strengthen its presence in the Middle East.

Putin has been a talented tactician in the Middle East—as elsewhere—taking advantage of opportunities presented to him by Western indecision and inaction.

Russia and the Middle East after COVID-19

Russia's capacity to expand its presence in the Middle East could, of course, be limited by the longer-term effects of the pandemic on the Russian economy. The Syrian operation has, so far, not required significant resources. Putin has been a talented tactician in the Middle East—as elsewhere—taking advantage of opportunities presented to him by Western indecision and inaction to insert Russia into Syria and beyond. So far the focus has been on ensuring that Russia remains a player in the region and concluding profitable deals there. Moreover, the Kremlin relies

heavily on private military groups such as the Wagner Group—as opposed to the Russian armed forces—to do most of the fighting in the Middle East. In May, the United States reported that Russia was sending fighter jets to Libya to support Russian mercenaries and Syrian soldiers fighting alongside rebel commander General Haftar against the U.N.-recognized Libyan government, which is backed by Turkey. Despite the pandemic, Russia has stepped up its involvement in the Libyan civil war.

It is unclear whether Putin has a longer-term strategy for the Middle East. Russia cannot replace the United States, either economically or militarily, in the region. But if Washington continues its withdrawal from the area—a process that the pandemic could accelerate—Russia will surely pursue future opportunities there. This assumes that Russia emerges from the current COVID-19 crisis with its attendant economic contraction, and is still able to project power beyond its borders. So far, despite its severe domestic toll on the Russian population, the pandemic does not appear to be constraining Russia's activities in the Middle East. ■

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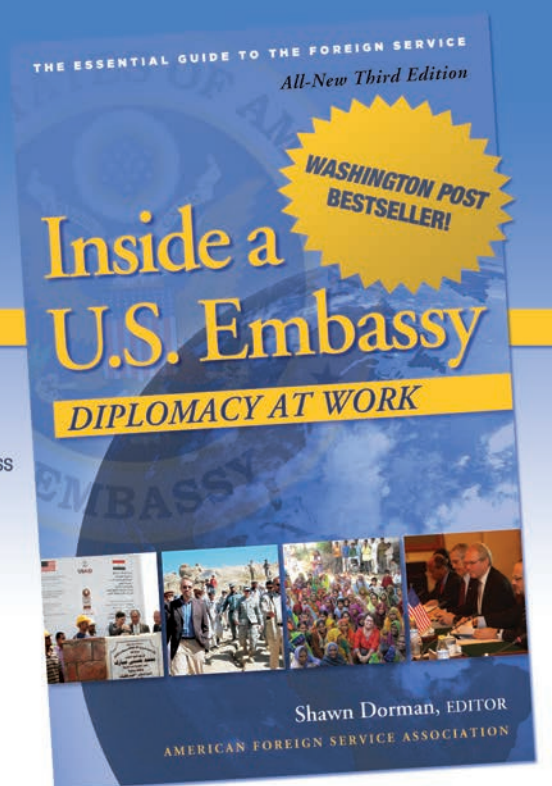
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AFSA Supports Racial and Social Justice

AFSA President Eric Rubin shared the following message with members June 3:

Our nation is in an unprecedented situation. The COVID-19 global pandemic has disrupted all of our lives, both personally and professionally. And now, we bear witness to the understandable sadness and rage over yet another unnecessary death of an African American—George Floyd—in Minneapolis.

As American diplomats, it is our job to explain America to the world. We have always pointed to our story as being worthy of emulation, whether it is human and civil rights, fighting against corruption, the power of our culture—much of it fueled by African American artists—or the strength of our democratic institutions. Because of recent events, we have been forcefully reminded that we still have a long way to go as a nation.

AFSA fully supports non-violent demonstrations to protest injustice, especially social and racial injustice. They are the cornerstone of any democracy, including America's, and are often the harbinger of much-needed reform.

We have also heard from many within the Foreign Service community about their own experiences with systemic racism, both within and outside of our agencies. These stories are distressing and vividly demonstrate that

our own community is not immune to the injustices of American society.

I am sad to say that AFSA's history on these issues is checkered. As an institution, we often took the wrong side on issues of racial and social justice. We were not full-throated in our demands for racial equality during the civil rights era. We did not come to the support of our LGBTQ colleagues in the 1990s when we should have. I think it is important to acknowledge these shortcomings.

Today, AFSA is strongly devoted to equality and diversity in all aspects. We push the management of all foreign affairs agencies to do more and to do better. We work hand in hand with the Pickering, Rangel and Payne Fellows programs to ensure

a steady intake of diverse Foreign Service candidates. We have worked to address unconscious bias. We have long working relationships with minority employee affinity groups. I am proud of this work and feel privileged that AFSA can help push us toward a more representative Foreign Service.

AFSA will continue to support all of our members on these issues. We will support and defend you so that you can continue to safeguard America's interests, assist Americans overseas, and promote the ideals of democracy and the protection of human rights everywhere.

If you believe AFSA can play a role in better supporting our shared community, please let us know. We will be there. ■

AFSA Members Speak Out in COVID-19 Survey

AFSA recently completed a survey of active-duty membership that assessed responses by foreign affairs agencies, posts and missions to the COVID-19 pandemic. We conducted the survey in order to hear directly from members about their priority concerns in relation to the pandemic response.

We plan to use the feedback to align AFSA's priorities with those of our membership.

Demographics and Response Rate. Twelve percent of active-duty AFSA members responded to the survey, a rate similar to that of the general active-duty member survey in 2019. State consular officers and consular fellows comprised the largest group of respondents. USAID members made up almost 11 percent of respondents.

Continued on p. 84

CALENDAR

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, please check www.afsa.org for the most up-to-date information. All events are subject to cancellation and/or rescheduling.

July 3
Independence Day:
AFSA Offices Closed

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

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

August 28
Deadline: Nominations for Sinclair Language Awards

September 7
Labor Day:
AFSA Offices Closed

September 16
12-2 p.m.
AFSA Governing Board Meeting

September 18
Fifth Annual Foreign Service Night at Nationals Park
Note: Based on local conditions, this game may be canceled.



COVID-19 and the Summer Transfer Season

Now that the summer transfer season is upon us in earnest, we know our members have many questions and concerns about what to do and how to plan, especially those with school-age children.

These are unprecedented times that require creativity and flexibility; the same business-as-usual mentality will not do.

We want to make certain that as the State Department implements the Diplomacy Strong initiative to reopen domestic and overseas posts, it is done safely and based on local conditions.

AFSA continues to engage with department management on getting you answers that are as clear and comprehensive as possible. While by no means an exhaustive list, here are some of the issues that we have been working on with our colleagues in Global Talent Management. Hopefully, these will have been largely resolved by the time you read this.

Global Authorized Departure. With GAD's expiration, we have received worried messages about what to do if the COVID-19 situation significantly worsens in various areas.

At the beginning of the pandemic, many of our members in Africa, South and Central Asia, and Central and South America, for example, felt safer staying in place rather than return-

ing to the United States.

Now, however, some of these "Phase Zero" countries, especially Brazil and India, are hot spots for the virus and, as of this writing, have not yet reached their peak infection rate.

We have asked the department to extend GAD or otherwise find a means to make certain our members serving in these posts feel safe.

Some of our members feel stuck in places like Brazil, where COVID-19 seems to be moving largely unchecked through the population, while at the moment the situation in the United States appears to be improving, at least in some areas.

Of course, individual posts can still decide to request authorized departure based on local conditions. In the absence of an extension of GAD, we encourage members to engage with post leadership to use that route if they feel unsafe.

Delayed Home Leave. Some members have asked if they can defer their home leave because they would feel safer traveling directly to their next post. Home leave in the United States is required, but AFSA agrees that if there is increased risk for people traveling back home this summer, it makes sense to delay.

As one of our members put it: "With the COVID situation in the United States significantly worse than in

some of the posts many of us are stationed in, the logistics of quarantine, home leave and getting to post in time for the school year just don't make sense."

We have asked our GTM colleagues to address this problem and, at the very least, clearly explain to employees how to proceed if their request for delayed or deferred home leave is not approved.

Long-Term Training in Fall 2020. Many members who are slated to begin language or functional training in the fall wonder how this will be accomplished. The good news is that language students can take remote language classes from any location that works for them.

The problem is that as the department moves from Phase 1 to Phase 2, students and their families might have little time to prepare to return to the FSI campus.

Regarding the consular course (ConGen), FSI is exploring whether some segments can be delivered virtually. But FSI says that it is not possible to teach the entire course virtually and still maintain the security necessary for the consular systems.

Again, it is not clear what ConGen students should expect, or what those who have completed language and other training and just need ConGen to be ready to go to post should do.

Use-or-Lose Leave.

Because of COVID-19 and travel restrictions, some of our colleagues have not been able to take use-or-lose leave. This includes chargés d'affaires, who are limited by the rule against double absence; but it also affects many others who for various reasons find their use-or-lose balance increasing to a point where it will be nearly impossible to manage.

The Department of Defense has recognized this problem and has already raised the ceiling to 120 days through September 2023 due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. We think it makes sense for State to follow suit, or find a means to restore leave. AFSA strongly supports a bill introduced in Congress in early May that would do this: bit.ly/annual-leave-benefits-bill. We will follow up with our GTM colleagues.

PPE Available Domestically and Overseas. We have gotten confirmation that personal protective equipment—gloves, masks, sanitizing lotions—will be available at State and other domestic facilities and at overseas posts as the department begins to reopen, along with clear instructions on social distancing.

Please keep your questions and concerns coming to member@afsa.org.

Happy summer! ■



Operating Expense Funds and Program Funds: A Division that Unites Us All

This column is about money—the foreign assistance funding entrusted to USAID on behalf of the American people.

I have enormous respect for all my colleagues who provide steadfast stewardship of public funds and who fight to achieve impact despite a budget system that would baffle even Rube Goldberg. Indeed, USAID's bifurcated budget structure undermines the agency's effectiveness, and real reform is needed.

First, a few caveats: 1) I am no budget expert; 2) There are a *lot* of waivers, exceptions and laws involved; and 3) I am simplifying complex issues. But I hope you will see that the main point stands: Reform is needed.

Congress separates USAID's budget into two parts: the administrative cost of delivering foreign assistance (aka operating expenses, or OE); and the cost of foreign assistance itself (aka program funds).

This makes sense on the surface, and the allocation between these two seems easy when you're dealing with *goods*: textbooks, solar panels, seedlings, syringes, etc. All are program-funded, as are the costs of the implementing partner staff deploying the goods.

Now, let's think about the *people*, those involved in managing USAID programs. There are certain U.S. direct-

hire staff, including career Foreign Service and Civil Service employees, who must be OE-funded. Their salaries and benefits, travel, training and support costs must be paid by OE.

Then there are non-direct hire colleagues, whose funding is determined by their function—inherently governmental duties and/or those relating directly to the cost of doing business (e.g., budget preparation, accounting, certain acquisition & assistance functions). Their particular function determines whether these colleagues are OE- or program-funded. (It's complicated!)

Program costs are much greater than OE costs, a reflection of the generosity of the American people and of USAID's mission. Over the years, and particularly after 9/11, the program budget skyrocketed, making the program-to-OE ratio highly unbalanced.

Doing more [program-funded activities] with less [OE-funded staff] has become the new normal.

With an insufficient number of career FSOs, USAID has developed operational workarounds to get the job done. The passion is commendable, but these less-than-best personnel practices leave career FSOs stretched thin, with their field perspective drowned out in Washington and their professional

growth and training opportunities limited by scarce OE.

Program-funded non-career staff are generally supposed to provide temporary fixes for specific, time-bound problems (e.g., specialized skills needed on a short-term basis to meet unforeseen urgent circumstances). But many colleagues hired under non-career mechanisms have served five, 10 or 15 years or more, and bureaus regularly seek expansions and extensions.

Congress recognized the problem and in 2019 provided OE "for not less than 1,600 permanent Civil Service staff and 1,850 permanent Foreign Service Officers ... restoring USAID personnel to pre-hiring freeze levels."

This is a good start, but USAID does not yet have an adequate strategic workforce plan accounting for its *current* workforce—Foreign Service, Civil Service, Foreign Service Limited, personal service contractors, institutional support contractors and staff on a myriad of mechanisms in the Global Health Bureau—much less a plan that is forward-looking.

As a result, non-career program-funded staff continue to be onboarded to do jobs that are in fact long-term, critical roles best suited for OE-funded career public servants. As the world's leading development agency, we must break this cycle.

An overarching agency goal should be the development of a comprehensive strategic workforce plan in conjunction with elimination of the OE-program divide. Realistically, the agency does not yet have the systems, staff and discipline in place to do either.

And as long as the agency fails to transparently track and report staff of all types, and robustly account for staff-related program and OE funds, Congress is likely to insist on the funding distinction.

In the interim, the agency should consider supporting a third-party audit that spells out the quantifiable and non-quantifiable consequences and costs (on both activities and staffing) of maintaining a bifurcated budget.

USAID should publish details on the OE budget and a clear analysis of program and OE staffing dynamics. USAID should develop a three- to five-year plan for phasing out its bifurcated budget structure that is tied to the demonstration of commitment and capacity to manage its operations and staff.

Any such plan should be developed in close coordination with Congress, stakeholders and employee organizations including the unions.

We should all be united in ending this budget division. ■



Mid-Term Progress Report

At the halfway point in my term as your Retiree Vice President for 2019-2021, here are highlights of what the AFSA staff and I have been doing in service to our retired members.

Defending Earned Benefits. Though President Trump continues to seek drastic cuts in federal retirement benefits, neither chamber of Congress has advanced those proposals. That is in part due to the lobbying efforts of the Federal-Postal Coalition, in which AFSA is an active participant along with the large Civil Service unions. I attend the coalition's monthly planning meetings.

News You Can Use. In the past year, we have expanded our efforts to provide you with expert advice on benefits issues. AFSA Retirement

Benefits Counselor Dolores Brown has posted significant new content on AFSA's retirement services web-pages (afsa.org/retirement-services).

She also expanded AFSA's retirement-focused lecture series, posting recordings of those presentations online for viewing by members worldwide. We also continued producing our bimonthly digital Retirement Newsletter featuring "news you can use."

Drawing from my experience as a former director of the Department of State's Office of Retirement, I contributed substantive content for the website, retiree newsletters and the introductory guidance section of AFSA's annual *Directory of Retiree Members*.

I also gave several live

presentations on federal benefits and produced an updated third edition of my "Retirement Planning 101" guide, published in the April 2020 *Foreign Service Journal*.

Member Advocacy and Counseling. Dolores Brown continues to provide one-on-one assistance to members who have questions about, or problems with, their retirement benefits. When needed, she contacts the Office of Retirement to seek assistance on behalf of members.

Additional Duties as Assigned. As an AFSA Governing Board member, I have taken on several additional duties. I am chair of the Scholarship Committee, which this year awarded \$352,000 to 100 Foreign Service youths.

As a member of the Awards and Plaques Committee, I am leading the effort to honor colleagues whose deaths in the line of duty were overlooked when AFSA created the Memorial Plaque in 1933 (see "The Foreign Service Honor Roll" in the May 2020 *Foreign Service Journal*).

I am also on AFSA's Political Action Committee and our Legal Defense Fund Committee.

Looking ahead to the final year of the current Governing Board, AFSA staff and I will continue to advocate for our members and provide information and guidance on retiree benefits issues.

If you have suggestions or comments, you can reach me at naland@afsa.org. ■



AFSA Governing Board Meeting, May 20, 2020

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and social-distancing recommendations, the AFSA Governing Board met via teleconference on May 20.

The board made the following decisions, which will need to be ratified at the next in-person Governing Board meeting, according to AFSA bylaws.

AFSA Memorial Plaque: The board approved four diplomatic couriers who died in the 1940s to 1960s to be inscribed on the AFSA Memorial Plaques.

Membership Committee: The board approved two new associate members to serve on the Membership Committee.

Legal Defense Fund: The board approved reimbursement for three members' legal bills: for up to \$36,959 for one member; \$33,516 for a second; and \$10,350 for a third. Additionally, the Board appointed Holly Kirling Loomis to the Legal Defense Fund Committee. ■



How Will the Pandemic Affect the International Affairs Budget?

After Congress passed several rounds of new coronavirus relief packages this spring, many were left wondering what the international affairs budget (IAB) will look like for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2020 and in FY 2021.

Last December, Congress passed an IAB totaling \$56.6 billion for FY 2020, a small increase of \$469 million, or 1 percent, over the FY 2019 budget.

Congress rejected the administration's proposed cut of 24 percent to the IAB and included \$8 billion for overseas contingency operations, which faced the threat of being cut completely. AFSA welcomed Congress' show of support via an appropriation that rejected proposed cuts for the third year in a row.

In March, however, as the coronavirus pandemic spread in the United States, Congress' progress on mapping out FY 2021 appropriations came to a halt.

It became apparent that emergency funding was necessary to address the immediate and unexpected needs related to the pandemic, such as evacuating personnel and their dependents, as well as funds to help American citizens get home to the United States from countries around the world.

AFSA emphasized to Congress the role diplomats have played in the pandemic

response and, especially, the Foreign Service's role in keeping Americans safe against an invisible enemy.

Congress appropriated an additional \$1.25 billion for the State Department and USAID in the first COVID-19 emergency package and another \$1.12 billion in funding for IAB programs directly related to the global response in the third relief package.

This nearly \$2.4 billion in unanticipated funds was not considered when Congress finalized its FY 2020 spending back in December. Generally, this style of funding is not subject to the budget caps that dictate topline limits, and more funding could come in additional relief packages prior to Congress finalizing FY 2021 funding.

After the relief packages, FY 2020 will provide more money for the IAB than predicted, but questions remain: Do emergency appropriations mean that the final FY 2021 IAB will struggle to receive level (or increased) funding? Will a significant increase in funding for a global health response receive bipartisan support in FY 2021?

The answers will become clearer as Congress inches toward the end of FY 2020 and is forced to confront the monetary needs of the country. A continuing resolution for the first months of FY 2021 seems to be growing more

and more likely.

The final FY 2021 international affairs appropriation, which could be passed shortly after the November elections or early next year, is likely to be influenced by these factors:

- When, or if, the appropriations committees will conduct proceedings on the FY 2021 bills.
- The condition of the United States amid the pandemic as appropriations votes take place.
- The proximity to the 2020 elections as appropriations votes take place.
- The extent to which the pandemic is affecting coun-

tries that receive aid from the United States.

- The results of the 2020 federal election.

Congressional oversight of the emergency funding for the IAB will be at the forefront of conversations over the next few months, even as Congress looks to find normalcy and tries to continue its FY 2021 appropriations process.

AFSA must continue to urge congressional leadership to uphold and increase funding levels for the IAB in FY 2021, so that our diplomats can be better prepared for global crises—such as a pandemic—as the nation's first line of defense. ■

AFSA Voter Registration Guide



Tuesday, November 3, 2020 is the next federal Election Day. Visit AFSA's website at afsa.org/afsa-voter-registration-guide for a voter registration guide that makes it easier for you and your family to register to vote.

The guide includes voter registration deadlines for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories, as well as information on requesting absentee ballots.

If you would like to check on your registration status, visit vote411.org or nationalvoterregistrationday.org. ■

Extraordinary Times: An Extraordinary Request

BY AFSA SECRETARY KENNETH KERO-MENTZ

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures, and the past several years have indeed been exceptional for the Foreign Service and for AFSA.

AFSA has risen to the unprecedented challenges of these years and has expanded and improved our member services and outreach. (See AFSA News in the March 2020 *FSJ* for a full report.)

Even as we continue our work on your behalf, we know that the need to maintain a strong, professional career Foreign Service is greater than ever, and our work will need to deepen.

We are reaching out now to our members for your support to do this. We are asking for a modest, additional \$6 to \$13 *annually* from each of you to enable us to increase the reach and impact of AFSA's work.

Having served on AFSA's Governing Board for four terms, I know well how every board strives to meet your

needs while ensuring that AFSA—your union and professional association—remains on firm financial footing.

AFSA's bylaws stipulate that the Governing Board may raise membership dues each year by not more than the Consumer Price Index increase (which has ranged from as little as 0 percent to as much as 2.3 percent over the past four years).

The bylaws also state that to raise dues beyond the CPI increase a referendum of the entire membership must be held.

At the April Governing Board meeting, the board unanimously voted to put our proposal to increase dues above the CPI to a vote of the membership in a special referendum (scheduled for September), and we urge you—our members—to support this modest, one-time increase above the CPI.

The dues increase that the Governing Board is asking for is small. Briefly, the referendum calls for dues to increase

At the April Governing Board meeting, the board unanimously voted to put our proposal to increase dues above the CPI to a vote of the membership.

by 50 cents per pay period (\$13/year) for FS-3s or above, and 25 cents per pay period (\$6.50/year) for FS-04s and below. For annuitants receiving more than \$50,000 a year, dues will increase by \$1.00 per month (\$12/year); and for those earning less, 50 cents per month (\$6.00/year).

These changes would take effect on Dec. 31.

While we recognize that all of us are being called on to stretch our families' resources during these uncertain times, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, we hope you'll appreciate how reasonable this increase is per member.

But that's the great thing about being a member of a

union. This small increase per member, when multiplied by our nearly 17,000 members, will help AFSA raise sufficient resources—approximately \$175,000—to hire additional (badly needed) staff.

Over the past several years, AFSA's resources in member assistance, communications and advocacy have been stretched thin.

This additional revenue will help AFSA commit resources in these critical areas (as part of the annual budget process) to best align with our Governing Board's strategic vision: support *all* of our members and explain the U.S. Foreign Service to Congress, the press and our country.

We are making this "extra-ordinary" request for your support for your union because it will help us help you.

When the referendum ballot is sent to you in September (by email if we have your address or by postal mail if not), we urge you to vote YES.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us at referendum@afsa.org. ■

Proposed Dues Increases

\$0.50/pp for active-duty members at the FS-3 through SFS levels.

\$0.25/pp for active-duty members at the FS-7 through FS-4 levels.

\$1.00/month for retirees receiving an annual annuity of \$50,000 or more.

\$0.50/month for retirees receiving an annual annuity of less than \$50,000.

AFSA Outreach in This New (Virtual) World

AFSA's outreach campaigns are designed to increase awareness of the work of the U.S. Foreign Service. We take the often complicated and nuanced work of diplomats and describe it in ways that will resonate with new audiences who may be completely unfamiliar with what the foreign affairs agencies do.

One of the major areas of Foreign Service work involves protecting Americans and keeping threats to our country at bay—whether the threats originate from criminal networks, pandemics, uncontrolled civil unrest spilling over borders, incipient terrorist activity or pests that threaten livestock herds or our ecosystem.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the repatriation of more than 100,000 Americans from more than 135 locations around the world illustrates in a real and immediate way how the Foreign Service works to protect Americans—in other words, how the Foreign Service is our first line of defense.

As we wrote in the June *Journal*, we assumed that we would have to slow down our public outreach efforts in the new reality dictated by the pandemic. However, the stories of how U.S. diplomats at embassies and consulates mounted a global response must be shared now.

These stories illustrate the importance of the network of

U.S. diplomatic posts—our enduring platforms in almost every country around the world—in serving our citizens and demonstrating global leadership.

We have collaborated on an episode of the American Diplomat podcast, available at <https://amdipstories.org/get-me-out-of-here>, to tell the story of members of the Foreign Service at U.S. Embassy Quito working around the clock to repatriate Americans, even as Ecuador became a hotspot of COVID-19 in Latin America.

We are now assembling a team of messengers to help us share the stories of repatriations and the Foreign Service on the front lines. We are creating new content, including videos and clips to be shared virtually in social media and other campaigns. All of the messaging materials for our First Line of Defense Campaign can be found at afsa.org/first-line-defense.

While we are not slowing down our messaging, we have had to shift its delivery. AFSA has always relied on in-person events as a way to bring people together to inspire and educate them. The new coronavirus reality means that we must explore new platforms and ways of sharing information.

Perhaps this is a silver lining—shifting to a largely virtual platform may allow us to reach even more

The new coronavirus reality means that we must explore new platforms and ways of sharing information.

people than in-person events could. We are testing out these platforms so that we can continue our planned activities virtually. Our aim is to reach new audiences, such as community college students and faculty, and to host virtual panels and share recorded modules.

Telling the story of the

Foreign Service is critical to helping us broaden our domestic constituency, particularly now as many countries, including ours, turn inward. We need to ensure continuing support for the U.S. Foreign Service. Are you ready to join us in this effort? ■



Get Involved in The First Line of Defense

- Contact AFSA Strategic Messaging Coordinator Nadja Ruzica at ruzica@afsa.org to join our roster of messengers and/or for more information on how to get involved.
- Visit our website at afsa.org/first-line-defense to familiarize yourself with our materials.
- Reach out to your local community college.
- Seek out other virtual opportunities in your community.
- Share stories and videos on social media.

COVID-19 Survey
Continued from p. 77

Evaluations—Multiple Choice. In the evaluation section of the survey, respondents could rate the performance of their agencies or missions as unacceptable, needs improvement, acceptable, very good or excellent. Performance was assessed in five categories: overall performance, communications, authorized or ordered departure, telework, and health and safety.

- Three-quarters of respondents rated their agencies or posts/missions positively—either acceptable, very good or excellent.
- Roughly a quarter rated agency or post responses negatively across the board.
- Decisions on authorized departure were rated slightly less favorably than other decisions.
- Decisions on telework were rated slightly more favorably.

Evaluations—Written Comments. Built into the ratings were opportunities for members to comment on their ratings. Despite the generally positive ratings, we found that even though members gave their immediate offices or missions good marks, they voiced concerns that their agency management would not give enough priority to the health and safety of the workforce.

Many respondents complained about what was for some an unexpectedly quick withdrawal of the option for authorized departure. On

the positive side, there was strong support for telework.

Priority Concerns. In response to questions on priority concerns going forward:

- An overwhelming number of people focused on the need for clear guidance and prudent policies, especially on the health and safety of Foreign Service members when reopening or resuming “normal” work operations, and the need for planning guidance on the upcoming transfer season. There were also many questions on returning from authorized departure.

- A priority concern for families slated to transfer or still on authorized departure is the possibility of family separation when phased operations are resumed.

- Many people had questions about travel safety, allowances, opening of international schools, host government opening and phased operations, and training.

- The effect of pandemic work on promotions was a concern for a significant number of respondents. Those who did not work on the pandemic or who took authorized departure and had child care duties during telework felt at a disadvantage.

- People who wrote comments voiced tremendous support for a continuation of, and maximum use of, telework, during and beyond the current crisis.

- Consular officers rated

An overwhelming number of people focused on the need for clear guidance and prudent policies, especially on the health and safety of Foreign Service members when reopening or resuming “normal” work operations.

their agency or post more negatively on health and safety. More than 30 percent gave ratings of “unacceptable” or “needs improvement” for the performance of the agency or mission regarding health and safety. Their overwhelming concern going forward was the health and safety of the workforce.

- USAID respondents shared general Foreign Service concerns over transfers and health and safety. They expressed strong support for telework and attention to family issues.

- Members expressed a clear desire for upgraded technology.

- Many members highlighted the plight of overworked employees left behind at posts after others departed; they asked for recognition and some suggested compensation for those employees.

- Several respondents advocated for a focus on mental as well as physical health of Foreign Service members.

- Multiple singles asked for more balanced attention to their needs.

Next Steps for AFSA.

- Member ratings for AFSA’s responses to the

pandemic were generally positive, but there is a need for more communication.

- Several survey respondents suggested Foreign Service members start their next overseas assignments virtually, rather than wait for a post to enter Phase 3. It appears as though the June 3 cable on PCS travel (20 STATE 52414) allows this on a case-by-case basis; AFSA will follow up.

- Members requested AFSA Town Halls to disseminate information on agency planning and to convey AFSA’s goals to members. AFSA scheduled four virtual town halls in June and plans to host one or two in July.

- AFSA will experiment with more types of communication—especially in social media. We will also explore using regular information wrap-ups instead of ad hoc, issue-based communication.

- Members strongly underlined their desire for AFSA to continue advocating for maximum flexibility in all areas—training, allowances, PCS, flexible working hours and telework. ■

AFSA Works to Protect USAID Members During Pandemic

AFSA has been working steadily throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to assist our members. Our strength and voice derive from you. Thank you for all that you do. What follows is an update on what we're doing to assist USAID members.

Welcoming Acting

Administrator Barsa. AFSA Vice President for USAID Jason Singer had an introductory call with USAID Acting Administrator John Barsa on April 23. He welcomed Administrator Barsa to his new role, affirmed the goal of a collaborative relationship and outlined AFSA's priorities, including advancing the career Foreign Service in the context of the USAID's reorganization and ensuring continued hiring of career FSOs.

Foreign Service Day.

On May 1, AFSA recognized Foreign Service Day. AFSA President Eric Rubin shared with members and the public a message honoring the Foreign Service and recognizing our fallen USAID colleague Mark Mitchell. Thank you all for your service.

The Roadmap to Return: Member Safety and Health.

AFSA strongly supports USAID prioritization of the health and well-being of employees and their families. In terms of the agency's Roadmap to Return, AFSA will continue to emphasize the safety and health of employees and work with members and USAID to resolve con-

cerns. Please reach out to us for support.

Support in a Time of COVID-19. AFSA is working closely with USAID on initiatives to mitigate the impact of the pandemic:

- AFSA coordinated with USAID to put a massive telework policy into effect, including increased training and resources for staff.
- AFSA advocated for USAID members needing greater workplace flexibilities related to child care, elder care and self-care while teleworking or doing essential work in the office during the pandemic. AFSA appreciates USAID's efforts and commitment in this area.

• AFSA is engaged with USAID on bidding and the summer transfer season, a particularly complex and challenging element in the COVID-19 context.

• AFSA negotiated per diem payments for a variety of individuals caught away from their posts of assignment and unable to return.

• AFSA has helped employees negotiate their preferences related to taking authorized departure or sheltering in place, or in rare cases sheltering in third locations.

• AFSA worked to resolve the situations of individuals in limbo as a result of language training and testing complexities due to COVID-19 dynamics.

Reorganization and the Career Foreign Service.

AFSA continues to engage, advocate and negotiate with USAID on reorganization and transformation. We know that this can be a stressful process; please reach out with concerns.

Most recently, AFSA has focused on the envisioned Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, where USAID has an opportunity to address long-standing structural and cultural challenges, and open field positions to career FSOs. This will strengthen the agency's capacity to address the full spectrum of humanitarian-development operations.

Recruitment and Onboarding New Career FSOs.

We have advocated for continued recruitment and onboarding of career FSOs, and AFSA was pleased to see the recent agency notice on new and planned FSO hires. Successful recruitment, onboarding, training and integration of new career FSOs is more critical than ever for USAID's sustainability and capacity to achieve our mission. Please let your colleagues, friends, family and contacts know that USAID is hiring.

Performance Management and Development & Promotion Processes. AFSA continues to work with USAID colleagues to improve the performance management and development & promotion processes, including extension of deadlines in the COVID-19 context. We

continue to support USAID's increased use of webinars and related flexible options.

At the same time, AFSA has requested that USAID make promotion data more easily available and publish further analysis on promotion trends, such as by backstop, demographics or post where FSOs have concern.

AFSA encourages all USAID members to attend the webinars, take advantage of HCTM expertise and consult with peers, mentors and colleagues.

Strategic Workforce Planning. AFSA continues to work with internal and external stakeholders to promote strategic workforce planning, particularly in the context of reorganization.

While career FSO hiring is encouraging, we continue our advocacy efforts in opposition to the creation and conversion of Foreign Service Limited appointments that appear to contravene ADS 414 and do not align with the objectives of the Foreign Service Act. We continue to caution against the overdependence on non-career mechanisms in parts of the agency.

Career FSOs are on the front lines, and a balanced, integrated workforce driven by sound strategic workforce planning and policies is needed to help FSOs achieve the agency's mission.

We are with you at this critical time. Stay safe, and please let us know how we can help. ■

Meet the 2020 AFSA Merit Award Winners

Founded in 1926, the AFSA scholarship program awarded \$352,000 this year. In need-based Financial Aid Scholarships, \$223,000 was divided among 60 students. Merit Awards totaling \$129,000 were distributed to 36 students.

AFSA is proud to present here the 2020 AFSA Merit Award winners, listed alphabetically by last name. AFSA awards scholarships to Foreign Service family member students for academic performance, art and community service, as well as for a "best essay."

Winners each received \$3,500, Honorable Mentions \$2,000, and the Best Essay \$1,000. AFSA thanks the judges and donors who made this year's Merit Awards possible.

Academic Merit Scholarship Winners

Morgan Atkinson

daughter of David (State) and Renee Atkinson, graduated from Washington Liberty High School, Arlington, Virginia. Plans to attend Virginia Tech to study biology.

Isaiah Bowen-Karlynn

son of Dr. Nina Bowen (USAID) and Andrew Karlyn, graduated from the International School of Kenya, Nairobi. Plans to attend Tufts University to study international relations. Isaiah is also the winner of an AFSA Community Service Honorable Mention Scholarship.

Jeffrey Broadbent

son of Peter (State) and Sheralie Broadbent, graduated from the American Embassy School, New Delhi, India. Plans to attend Brigham Young University to study mathematics.

Christopher Melvyn Brokenshire

son of Kent Brokenshire (State) and Francesca Munzi, graduated from the Washington Waldorf School, Bethesda, Maryland. Plans to attend the College of William and Mary to study mathematics.

Kenneth D. Browder

son of James Browder (State) and Gulnara Browder (State), graduated from the American International School of Kingston, Jamaica. Plans to attend Grove City College to study computer science.

Emre Durmus

son of Onder (State) and Anna Durmus, graduated from Ankara High School, Turkey. Plans to attend the University of California San Diego to study molecular and cell biology.

Samuel James Falls

son of Eric (State) and Patricia Falls, graduated from Colegio Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Lima, Peru. Plans to attend the University of Virginia to study aerospace engineering.

Cody Fritz

son of Michael Fritz (USAID) and Susan Fritz (USAID), graduated from the Pechersk School International, Kyiv, Ukraine. Plans to attend the University of Warwick to study philosophy, politics and economics.



Morgan Atkinson



Kenneth D. Browder



Isaiah Bowen-Karlynn



Emre Durmus



Jeffrey Broadbent



Samuel James Falls



Christopher Melvyn Brokenshire



Cody Fritz



Rebecca Goldrup



Julia Johannsen



Hannah Ikkai Graham



Anna Catherine Kamian



Adrian Hall



Aliya Jordan Kaplan



Reika Sophia Herman



Fiona Kelleher

Rebecca Goldrup

daughter of Stephen Goldrup (State) and Nicole Price, graduated from Yorktown High School, Arlington, Virginia. Plans to attend Brigham Young University to study mechanical engineering.

Hannah Ikkai Graham

daughter of Michael (State) and Harumi Graham, graduated from the International School of Beijing, China. Plans to attend Wageningen University to study international land and water management. Hannah is also the winner of an AFSA Community Service Honorable Mention Scholarship.

Adrian Hall

son of Lisa Wilkinson (State) and Morgan Hall (State), graduated from St. George's British International School, Rome, Italy. Plans to attend Yale University to study physics and/or biophysics.

Reika Sophia Herman

daughter of Paul Herman (State), graduated from the Singapore American School, Singapore. Plans to attend Middlebury College to study international politics and economics.

Julia Johannsen

daughter of Richard (State) and Agnes Johannsen, graduated from McLean High School, McLean, Virginia. Plans to attend Stanford University to study chemical engineering.

Anna Catherine Kamian

daughter of Robin Dunnigan (State) and Harry Kamian (State), graduated from the American International School of Vienna, Austria. Plans to attend the University of Virginia to study economics and psychology.

Aliya Jordan Kaplan

daughter of Dean (State) and Crystal Kaplan, graduated from Oakton High School, Vienna, Virginia. Plans to attend Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University to study engineering. Aliya is also the winner of an AFSA Art Merit Honorable Mention Scholarship.

Fiona Kelleher

daughter of Michael Kelleher (State) and Jo-Ann McGauley-Kelleher, graduated from Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School, Bethesda, Maryland. Plans to attend New York University to study international relations.

Maia Laitinen

daughter of William (State) and Valeria Laitinen graduated from the American Community Schools of Athens, Greece. Plans to attend Barnard College of Columbia University to study economics.

Bryce Lewis

son of Glenn (State) and Erika Lewis, graduated from Liahona Preparatory Academy, Pleasant Grove, Utah. Plans to attend Brigham Young University to study nursing.

Adam Ludwig

son of Grant Ludwig (State) and Lea Ida (State), graduated from the Anglo-American School of Sofia, Bulgaria. Plans to attend the University of Southern California to study neuroscience.

Maite Imani McPherson

daughter of Nicole Enersen (USAID) and Marlon McPherson, graduated from Colegio Maya, Santa Catarina Pinula, Guatemala. Plans to attend Duke University to study political science and biochemistry.

Camila Orr

daughter of David (State) and Selma Orr, graduated from Langley High School, McLean, Virginia. Plans to attend Cornell University to study computer science.

Ryan Reynolds

son of Ryan (State) and AmyLyn Reynolds, graduated from the Kyiv International School, Ukraine. Plans to attend the University of Portland to study environmental science.

Grant Schooling

son of Dr. Christine Schooling (State) and Michael Schooling (State), graduated from the Singapore American School, Singapore. Plans to attend Stanford University to study management science and engineering. Grant is also the winner of an AFSA Community Service Honorable Mention Scholarship.

Trevor Luke Shaw

son of Andrew (State) and Peggy Shaw, graduated from the Jakarta Intercultural School, Indonesia. Plans to attend Bowdoin College to study computer science.

Jonathan Silverman

son of Robert (State) and Youngmi Silverman, graduated from Winston Churchill High School, Potomac, Maryland. Plans to attend Princeton University to study international relations and public policy.

Hugo Stevenson

son of Susan (State) and Robert Stevenson, graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, Arlington, Virginia. Plans to attend the University of Pittsburgh to prepare for further study of medicine.

Taylor Tye

daughter of Duncan Tye (State) and Laura Tye (State), graduated from Westview High School, San Diego, California. Plans to attend the University of California Santa Barbara to study biology.

Karl Wolf

son of Benedict (State) and Ursula Wolf, graduated from the Cairo American College, Egypt. Plans to attend Virginia Tech to study aerospace engineering.

Myel J. Zuberi

daughter of Jamshed (USAID) and Kiran Zuberi, graduated from the Cairo American College, Egypt. Plans to attend the University of California Los Angeles to study the mathematics of computation. Myel is also the winner of an AFSA Community Service Honorable Mention Scholarship.

Art Merit Scholarship Winner**Sterling David Tilley III**

son of Sterling (State) and Eurona Tilley, graduated from Saint John Paul the Great Catholic High School, Dumfries, Virginia. Plans to attend the University of North Carolina School of the Arts to study musical composition.

Art Merit Honorable Mentions**Sachi Dieker**

daughter of Mark (State) and Satomi Dieker, graduated from McLean High School, McLean, Virginia. Plans to attend Vassar College to economics and drama.

Aliya Jordan Kaplan

see biography under academic merit.

Samuel Michalski

son of Edward (State) and Qi Michalski, graduated from the American Embassy School, New Delhi, India. Plans to attend Case Western Reserve University to study theater.

Nick Pattarini

son of Daniel (State) and Kathryn Pattarini, graduated from the International School of Luxembourg. Plans to attend the University of Cincinnati to study musical theater.



Maia Laitinen



Camila Orr



Bryce Lewis



Ryan Reynolds



Adam Ludwig



Grant Schooling



Maite Imani McPherson



Trevor Luke Shaw



Jonathan Silverman



Myel J. Zuberi



Nick Pattarini

Community Service Scholarship Winner

Hannah Ikkai Graham

see biography under academic merit.

Community Service Honorable Mentions

Isaiah Bowen-Karlynn

see biography under academic merit.



Hugo Stevenson



Sterling David Tilley III



Laura Skillin

Grant Schooling

see biography under academic merit.

Laura Skillin

daughter of Kevin (State) and Becky Skillin, graduated from Halifax Grammar School, Halifax, Canada. Plans to attend the University of Virginia to study public policy, political philosophy and law.

Myel J. Zuberi

see biography under academic merit.



Taylor Tye



Sachi Dieker



Mary Faith Everman

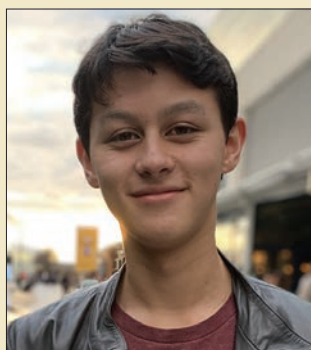
Best Essay Scholarship

Mary Faith Everman

daughter of John (State) and Alexandra Everman, graduated from The Madeira School, McLean, Virginia. Plans to attend Virginia Commonwealth University to study political science.



Karl Wolf



Samuel Michalski



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State Department Drops Mandatory Low Ranking

The State Department has eliminated a mandatory quota requiring selection boards to low rank a certain percentage of Foreign Service officers each year. AFSA's Labor Management team has been seeking removal of the quota for several years. The move takes effect in time for this year's selection boards.

The department instituted the mandatory quota in the 1990s, requiring that five percent of employees being reviewed be low ranked. The quota was lowered in 2010 to two percent, in part due to AFSA's advocacy.

A low ranking means that the selection board found the person reviewed did not meet the standards of his or her class and thus fell into the bottom five percent of the class of officers reviewed.

When it was first implemented, State Department officials believed the low-ranking system would ensure a better flow of officers through the up-or-out system, and that the selection boards would be able to identify people who fell short of the standards.

Selection boards issue a written low-ranking statement that is based on the procedural precepts that AFSA negotiates with the department each year. Those precepts govern the selection boards, including how they are composed, when and how

often they meet, and what the criteria are for promotion or low ranking.

Traditionally, while a low ranking means only that a person is not recommended for promotion that year, it can also lead to an officer's separation from the Foreign Service. If an officer receives two low rankings within five years, their case is sent to a Performance Standards Board that determines whether that person should be separated for failing to meet the standards of their class.

Selection boards also have the power to directly refer someone via the low-ranking process to the PSB without having to wait for the two-in-five-year referral.

Historically, around 80 to 100 people with low rankings have been referred to the PSB each year, and eight to 15 people might be recommended for separation.

While selection boards will still be able to low rank officers, the boards no longer need to meet arbitrary quotas. AFSA believes this is a much more natural way for boards to proceed, and we hope it will reduce the number of grievances, as well as anxiety and stress in employees.

—Zlatana Badrich,
Senior Staff Attorney,
Labor Management

■ **James Llewellyn Barnes**, 79, a former Foreign Service officer from Bethel, Maine, died on Feb. 19 at the Maine Veterans' Home in South Paris, Maine.

Mr. Barnes was born in Tampa, Fla., on March 8, 1940, to Paul L. and Vera S. Barnes. He earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Florida in 1962 and, supported by a U.S. International Studies Grant, a master's degree from the University of Florida in 1964. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1964 to 1966.

Mr. Barnes joined the Foreign Service in 1966 and served as a consular officer in Sierra Leone and Honduras. He received the Department of State's Meritorious Honor Award in April 1968 while posted in Freetown. He was duty officer in the embassy through three consecutive nights during a coup d'état there.

Mr. Barnes left the Foreign Service in 1971 when he joined Leon Tempelman & Son and Lazare Kaplan & Son, for whom he worked for 36 years. He worked and lived in numerous African countries, including Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Angola, Botswana and Namibia.

Mr. Barnes is survived by his wife of 60 years, Eliza Haven Barnes; his children, Jessica Barnes Jolly (husband, David), Paul Barnes (wife, Leef Smith) and James S. Barnes (partner, Reanna St. Pierre); and beloved grandchildren, Sarah Jolly, and Harrison and Charlotte Barnes.

■ **Frank W. Brecher**, 88, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on April 19 in New York–Presbyterian Hospital due to complications from COVID-19.

A New York City native, Mr. Brecher was born on Oct. 6, 1931. He joined the Navy, serving from 1951 to 1954. Following discharge, he received a bachelor's

degree from City College and a master's degree from the School of International Affairs of Columbia University.

Mr. Brecher was a Foreign Service officer with USAID; serving from 1961 to 1983, he specialized in economic development. His postings included Nigeria, Bolivia and Morocco, for which he acquired fluency in French and Spanish.

He also served as an economic specialist at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations for two terms, under Ambassadors Adlai Stevenson, Andrew Young and Jeane Kirkpatrick.

Mr. Brecher attended Princeton University from 1967 to 1968 on a midcareer fellowship award. In 1974 he received the Department of State's Meritorious Honor Award. Later, he received Senate confirmation as a counselor to the president.

After retiring from the Foreign Service, Mr. Brecher embarked on a second career as a historian. Having developed a keen respect for historians who combined the practice of diplomacy with the skills of a scholar, he applied his diplomatic knowledge and expertise in producing several scholarly works.

In addition to a trilogy of books analyzing early French-American relations, he authored *Reluctant Ally: United States Foreign Policy toward the Jews from Wilson to Roosevelt* (1991). He maintained a special interest in John Jay's contribution to diplomacy and American independence, authoring *Securing American Independence: John Jay and the French Alliance* (2003) and lecturing on this seminal figure in American diplomacy.

He also contributed articles to several periodicals and scholarly journals, including a profile of the first U.S. ambassador to Israel, James G. McDon-

ald, published in September 2010 in *The Foreign Service Journal*.

Mr. Brecher led a full and active life in retirement. He lived in New York City, to be near his family. He played tennis most afternoons until his late 70s. He was dedicated to retaining his French proficiency, daily reading French newspapers online and rereading the complete works of Proust. The windows of his 28th-floor apartment faced the East River, and he enjoyed seeing vessels sail up the waterway—a remembrance of his Navy days.

Mr. Brecher is survived by his brother, two sisters, three nieces and four nephews.

■ **Shirley A. Cross**, 99, spouse of the late FSO and former ambassador Charles T. Cross, died on April 7 in Marblemount, Wash.

Born on Jan. 7, 1921, in Faribault, Minn., Shirley Foss was the oldest of five children to Marvin and Lillian Foss. In January 1946, she married Mr. Cross. She accompanied her husband on Foreign Service assignments to 11 countries in Asia, the Middle East and Europe during his diplomatic career.

Both abroad and in the United States, friends recall, Mrs. Cross was enthusiastic and hardworking, teaching adult literacy and language, and exploring new cultures, art and archaeology.

She was an active member of the American Women's Associations in Hong Kong and Singapore, the YWCA in Taiwan, the Indonesian International Women's Club and the Seattle Sunset Club. She was a member of the American Association of Foreign Service Women from 1963 until she retired in 1981. Together with Amb. Cross, she served in the Foreign Service for more than three decades.

In retirement, Mrs. Cross continued to teach and write, and learn about and serve within her communities in Seattle and Bellingham, Wash. She and her husband taught on three voyages on the Semester at Sea program, spanning the planet. She made dear friends among her neighbors, in her church and within her writing community. Visits with family and friends anchored her.

Mrs. Cross was predeceased by her husband, Charles, in 2008.

She is survived by her children, Ann (Pug) Edmonds of Bellingham, Wash., Kathy (Bob) Leutner of Iowa City, Iowa, and Richard (Anne) of Marblemount, Wash.; seven grandchildren and their spouses; and 17 great-grandchildren.

■ **Robert Ray Gibbons**, 84, a retired Foreign Service officer with the U.S. Information Agency, died at his home in Mesa, Ariz., on March 19, soon after a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer.

Mr. Gibbons was born on May 5, 1935, in rural St. Johns, Ariz., to Marion Vinson Gibbons and Mary Jane Hatch. In 1955 he served on a mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) to Montevideo, Uruguay.

On returning from South America, he married Yvonne Mills, a close college friend from Show Low, Ariz. He received bachelor's and master's degrees from Arizona State University.

In 1966 he began his Foreign Service career in Baghdad as a binational grantee. In 1967 he and his wife were evacuated with their two young children to Tehran during the Six-Day War.

The next 30 years saw the Gibbonses and their five children growing and benefiting from assignments to Latin America. In Caracas, Mr. Gibbons served as the director of courses at the Bi-National Center.

In Lima, he was director of the Instituto Cultural Peruano-Norteamericano. While there, he was commissioned as a Foreign Service information officer and served as the assistant cultural affairs officer. In Montevideo, he served as a cultural affairs officer.

After an assignment in Washington, D.C., as country affairs officer for francophone Central Africa, Mr. Gibbons returned to overseas assignments. In Kaduna, Nigeria, he served as branch public affairs officer in the consulate. In Lahore, Pakistan, he was the branch public affairs officer.

Mr. Gibbons concluded his career with three assignments to Latin America: as cultural attaché in Guatemala City and in Monterrey, Mexico; and as deputy public affairs officer in Mexico City.

His retirement from public service in 1994 was short-lived. He and Mrs. Gibbons undertook LDS church missionary assignments to the Family History Centers in Mesa, Ariz., and Bogotá, followed by service in a new LDS temple in Villahermosa, Mexico.

In 2002 Mr. Gibbons locked up his dog-eared passport in his worn-out attaché case. He served in the Mesa LDS temple for the next 20 years until his death.

Mr. Gibbons is survived by his wife of 61 years, Yvonne Mills; five children, Michael, Robert (aka Bryn), Kevin, Christopher and Caryn; 24 grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

■ **Simon Henshaw**, 59, a Senior Foreign Service officer serving as U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Guinea, died unexpectedly on June 9 in Conakry.

Born in England, Mr. Henshaw and his family immigrated to the United States in 1965, settling in Harvard, Mass. He graduated from the Bromfield School

in 1978 and earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. He worked as a reporter for the *Harvard Post* before joining the Foreign Service in 1985.

Mr. Henshaw was confirmed as U.S. ambassador to Guinea in January 2019. Prior to that he served as a senior adviser to the Health Initiative Task Force at the State Department, coordinating efforts to respond to a series of health and security incidents affecting U.S. diplomats in Cuba and China.

From 2013 to 2018, Mr. Henshaw served as principal deputy assistant secretary and, starting in 2017, as acting assistant secretary of the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.

Before that he served as director of the Office of Andean Affairs (2011-2013) and deputy chief of mission at Embassy Tegucigalpa (2008-2011). Earlier he served at five other posts.

President Alpha Condé of the Republic of Guinea posthumously nominated Amb. Henshaw as a Commander in the National Order of Merit for his exceptional service and contribution to strengthening friendship and cooperation between the United States and Guinea.

Mr. Henshaw is survived by his wife, Jackie; his adult children, Maddie and Sandy; his mother, Pam Henshaw of Harvard; his sister, Sarah, and brother-in-law, Ken Johnson; and their sons, Sam, Mick and Jack Johnson.

■ **Wilbur Wilkins "Bill" Hitchcock**, 97, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on May 11 at his Longhorn Village Retirement Community home in Austin, Texas.

Mr. Hitchcock was born on July 31, 1922, in Camden, N.J., and raised in Woodlynne, N.J. He graduated from Collingswood (N.J.) High School in 1939,

and earned a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Pennsylvania in 1943. He later returned to Penn for master's degrees in education (1950) and in political science (1951).

A Reserve Officer Training Corps cadet at Penn as an undergraduate, Mr. Hitchcock entered the U.S. Army as a lieutenant in 1943 and was assigned to the Army Air Corps Administration. He served in Korea as a military government officer and, later, as captain. He remained in the Army Air Corps Reserve, later the Air Force Reserve, resigning in 1957 as major.

Mr. Hitchcock worked for the Department of State and the U.S. Information Agency in Washington from 1952 to 1954.

In 1954 he was commissioned as a Foreign Service officer, diplomatic officer and consular officer, and his career extended until 1982. He served overseas in Canada, Argentina, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Laos, Thailand and South Korea.

His first wife, Margaret L. Schug, died in 2002. They had no children.

In 2003, Mr. Hitchcock married Margaret M. "Mary" Hamel of Calgary, Canada, who survives him.

■ **Jay Kenneth Katzen**, 83, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on April 9 at his home, Beaver Cabin, in Talkeetna, Alaska.

The son of Perry and Minnie Katzen of Brooklyn, N.Y., Mr. Katzen was born on Aug. 23, 1936. He attended Princeton University, graduating magna cum laude in politics.

After earning a master's degree at Yale University, Mr. Katzen entered the U.S. Foreign Service and during a diplomatic career of more than 25 years served in Australia, Burundi, both Congos, Romania, Mali, the United Nations

and at the White House. He spoke five languages.

After retiring from the Foreign Service, Mr. Katzen served as consultant to the CEOs of five Fortune 50 companies for a decade, as vice chairman of the African Development Foundation and as acting chief of staff of the Peace Corps.

A lifelong Republican, he was the first of his party to represent his rural constituency in Virginia's House of Delegates, where he served for four terms before narrowly losing as the candidate for lieutenant governor.

He was a visiting professor at Boston College's Carroll School of Management and a member of several university boards.

Mr. Katzen and his wife of 56 years, Paddy, were driving forces behind construction of the Victims of Communism Memorial in Washington, D.C. He was chairman of the Board of the Combat Wounded Veteran Challenge.

The couple moved to Alaska in 2009, where he served as a national park ranger.

Mr. Katzen leaves his wife, Paddy; sons Timothy, David and James; and seven grandchildren.

■ **Theodore Cooke Nelson**, 89, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on May 9 at the Oaknoll Retirement Residence in Iowa City, Iowa.

Mr. Nelson was born on Jan. 6, 1931, in Hartford, Conn., to Mr. and Mrs. R. Winthrop Nelson. He attended local schools and then followed his older brother to the Loomis School (now Loomis Chaffee) in Windsor, Conn., and then to Harvard College, from which he graduated in 1952.

Having enlisted in the U.S. Army, Mr. Nelson graduated from the Army

Language School in Monterey, Calif., and then served with the U.S. Army in Germany until 1955.

He spent a summer at Middlebury, Vt., in the Intensive Russian Language Program, and then earned a master's degree in Russian studies from the University of Minnesota in 1956. His marriage to Elizabeth Erickson, in summer 1956, ended in divorce in 1957.

Mr. Nelson joined the Foreign Service at the U.S. Department of State in the summer of 1956 and moved to Washington, D.C., where he served until 1959. He married Margaret Moeller that year, and the couple moved to their first overseas posting, at the consulate in Sarajevo, where their first son was born.

Mr. Nelson's next posting, in 1961, was to U.S. Embassy Pretoria, where his second and third sons were born. After studying Hungarian at the Foreign Service Institute in Washington, he was posted to the U.S. Legation in Budapest in 1965.

After returning to Washington, D.C., for a three-year assignment, Mr. Nelson earned a master's degree in population affairs at the University of North Carolina in 1971. He then served as coordinator of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities in Tehran from 1972 to 1974, when he was posted to Kabul until 1976. He returned to the State Department from 1976 to 1983.

Retiring from the State Department in 1983, Mr. Nelson became an active volunteer at Youth for Understanding, an international exchange program for high school students.

Moving to Iowa City, in 1988, he became involved with the Teaching Assistant/Simulated Patient program at the University of Iowa College of Medicine, retiring in 2000.

In his later working years and in

retirement, Mr. Nelson and his wife traveled extensively. They moved to the Oaknoll Retirement Residence in 2011.

Mr. Nelson is survived by his wife, Margaret; their sons, Andrew (Teresa), Jeffrey and Brian (Claudia); and by an older brother, Win. Mr. Nelson deeded his body to the University of Iowa College of Medicine.

■ **Douglas Kai Rasmussen**, 70, a retired Foreign Service officer who specialized in Southeast Asia, died on May 6 in Potomac, Md.

Mr. Rasmussen was born on March 8, 1950, in El Paso, Texas, to Martha and James Rasmussen. He graduated from Occidental College in 1972 with a bachelor's degree in international affairs.

His lifelong pacifism and interest in foreign affairs grew during the Vietnam War. At 24 he hitchhiked from California to New York, where he secured work on a commercial freighter to obtain passage to India.

While he was in India, Indira Gandhi's government detonated the country's first nuclear bomb, precipitating an arms race on the subcontinent. This fueled his desire to work toward nonviolent resolutions to geopolitical issues, and he applied to join the Foreign Service at U.S. Embassy New Delhi in 1974.

Mr. Rasmussen joined the Department of State in 1975 and spent 33 years serving in Thailand, Burma, Malaysia, Laos and Washington, D.C.

As deputy chief of mission in Rangoon from 1996 to 2000, a period marked by repressive military rule and economic sanctions by the Western world, he served as the principal channel of communication with pro-democracy leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi during her house arrest.

Throughout his diplomatic career, Mr. Rasmussen was deeply involved in American efforts to stem the drug trade out of Asia. He developed extensive expertise in the "Golden Triangle" region of Burma, Thailand and Laos, a global epicenter of opium production.

As the Asia division chief for the Bureau of International Narcotics Matters, Mr. Rasmussen worked closely with the Thai government to help craft a successful multipronged approach to reducing heroin trafficking, including promoting alternative sources of livelihood for hilltribe opium poppy farmers.

On an earlier assignment to Bangkok as a political officer, he found himself on the receiving end of Thai gunfire during the 1992 "Bloody May" military crackdown on student protestors against army rule.

He also played an important role in the 1980s in implementing American anti-piracy efforts in the region, aimed at suppressing the brutal predation to which Vietnamese boat refugees were frequently subjected while crossing the Gulf of Thailand.

A true lover of nature, Mr. Rasmussen was happiest outside—gardening, hiking and camping with family and friends. Family members and friends recall that he made everyone around him feel happy and at ease with his kind, gentle and generous nature.

Mr. Rasmussen is survived by his wife, Alice; his daughters, Caroline and Anne; a granddaughter, Liana; and brothers Jim and Steve.

■ **Yale Wolf Richmond**, 96, a retired Foreign Service officer, died of natural causes on March 22 in Chevy Chase, Md.

Born in Boston, Mr. Richmond graduated from Boston College in 1943 at age 19, served in the U.S. Army from 1943 to

1946, and received degrees in electrical engineering from Syracuse University (1947) and in East European history and Polish language from Columbia University (1957).

In 1947 he joined the U.S. military government in Germany as an intern. He joined the U.S. Foreign Service in 1949, serving first as a Kreis resident officer and then in several cultural affairs assignments in Germany until 1954.

Transferring to the U.S. Information Agency in 1953, Mr. Richmond went on to complete a 31-year diplomatic career, with additional overseas assignments in Laos, Poland, Austria and the Soviet Union.

For his service as public affairs officer in Laos from 1954 to 1956, Mr. Richmond received the U.S. Information Agency's Meritorious Service Award. After Polish language training, he was assigned to Warsaw as cultural attaché in 1958.

In 1961 he was transferred to Vienna as a special projects officer, returning to the State Department in 1963 as an exchange program supervisor.

Following Russian language training, Mr. Richmond became counselor for public affairs in Moscow in 1967, returning to Washington, D.C., in 1970 as USIA's policy officer for Europe.

From 1971 to 1978, Mr. Richmond was deputy director for the Soviet Union and East Europe at the State Department. He retired in 1980 as deputy assistant director (Europe) at the U.S. Information Agency.

After retiring from the Foreign Service, Mr. Richmond was a staff consultant to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe in the U.S. Congress and served as a senior program officer at the National Endowment for Democracy.

A specialist in educational and cul-

tural exchanges with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Mr. Richmond established the Fulbright program in Poland in 1959. He negotiated 14 intergovernmental agreements with the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe on exchanges in education, culture, science and technology.

For his work in Poland, Mr. Richmond was awarded the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland.

After a distinguished career as a cultural officer helping people of other countries to understand America and its people, Mr. Richmond wrote 11 books to help Americans going abroad for work or study to better understand the culture and people of other countries.

His published works include: *From Nyet to Da: Understanding the New Russia* (1992); *From Da to Yes: Understanding the East Europeans* (1995); *U.S.-Soviet Cultural Exchanges, 1958-1986: Who Wins?* (1987); *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain*, a 2003 study of how exchanges helped to end the Cold War; *Practicing Public Diplomacy: A Cold War Odyssey* (2008); and, with wife Phyllis Gestrin, *Into Africa: A Guide to Sub-Saharan Culture and Diversity* (2009).

Several of his books have been published in Chinese- and Korean-language editions; his *From Nyet to Da* has been published in four editions and sold more than 35,000 copies. He was also a frequent contributor to *The Foreign Service Journal*.

Mr. Richmond's first marriage to Pamela Cheatham Richmond ended in divorce.

He is survived by his wife, Phyllis Gestrin, of Chevy Chase, Md.; a child, Hania, of Naperville, Ill.; and a grandchild, Pierre David Hanlet.

■ **Edith "Edie" Sabetay Wilcox**, 69, the wife of retired Foreign Service specialist George Wilcox, died peacefully, surrounded by her family, on Dec. 19, 2019, after a six-and-a-half-year fight against metastatic breast cancer.

Edith Sabetay, a native Uruguayan, married Mr. Wilcox in Montevideo in August 1968. Their family traveled the world, visiting more than 100 countries and most U.S. states during the couple's long life together.

Besides raising three children, Ms. Wilcox was involved in many activities, both paid and unpaid, throughout her life.

In Uruguay, she worked as a telephone receptionist in a large medical center, later attending medical school at the national university. She worked and taught in the Boulder Valley Schools in Colorado, at the University of Colorado-Boulder, at the Peace Corps training center in Escondido, Calif., and at a private bilingual school in Corpus Christi, Texas.

In San Antonio, she was one of the first employees at the new SIN TV network (now Univision), where she computerized the local station's commercial programming. In Singapore, she worked at the Embassy of Argentina as a part-time secretary to the ambassador and as acting cultural attaché.

In South Africa in the early 1990s, Ms. Wilcox was the student adviser at U.S. Embassy Pretoria. As president of the International American Women's Association there, she worked with the wife of then president F.W. de Klerk and U.S. Ambassador Bill Swing in various endeavors to bring an end to apartheid.

In Uzbekistan, she served as the community liaison office coordinator and escorted then First Lady Hillary Clinton to various events during her

November 1997 visit. In Brazil, as CLO at the U.S. consulate in São Paulo, she organized many programs, one of which was the 1999 visit of Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

In the Washington, D.C., area, Ms. Wilcox served as a case worker at the Alexandria-Arlington Center for the Homeless and, later, as coordinator for the American Foreign Service Association's Elderhostel programs. At her final two posts overseas, Bahrain and Thailand, she worked as a freelance writer for various publications.

When Mr. Wilcox retired in 2007, the couple settled in Tucson, Ariz., where Ms. Wilcox continued her writing and other activities.

Ms. Wilcox is survived by her husband of 51 years, George; three children and their spouses, Carolynne (Ian) of Seattle, Wash., Sarah Katz-Wilcox (Greg) of Las Vegas, Nev., and David (Margie) of Sacramento, Calif.; two granddaughters, Brooke and Rachel Katz; and a sister, Marta Sabetay Nathan, and her family of Montevideo.

According to her last wishes, those who want to honor Ms. Wilcox should consider donating to a local homeless shelter or a local food bank. ■



If you would like us to include an obituary in *In Memory*, please send text to journal@afsa.org.

Be sure to include the date, place and cause of death, as well as details of the individual's Foreign Service career. Please place the name of the AFSA member to be memorialized in the subject line of your email.

A Seminal Work on the Arab World

Arabs: A 3,000-Year History of Peoples, Tribes and Empires

Tim Mackintosh-Smith, Yale University Press, 2019, \$35/hardcover, \$18/paperback, eBook available, 656 pages.

REVIEWED BY CHARLES O. CECIL

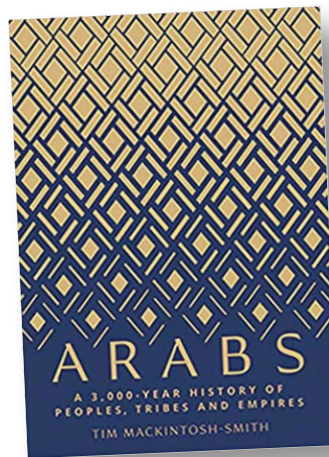
Who is an “Arab”? What makes one identify as Arab? British author Tim Mackintosh-Smith sets out to examine these questions, drawing on his profound knowledge of the Arabic language and literature, especially poetry. His earlier three volumes on the travels of Moroccan scholar Ibn Battuta and on Yemen, where he has lived for 30 years, have already established his reputation as a serious commentator on Arab history and culture. This work will cement his standing in the field for decades.

Mackintosh-Smith claims that the book is a history of the Arabs. But it is much more than that. Many writers begin their account of Arab history with a brief nod to conditions in the Arabian Peninsula immediately before the birth of the Prophet Muhammad and then follow the story from there. They also usually emphasize the competition for political and economic power in the centuries following the prophet’s death. Mackintosh-Smith, however, places Muhammad midway in the historical record, halfway between the first written reference to the Arabs (853 B.C.) and the modern era.

As Mackintosh-Smith’s work is not a strictly chronological rendering of history, it might occasionally confuse readers new to the subject. His pursuit of certain themes sometimes results in

skipping over details in the story, only to return to backfill later, after the reader has perhaps turned to other sources for clarification.

One theme he discusses is the unifying power through the centuries of the Arabic language, anchored in the touchstone of the Quran, always juxtaposed against the historical and cultural centrifugal forces that have prevented the Arabs from achieving the dream of “Arab unity,” an



the last two chapters most relevant to our work today—an unspoken argument for the importance of 4/4 or better capability in the language. Chapter 15, “The Age of Disappointment,” helps us understand the events in the Arab world of the last 30 years—especially since 2000, particularly after the “Arab Spring” of 2011, “the spring that

had no summer.”

Mackintosh-Smith discusses the new influence of instant communication through social media: “Words are

Mackintosh-Smith’s use of contemporaneous quotations conveys the impression of one immersed in Arab culture and tradition, helping us to feel the spirit of the age.

aspirational goal much in vogue in the Nasser era and for some time afterward. We don’t hear much about that mirage today.

The author’s knowledge of the language enriches the account with translations of Arab poetry relevant to the story, quotations from Arab writers of the modern era, plus observations regarding the origin and meaning of many Arabic words and concepts. Readers who know Arabic will appreciate his approach more than those who don’t, but his style is always light and entertaining. He is as adept at coining a phrase in English as he is at interpreting important terms in Arabic, and displays a penchant for playing with words (“the Ba’th dissolved in bathos and battles”).

Foreign Service readers may find

still the sharpest weapons” and “men of words—poets, preachers, orators, authors ... are the ones who have formed identity, forged unity and forced the march of history.” Yet up to our present time, neither language nor religion has been able to overcome the divisive forces of politics and culture or restrain the renewed growth of militant Islam.

In his afterword, “In the Station of History,” Mackintosh-Smith hopes that Arabs themselves will assess not only the glorious highlights of their history but also their low points and failures, as a way of establishing a sounder basis for their future.

For the last several decades students of the Arab world have relied on Philip Hitti’s *History of the Arabs* (1st edition, 1937; most recent, 10th edition, 2002)

and Albert Hourani's *A History of the Arab Peoples* (1991, updated 2013 by Malise Ruthven). In dealing with the modern 20th-century era, Hourani, for example, supports his analysis with frequent use of statistics. This helps the reader understand the magnitude of economic and social change in the decades following World War II.

His final chapter of the 1991 work gives an excellent snapshot of economic and social conditions of the 1980s, while discussing the Arabs' loss of confidence in themselves following the defeats by Israel in the wars of 1967 and 1973.

But Hourani writes as one inside the classroom, lecturing to students. Mackintosh-Smith is in the street, with the crowds. His use of contemporaneous quotations, even song lyrics from the modern era, conveys the impression of one immersed in Arab culture and tradition, helping us to feel the spirit of the age. I found this style to be more interesting and more enjoyable to read.

Both works obviously have their merits (and the Hourani book has been updated by another writer), but Mackintosh-Smith's book will now be read for decades to come. Every Foreign Service Arabist—or anyone seeking a deeper understanding of Arab culture and language—should read it.

Though the text is identical, the trim size of the paperback edition is smaller than that of the hardback edition. Aging readers may prefer the larger print of the hardback edition.

Charles O. Cecil is a retired Foreign Service officer. Of his 10 overseas assignments, six were in the Arab world, including two years as director of the Foreign Service Institute's Arabic Language School in Tunis. He served as ambassador to Niger (1996-1999) and as chargé d'affaires in Libya (2006-2007).

Behind the Scenes, at the Forefront of History

The Second Most Powerful Man in the World: The Life of Admiral William D. Leahy, Roosevelt's Chief of Staff

Phillips Payson O'Brien, Dutton Caliber, 2019, \$20/paperback, 544 pages.

REVIEWED BY DMITRY FILIPOFF

While some historical figures shape world events profoundly, their subtle methods and unfailing discretion often condemn their memory to a historical afterthought. On further exploration, the extent of their impact not only transforms our understanding of them as individuals but also the story of how history came together. Such is the case of William D. Leahy, the fascinating subject of Phillips Payson O'Brien's new book, *The Second Most Powerful Man in the World*.

In 1940, fresh off a decadeslong naval career capped by a final assignment as the service's chief, Bill Leahy was breakfasting with his wife in his governor's residence in Puerto Rico when a request from an old friend of nearly 30 years was urgently presented to him. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who a year earlier had appointed Leahy governor of Puerto Rico, had a sensitive assignment in mind for his longtime confidant: to go to newly conquered France to serve as the American ambassador to the Vichy regime.

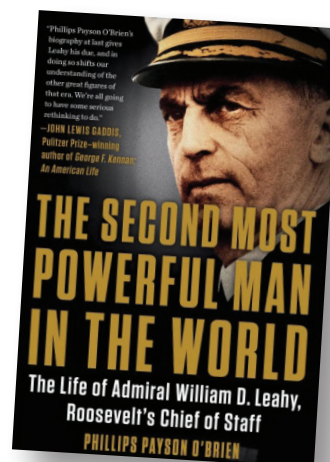
Several months after the United States formally entered World War II, when Leahy had been in France for some two years, he was recalled to active duty

to serve in an unprecedented role at the White House, a role that Roosevelt had discussed with Leahy years prior. Admiral Leahy would now preside over the chiefs of the military services and be the senior-most adviser to the president on the war.

Simply called the chief of staff to the commander in chief, the position would later be formalized as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the national security adviser. What was not clearly spelled out at the onset was the diplomatic nature of the post, or its role in shaping strategic conceptions of foreign policy for the presidency.

Through painstaking research, O'Brien homes in on Leahy's role not only in White House decision-making, but also at the grand strategic conferences of World War II where the Allied powers met to debate and decide on the political-military strategy of the war. There Leahy worked to ensure a coherent American position, provided invaluable counsel to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman as they sized up the strategic intentions of other world leaders, and helped defeat proposals that could have changed the course of World War II—including, for instance, delaying the D-Day invasion or focusing on a Mediterranean thrust as the British tenaciously advocated.

Mindful of evolving civil-military relations during the war, Leahy also served as the White House's chief conduit with the State Department, primarily through Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles, whose influence with the president was greater than that of Secretary of State Cordell Hull.



Leahy remained concerned about the risk of the military overshadowing civilian input at the White House, and pressed hard for a special State Department liaison with whom he would meet daily. According to George Elsey, a naval officer on duty in the president's map room (FDR's wartime equivalent of the situation room), Leahy was "the one man around the White House who kept constantly saying, 'But the State Department ought to be consulted.'"

After the war ended, the victors were confronted with reshaping the global order, an opportunity they were determined not to squander as their World War I predecessors had done. But just as soon as the world's most costly war was over, a new era of militarized great-power competition was dawning, and in foreseeing the Cold War, Bill Leahy was ahead of the curve.

President Harry Truman's historic Navy Day address, which Leahy feverishly crafted with presidential speechwriter Samuel Rosenman, outlined the major new precepts of American foreign policy in the immediate postwar world. In addition to supporting the new United Nations, Truman issued a clear challenge to the Soviet Union's subjugation of Eastern Europe by explicitly supporting the return of self-government to those who had been deprived of it by force.

Not long after the Navy Day address, Leahy met with Winston Churchill, an old warhorse friend, to discuss the draft text of another speech. Across several days Leahy and Churchill pored over the speech, refining details and points of emphasis. Delivering the "Iron Curtain" speech at Westminster College soon after, Churchill declared that while the Soviet Union was no friend of Western powers or to free peoples, a peaceful accommodation and co-existence was

within reach—it was a concept Leahy had steadily pressed for months inside the White House. Churchill later wrote Leahy: "Your advice on the Fulton draft proved sound."

One area in which O'Brien leaves readers wanting concerns the National Security Act of 1947. Among other things, this legislation created the modern Department of Defense, the National Security Council and the Central Intelligence Agency. Leahy no doubt played a major role in shaping the latter two by helping place their first chiefs, but more detail could have been shared on Leahy's views on this historic reform of America's national security institutions.

The Second Most Powerful Man in the World is a unique treat, history retold through the lens of fresh, groundbreaking evidence. This is perhaps why former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright says the book "greatly enriches our understanding of wartime Washington power," or why John Lewis Gaddis suggests: "We're all going to have some serious rethinking to do."

Despite his skill, Leahy did not exhibit Roosevelt's effusive brotherly charm, or Churchill's strident self-assuredness, or Stalin's steely guile. Instead, one saw a stern-looking gentleman with an owl-like visage who spoke deliberately but infrequently, and was always discerning but rarely forceful. Leahy may have been hard to remember at first; but, in the end, he was an individual history could never forget. ■

Dmitry Filipoff is the publications coordinator for The Foreign Service Journal. He is also the director of online content for the Center for International Maritime Security (CIMSEC). For Filipoff's interview with author Phillips Payson O'Brien, go to <https://bit.ly/2zJCpPF>.

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Public Health in Foreign Policy—Ebola 1976

BY WALTER CUTLER

As if two armed uprisings were not enough, my time in Zaire remains memorable because of a third crisis—this one created not by rebels, but by monkeys. In August 1976 the embassy picked up word that two Belgian nuns, working as nurses at a medical mission in the remote Yambuku region of northern Zaire, had suddenly fallen ill and died after being rushed to a hospital in Kinshasa. Soon, reports of other such deaths came in, including no fewer than 11 of that mission's staff members.

I had heard about something labeled “Green Monkey Fever” when, not long before, it had broken out in nearby Sudan. Believed to be a virus coming from the blood of monkeys, its symptoms ranged from high fevers and nausea to rashes and internal bleeding, with a very rapid and high fatality rate. The same, or a very similar, deadly disease now seemed to be breaking out in Zaire; and the government, fearing a widespread epidemic, placed the afflicted region under a tight quarantine.

My immediate concern was the welfare of a handful of American Peace Corps volunteers serving—and now trapped by the stringent quarantine—in the Yambuku area. After urgent consultations with our Peace Corps director

Deadly disease now seemed to be breaking out in Zaire; and the government, fearing a widespread epidemic, placed the afflicted region under a tight quarantine.

and the embassy's medical doctor and military attachés, I decided that, one way or another, the stranded volunteers must be quickly extracted from the afflicted region.

It would not be easy: No road travel was permitted, and all commercial flights had been suspended. Even Zairian government officials were reluctant to breach the quarantine, partly because of personal fears of contracting the mysterious disease, and partly because of dangers posed by an increasingly petrifed local populace trying to find any way to get out.

Given this situation, asking the Zairian government to rescue our volunteers, while ignoring its own people, was to my mind not the best way to go. But we had to act—the medical risk persisted each additional day they were there; and, understandably, Peace Corps headquarters in Washington was becoming increasingly alarmed.

So we devised our own rescue plan. Using short-wave radio contact with

the volunteers, we arranged for them to quietly gather one night at a small dirt airstrip we had discovered in a village near Yambuku. At dawn, our embassy plane—an eight-seat Cessna piloted by our two air attachés—found its way to the strip and quickly took the volunteers on board. By this time, word of the “American rescue” was beginning to spread, and the plane was just able to take off before being besieged by a mob of Zairian would-be evacuees.

On their arrival in Kinshasa, the volunteers were again quarantined together in a safe house. Thankfully, all of them survived. The operation, while not pretty, had succeeded. And my decision to confidentially inform President Mobutu's office of what we were doing—but only after the operation was well underway—also escaped negative repercussions. In fact, I figured, the government was glad to have avoided the politically delicate position that a request for prior flight authorization would have created.

During the ensuing weeks, a good deal of the embassy's time was focused on learning more about, and developing protection against, this strange disease that became known as Ebola fever (Ebola being the name of a river that flows not far from Yambuku and into the Congo River). To its credit, the Zairian government, eschewing the possible embarrassment of admitting to the world the



DIDI CUTLER

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seriousness of the emergency, cooperated in organizing an international team of doctors to undertake in-country research.

We at the embassy were deeply involved, helping to bring over from Atlanta's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention several prominent experts in tropical diseases to play a courageous, leading role in the research effort. No sooner in the country they were off to Yambuku for the first of repeated visits. Meanwhile, the toll of victims was rapidly rising: Within a few weeks, 280 of 318 people infected had died.

In his post-operation report, Dr. Joel Breman, a CDC epidemiologist who went to Yambuku, called Ebola "the scariest epidemic of my entire career, and possibly of the last century." The goal was quickly to identify and isolate the virus, thus permitting the development of an antidote that would prevent the epidemic from spreading throughout the country and perhaps the world. That goal was eventually achieved.

Understandably, the near panic that was gripping Kinshasa included the foreign community. In an effort to inform and, hopefully, calm members of my staff, I invited one of the CDC experts, Dr. Karl Johnson, to brief our embassy country team following his initial visit to the infected area. Meeting first with me in my office, he grimly compared Ebola to *The Andromeda Strain*, the shocking novel about a deadly extraterrestrial disease.

We then walked into the embassy's conference room, where we found most of the staff had already seated themselves as far away as they could from the chair reserved for the doctor. Their obvious concern not to get too close to him was readily heightened by seeing his arms riddled with what looked like severe sores and rashes. He smiled and said not



In 1976 Sister Marietta walks among the graves of her colleagues who perished during the Zaire Ebola outbreak of August that year. The Flemish nuns and the African staff of a mission hospital in Yambuku, Zaire, treated the first known patient of Ebola hemorrhagic fever. The virus traveled quickly, and a large number of the mission members and patients died that fall.

to worry: We were only looking at harmless mosquito bites—not at any symptoms of Ebola. We all laughed, although a tad nervously.

If our American doctors were brave in trying to solve this dangerous medical mystery, so, too, was one of our Peace Corps evacuees, a young public health volunteer. Although prohibited from resuming his work and life in Yambuku, he had gotten to know the region well and offered to accompany the doctors on one of their first trips there. Our Peace Corps director, with my somewhat reluctant concurrence, agreed.

One can imagine our second thoughts when, only a few days after the volunteer's arrival in Yambuku, we received word that he had developed symptoms of Ebola and required immediate evacuation. Placed in a U.S.-supplied "aircraft transit isolator"—a head-to-foot contraption that looked like a custom-made cell—he was flown back to Kinshasa in a Zairian military plane for transfer to a U.S. Air Force C-141 that, with a complete medical team aboard, would fly him to a hospital in South Africa.

But nothing is ever easy in Africa. The victim had to wait some six hours, lying in his isolator in the back of a truck

in the corner of a stifling airport hangar far from other people, while the C-141 made its way across the continent from Madrid. Our embassy doctor managed to get water to him, and a portable fan was set up to counter the wilting midday heat. Then, once safely in Air Force hands, the patient had to endure an unusually long and turbulent flight.

It was a frightening life-and-death mission, and we were all immensely relieved to get word from South Africa a few days later that it was not, after all, the deadly Ebola virus. I was equally proud of probably the only government in the world that would go to such an extraordinary extent to safeguard the life of one of its young employees.

Little did I guess how often Ebola would recur in Africa after my time there, including the widespread 2012-2015 outbreak in several West African countries and, more recently, in remote regions of the Congo and neighboring states. At the same time, for a variety of reasons, including the eventual development of vaccines, Ebola has failed to go global like today's COVID-19. If little else, the 1976 scare served to underscore the critical importance of public health as an issue of foreign policy. ■



We came across this ice cream vendor not far from the Blue Mosque during a visit to Istanbul. His mustache and outfit added to the charm of this age-old and very popular treat in Turkey. During the summer, you can find these vendors all across the city, dishing up refreshing and traditional flavors. I took this photograph in August 2019. ■

Keshav Gopinath is a former Foreign Service economic officer. He joined the Foreign Service in 2009 and left after an eight-year career with postings in Kolkata, Johannesburg, Brazzaville and New Delhi. He took this photograph with a Sony Alpha 6500 camera. He and his wife live in San Diego.

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