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PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

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especially those returning home from overseas service.



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On the Cover—Adapted from art by Jing Jing Tsong/Theispot.

A Fond but Cautionary Farewell

BY ERIC RUBIN

This is my last *FSJ* column as president of AFSA. In June, I reflected on the accomplishments of the past two AFSA boards and my hopes for future progress in the near term. Here, I'd like to share some thoughts about where we, the Foreign Service of the United States of America, find ourselves in 2023 and what needs to be done to restore morale and a sense of coherence and purpose to our work.

Before I do that, however, I want to pause to say that these past four years, and the 34 years of my career that came before them, have given me an understanding of the real dedication that our colleagues demonstrate every day, often under the most unforgiving conditions. The level of sacrifice our colleagues and their families make is deeply impressive. In recent years, the challenges to our career and our lives in the Foreign Service have escalated, from COVID-19 to the CDC dog ban, from Anomalous Health Incidents (or Havana syndrome) to the evacuation of our embassies in multiple countries.

So let me start out by saluting our active-duty and retired colleagues and all FS family members, as well as our dedicated Foreign Service National colleagues. You demonstrate the real meaning of service every day. The world is complicated and

challenging, and the work that we do is more important than ever. But it is not easy. Despite the advances in transportation and communications, I honestly think the logistics of Foreign Service life were easier when I joined in the mid-1980s.

Morale Concerns

Concerns about morale are not theoretical. From the Office of Personnel Management's Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey to the surveys that we, together with employee organizations, do ourselves, we know that morale is much worse than it was a decade ago and has not significantly improved in the past three years, even as we have made important progress on advancing DEIA matters within the Foreign Service.

Morale is directly linked to retention and attrition, and this includes family member morale as well. Too many families are making the collective decision that they cannot continue to endure the hardships, especially constant evacuations and drawdowns. Within the space of two years, we went from having more than 500 American family members in Kyiv and more than 300 in Moscow to nearly zero in both posts. The reasons are real and evident, but the impact has been dramatic.

Laws and regulations must be followed, of course. But the way they are implemented can make a dramatic difference. I am reminded of the phrase coined by "Pogo" cartoonist Walt Kelly, "We have met the enemy, and he is us," adapted

from a famous statement by Commandant Oliver Perry during the War of 1812. AFSA has been publicly critical of the excessive number of political appointments to senior positions, but in the case of morale, retention, and attrition, it is all too often our career colleagues, Foreign Service and Civil Service alike, who make it hard to stay in the Service.

Saying to a subordinate with a problem, "I know this is not a good situation, but I am going to do my best to change it if it is unfair or at least help you within the parameters of the regs" is way better than saying, "Sorry, there is nothing to be done, so suck it up." All of us have encountered both responses from supervisors in our careers, but I am afraid the latter may be more common than the former.

Take Care of Each Other

This bureaucratic tendency has come into stark relief since the start of the pandemic. Travel regulations that never anticipated a global health crisis were not flexible enough to accommodate real people in real situations. Last summer, many FS travelers with pets were forced to pay their own transfer travel costs to and from post because we do not have an exception to the Fly America Act that covers pet travel. This is a reflection of the challenges our people face in 2023. It is wrong, and AFSA is working to get an exemption from Congress.

When I meet with new members of the Foreign Service from any of the



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

foreign affairs agencies, I tell them that government service is sometimes like what Michael Corleone said in “The Godfather” (Part I): “It’s not personal. It’s strictly business.” I explain that it is very unlikely that career colleagues—or political appointee colleagues—will set out to ruin someone’s career or make the person miserable. But that can be the outcome, especially when you’re dealing with a vast, impersonal bureaucracy.

So my plea to colleagues as I retire from the Foreign Service is: Take care of each other. Be nice to each other. Be supportive whenever you can. Always err on the side of being more helpful and more supportive, within the limits of law and regulation. And be sympathetic *and* empathetic: This is a tough career, and we all need each other’s help to get through it.

We have spent the past 30 post-Cold War years cutting all the budgets for diplomacy and foreign assistance, with a few occasional plus-ups, and assuming that we did not have to get our game up to earn and maintain our leadership role in the world. But the end of the Cold War was not “the end of history,” and this set of realities is now being recognized as we open or reopen embassies in small island nations around the world.

Acknowledging New Realities

We still act as if the default setting is U.S. leadership, but without the need to staff it or fund it or earn it. History will not be kind to the way the U.S. and our allies have handled the past three decades. U.S. diplomacy and development have not been adequately funded or staffed during this time, and it shows. Ask anyone in any of our embassies and consulates overseas, especially but not exclusively those in Africa, and they will tell you that we are running on fumes.

It has been the greatest honor to serve my country for 38 years together with the most impressive group of people I have ever encountered.

After a small plus-up last year and the passage of the first State Authorization bill in many years, we are now back to hoping for no cuts and for holding the line on spending. That is not good enough.

Upping our game also means not assuming that we can send friends and donors overseas as ambassadors regardless of whether they have the qualifications to do the job well. I am not saying that there are no political appointee ambassadors who are superbly qualified and do a fantastic job. There are. But it is also not possible to say that they are all qualified.

We also must be able to expect appointees to complete their assignments. It costs hundreds of thousands of dollars to vet and confirm a presidential nominee. In the past two years, we have seen multiple political appointees resign their positions, in some cases only a few months after arriving at post. We have seen it with ambassadors to major U.S. allies and with assistant secretaries of State.

It rankles our career colleagues terribly when a political appointee says, “I did not realize how hard the job was and how hard it would be for my family.” We all know how hard it is. Give it to a career professional who will serve a full term rather than a political appointee who may leave in a matter of months.

Thank You

I would be remiss in not expressing my sincere thanks to the professional staff at AFSA. Their experience and wise counsel over the last four years have been crucial

to the successes AFSA has achieved. I am grateful to all those who served on the Governing Board during both the 2019-2021 and the 2021-2023 terms: You kept me on my toes, fighting the good fight. And thank you to all those who volunteered their time as members of AFSA committees and the *FSJ* Editorial Board. Your dedication to the association keeps us going. Finally, thank you to outgoing State VP Tom Yazdgerdi, our incoming AFSA president. AFSA is in good hands.

This career has helped define my life, and it has been the greatest honor to serve my country for 38 years together with the most impressive group of people I have ever encountered. I treasure the friendships I have made in the Foreign Service, and those will last after I step away from active duty. I intend to remain engaged with Foreign Service reform issues—and of course with AFSA. There is strength in unity at a very challenging time.

Let me close by thanking all of you who have been such valued friends and colleagues, and once again saluting you and your families for your service, sacrifice, and dedication. What we do matters, and fixing what is broken in our Service matters, as well. Diplomacy and international development work are the primary alternatives to war and destruction and suffering. We can and should be proud of our work.

Let’s recommit to fixing what ails the U.S. Foreign Service and continue to work for a better world at a time of intense change and upheaval. And let’s take care of each other. ■

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Tragic Markers and Progress Milestones

BY SHAWN DORMAN

August 7, 1998:
May we never forget.
I was on shift as a watch officer in the Operations Center on that fateful morning when the first call came in sounding the alarm about a bombing at the U.S. embassy in Dar es Salaam. Within a few minutes, we got the call from Nairobi—the embassy had been bombed. It did not take long to realize the United States had been attacked.

This Aug. 7 will mark 25 years since the 1998 East Africa embassy bombings, al-Qaida terrorist attacks on two U.S. embassies that killed more than 200 (including 12 Americans) and injured more than 4,000 in Nairobi, and killed 11 and injured 85 in Dar es Salaam.

For this edition, we invited Prudence Bushnell, who was U.S. ambassador to Kenya in 1998, and John Lange, who was chargé d'affaires in Tanzania then, to reflect on what we should learn from this tragedy. They do so in our cover story, “East Africa Bombings, 25 Years Later.” We also hear from Lee Ann Ross, USAID/Kenya’s deputy director in 1998, on “The U.S. Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism Fund: What You Should Know.”

This month’s focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility—“DEIA:

Foundations for Progress”—is the *Journal’s* fifth DEIA focus in the past three years. While we have covered DEIA issues in the



Shawn Dorman is the editor of *The Foreign Service Journal*.

past (see the extensive *FSJ* Digital Archive Special Collection), we turned a brighter spotlight on this in July 2020 following the killing of George Floyd and the beginning of a national reckoning on racism.

We have continued to explore and cover the progress and challenges of advancing DEIA in the foreign affairs agencies. In total, we’ve run more than 25 articles and Speaking Out pieces since July 2020, a majority of them written by authors of color.

Improving DEIA in the Foreign Service is a process, one involving individuals, institutions, and “culture.” In this edition, we look at foundations, the basis for further advancement—both historical foundations and those more current. We begin with a look at the first two years of the Secretary’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI).

Several months ago, we invited ODI to submit an article on the work done and initiatives underway. In “DEIA Is No Longer Just ‘Nice to Have,’” State’s first chief diversity and inclusion officer, Ambassador (ret.) Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, describes the efforts of the ODI team. Her June 30 departure was announced as we headed to press.

FSO (ret.) Marianne Scott was senior adviser for DEIA for the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and tells us what she learned in “Advancing Racial Equity and DEIA: Ten Truths of Implementation.”

A half century ago, the first employee organization at State was established—TLG (the Thursday Luncheon Group). In “Let Our Rejoicing Rise: TLG Cel-

brates 50 Years,” Yolonda Kerney and Krystle Norman tell the story of this foundational group.

Next, we hear from Marguerite Cooper, a retired FSO, about the early movement for women’s equality in the Foreign Service and at State, in “Through the Rearview Mirror: The 1970s Reform of Women’s Role in Diplomacy.”

In light of the recent changes to the worldwide availability requirements for Foreign Service entry, Senior FSO (ret.) Paul M. Carter Jr. tells of his own ultimately successful struggle in the 1990s to join the Service with family members who had medical conditions in “A 1996 Accessibility Milestone.”

Closing out the focus is an illustration of the changing cultural landscape from USAID FSO Jesse Gutierrez, who tells us he was inspired by more open conversations and by articles in the *FSJ*. He shares, for the first time publicly, his journey “From Undocumented to U.S. Career Diplomat.”

So much more in this edition is worth highlighting, including a Speaking Out from former FSO Sonnet Frisbie taking “Another Look at Reappointment”; an Appreciation for disability rights activist Judith Heumann; a personal account from 1975 Vietnam, “The Real Heroes in Getting Out of Saigon: U.S. Foreign Service Officers”; and AFSA President Eric Rubin’s “Fond but Cautionary Farewell.”

From the *FSJ* Editorial Board and staff, we offer thanks and best wishes to the outgoing Governing Board, and a warm welcome to incoming AFSA President Tom Yazdgerdi and the rest of the 2023-2025 Governing Board. ■

People-to-People Diplomacy

Thanks for the wonderful May 2023 *FSJ* collection, “Up Close with American Exhibit Guides to the Soviet Union, 1959-1991.” Great stories well told.

This Russian-speaking U.S. exhibit guide program was one of the inspirations for our student ambassadors at Expo Shanghai 2010, where 160 Mandarin-speaking U.S. students represented 38 states and 84 universities. Their ability to welcome the crowds in fluent Mandarin (as well as Shanghainese and Cantonese) became one of the hallmarks of the USA Pavilion.

With their youth and language skills, the student ambassadors joked with the crowds and encouraged audience response in a quintessential American way. We were also proud that many took the Foreign Service exam at the consulate while in Shanghai.

Aware of the earlier exhibits program, we invited former guide Tom Robertson, a retired ambassador, to speak at the Washington orientation for the student ambassadors. Although they seemed most interested in hearing how Tom met his wife while serving with the exhibits program, we did impress on them the historical legacy of people-to-people diplomacy.



Small pins (znachki) given as souvenirs at the Hand Tools USA and Industrial Design USA exhibits in the Soviet Union in 1966 and 1967, respectively.

The baton was passed—and several went on to join the Foreign Service as well.

Beatrice Camp
FSO, retired
Arlington, Virginia

Meeting Exhibit Guides

Though I was not an exhibit guide in the Soviet Union like those in “Up Close with American Exhibit Guides to the Soviet Union, 1959-1991,” I was very much influenced by the program.

Shortly after arriving on assignment in Moscow, in October 1966, as the most junior FSO at the embassy, I accompanied Chargé d’Affaires John Guthrie and a few others to Yerevan for the opening of the Hand Tools USA exhibition there. Instead of the intended quick trip, I stayed for almost a week due to bad flying weather.

While there, I spent most of my time with the guides and with the exhibits director, Fritz Berliner, a wonderful man.

Conversing with the guides was a great introduction to everyday life in the Soviet Union. They were young, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable. All were fluent in Russian. Their stories of interacting with ordinary citizens, especially in the

hinterlands, were a real eye-opener for this USSR newbie.

Two of the guides were Black. I distinctly recall an anecdote related, with relish, by one of them. While walking down the street in a provincial city, he encountered a mother and her obstreperous young son approaching on foot from the opposite direction.



In exasperation, the mother told her son that if he didn’t behave, she would give him to the Black man, who would eat him. She could not imagine that the foreigner understood Russian.

Ignoring the blatant racism of the remarks, the guide decided to have a little fun with the situation. When he reached the misbehaving boy, he scrunched up his face and growled loudly. He said he didn’t know whom he had frightened more, the mother or the boy. Lesson: Never assume that those around you do not understand whatever language you are speaking.

I had later encounters with exhibit guides when Industrial Design USA came to Moscow in 1967, including a few of the guides I had met in Yerevan. It was great to spend time with them again.

My experiences with the guides and the two exhibitions were helpful to me professionally and also enjoyable personally. And from what I could see, the Soviet attendees gained a lot from what both had to offer.

Jonathan B. Rickert
Senior FSO, retired
Bainbridge Island, Washington

What about Today’s PD?

I enjoyed the May 2023 *Foreign Service Journal’s* articles related to public diplomacy, “Public Diplomacy: The Cold War and Beyond.”

However, I was disappointed to find that it didn’t include any articles on the important, creative, and strategic day-to-day work that is being carried out around the world right now.

This public diplomacy merits equal recognition and coverage.

Dan Sreebny
FSO, retired
Issaquah, Washington

A Cheap Shot?

In response to Frederic Maerke's letter, "Classified Documents," in the April 2023 *Foreign Service Journal*, it is an easy thing to "blame the secretary" (or the assistant, or an officer) for classified material found in someone's home.

I would like to remind readers that it is the responsibility of the individual to ensure that all classified material stays where it belongs. Blaming someone else is a cheap shot!

Katherine McGifford
OMS, retired
Enumclaw, Washington

Good Friday Agreement at 25

Hope and history rhymed this April as we marked the 25th anniversary of one of our most successful and enduring peace-making efforts, the Northern Irish Good Friday Agreement.

Oddly, rather than calling attention to the unsung American diplomats working behind the scenes who helped make that a possibility, AFSA included in its April 14 daily media roundup a link to a July 1996 *FSJ* article, "Dissent in Dublin," a celebrated Dissent Channel case.

The 1994 Dublin dissent was a protest to then-Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith's cable to Washington recommending a visa for Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams and including Ireland in the visa waiver program.

Concerned that giving a visa to the leader of an organization linked to IRA terrorist acts would send the wrong signal, the FSOs drafted a Dissent Channel message and sent it out at close of business on



a Friday when one of them was the acting deputy chief of mission (DCM), without giving the ambassador a heads-up.

All hell broke loose when Amb. Kennedy Smith found out the following week. The Office of Inspector General (OIG) was called in to investigate the harsh retaliation she visited on the public affairs officer and consul, which led to her being admonished; the July 1996 *FSJ* cover story celebrated the dissenters, one of them crowned with AFSA's top award for constructive dissent.

Ironically, if that dissent message had succeeded, Good Friday might never have happened. More irony was in highlighting that dissent during the week that Congress hit State with a subpoena for the 2022 Embassy Kabul Dissent Channel cable.

With the benefit of 25+ years hindsight, AFSA and the OIG got it right to come down hard on Ambassador Kennedy Smith (referred to inside the embassy as "she who must be obeyed") for retaliating. Based on the very long, miserable year I endured as her second (of three) DCMs, I could sympathize with the dissenting officers not wanting to directly confront her.

However, you can be righteously wrong, as the Dublin dissenters proved to be. I got to Dublin in August 1996 after two years in Belgrade, where I dealt with terrorists and indicted war criminals daily. One does not make peace with the good guys, rather the bad ones.

In 1995, I had faced a similar dilemma in Belgrade when, in the absence of formal approval from Washington, I had to decide whether to issue Slobodan Milosevic a visa to go to Dayton, Ohio.

Imagine the alternate futures if the U.S. had not issued those visas. No Dayton Accord, no Good Friday Agreement.

No peace in Bosnia, no end to 30 years of The Troubles.

And the decision to add Ireland to the visa waiver program was prescient. In 1997, Ireland experienced its first net in-migration in centuries, thanks to its booming economy and vibrant cultural explosion.

Larry Butler
Ambassador, retired
Thomaston, Maine, and Reston, Virginia

Consular Fellows Needed

With all the talk of Foreign Service reform and hiring rule changes in the March 2023 *Foreign Service Journal*, the Department of State should also consider a decisive measure to address the nonimmigrant visa (NIV) application backlogs.

Wait times for B1/B2 applicants requiring an interview range from several months to more than a year at some posts, creating an economic and diplomatic challenge for the department and major delays for travelers.

Long NIV wait times harm the U.S. tourism industry and its workforce. An important issue to host nation governments, the problem also strains bilateral relations. Many countries are competing for international visitors, and the U.S. cannot afford to fall behind.

State deserves praise for its remote adjudication initiative, but it won't be able to rapidly reduce the pent-up demand without significantly more adjudicators. The solution is to expand the Consular Fellows Limited Non-Career Appointment (LNA) program.

LNA Consular Fellows are short-term, contract employees trained to conduct interviews and adjudicate visa applications. They are an essential part of the department's workforce and play a critical role in reducing NIV wait times.

Further, unlike most other employees, visa adjudicators directly generate revenue for the department.

Thus, expanding the LNA program not only addresses the NIV backlog but also the Bureau of Consular Affairs' revenue shortfall, a result of the pandemic, without creating a long-term staffing problem.

While Consular Fellows have long been praised for their dedication to the department, it would be great to see that commitment reciprocated. An important part of State's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Strategic Plan is to "examine methods to support the professional development of Consular Fellows."

In pursuit of this, State should give hiring preference to Consular Fellows like it currently does for veterans. Fellows should be awarded additional points on the hiring register after they've served a requisite amount of time supporting the department overseas.

Consular Fellows bring valuable experience to the FSO ranks and are vital to the DEIA Strategic Plan's priority to "retain and advance a diverse, high-performing workforce."

Expanding the Consular Fellows LNA program is a win-win. It will reduce NIV wait times, boost the U.S. economy, improve bilateral relations, and support the professional development of Consular Fellows.

The department should act now to expand the program and ensure that the United States remains a welcoming and attractive destination for international visitors.

Eric Bernau

FSO

U.S. Embassy New Delhi

Kennan and NATO

I read the review of Lee Congdon's book *George Kennan for Our Time* in the March 2023 *FSJ* with interest. In particular, I agree with Joseph L. Novak's correction of Congdon's assertion that "U.S.

negotiators agreed in 1990 that NATO would not move 'one inch into the east.'"

Assertions that Secretary of State James Baker, in his discussions with Gorbachev, had an informal verbal agreement that there would be no expansion of NATO are baseless, as I explained in a 2019 *Friends of*

Europe article and elsewhere.

Congdon notes that Kennan opposed NATO enlargement, but does not examine Kennan's analysis of Stalin in 1947. Stalin was, in Kennan's view, the successor in a long line of czars, whose territorial expansion by military means led Kennan to develop his containment strategy.

In the summer of 2021, Russian President Vladimir Putin described himself as a successor to Czar Peter the Great, foreshadowing his imperial Russian ambitions and the invasion of Ukraine. NATO's opening to East Central Europe and the Baltics, with Finland, too, has blocked Russian territorial aggression in NATO states but not in Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia.

Even if Kennan did not agree with NATO enlargement, Congdon could have cited his views on the Russian czars' territorial expansion imperative to challenge Putin's narrative that NATO threatens Russia.

J.D. Bindenagel

Ambassador, retired

Bonn, Germany



Ethical Challenges

News of Justice Thomas' ethical challenges recalled an experience my wife and I had on assignment in then Communist Slovenia (where we made friends with some of the nicest communists you'd ever hope to meet).

The local wood and furniture company asked if we could help by lending our American voices for a commercial they were producing to help export their products internationally. It worked out well, but then they insisted on paying us. We said we could not accept money, but suggested they instead contribute to the Fight Against Cancer (*Boj Proti Raku*).

Well and good, but soon a whole large prosciutto ham (*pršut*) worth its weight in gold was delivered to our door. Unfortunately, this was shortly before our planned departure; so we (quite reluctantly) gave it to friends in Zagreb who had been kind to us in lonely moments during our tour.

Christopher Henze

Senior USIA FSIO, retired

Neuilly, France

"Gaming at State"— The Author Responds

I was honored that Fred Hill took the time to write (March 2023 *FSJ*) in response to my article on "Why the State Department Needs an Office of Diplomatic Gaming" (November 2022 *FSJ*). Mr. Hill highlighted some of the important policy games that the Office of Special Programs conducted before it was disbanded. Much more of this valuable history needs to be shared!

We both agree that the State Department needs far more policy gaming capabilities to enhance foreign policy decision-making and improve diplomacy. We have some important disagreements, however, over the role and scope of gaming in the State Department.

Mr. Hill believes that career-minded FSOs would not be interested in doing tours as policy game designers and facilitators.

My work in conflict game design in the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations was some of the most important work of my FSO career. Since the diplomatic gaming article appeared in the *FSJ* last November, I have been approached by several FSOs and FS specialists seeking advice on how they can get involved in policy gaming at State.

I believe there is a great deal of interest in policy gaming, and such positions would be highly sought after. We should hear directly from members of the Foreign Service and Civil Service. Would you be interested in learning how to design and run policy games in the State Department?

Mr. Hill believes that bureaus should not have their own gaming staff, and I disagree with this. They do now. Educational and Cultural Affairs uses games as outreach tools for youth. Consular Affairs created games to prepare embassy staff for providing emergency services to American citizens during a crisis. Conflict and Stabilization Operations runs numerous games on border conflicts, political transitions, stabilization operations, potential future conflicts, and other topics.

Games improve decision-making, and decisions are made throughout the organization and at all levels. Decision games are not limited to only the highest levels of the department. To support this use by embassies and offices, we need game designers in all bureaus. A central office could support these bureau designers, but a central office could not manage all the games in the department.

Mr. Hill provides good arguments for locating an Office of Diplomatic Gaming at FSI or in the Policy Planning Office (S/P). There are likely good arguments

for other locations, as well. I welcome greater debate on this topic. Wherever such an office is located, it must be able to support policy gaming throughout the entire State Department and beyond. (The importance of the State Department leading interagency policy games deserves its own article.)

Some of the functions of an Office of Diplomatic Gaming are: developing high-level policy games for State Department leaders, running interagency games, providing consulting services for bureau game designers, organizing training efforts in game design and facilitation, providing State Department design input and participants to games run by other departments and agencies, and recruiting outside experts for participation in State Department games.

Which location would provide the best home to carry out these functions and maintain a departmentwide (and beyond) focus? I look forward to the continuing conversation on these pages.

Robert Domaingue
FSO, retired
Seattle, Washington

“Meritocracy at State”— The Author Responds

I want to thank Ambassador James Jeffrey for his thoughtful response to my article (“Meritocracy at State and the Foreign Service Exam Are Not Incompatible,” *Letters-Plus*, June 2023 *FSJ*). I’m glad it generated so much interest! I would also like to briefly respond to a few points.

Recent State Department decisions with regard to the FSOT were indeed made in response to, and not despite, data regarding applicants’ ability to pass the Foreign Service Oral Assessment (FSOA), which is widely considered the most indispensable step in the candidate selection process. (That’s why even

Fellows like me who do not have to pass the FSOT still must pass the FSOA.)

I disagree that the “main mission” of the Foreign Service is to develop candidates for the approximate 10 percent of officers making up the Senior Foreign Service, which has only formally existed since 1980.

To Amb. Jeffrey’s point about the exceedingly few officers (four in 40 years) who attain Cabinet-level positions, I believe this illustrates the opposite of his intended conclusion. The “routine” work of the Foreign Service is in fact the rule, while outlier FSOs in Cabinet positions are rare exceptions.

And if the success of those outliers is somehow related to their performance on the FSOT, it begs the question of why they then find themselves in the company of the most senior policymakers, who typically never passed the FSOT themselves: What was Susan Rice’s FSOT score? Or Kissinger’s? Or Blinken’s?

As I stated in my article, it is understandable—for both of us—to extol the system that allowed us to achieve success. For me, that was the Pickering Fellowship. For Amb. Jeffrey, that was an FSOT-weighted system that no longer exists. He has proved through his numerous career achievements that, in his case, that selection process certainly worked. I hope to do the same, like many other Fellows already have.

Marshall Sherrell
FSO
U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv ■



Share your thoughts
about this month’s issue.
Submit letters to the editor:
journal@afsa.org

Threats to Federal Workers

On May 4, a group of 14 conservative lawmakers reintroduced legislation that would make the federal government an at-will employer, eviscerate Civil Service protections, and do away with the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB).

Representative Chip Roy (R-Texas) and Senator Rick Scott (R-Fla.) are the lead sponsors of the Public Service Reform Act, H.R. 3115.

Under the proposed legislation, abolition of the MSPB means that most appeals would be sent directly to federal appellate courts. The act also creates a disincentive for federal workers to appeal their firings: A provision mandates that an employee's retirement benefit annuity be automatically reduced by 25 percent if a court finds a complaint to be "frivolous" or "brought in bad faith."

Rep. Roy previously introduced this bill in July 2022, *GovExec* reported, but with Democrats in control of the House, it failed to move. Under the current divided Congress, its chance of passage remains low. But the number of initial

co-sponsors has grown from five to 14.

"It's clear that the bureaucracy of the federal government is both a waste of taxpayer dollars and inefficient," Sen. Scott said in a May 5 press release.

In addition to the Public Service Reform Act, conservatives have also prepared a plan to revive Schedule F, a new employment category for federal employees that effectively strips them of Civil Service protections. Schedule F was mandated in an executive order (EO) signed by President Donald Trump in October 2020—and rescinded by President Joe Biden in early 2021.

According to Axios, the EO would have reclassified about 50,000 employees in policymaking positions to make them at-will workers who could be fired with no recourse for appeals and replaced with partisan loyalists.

Critics and career professionals fear that the resulting politicization and pendulum swings from one administration to the next would threaten not only the continuity of service to taxpayers, but American democracy itself.

Details of the plan are laid out in

Project 2025, a presidential transition agenda devised by the Heritage Foundation think tank to serve as a turnkey government-in-waiting for the Republican presidential nominee. Project 2025, in turn, is based on a 900-page book, *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*.

First published by the Heritage Foundation in 1981 for the incoming Ronald Reagan administration, *Mandate for Leadership* contains thousands of individual suggestions to move the federal government in a conservative direction. The ninth and most recent edition was released in April 2023.

Sudan Evacuation

The U.S. concluded its evacuation of at least 1,300 Americans from Sudan on May 4—an effort that had been underway since violence erupted on April 15 as rival military factions began fighting for control of the country.

The evacuees, counting more than 2,000 in total, include U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents, local staff at the U.S. embassy and their families, and

Convoy of Embassy Staffers Attacked

On May 16, unknown assailants in southeast Nigeria opened fire on a convoy of U.S. embassy employees, killing two locally employed staff members and two local police officers, NPR reported. Two more police officers and a driver were kidnapped.

In a statement on May 17, the State Department said that the two-vehicle convoy was carrying nine Nigerian nationals: five employees of the U.S. Mission to Nigeria and four members of the Nigeria Police Force. They were

traveling in advance of a planned visit by U.S. Mission Nigeria personnel to a U.S.-funded flood response project in Anambra. No U.S. citizen was on the trip.

"We condemn in the strongest terms this attack," the statement read. "We will work closely with our Nigerian law enforcement colleagues in seeking to bring those responsible to justice. The United States has no greater priority than the safety and security of our personnel."

Authorities blamed the attack on an increasingly violent separatist group known as the Indigenous People of Biafra, which is leading a campaign for

the region to break away from Nigeria to form an independent country.

At a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on May 17, Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) offered condolences "to the families and colleagues of the U.S. embassy local employees killed in Nigeria yesterday. As career Foreign Service officers, you know that locally employed staff, foreign nationals, are essential to the success of our embassy and missions abroad, and we all feel this loss. I want to thank them and the other foreign nationals who help support our embassy operations overseas."

citizens of ally nations, Bloomberg wrote.

According to *Foreign Policy*, the U.S. government has no plans to continue evacuation efforts even though hundreds of additional U.S. citizens and permanent residents who wish to leave remain stuck in Sudan.

At least two American citizens were killed in the fighting, the White House confirmed on April 26. One victim was identified as Bushra Ibnauf Sulieman, a doctor and father of four helping to educate physicians in Sudan, who was stabbed to death by looters. The identity of the other victim has not been made public.

An estimated 16,000 Americans—most of whom are dual U.S.-Sudanese citizens—remained in Sudan as of late April, according to National Security Council Spokesman John Kirby.

In a May 10 Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing evaluating options for a policy response to the conflict, lawmakers from both parties called for a special envoy to Sudan to elevate the issue.

New Embassies, from Polynesia to the Arctic

The U.S. opened its newest embassy on May 9 with a ceremonial raising of the American flag in the Polynesian archipelago Kingdom of Tonga.

Announced in July 2022 by Vice President Kamala Harris, the intent to open the mission, as well as additional embassies in the region, is part of an effort to broaden the U.S. diplomatic footprint where China has sought to increase its influence in recent years.

The embassy in the Tongan capital Nuku'alofa—based on one of the nation's 171 islands—is the second the State Department has opened in the Pacific islands this year, following the embassy



The ceremonial flag raising at the new U.S. embassy in Tonga took place on May 10.

reopening in the Solomon Islands in February.

Additional U.S. embassies are planned for the Pacific island nations of Vanuatu and Kiribati, as is reopening of the U.S. embassy in the Seychelles after a 27-year absence, according to State Department press releases.

A significantly cooler climate is also slated to host a new mission. On June 1, Secretary Blinken announced plans to open “an American presence post” in the Norwegian town of Tromsø, above the Arctic Circle, according to a press release from the U.S. embassy in Oslo.

Blinken described the outpost as part of a strategy “to make sure that the Arctic remains an area of peaceful cooperation.”

The post will open later this year and will be staffed with just one U.S. diplomat.

The high north is becoming strategically more important as a shrinking ice cap opens up new sea lanes and attracts other nations seeking its natural resources, Reuters reported.

Blinken's announcement comes three weeks after Norway took over from Russia the rotating chairpersonship of the Arctic Council, a forum created in 1996 to discuss issues affecting the polar region. It comprises the eight Arctic states: Russia, the U.S., Canada, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Sweden, and Denmark.

Cooperation between the Western Arctic states and Moscow on the Arctic body has been frozen since the invasion of Ukraine.

Former Diplomats Sign NYT Ad

On May 16, *The New York Times* ran an open letter appearing as a full-page advertisement signed by 14 former national security and military officials challenging the Biden administration's Ukraine policy. Retired diplomats and State Department officials on the list: Ambassador (ret.) Jack Matlock, Matthew Hoh, Larry Wilkerson, and Ann Wright.

Titled “The U.S. Should Be a Force for Peace in the World,” the ad urges President Joe Biden and Congress “to end the war speedily” by “forging a diplomatic settlement.”

The letter states: “The immediate cause of this disastrous war in Ukraine is Russia's invasion. Yet the plans and actions to expand NATO to Russia's borders served to provoke Russian fears. And Russian leaders made this point for 30 years. A failure of diplomacy led to war. Now diplomacy is urgently needed to end the Russia-Ukraine War before it destroys Ukraine and endangers humanity.”

It continues: “Why did the U.S. persist in expanding NATO despite such warnings? Profit from weapons sales was a major factor. Facing opposition to NATO expansion, a group of neoconservatives and top executives of U.S. weapons manufacturers formed the U.S. Committee to Expand NATO.”

Asked why the group chose to express its dissent through this medium, Hoh told the *FSJ*: “While there have been some opinion essays in the major media arguing for cease-fire and a negotiated solution to the conflict, arguments for a policy based on military victory have dominated in the U.S. Running the letter as an ad would allow us to reach readers that we would not have reached if we had published an op-ed on a platform in agreement with our views.”

Contemporary Quote

“From the bottom of my heart: thank you, thank you, thank you. You’re not only changing America’s image; you’re in the process of changing the world. Thank you for representing our country overseas, protecting America’s interest all around the world. Thank you for the leadership you provide to Foreign Service officers, to the Civil Service, to developmental professionals, to locally employed people, and to everyone at your mission who brings diplomacy to life.”

Thank you for helping put diplomacy back at the center of American foreign policy.”

—President Joe Biden at a June 13 reception for U.S. chiefs of mission—the first time in 15 years that ambassadors, *chargés d'affaires*, and consuls general have been hosted at the White House during the annual Chiefs of Mission Conference.

Former Appointees Speak Out on Iran

On May 8, former State Department officials published an open letter in *The Washington Times* calling for the cessation of diplomacy with Iran.

The letter urges the Biden administration to “stop all diplomatic overtures toward the Islamic Republic of Iran and instead reimpose the ‘maximum pressure’ campaign ... of isolation—diplomatic and economic—that worked in putting the regime on its heels, reining in its malign activities across the region, and restoring America’s deterrent against it.”

Most of the 28 signatories are former Republican political appointee ambassadors, former Republican members of Congress, and conservative think tank fellows.

The letter comes on the fifth anniversary of President Donald Trump’s decision in 2018 to withdraw the U.S. from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the Iran nuclear deal signed under President Barack Obama in 2015.

Excellence in Public Diplomacy

At a virtual ceremony in early June, the Public Diplomacy Council of America honored the recipients of its annual awards for exemplary achievement in public diplomacy.

The awards went to four entries: U.S. Embassy Kyiv’s public diplomacy (PD) section; Onur Dizdar, cultural affairs assistant at the U.S. consulate in Istanbul; Monica Sarmiento, strategic public engagement specialist at U.S. Embassy Mexico City; and the Mobile American Corner team at U.S. Embassy Tirana.

The PD section in Kyiv was recognized for the range of activities it carried



U.S. Embassy Tirana’s public diplomacy team created a Mobile American Corner to bring programming to underserved parts of Albania.

out despite the extraordinarily difficult circumstances at post. This work included the daily business of shaping official messaging in support of U.S. policy but also handling visits to the country from U.S. officials at the highest level, such as that of President Biden in February 2023.

The section also engaged in long-term programming, including media development, civil society support, and English teaching, to help postwar Ukraine rebuild its human capital, strengthen democratic norms, and advance the rule of law.

Onur Dizdar devised a novel strategy centered on game development to engage Turkish youth. After almost a year of preparation, his team launched the mission’s first-ever Tech Camp, a three-day event that led to dozens of gaming prototypes addressing one of three critical issues for the U.S. mission in Türkiye: combating climate change, gender-based violence, and disinformation. Six prototypes were selected to receive seed money for development into playable games.

To mark the bicentennial of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Mexico, Monica Sarmiento planned and coordinated more than 200 programs, engaging dozens of governmental, business, and academic entities on both sides of the border.

Her work resulted in substantial donations from companies to support the American Spaces network in Mexico, as well as commitments from more than 40 U.S. universities and colleges to promote greater opportunities for Mexican students to study in the United States.

In an innovative effort to reach underserved and underdeveloped communities in rural parts of Albania, U.S. Embassy Tirana’s PD team packaged the most effective American Corner programs, put them on a branded tour bus, and traveled around the country. Visiting eight cities



Historical Revisionism, the Cold War, and NATO

To a striking extent, the revisionist interpretation of the events of the post World War II period—the “Cold War”—has been accepted by a significant number of students and professors.

The orthodox view of the origins of the Cold War, as held by the vast majority of persons in the foreign affairs establishment, maintains that the Cold War started at the end of World War II when the Soviet Union rebuffed U.S. efforts to establish international cooperation and began to forcibly impose Communist regimes on the liberated European states.

The traditionalists have maintained that were it not for the massive U.S. assistance to the continent, Western Europe would have fallen under Soviet dominance. Further, the establishment of NATO provided the military strength which “contained” further Soviet expansion.

Revisionists regard specific Western actions as crucial in arousing Soviet suspicions. The revisionists claim that Moscow was practically compelled to react to such “aggressive” American actions as the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the rearmament of Germany, and the establishment of NATO, all of which aroused traditional Russian fears of hostile aims on the part of the outside world.

To revisionist historians, the U.S. bears the guilt for initiating the Cold War because of America’s never-ending search for new markets for investment. To the radical revisionist, there is no such thing as accident or chance; in his perspective, U.S. policy throughout the 20th century has operated according to a design, with the underlying motive being the

single-minded protection of U.S. imperialist-capitalist interests.

The current revisionists indict the very nature of American society in the 20th century, and denounce what had once seemed to be our most enlightened policies as imperialism in its worst form.

Probably the majority of persons over 30 working in the foreign affairs agencies have held the view that U.S. policy since WWII, whatever its mistakes, has been founded on a basic American idealism, and carried out by well-intentioned (if all too human) leaders under difficult circumstances in an imperfect world. We have conceived of such policies as the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan as master strokes which combined successfully our idealistic impulses with shrewd practicality, and which not only staved off a Soviet take-over on the Continent, but brought about the revival of postwar Europe.

And as practitioners, aware of the complex factors which go into the formulating and implementing of foreign policy, we generally find that the revisionist analyses do not ring true.

It is a frustrating experience for someone who has lived through the period to convey the atmosphere of urgency, even of desperation, in which the Western leaders made their decisions following the end of WWII, as freedom was crushed in country after country in Eastern Europe.

—FSO John P. Owens, excerpted from his article, “The Universities and Historical Revisionism,” in the August 1973 FSJ.

located far from the existing American Corners, the tour reached more than 4,000 youth.

The Mobile American Corner is now an annual project for Tirana’s PD section, and State Department PD offices are using it as a model for other posts to follow.

Honorable mentions went to the public affairs section of the Venezuela Affairs unit based at U.S. Embassy Bogotá; Erica Thibault, public affairs officer at U.S. Embassy Tunis; and Lau-

rence Socha, public affairs officer at U.S. Embassy Mogadishu.

SFRC and HFAC Hearings: Power Testifies

USAID Administrator Samantha Power testified on April 26 before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) and on May 17 before the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC). Both hearings were to review the USAID Fiscal Year 2024 budget request to Congress.

While the FY24 budget request for the State Department and USAID together stands at \$63.1 billion, \$32 billion of that is earmarked as foreign assistance for USAID fully and partially managed accounts—an increase of \$3 billion (or 10 percent) over the FY23 level.

Administrator Power also testified in the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Subcommittees in both chambers.

In her opening remarks before HFAC and SFRC, the Administrator said the new budget would help the agency promote democracy abroad, bolster broadly shared economic growth, and meet growing humanitarian needs. The funding would also go toward USAID's workforce, funding the staff necessary to carry out the agency's ambitious agenda.

She spoke at length about the reversal of previously positive trends, noting that the pandemic damaged health systems and economies, and that rising inflation has been exacerbated by Russia's war in Ukraine, pushing more communities toward poverty.

She said the new budget is needed to address these challenges, thereby also bolstering America's national security and prosperity.

Diplomats Respond to "The Diplomat"

Released on April 20 to an eager "worldwide available" audience, Netflix's new series "The Diplomat" takes some liberties in its portrayal of life in the U.S. Foreign Service. Nevertheless, we



know many of you have been bingeing—and airing your takes.

Here, members of the FS community respond to the show:

Kate and Hal felt emblematic of two types of Foreign Service officers:

Kate, the hard working, behind-the-scenes bureaucrat who would rather be in Kabul mitigating the fallout of a multi-decade foreign policy crisis. And Hal, the ego-driven, calculating counterpart who craves the spotlight, wanting power for the sake of power. Like any institution, the State Department has its fair share of Hals, which prompts the question: how do we recruit and retain more Kates?

—Maryum Saifee, FSO

As a diplomat, it's difficult not to be a purist while watching the show, but I realize some creative license is needed to sell this to a wider audience. (Not sure clearing demarche talking points makes

In a Facebook post, FS spouse Gunner Hamlyn shares his thoughts on how the Netflix show could have been titled. EFM (eligible family member) is the official designation for a Foreign Service family member.

for good TV, for example.) That said, I'd compare diplomats watching "The Diplomat" to pilots watching "Airplane"—a hilarious stretch of the imagination, but still very entertaining.

—Anthony Eterno, FSO

I was very disappointed in this show. I don't know why Hollywood feels the need to portray high-powered women as frazzled and high strung instead of poised and in control, like most ambassadors I have worked for.

—Jane Vizzi, former FSO

It's great to see diplomacy foregrounded in a Hollywood production about national security. There are basically no pop culture images of heroic diplomats, but Keri Russell's Amb. Kate Wyler character is courageous, razor-sharp, and has a strong sense of purpose. She reminds me of a lot of the women (and men) I know at the State Department. We should celebrate our diplomats. They are shaping history in real time and rarely get any credit.

The show also does a great job showcasing the mechanisms of diplomacy. Foreign policy expresses itself in the subtleties of private messages and public statements.

The ambassador is shown chess-piecing high-level visits, managing complicated alliances, interpreting uncertain intelligence, and generating least-bad strategies to avoid what the show suggests is a slippery slope toward nuclear war.

—Dan Spokojny, former FSO

Site of the Month: Federal Drive (<http://bit.ly/FederalDrive>)

This weekday podcast by Federal News Network explores current issues facing the executive branch through interviews with federal executives and government contractors.

Hosted since 2006 by Tom Temin, a government information technology journalist, episodes range in length from 45 minutes to an hour and don't shy away from granular topics.

Temin addresses such issues as barriers to digital transformation in government agencies, the case for evidence-based policymaking on Capitol Hill, and how the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention could improve pandemic readiness.

For commuters literally making a "federal drive," the podcast can also be heard on the airwaves at 1500 AM in the Washington, D.C., region.



The appearance of a particular site or podcast is for information only and does not constitute an endorsement.

This edition of Talking Points was compiled by Julia Wohlers. ■

Boomerang Diplomats? Another Look at Reappointment

BY SONNET FRISBIE

Workforce changes across the U.S. economy in recent years have made it more common than ever

for so-called “boomerang” workers to return to previous employers. A growing literature suggests that these employees bring a number of benefits.

Those who return are generally more satisfied than employees who never left, presumably because they know the exact hue of the grass on the other side. They are significantly cheaper to onboard and already know the organizational structure and culture. In certain types of roles, they seem to perform better.

This is why well-meaning family and friends were befuddled by how much I agonized over whether to leave the Foreign Service last year for an exciting new opportunity. “But you can always go back, right?” they frequently asked. The answer for most Foreign Service officers (FSOs) up to this point, as many readers of this journal will know, is no.

That may be about to change.



Sonnet Frisbie was an economic-coned Foreign Service officer from 2009 to 2022. Her assignments included Mexico, the Czech Republic, Iraq, Poland, and Washington, D.C. She is currently the lead geopolitical risk analyst for Europe, the Middle East, and Africa for Morning Consult. Her analysis and commentary have been featured in The New York Times, Bloomberg, Axios,

The Financial Times, Politico, and more.

A sincere thank you from the author to AFSA, the State Department Bureau of Global Talent Management, and all the former and current Foreign Service officers who shared their experience and expertise for this piece.

The assumption has long been that FSOs will start at entry level and serve a 20-year career.

Current Policy: A Product of Culture and Process

There has long been a theoretical path back into the Foreign Service. But as implemented, the policy has actively discouraged reentry. The Foreign Service Act of 1980 (as amended) allows for the reappointment of former FSOs when it meets the needs of the Foreign Service.

The Bureau of Global Talent Management (GTM) has historically interpreted this to mean: (1) there must be a deficit of employees in the grade and skill code of the position to be filled, (2) there must be no active bidders to fill the position, and (3) the position must remain unassigned for 30 days or more after the opening of the stretch assignment season.

There are additional restrictions, including a requirement to serve a directed assignment upon reentry.

And reappointment has to be sought within five years of resigning (extended to eight years for those employed in the Civil Service).

Furthermore, when applications have been open in recent years, the skill codes with deficits have been limited to some specialists and consular-coned generalists. In effect, reappointment has not been a viable option for the majority of FSOs. This begs the question, why?

Culturally, an FSO career is viewed as an apprenticeship. The assumption has long been that FSOs will start at entry level and serve a 20-year career, much as the assumption once was that employees would spend a full career span at a single company. Department workforce planning models are still based on this underlying assumption.

Process also drives policy. Reappointment affects a very small group. While major initiatives like changes to the oral exam are hotly debated, reappointment has been a sideshow, with commensurate resources and attention allocated to it. There is no dedicated reappointment team in GTM. The current process for bureaus to get needed staff through reappointment is reportedly so onerous that they typically opt

Unsatisfied demands for flexibility are a factor in retention, a finding that prompted the creation of an Office of Retention.

for other, more well-trodden paths to fill their vacancies.

Now multiple individuals with insight into the process tell me that reappointment is getting a makeover. The careers.state.gov website was updated in March to announce an open season until June 30 for all skill categories at the FS-2 level and below to express interest in reappointment. This will help the department gauge the size of the latent demand for reentry.

In addition, GTM is purportedly updating the standard operating procedure (SOP) with an eye to making it smoother to rejoin and is looking to staff that effort appropriately.

Why Bother?

With so many competing HR demands, three things make reappointment worth the effort: strengthening retention and diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA), upskilling the department's mid-levels, and embracing incremental positive change.

Strengthening retention and DEIA. Following broader post-COVID-19 pandemic trends, department employees are demanding greater flexibility. Although the department has made strides in this regard, former Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Brian McKeon said internal workforce surveys show that “significant numbers” of employees are thinking of leaving. He noted that unsatisfied demands for flexibility are a factor in retention, a

finding that prompted the creation of an Office of Retention. (On a personal note, after announcing my resignation, I was shocked by the number of FSOs who asked to speak with me privately, telling me they were also considering leaving.)

A 2021 Harvard Kennedy study found that although attrition may not appear higher, disaggregated rates reveal that women and racial and ethnic minorities were leaving the department at a higher rate. For some former FSOs with whom I spoke, leave without pay (LWOP) as it now exists would have helped them stay (it was extended to three years under former DG Carol Perez).

Greater LWOP flexibility has been a perennial recommendation to address DEIA and other workforce flexibility goals and is a useful analogue to reappointment. Just as consensus has emerged that a more generous LWOP policy is a retention measure (rather than a flight risk), a liberal reappointment policy would allow the department to retain some employees who need more flexibility to complete full careers in the Foreign Service.

Needs of the Service. In a speech at the Foreign Service Institute in October 2021, Secretary of State Antony Blinken laid out areas in which the department needs more expertise: climate, global health, cyber security and emerging technologies, economics, and multilateral diplomacy.

Following his lead, the Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of GTM Marcia Bernicat said last year

that State needs upskilling in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields and new technology. Similarly, the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) prioritized the role of science and technology in the exercise of diplomacy.

Much of this expertise is going to come from new specialized positions in the Civil Service. But leadership has been clear that the Foreign Service also needs skill modernization.

There is extremely limited mid-career entry into the Foreign Service, mostly through Civil Service to Foreign Service conversion (as of this writing, a pilot lateral entry program at State, mandated by the NDAA, has not yet begun). That means that the upskilling the Secretary and DG call “critical to our national security in the years ahead” needs to take place primarily within the current ranks.

Hiring entry-level officers with the desired skills is an important part of this effort. But in 10 years, those same skills will, in turn, need to be renewed; there is a perpetual need for updated capabilities at the mid-ranks. This is why training has been such a prominent element of reform efforts.

Take, for instance, the push to revamp economic and commercial training. State has a number of programs to allow FSOs, mostly in the economic cone, to spend a brief stint in the private sector, like the Eagleburger Fellowship and six-month practicums after economic training.

Prioritization of these kinds of programs shows that private sector experience is increasingly necessary for top performance by those FSOs. Reappointment would be an additional cost-effective way to get people with the desired experience at the mid-ranks.

Incremental change is still change. According to GTM's 2020 workforce

data (the latest year released publicly), roughly 50 FSOs per year on average are voluntarily separating for reasons other than retirement. Most of them presumably don't ever seek reappointment. So changing the policy will not solve the department's upskilling issues, but for that matter neither will it break the system.

While sometimes we need the kind of big thinking involved in blue-sky proposals like a Foreign Service reserve, most institutional improvement happens as piecemeal incremental change. Expanded reappointment is one such small step. For many of the needed changes, such as current moves to remove skill code and grade restrictions, all that is required is a change to the SOP. Foreign Affairs Manual changes would be sufficient for much of the rest.

How to Stick the (Return) Landing

The department is in the early days of rethinking the process for reappointment, and many policy elements have not yet been settled. Time limits for seeking reappointment, ways to recognize experience gained while away, and the interests of employees who stayed all appear to be under consideration.

Let's be honest, there are some possible pitfalls to welcoming former employees back. If they have not interrogated their own motivations, the reasons they left the first time may sow the seeds for another departure. Policies may change while employees are away, so they will need reorientation and mentorship to help them reintegrate and reach full performance.

And the department needs to be careful not to treat the returning employee as the "prodigal son," showering them with benefits to the resentment of employees

The department is in the early days of rethinking the process for reappointment, and many policy elements have not yet been settled.

who stayed. To that point, one contentious discussion is whether reappointees should be granted rank or grade increases commensurate with experience gained while away.

AFSA representatives have told me that while support for more liberal reappointment is quite high among their members, support for pay or rank increases for returnees is low. There are reasoned arguments for and against, but I predict that the ultimate decision will be to offer reappointment at the same grade and step the employee reached before they exited.

The department could find other ways to incentivize those with the most in-demand skills to return. One idea would be to award points toward rehiring for experience gained while away, much like language proficiency points are used on the A-100 register. Another would be to waive the requirement to serve a directed assignment for those with the most-needed skills.

A related concern is that officers would use reappointment to sit out administrations or policies they dislike. With the caveat that my sample is non-representative, all the FSOs I connected with who had considered or sought reappointment had resigned principally for family reasons or professional opportunities, not partisan protest. It would be more likely that senior policymakers would return via a different avenue, given that reappointment is envisioned for FS-2 and below.

Building an Alumni Ethos

I loved my years in the Foreign Service, but I don't plan to seek reappointment. Why, you might ask, do I still care enough to spend my free time dissecting what some see as an esoteric personnel policy?

From day one, I knew that serving my country was an immense privilege. And despite no longer being employed by the State Department, I am still representing the Service.

Hardly a week goes by that I don't have a call with a young person considering a career with the department, speak on a panel where I'm asked about my time overseas, or connect with former colleagues or contacts looking for advice.

More than a "former FSO," I am a department alumna. I have seen this sense of loyalty and belonging replicated in dozens of other alumni who left for myriad reasons. For myself, and for them, it would be an honor to see behind us an open door to serving at our alma mater again, even if most of us never step through it. ■

Speaking Out is the *Journal's* opinion forum, a place for lively discussion of issues affecting the U.S. Foreign Service and American diplomacy. The views expressed are those of the author; their publication here does not imply endorsement by the American Foreign Service Association. Responses are welcome; send them to journal@afsa.org.

East Africa Embassy Bombings 25 Years Later

REFLECTIONS FROM AMBASSADORS
PRUDENCE BUSHNELL AND JOHN E. LANGE

**Two ambassadors look back on what happened
and what it means now.**



Ambassador
Prudence
Bushnell

Ambassador
John Lange



A tragic anniversary is upon us. Aug. 7, 2023, will be 25 years since the al-Qaida terrorist bombing attack on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

To mark the 20th anniversary in 2018, the FSJ reached out to survivors and compiled reflections from 40 people who were on the ground in Nairobi or Dar when the unthinkable happened. Please return to those powerful stories in the July-August 2018 FSJ to better understand that seminal moment and the way the mission communities came together and carried on.

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary, we check back in with Ambassadors Prudence Bushnell and John Lange, distinguished retired career members of the Senior Foreign Service, who both contributed to the 2018 collection. Pru Bushnell was serving as U.S. ambassador to Kenya and John Lange as chargé d'affaires in Tanzania at the time of the bombings.

In a conversation with the Journal, they shared their thoughts looking back.

FSJ: *What do you think today's generation of the Foreign Service should remember about the 1998 events and the people we lost and the survivors?*

Ambassador Prudence Bushnell: There was a time when U.S. embassies were located on busy urban street corners, across from rail and bus stations, amid bustling commuters, hustling vendors, and awaiting visa applicants.

At mid-morning on Friday, Aug. 7, 1998, Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida operatives detonated a thousand pounds of explosives in the rear parking lot of one such embassy, this one in Nairobi, Kenya. Minutes later another truck bomb exploded outside the gate of the U.S. embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

In Nairobi, 218 people were instantly killed: One hundred and seventy-two were neighbors or passersby. In the embassy, the dead included 46 colleagues: 34 Kenyans and 12 Americans.

The blast injured more than 4,000 people: 400 were severely disabled; 164 endured acute bone and muscle injuries; 38 adults and children were blinded; 15 were totally deafened; 75 suffered severely impaired vision; 49 were left with hearing disabilities. Hundreds of businesses were destroyed or damaged, many of them mom-and-pop stores with little or no insurance.

All this because they were near an American embassy that foreign terrorists wanted to destroy.

U.S. embassies are now housed in fortresses. Most are unbecoming and inconvenient. But they safeguard the neighbors, as well as the people inside.

Ambassador John Lange: The loss was enormous: More than 200 innocent people lost their lives, and thousands were injured,

We did not want the world to forget what happened, so we left our own mark.

—Ambassador Pru Bushnell

in simultaneous terrorist attacks aimed at two U.S. embassies. U.S. Embassy Nairobi, in a vulnerable downtown location with high-rise buildings, suffered the most. At U.S. Embassy Dar es Salaam, in a suburban location with low-rise buildings, 11 people died and more than 85 were injured.

The deaths included American, Kenyan, and Tanzanian Foreign Service personnel doing what the Foreign Service does every day: promote peace, support prosperity, and protect American citizens while advancing a broad range of U.S. interests in countries all over the world.

Twenty-five years later, the trauma of that experience still haunts the survivors and the families of those who died or were injured. Some still suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. There are those who may be able to achieve psychological closure by putting such a tragic experience behind them, but for many of us the intense events of Aug. 7, 1998, are seared into our memories and cannot be forgotten or minimized.

FSJ: *How have your thoughts about the 1998 bombings changed over time?*

Amb. Bushnell: The August 7th Memorial Park, which we founded on the site of the former embassy, becomes increasingly meaningful. A green oasis on a busy street corner, it recognizes by name those who died and underscores the importance of peace and community. It is also, for me, the visible and culminating act of achievement of a traumatized and courageous Kenyan and American community that pulled itself out of the rubble, re-created its organizations, and helped one another to heal in the aftermath of a vicious terrorist attack.

We did not want the world to forget what happened, so we left our own mark. Every U.S. president who has come to Kenya has laid a wreath in front of the arched wall etched with the names of those who perished. *Pole Sana* (field of dreams).

As to thoughts about the bombing, the more I researched how it could have happened given the scrutiny that bin Laden and al-Qaida were under at the time, the more disturbed I became that I had been told by State Department colleagues to stop “nagging” about concerns of our embassy’s vulnerability



This memorial in Arlington National Cemetery honors the victims of the East Africa embassy bombings.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE



At left, Secretary of State Antony Blinken lays a wreath at the Nairobi memorial in 2021. Above, one of two permanent exhibits at the Dar es Salaam memorial honoring victims of the 1998 East Africa embassy bombings.

just months before we were blown up. Weeks after the bombing, the world had moved on. Other than the mandatory Accountability Review Board dispatched by the Secretary of State, no after-action review or congressional hearing was held.

When al-Qaida struck the homeland three years later, the world forever changed. In the words of the 9/11 Commission: “The tragedy of the embassy bombings provided an opportunity for the full examination across government, of the national security threat that bin Laden posed. Such an examination could have made clear to all that issues were at stake that were much larger than the domestic politics of the moment.”

The title of the book that resulted from my research became *Terrorism, Betrayal, and Resilience: My Story of the 1998 U.S. Embassy Bombings* (2018).

Amb. Lange: The single biggest day that affected me since the 1998 bombings was 9/11, when al-Qaida attacked the U.S. homeland. Those attacks brought back all of the terrible memories from 1998 combined with anger. Al-Qaida had planted a truck bomb beneath the World Trade Center in February 1993, bombed two U.S. embassies in 1998, and set off explosives next to the USS *Cole* during its fuel stop in Yemen in 2000. Why hadn’t the U.S. government taken the threat posed by Osama bin Laden more seriously and done more to prevent him from ever again attacking the United States?

In email exchanges on 9/11, survivors of the Dar bombing described themselves as “dysfunctional” and “incapacitated.” We were reliving the trauma. The day 9/11/2001 deeply affected those of us who had survived 8/7/1998.

Fittingly, commemorations of the East Africa embassy bombings continue to this day. I was pleased that Vice President Kamala Harris, during her March 2023 visit to Dar es Salaam, went to the Hope Out of Sorrow memorial at the National Museum of Tanzania to honor the victims and shook hands with staff who had been present during the attack.

Every Aug. 7, at 10:30 a.m., many of the survivors of the Nairobi and Dar bombings and their families assemble at Arlington

National Cemetery at the memorial plaque dedicated to those who lost their lives in the embassy bombings. The gathering brings back painful memories but also reinforces our bonds of friendship and community from shared experiences.

FSJ: *What should we learn (or have learned) from this tragedy?*

Amb. Bushnell: The importance of leadership. On Aug. 7, survivors of the blast who made it out of the building regrouped on the front steps and returned as first responders. Our medical team set up triage on the glass-strewn sidewalk, using good Samaritans to send the most severely wounded to the hospital. Kenyan colleagues from USAID formed teams with Americans to scour neighborhoods, hospitals, and morgues for the missing. USAID drivers formed an emergency motor pool that ran for the next 10 months. Others initiated the emergency task force. No one waited to be told what to do; we did what was necessary.

Take care of your people, and the rest will take care of itself. These words that Don Leidel, a mentor, wrote when I became chief of mission popped into my brain the day after the bombing. I could see a stalwart community taking care of everything from storing bodies for the FBI to initiating medical and death claims for grieving families. My job was to take care of them. That meant asking the right questions, actively listening to answers, eliminating obstacles, and securing resources.

Amb. Lange: At all levels: Take care of our people, take care of security, and prepare for the unexpected.

As I wrote in a March 2001 *Foreign Service Journal* article, “Crisis Response: The Human Factor,” American Foreign Service generalists and specialists, locally employed staff, and family members all have a huge impact on crisis management and embassy security. That makes personnel recruitment and retention vitally important.

There are many aspects to taking care of people, but one that comes to mind in this context is the importance of recognizing and dealing with the lingering effects of such devastating events on active and retired personnel and their family members.

On security, we knew that U.S. Embassy Dar es Salaam had vulnerabilities, including an antiquated building with a 30-foot setback. But it was considered a low-threat post, and we had no advance warning of the devastating attack. Many new, and much more secure, embassies have been built since 1998. But for anyone serving abroad, it is important to be vigilant and not to make assumptions about security, no matter where one is stationed.

And one needs to be willing to take on responsibilities that were never anticipated. In the immediate aftermath of the bombing in Dar, Foreign Service personnel and their family members valiantly took on roles they were never expected or trained to do: arranging hospital visits and medical evacuations for those who were badly injured; running the airport operation for the planeloads of people and assistance that arrived; finding hotel rooms for hundreds of temporary duty personnel; giving up their residence so we could establish a temporary embassy; organizing a commemorative ceremony for our colleagues who had died; working with the Tanzanian government to help the FBI pursue its investigation; and much, much more.

For anyone serving abroad, it is important to be vigilant and not to make assumptions about security, no matter where one is stationed.

—Ambassador John E. Lange

Finally, I have my own message for deputy chiefs of mission: Do not assume when you serve as chargé d'affaires that you are just a caretaker until the ambassador is present in-country. I was a mid-level officer assigned to be DCM, but I served as chargé in Dar es Salaam from my arrival in December 1997 until the arrival of the new ambassador in mid-September 1998. I never anticipated having to lead an embassy following a devastating and deadly bombing, but that leadership role fell upon me—and the American and Tanzanian staff and family members responded heroically. DCMs need to be well trained and well prepared. ■



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The U.S. Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism Fund

What You Should Know

This fund for victims of international terrorism needs to be better known, explains an FS survivor of the East Africa bombings.

BY LEE ANN ROSS

Ripple effects from the 1998 terrorist bombing of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania continue to this day. For many years, U.S. citizens and U.S. government non-citizen employees and contractors injured in these attacks or any other attack by state sponsors of terrorism have been eligible for victim's compensation thanks to the 2015 act that created the U.S. Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism Fund (usvsst.com). If this is the first time you are hearing of this fund, read on to learn how it works.



Lee Ann Ross was deputy director of USAID Kenya in 1998 at the time of the bombing. In the immediate aftermath, the USAID building became the command center, and the ambassador appointed Ross the off-site incident commander. She remained at post for two

years following the event and, in addition to her normal duties, ran the Bomb Recovery Unit, which managed the \$37 million Congress allocated to assist Kenyan victims. She retired from the Foreign Service in 2001.

Background

In 2015 Congress established the U.S. Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism (USVSST) Fund to provide compensation to U.S. citizens and U.S. non-citizen employees and contractors who were injured in acts of state sponsored terrorism. The fund awards payment to victims of acts of international terrorism based on final judgments obtained in U.S. district courts against a state sponsor of terrorism, as well as to the Americans held hostage in Tehran after the U.S. embassy was overrun in 1979.

While many of our foreign affairs colleagues qualify for access to this fund, few know about it. Unfortunately, there was no provision in the law to notify victims that the fund exists. When I called the Department of Justice (DOJ) to ask why there was no effort to notify victims of terrorism, I was told that the DOJ had done the needful by placing advertisements in U.S. newspapers announcing the fund. To my knowledge, neither the State Department nor AFSA has ever made any attempt to educate employees regarding their eligibility for this compensation.

Potential Claimants. A very large number of people who were affected have not been able to claim compensation. Potential claimants could include but would not be limited to victims of the following events: the 1983 embassy bombing in Beirut, the



bombing of Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983, the Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia in 1996, the bombing of the USS *Cole* in Yemen in 2000, the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and any victims taken hostage or murdered by a state sponsor of terrorism. The victims of the 9/11 attacks are also included in the fund and have access to half of the fund resources.

State Sponsors of Terrorism. The list of state sponsors of terrorism includes Cuba, North Korea, Iran, and Syria. Sudan recently settled a case brought by victims of the Nairobi and Dar es Salaam embassy bombings and has been removed from the list. Libya was removed in 2006.

Injuries Covered. Injury can include both physical and psychological damage. It has been ruled by the courts that when “one, who by extreme and outrageous conduct, intentionally or recklessly causes severe emotional distress to another, one is subject to liability for such emotional distress. Acts of terrorism are by their very definition extreme and outrageous and intended to cause the highest degree of emotional distress.”

In previous U.S. court cases related to the Nairobi and Dar es Salaam bombings, the court has accepted plaintiffs’ uncontroverted assertions that they did, in fact, suffer severe emotional and/or physical injury, and the court concluded that defendants were liable for intentional infliction of emotional distress (IIED). I believe that almost anyone who was in the facility or involved in helping in the immediate aftermath of the Kenya and Tanzania embassy bombings will have a strong case for an award based on IIED and/or physical injury.

Damages can include reimbursement for medical bills, economic losses, pain and suffering, solatium (compensation for emotional rather than physical or financial harm), and punitive damages. Further, it has been ruled that one did not have to be present at the site of the attack to claim IIED. Thus, one’s spouse, children, parents, and siblings can claim IIED, as well.

Amounts of the damage are set out in *Peterson, et al. v. Republic of Iran* (a case resulting from the bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983). Under this, spouses can receive up to \$4 million, children \$2.5 million, and siblings \$1.25 million. Victims’ awards are based on severity of injury. Whatever the award level is, it is highly unlikely that one will ever receive the total amount of the award because there are so many people who qualify and there is only so much money in the fund. The fund usually pays out, at most, once a year. The fund currently sunsets in 2039.

How to Make a Claim. To make a claim to the U.S. Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism Fund, one must have a final judgment from a U.S. district court. To do that, one has to sue a state sponsor of terrorism under the Foreign Sovereign Immunities



Act before the 10-year statute of limitations runs out. In the case of the East Africa embassies, one sues Iran because other courts have ruled that country culpable in the bombings. And because Iran has chosen not to respond to any of the bombing cases filed against it, the judge has ruled that cases can proceed notwithstanding expiration of the statute of limitations.

I feel strongly that all of us should know about the U.S. Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism Fund, and that all who qualify should be able to access the fund. With regard to the victims of the Kenya and Tanzania bombings, I assembled a list of names for more than 200 Americans and 100 Foreign Service Nationals (now called locally employed staff) who had not yet made claims. I was unable to find contact information for everyone on the list but reached out to as many as I could.

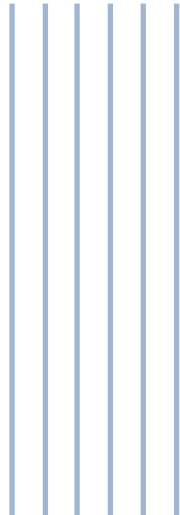
To access the U.S. Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism Fund, you have to go through a lawyer to get the final judgment from the court. A Google search for lawyers for victims of the Kenya and Tanzania embassy bombings will bring up lawyers with the proper experience in working this kind of case.

Further Actions

My hope for the future would be that the State Department would notify any and all victims of their possible eligibility for the fund. Information regarding the fund should be included in all terrorism training programs.

I would also like to see AFSA work to amend the law so that the Justice Department is required to notify any victims of any future event of their eligibility to make a claim through the fund. An amendment should include at least the following points.

Notification. When a terrorist attack that would fall under



My hope for the future would be that the State Department would notify any and all victims of their possible eligibility for the fund.

the purview of this act occurs, the DOJ will be designated as the lead agency for the U.S. government and will make every effort to notify victims that might be eligible to make a claim to the USVSST Fund and in each case provide all of the informational material. To do that, the DOJ will undertake to reach, but not be limited to, the following:

1. *U.S. government employees and contractors.* The DOJ will notify employing agencies and require that said agencies notify their employees. Payroll data can be used to identify which employees would have been potential victims of said attack.

2. *Private U.S. citizens.* In an overseas setting, the DOJ will request that the appropriate U.S. embassy provide information to all U.S. citizens registered with the embassy.

3. *Overseas schools.* In an overseas setting, the DOJ will ensure that pertinent information is provided to the schools that the majority of the U.S. citizen dependents attend.

4. *When an event involves U.S. service members,* the DOJ will coordinate with the Department of Defense on all matters pertaining to identification and eligibility.

5. *In the event of a qualifying attack on U.S. soil,* the DOJ will also coordinate with local officials to notify victims.

A more sweeping but obviously welcome change in the law would be for the USVSST to determine by themselves which events qualify and allow victims to apply directly to the fund without having to spend years going through the judicial process. That would also get around any statute of limitations issues.

Separately, if victims want to sue the country that sponsored the terrorism, they would still have to go through the courts. ■

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DEIA IS NO LONGER JUST “NICE TO HAVE”

A difficult mandate, significant strides, stubborn challenges ahead: State’s first chief diversity and inclusion officer reviews the past two years.

BY GINA ABERCROMBIE-WINSTANLEY

April 12 marked two years since the establishment of the Secretary’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) and my appointment as the State Department’s first stand-alone chief diversity and inclusion officer (CDIO).

On my first day, Secretary of State Antony Blinken made clear that the only way to ensure our foreign policy delivers for the American people is to recruit and retain a workforce that truly reflects the American people. America’s diversity is a source of strength that few countries can match, and it gives us unique advantages on the world stage.



Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, a 30-year diplomat, was the State Department’s first chief diversity and inclusion officer, serving from April 12, 2021, until June 30, 2023. She has held a series of senior positions that included ambassador to the Republic of Malta, foreign policy adviser to the commander of U.S. cyber forces, and deputy coordinator for counterterrorism.

The Secretary asked us to develop a robust framework for fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) across the department and noted that the mandate is a hard one: to change parts of the State Department’s culture—the norms, behaviors, and biases—that have prevented equity in career outcomes for far too long.

Over the past two years, the department made significant strides to advance DEIA, but as with any organization, gaps between intentions and outcomes arise. Assigned to lead this tall order, I knew success would not be achieved in a straight line and that we would encounter zigs and zags along the way. For instance, we have identified a range of anomalies in the department’s demographic data that suggests possible barriers to equal opportunity, but we don’t have the resources to study every single anomaly. Instead, we try to identify those areas with the broadest possible enterprise impact and investigate them first.

We also have our work cut out for us in the accountability space. In our May 2022 DEIA Climate Survey, an unacceptably high number of employees reported that they have been the victim of discrimination, harassment, or bullying, but many employees also report that they do not file an official complaint

DEIA is now a core part of all Civil Service and Foreign Service officers' work requirements.

because they either do not think the department would take the necessary corrective action or they fear retaliation. These are two key areas where a lot more work needs to be done.

Solidifying the Foundation

In year one, ODI focused on establishing a solid foundation that would support the DEIA mission for years to come. We made advancing DEIA an agency priority goal in the joint State-USAID overall strategic plan. We negotiated with AFSA to establish advancing DEIA as a precept for Foreign Service officers. Many questioned the need for a stand-alone precept, rather than weaving it in among other “nice-to-haves.” However, advancing DEIA had been part of the precepts for years without resulting in needed change because Foreign Service officers could demonstrate competency in the precept without addressing DEIA. Once we flagged this, we gained the needed support.

DEIA is now a core part of all Civil Service and Foreign Service officers' work requirements, and for Foreign Service officers it is something that increases their chances for promotion. Every employee benefits from increased inclusion and accessibility, and now every employee gets to do the work. And be rewarded for it.

We established a DEIA Data Working Group, which was charged with the establishment of both a quantitative and qualitative baseline for the department so that future progress could be tracked. I wanted the data disaggregated so that we could really see what was going on and where things might need to be changed to ensure equal opportunity for all.

The “Demographic Baseline Report,” designed to be updated annually, provides every bureau and major office in the State Department a breakdown of its workforce by race, ethnicity, sex, status of disability, grade/rank, and for Civil Service and Foreign Service specialists by job series skill code. The first-year report was posted to our workforce, and in summer 2023, the first two years' worth of data will be posted not only to our workforce but also to the American people.

On the qualitative side, our team conducted the first-ever DEIA Climate Survey of all U.S. direct-hire employees. That survey, which is only available internally, was vital to identify areas in which there are opportunities for growth, change, and impact. The results were not pretty, particularly, as noted, when it came to reported experiences of bullying or harassment, perceptions of lack of transparency and fairness in the promotion and assignment processes, and perceptions of the department's interest in holding people accountable.

In March 2022, in response to Executive Order 14035 on advancing DEIA in the federal workforce, we submitted our five-year “DEIA Strategic Plan, 2022-2026” to the Office for Personnel Management (OPM). In September 2022, after OPM had reviewed all agencies' plans, we rolled out the plan, which outlined and provided a timeline for delivery of more than 200 milestones. We developed an interactive Implementation Dashboard so that employees can track progress toward the goals and objectives envisioned for any given quarter. We also posted the strategic plan on the State Department's public website—one of only a few government agencies to do so.

With this strong foundation in place, the workforce now expects to see evidence of fewer words and more actions, fewer promises and more impact. And, indeed, we have begun to deliver on impactful change.

Fewer Words, More Actions

Because diversity diminishes in our more senior positions, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion began examining the policies, practices, and procedures used to select officers for senior positions in the State Department. We found that the deputy assistant secretary positions (slated for Foreign Service officers)—top bureau jobs, and frequently launching pads for chiefs of mission—were not openly advertised and competed. Candidates heard about them with a tap on the shoulder. These jobs are now advertised and competed, a much-needed step toward transparency and fairness.

More than 20 bureaus have established a position for a DEIA senior adviser to advance DEIA across their respective organizations. The DEIA Data Working Group has briefed more than two-thirds of the bureaus on their data, which led many to adjust policies as a result, particularly when it comes to recruitment strategies and how to screen, interview, and select or hire new talent.

The ODI team increased transparency on equal employment opportunity settlement agreements by alerting employees they can speak about aspects of their cases. We support

efforts to establish an office focused on stopping bullying and harassment.

Congressional support has allowed the State Department to expand the availability of paid internships, and State is converting all internships to paid internships. State's first cohort of 126 paid interns was brought on in fall 2022, and we expect to be able to onboard a total of 500 paid interns in Fiscal Year 2023. Recruiting for these opportunities focuses on traditionally underserved communities, socioeconomic groups, and major geographic centers, including minority-serving institutions, women's colleges, public and land grant universities, and community colleges. The ODI team, including our DEIA Data Working Group, will perform demographic analyses on the intern cohorts to assess if the program does, in fact, enhance department diversity.

Recently, in a move that got widespread press coverage, Secretary Blinken directed the State Department to use a more accessible typeface that is easier to read for colleagues with vision impairments. He elected Calibri (a sans serif typeface) for all papers submitted to the Executive Secretariat. Though a relatively small move, it is a start on addressing the broader issues around accessibility and reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities. Our office is also working in collaboration with the Bureau of Medical Services, the Bureau for Global Talent Management, and Diplomatic Security to get medical and lactation devices approved for use within controlled access spaces. Such steps, small or large, create a stronger sense of inclusion and belonging for all.

In March 2023, 16 new demographic questions were added to the State Department's Global Talent Management database. New questions offer Civil Service and Foreign Service employees expanded options to voluntarily self-identify their sexual orientation; gender identity; disability status; regional origin/heritage; where they are from in the United States; whether they grew up in a rural area, small town, or large city; their educational background; and whether they reside with and/or care for an individual with a disability.

The expansion addresses concerns expressed by employees who do not identify with the current binary gender options "male" and "female." It will also address concerns of those who are of Middle Eastern and North African heritage and have long lobbied for a "MENA" category. The new questions about where employees spent the majority of their time prior to age 18 and if they lived in a rural area, small town, or large city will allow us to address congressional interest in whether our workforce is drawn from diverse communities and all 50 states.

More than 20 bureaus have established a position for a DEIA senior adviser to advance DEIA across their respective organizations.

The questions are voluntary, but we encourage employees to answer them, because doing so will give us a much better sense of our overall workforce and any issues particular demographic groups may have.

This summer we will release the results of our first three "barrier analyses"—one on potential barriers for Civil Service progression to the Senior Executive Service, one on mid-level bidding for Foreign Service officers, and one on Civil Service applicant data flow. The last two studies—on FS mid-level bidding and CS applicant data flow—are extremely complex. To assess, for instance, if protected characteristics are a factor in the bidding process, the data group had to control for things like regional experience, language capability, and the rank and cone of the various bidders. The exacting work going into these studies will pay dividends for years to come via interactive dashboards that will allow bureaus to continuously study the makeup of the bidders and applicants for their jobs.

Looking Ahead

I'm proud of what our team has been able to accomplish in two years. We work to ensure that this DEIA push is the last such one the State Department will ever have to do. I say the "last" because, with a sustained effort, we will make sure that, as my friend and fellow DEIA champion Director General of the Foreign Service Marcia Bernicat likes to say, DEIA is part of our institution's DNA.

To succeed in embedding DEIA in State's DNA, we will take on some stubborn challenges. I always knew that the accountability piece would be the most difficult, and that has proven true. The Department of State 2022 DEIA Climate Survey revealed widespread employee distrust of how the department handles allegations of harassment, discrimination, and bullying. The ODI team is working with stakeholders throughout the building to fix this.

When the Anti-Harassment Program substantiates harassment, victims are not privy to the details of the findings or

Another continuing challenge is the perception that DEIA is focused on advancing only the interests of racial minorities.

recommended solutions; we are exploring ways to address that in keeping with due process and privacy considerations. The ODI team has advocated for stronger consequences for substantiated harassment, discrimination, and bullying, as well as for stronger vetting of candidates under consideration for chief of mission, deputy chief of mission, principal officer, and deputy assistant secretary positions. Those who have a track record of engaging in or tolerating misconduct should not lead our bureaus and missions.

Another continuing challenge is the perception that DEIA is focused on advancing only the interests of racial minorities. We make the case that DEIA benefits everyone: women, racial minorities, those with disabilities, LGBTQI+ individuals, as well as those in the majority in State leadership positions, meaning for the most part straight males of European descent. It takes only a moment to realize not every European American male is part of the “in crowd.” DEIA initiatives help everyone by introducing greater transparency and accountability in our processes.

I will close by noting that we are also living in extraordinarily complex times. If we are to handle the challenges our nation faces with maximum effectiveness, the State Department needs diversity of thought, background, perspectives, and lived experiences at the policymaking table. We need an inclusive workforce, offered equitable opportunities to advance, to ensure our foreign policy is as strong, smart, and creative as it can be. ■



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ADVANCING RACIAL EQUITY AND DEIA

TEN TRUTHS

OF IMPLEMENTATION

A Senior Foreign Service officer who was charged with advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs distills lessons learned.

BY MARIANNE SCOTT

Racism makes democracies less prosperous, less stable, less equitable. It fosters polarization and distrust. And it robs democracies of the strength, the innovation, the creativity that can be drawn from diverse and inclusive communities and workplaces. It requires a concerted, urgent effort on the part of all of our communities and institutions to address this challenge, including government institutions like the one I lead. One of my top priorities at the State Department is ensuring that our diplomats reflect America in all of its remarkable diversity.

—Secretary of State Antony Blinken, “Making Democracy Deliver for the Americas,” Quito, Oct. 21, 2021



Marianne Scott recently retired from the Senior Foreign Service. Her 26-year diplomatic career included assignments in South, Central, and North America; Africa; and, most recently, as senior adviser for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility with the

Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. The opinions and characterizations in this piece are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the U.S. government.

With these words, Secretary Blinken summed up the assignment Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Brian A. Nichols and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Ricardo Zúniga had reiterated to me a month earlier,

in September 2021. We had just started in our new positions, mine a one-year tour as the first senior adviser for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) front office. My mandate: Lead a concerted, urgent effort to (1) include equity as part of our foreign policy to reduce the corrosive impact of racism on equal opportunity in the Western Hemisphere and (2) institutionalize processes and programs to recruit and retain a bureau workforce that reflects the diversity of the United States.

I knew the State Department’s historical track record on diversity in our workforce and inclusion in our workplace was poor. I knew the WHA front office had to provide the leadership, but the entire bureau had to do the work. I knew that most of the State Department had little experience discussing racism, but employee

Identifying and breaking down structural and cultural barriers to inclusion require expertise and concentrated time.

volunteer diversity councils in WHA were tackling this hard conversation and seeking to value differences, not just similarities. I knew we had to make a strategic national security case for equity as part of our foreign policy and a business case for DEIA in our workforce. I knew we had to measure progress. I knew we would make mistakes. I knew some changes would be unpopular.

I also knew that the COVID-19 pandemic had delivered disproportionate tragedy to the people of the Americas, eroding confidence in leaders' ability to deliver and accelerating the demand for more equal, inclusive societies. We had an opportunity on the ground and a clear policy mandate from the top. On his first day in office, President Biden signed Executive Order (EO) 13985 mandating all federal agencies to advance racial equity and support for underserved communities. Six months later, he issued EO 14035 on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the federal workforce. Racial equity and DEIA were top priorities for the Secretary of State and for several members of Congress.

In November 2021 testimony on U.S. policy on democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Assistant Secretary Nichols summed up the challenge: "Close the gap between democracy's promise and its reality." He directed the bureau to leverage our diplomatic, information, and economic influence to help build a more equitable, inclusive region in partnership with democracies.

What did we learn during the first years of our efforts on both the internal workforce and foreign policy fronts? As James Baldwin wrote: "Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced." I offer 10 difficult truths from my experience in WHA that must be faced before change will take hold.

Moving the DEIA Needle in General

Difficult Truth #1: The State Department is still at the "facing DEIA" stage, figuring out how to consider race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and disability as more than EEO categories, and how to engage with other countries on racial equity when our own historical record is so poor. This will require more specificity with vocabulary and clarity as to the results we seek from DEIA in the workforce and from external foreign affairs equity work.

Difficult Truth #2: An underfunded policy applied persistently can produce some change but is unlikely to create a generational commitment or systemic change. Thus far, the State Department has dedicated relatively few resources to DEIA and equity. In WHA we used existing resources to enhance outreach to marginalized communities, embed equity considerations, and further DEIA via public diplomacy programs, economic support fund projects, training, high-level dialogues, and more.

Difficult Truth #3: Identifying and breaking down structural and cultural barriers to inclusion require expertise and concentrated time. Disproportionately, women and people of color have led the charge on DEIA councils and on the State Department's Equity Action Plan and DEIA Strategic Plan. They do this in addition to their full-time jobs, and many are exhausted. Some bureaus have hired DEIA experts, but the bureaucratic inertia to creating high-level DEIA or equity expert positions weakens implementation. The addition of DEIA into the Foreign Service precepts for promotion critically increased the number of people engaged on DEIA and racial equity, but didn't necessarily add needed technical expertise.

Advancing Equity in Our Foreign Policy

WHA had already built a strong foundation for advancing racial and gender equity in our foreign policy. Established more than a decade ago, WHA's Race, Ethnicity, and Social Inclusion (RESI) Unit pioneered the department's only bilateral RESI agreements with Colombia, Brazil, and Uruguay. For many years, USAID, public diplomacy, and human rights programs and staff in the Americas have focused on engaging with and promoting opportunities for marginalized communities, such as access to education and health care, entrepreneurship, and civil society empowerment. It is, of course, important to avoid the politicization of these issues, which leads to polarization and reinforcement of the status quo.

Since 2021, WHA has reinvigorated the existing bilateral RESI agreements and worked on new ones such as the North American Partnership for Equity and Racial Justice with Canada and Mexico (2021) and a new DEIA Memorandum of Understanding with Chile (2022). WHA recommitted to working with the Dominican Republic on ending statelessness there.

When the U.S. hosted the Ninth Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles in June 2022 under the theme "Building a Sustainable, Resilient, and Equitable Future," our team negotiated action plans in which the heads of state and government pledged "increased attention with respect to members of groups that have been historically marginalized, discriminated against,

and/or in vulnerable situations, as well as all women and girls.” President Biden announced a new America’s Partnership for Economic Prosperity with a promise that it would promote growth from the bottom up.

As host of the 52nd Organization of American States General Assembly in Lima in October 2022, Peru continued the conversation among the countries of the region under the theme “Together Against Inequality and Discrimination.” A follow-up Cities Summit of the Americas in Denver in April 2023 included municipal measures to address inequalities.

This work exposed some uncomfortable facts.

Difficult Truth #4: The consistency of senior leadership matters. An occasional talking point on racial justice or LGBTQI+ discrimination or sprinkling “equity” into documents won’t reduce inequality. Senior leaders from across the U.S. government must relentlessly and with humility engage foreign counterparts in the search for innovative solutions to mitigate inequity and inequality. No single country has all the solutions; we stand a better chance of finding them by learning from each other and working together.

Difficult Truth #5: The empowerment of marginalized communities may upset traditional elites, many of whom the United States has considered longtime friends. True friends have difficult conversations. Most diplomats are not trained to have hard conversations on racial bias or LGBTQI+ prejudice, nor to handle the backlash. But we and our partners lose when we overlook racism, LGBTQI+ discrimination, misogyny, and religious bigotry; they contribute to instability. We also lose when we overlook a government’s progress on reducing inequality because we don’t agree on other issues; giving credit where credit is due builds trust.

Difficult Truth #6: The State Department makes insufficient use of data. Even a widely accepted (albeit imperfect) measure of income inequality such as the Gini coefficient isn’t used very often by U.S. diplomats and policymakers. The department’s Equity Action Plan, required by EO 13985, pledges to integrate equity into every aspect of our foreign affairs mission. I served as a co-chair of the working group that, among other measures, proposed a framework to track progress on reducing barriers to equity. I enlisted the department’s Center for Analytics on a pilot project, a dashboard map of the Americas with country-by-country equity data—wealth concentration, demographics, health and education figures, Gini, etc. We got as far as the review of more than 130 independent data sources to identify the most credible and reliable when staffing turnover and budget challenges stalled the project.

The empowerment of marginalized communities may upset traditional elites, many of whom the United States has considered longtime friends.

Advancing DEIA in Our Workforce

In 2018 WHA started one of the State Department’s first employee-led Diversity and Inclusion Councils. By the end of 2022, U.S. embassies and consulates in the Americas had formed more than 30 volunteer DEIA Councils, groups of employees who came together to create more inclusive workplaces. Embassy DEIA Councils hold educational events, pilot diversity recruiting practices and professional development programs, and use data to identify and mitigate disparate treatment in awards, consular services, exchanges, ID checks, and more.

From Washington, we supported WHA employee-led councils’ innovative programs. We advised chiefs of mission and collaborated with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. We offered eCornell diversity and inclusion courses. When U.S. chiefs of mission doggedly engaged ministries of foreign affairs about equal accreditation for all legal spouses of U.S. diplomats, in several places it made the difference in persuading partner governments to provide same-sex spouses the same privileges and immunities as opposite-sex spouses.

And we looked for metaphorical “curb-cuts,” a concept I took from Angela Glover Blackwell’s 2017 *Stanford Social Innovation Review* article, “The Curb-Cut Effect.” Curb-cuts in public sidewalks were required by the Americans with Disabilities Act to give people in wheelchairs access. Who else benefited? Anyone pulling a wheeled suitcase, pushing a stroller, riding a scooter. Focusing on eliminating a barrier to access for one group created better access for everyone.

Informed by anonymized workforce demographic data and knowing WHA’s reputation as a cliquish bureau, our first “curb-cut” came from WHA’s assignments chief to make the assignments process for FSOs more transparent—less who you know, and more what you know and what experiences taught you. We aimed to attract diversity through inclusivity by making the bidding process fairer for all. (At the same time, diplomacy is a relationship business, so who you know will continue to matter. Unfortunately, weaker professional networks may be an unintended by-product of telecommuting, which anecdotal

The State Department encourages teamwork, but few rewards actually incentivize teamwork, much less inclusive, diverse teamwork.

evidence suggests women and people with disabilities do more of.)

We conducted diversity recruitment and instituted scored panel interviews with set questions that would interview all at-grade, in-cone bidders. WHA doubled down on adding senior-level “out-year-language program” positions on the bid list to give officers who had spent careers in other regions the time to learn a WHA language. We catalyzed a multibureau bidder feedback survey to measure success. We mostly succeeded, but not without unintended consequences. Notably, the new requirements took considerably more time.

In the process of this work, we discovered some challenging realities.

Difficult Truth #7: Most employees don’t see procedural changes to advance DEIA as their responsibility. With several notable exceptions, I found mid-level staff more hesitant to change the priorities and rules they had learned to live by and expect to get promoted by, even when they had the authority to do so. Entry-level and senior-level personnel tended to be more open to systems and culture changes, but many senior-level personnel don’t do enough to examine the DEIA outcomes under their control and insufficiently challenge their own teams and portfolios.

Difficult Truth #8: The diplomatic advantage of a diverse workforce is clear, but the route from the department staff we have to a racial, gender, and ethnic composition that mirrors our country in fewer than several decades isn’t clear. Nor is accountability clear. Who should be held responsible when the department’s workforce doesn’t represent the demographic diversity of our country? And how should we hold them accountable?

Difficult Truth #9: Even obvious “curb-cuts” often get dismissed as infeasible due to lack of resources or siloed portfolios. For example, the 360-reference system was an improvement when it was built but now adds little value to the Foreign Service assignments process. A system that includes an element of feedback from random subordinates and peers (not just the hand-picked ones) would provide interview panels with better insight and could incentivize more collegiality. This requires pulling

together information from disparate IT systems controlled by several bureaus, a challenging and perhaps costly undertaking.

Difficult Truth #10: The State Department encourages teamwork, but few rewards actually incentivize teamwork, much less inclusive, diverse teamwork. The most important incentives—promotions, assignments, awards—prioritize individual performance and are competitive and limited, creating a mostly “me vs. you” career ladder. Incentivizing diverse and inclusive collaboration, rather than constant competition, may produce better teamwork.



The good news is that the State Department has a history of successfully combining employee-driven change with leadership from the top to make procedural and cultural “curb-cuts,” although they weren’t called that at the time. “The Macomber Era,” as AFSA’s Tex Harris dubbed Ambassador William Butts Macomber’s 1969-1973 period as under secretary, “introduced the cone system and open bidding for jobs, emancipated wives from ratings and unpaid work, mandated gender equality, provided for due process in evaluations, allowed officers to see their ‘secret’ performance appraisals and much more” in the Foreign Service.

Fifty years ago, Amb. Macomber set up dozens of task forces with hundreds of employee volunteers examining how the department conducts business. This is exactly what many offices and bureaus in the department as well as outside organizations have done over the past few years. The State Department is in the midst of an equally monumental era of change.

We need to face difficult truths by holding more uncomfortable conversations and dedicating sufficient resources both human and financial. We need to consider the cost of not making “curb-cut” changes rather than just the immediate price tag of making such changes. We need to collect and analyze data and measure progress. We need to consider equity outcomes in our foreign affairs policies and programs early on, and engage more on equity with foreign counterparts and affected communities.

Most of all, we need to accelerate the consideration of diverse identities, backgrounds, and experiences as our workforce’s superpowers. These qualities make us more effective at understanding, persuading, and negotiating with other cultures and countries. And we need to embrace the national security imperative to seize this historic, urgent moment to strengthen democracies’ collective ability to attack the consistent bias and discrimination that corrodes our societies. There is no better inoculation against authoritarianism than a democracy that delivers equitably for all. ■

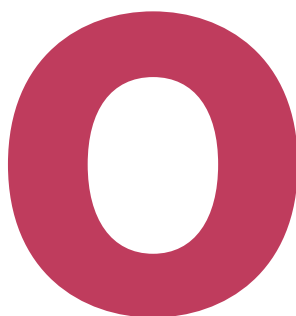
LET OUR REJOICING RISE

TLG CELEBRATES

50 YEARS

The State Department's first employee association looks toward the next 50 years as a dynamic force for progress in the foreign affairs community.

BY YOLONDA KERNEY AND KRYSTLE NORMAN



On Feb. 2, 2023, the Thursday Luncheon Group (TLG) launched a yearlong celebration of its 50th anniversary with a festive luncheon in the Benjamin Franklin State Dining Room at the Department of State. The first in-person TLG event post-pandemic, the luncheon was part reverent con-

vocation and part joyous family reunion of more than 150 TLG members, employee organization presidents, and congressional representatives.

TLG was founded in 1973 by a handful of Black Foreign Service officers from the Department of State, the U.S. Information Agency, and USAID. Because the group met once a month on Thursdays for lunch to discuss and debate foreign policy as well as personnel issues of interest to Foreign and Civil Service employees across the interagency, they adopted the weekday name.

The first of the State Department's employee organizations, TLG has as its mission to increase the participation of African Americans and other underrepresented groups in the formulation, articulation, and implementation of U.S. foreign policy. In addition to foreign policy examination, its priorities are advocacy, support, and mentoring for African Americans who choose a foreign affairs career.

The unique value of TLG's policy analysis is the cross-fertilization between Civil Service and Foreign Service members, which enables TLG to offer nuanced perspective to policy discussions. TLG has championed progressive foreign policy positions such as pointed opposition to apartheid, support for post-colonial government reforms in the global south, and support for environmental protections.



TLG President Yolonda Kerney, at right, is a public diplomacy-coned Foreign Service officer. She currently serves as senior policy adviser in the Secretary of State's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Her overseas experience includes tours in the Caribbean

and sub-Saharan Africa.

TLG Foreign Service Vice President Krystle Norman, at left, has a passion for leading strategic campaigns, building coalitions for change, and mentoring aspiring and entry-level diplomats. After serving in public diplomacy positions in South America, Europe, and in Washington, D.C., at the Foreign Service Institute, she joined the Bureau of African Affairs as the desk officer for Mozambique and Eswatini (formerly Swaziland).

Throughout its five decades, TLG has been a dynamic force for progress at the State Department and in the foreign affairs community broadly. Membership is open to all employees of the foreign affairs agencies. The strength and effectiveness of TLG's work was abundantly apparent at the anniversary celebration. The group's 2022-2024 action plan promises to deepen that success.

On the Shoulders of Giants

TLG Vice President Krystle Norman welcomed guests with a reminder of the group's importance and responsibilities. "We have and will continue to make important contributions to the formulation, articulation, and implementation of foreign policy," she stated. "The responsibility to shape and strengthen this institution that has become the leading voice for African American and foreign affairs professionals of color is one that neither I nor the board take lightly. We stand on the shoulders of giants, lean on the counsel of our pioneers, and work every day to forge a future filled with resilience and unwavering optimism. TLG is truly a family, a legacy, and a community deeply rooted in its past and fiercely devoted to its future."

The ceremony included announcement of the 2023 TLG Pioneer Award winners: Ambassador (ret.) C. Steven McGann and Ambassador (ret.) Pamela Bridgewater. TLG Pioneers are distinguished by their contributions to foreign policy and their commitment to mentorship. The awards were established to honor awardees' achievements and, at the same time, spotlight what's possible for aspiring new members. The Pioneer Award is given to individuals who have invested in the recruitment, retention, empowerment, support, advocacy, sponsorship, and/or mentorship of Foreign Service and Civil Service people of color in the foreign affairs agencies, within or outside of the TLG representational community.

Some of TLG's newest members presented the awards, and in doing so, they expressed their gratitude for TLG's support and offered insight into the power of its programs. In introducing Amb. McGann, State Department intern and new TLG member Ghaida Ahmed said: "Discovering TLG was one of the best parts of my experiences at the State Department. I'm a current master's candidate at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced and International Studies. And after graduation I hope to join the State Department as a foreign affairs officer. Over the summer I had the honor and privilege of interning at the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor under the Office of Near Eastern Affairs. My experience was nothing short of extraordinary."

She continued: "At the time, however, interns were not being paid as they are now. To my complete surprise upon the completion of the 10-week program, I received a call from board members of TLG and ABAA [the Association of Black American Ambassadors] letting me know that I was going to be receiving a stipend [to defray internship expenses] for my time and dedication. I'm so grateful that organizations like TLG exist, because they have highlighted to me that Black Americans not only have an honorable place at this distinguished agency but can also make venerable achievements while making history, as many of you all have done."

Amb. McGann was founder of the international consulting firm The Stevenson Group and a retired Senior Foreign Service officer with the rank of Minister-Counselor. He was U.S. ambassador to the Republics of Fiji, Nauru, and Kiribati, the Kingdom of Tonga, and Tuvalu. He also served as the deputy commandant and international affairs adviser of the Dwight D. Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy at the National Defense University. Amb. McGann served two tours at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations covering issues



Past TLG presidents with Secretary Antony Blinken (left to right): Stacy Williams, Amb. Pamela Bridgewater, Amb. Teddy Taylor, Amb. Aurelia Brazeal, Secretary Blinken, Amb. Ruth Davis, Amb. Gail Mathieu, Amb. Steven McGann, and Yolonda Kerney.



At the TLG 50th anniversary luncheon on Feb. 2, 2023, Director General Marcia Bernicat (center) presents Amb. Ruth Davis with a bouquet of flowers as Secretary of State Antony Blinken looks on.

in the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Security Council.

In his remarks on receiving the award, McGann encouraged Ms. Ahmed and all other State Department aspirants: “We chose a career that has a path that is difficult. It’s not easy. But that’s why we have a duty to make sure that the policies toward recruitment, retention, and promotion are sound. It is our obligation to ensure the continuity, the viability, and the sustainability of the Pickering, Rangel, and Payne programs. But most importantly, it’s important for us to understand that we are the State Department. We are a part of the State Department.” (Sadly, Amb. McGann passed away on May 24. He will be deeply missed, but his legacy will live on.)

An Introduction to Excellence

Amb. Bridgewater, the second Pioneer Award recipient and a former president of TLG, is a three-time ambassador who retired from the Foreign Service in 2013. Among many important assignments, she was the first African American woman to serve as consul general in Durban and the longest-serving American diplomat in South Africa. Appointed U.S. consul general in Durban in 1993, she worked closely with Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress during the transition from apartheid. Later named the State Department’s special coordinator for Peace in Liberia, she was instrumental in bringing that country’s second civil war to an end in 2005.

Amb. Bridgewater was introduced by newly selected Rangel Fellow Abbie Ferguson, who described her experience with TLG. “My introduction to TLG came through my participation in the group’s Larry Palmer Envoys program with former Diplomat

in Residence Dr. Yolonda Kerney, who worked with Ambassador Palmer early in her career,” Ferguson explained. “[After his death, she] wanted to continue his legacy of service and mentorship by introducing historically Black college and university [HBCU] students like myself to the work of the State Department and the importance of excellence in diplomacy. So she started the Palmer Envoys.”

Ms. Ferguson continued: “In December I graduated from the University of the District of Columbia with a bachelor’s degree in political science and a concentration in global studies. And I was also chosen as a 2023 Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Graduate Fellow. My fellow Palmer Envoy, Karmel Reeves, was selected as a Pickering Fellow. We are proud to be the first Palmer Envoys to become diplomatic fellows, and we are both grateful to TLG.”

In accepting her award, Amb. Bridgewater cited TLG’s professional development programs and networking events: “As we pay it forward in the years ahead, we commit ourselves to continuing the work of the Thursday Luncheon Group and, Mr. Secretary, in making sure that the face of American diplomacy continues to represent the best of the United States of America.”

An Ongoing Story

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the keynote speaker, was introduced by TLG member Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley with a nod to TLG’s provenance: “Before diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility [DEIA] was a formal concept or an arm of organizational management under a committed and bold Secretary, TLG members focused on inclusion, accessibility, equity, and diversity across the interagency.”

Secretary Blinken saluted TLG’s impact over 50 years: “As the oldest employee affinity group, the TLG has helped launch other employee organizations and served as a model to those helping Americans of all backgrounds find a home here in the department. What’s so encouraging to me is to see some of our younger colleagues come up here today and show that this is an ongoing story. Over the past half century the Thursday Luncheon Group has quietly, steadily changed American diplomacy. We see that first and foremost in TLG’s members—devoted diplomats who have always offered a hand-up to the next generation.

“TLG has also encouraged the department to improve how it recruits, how it retains, and how it promotes employees of color so that, yes, our department actually looks more like the country it represents,” he continued. “This is literally the future of our foreign policy. Thank you, thank you, thank you for this.”

Secretary Blinken received an honorary lifetime TLG membership from Ambassador Ruth Davis. “Early in your tenure as Secretary of State,” Davis explained, “you said, ‘We simply cannot advance America’s interest and values around the world without a workforce that is truly representative of the American people. Beyond diversity we are committed to inclusion.’ TLG members know that institutional attitudes are guided by their leaders. Therefore, we feel very fortunate to have you at the helm of this great institution that we all love so well. And that is why we take great pleasure in conferring on you a lifetime membership in TLG.”

As guests rose to give Amb. Davis a standing ovation, Director General of the Foreign Service Marcia Bernicat presented her with a bouquet of flowers and a tribute: “We think it is only fitting that as TLG celebrates its 50th anniversary and its service to the international affairs community, we also pause to recognize a trailblazer, past TLG president Ambassador Ruth Davis. Hers is a long list of firsts. She was the first female senior watch officer in the Operations Center, the first African American director of the Foreign Service Institute, the first African American female Director General of the Foreign Service, and the first African American woman to be named a Career Ambassador. Who in this room does not stand on the shoulders of this giant?”



The Thursday Luncheon Group Executive Board (left to right): Jacques Etienne, membership chair; Bernie Cole-Byrd, treasurer; Candice Helton, Civil Service vice president; Yolonda Kerney, president; Krystle Norman, Foreign Service vice president; Russell Brooks, programming chair.

JAVON ROWE

In closing the ceremony, TLG President Yolonda Kerney reflected on the group’s role: “When I first joined the Foreign Service I was told—and I still believe it to be true—this is the greatest way to serve this country. I was also admonished: ‘Even if it costs you, speak truth to authority. If it costs you the ambassadorship, speak truth to authority. It is the right thing to do.’ And the truth is,

at many inflection points in our history, TLG hoisted a mirror and asked the foreign affairs community and the agencies to look at themselves. And we did not always like what we saw.

“But in it we also found things of great beauty,” Kerney continued. “We saw the dignity and the moral force and the clarity of wisdom of Ruth Davis and Aurelia Brazeal and Teddy Taylor and Linda Thomas-Greenfield and Larry Palmer. We saw Pamela Bridgewater serve with distinction in apartheid South Africa. And we saw Steve McGann lead in Asia and the Pacific with maritime policy in ways that we had not seen before. We saw a network of people who support each other and cheer each other on in a thousand small and huge ways.”

Programs and Initiatives

Always a cornerstone of its mission, policy deliberation has been ongoing. The value of TLG’s foreign policy analysis is the interplay between and among its Civil Service members who serve as institutional brain trusts, and its Foreign Service specialist and generalist members who bring the value of ground truth from post. As Secretary Blinken stated in his keynote: “On every issue in every region, TLG members have made our foreign policy smarter. They’ve made it more creative. They’ve made it more effective.” TLG regards dispassionate policy examination as its legacy.

In an effort to attract a more diverse next generation of career Foreign Service members, in 1992 TLG partnered with the American Foreign Service Association to establish a joint internship program for minority college students at State. “AFSA has supported a TLG intern every year since 1992,” says AFSA President Eric Rubin. “To date, the program has supported 32 interns, many of whom have gone on to join the State Department. AFSA has enjoyed a long and fruitful relationship with TLG and looks forward to the next 50 years of partnership.”

In 1995 TLG established the Terence Todman Book Scholarship—named after the late six-time ambassador, who retired in 1993, the first African American to attain the rank of Career Ambassador—to encourage outstanding students at HBCUs to pursue careers in international affairs. In February 2022, TLG President Kerney was instrumental in having the State Department cafeteria named in honor of Ambassador Todman. In 1957, as a young diplomat and self-identified “troublemaker,” he succeeded in integrating the dining facilities at the Foreign Service Institute.

As a core programmatic initiative during its golden anniversary year, TLG seeks to expand its Palmer Envoys program. Selected from HBCUs across the country, the initial cohort of 41 students met virtually with TLG members for eight months. Palmer Envoys are students interested in international affairs careers. The sessions with TLG members included review of the National Security Strategy, the interagency budget process, and the State Department’s Managing for Results Framework to demystify the department and make it more accessible to the

As a core programmatic initiative during its golden anniversary year, TLG seeks to expand its Palmer Envoys program.

exceptional students who might otherwise not seek State internships, fellowships, or employment.

TLG continued its yearlong celebration with a speakers’ series that included retired NASA astronaut Robert Curbeam discussing space diplomacy, and two Real Talk sessions on bidding and general career advice with Ambassador Dereck Hogan and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Ervin Massinga. TLG’s executive board is modernizing the organization’s virtual and social media presence and paying tribute to its luminaries as it prepares for its next 50 years of service. ■

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THROUGH THE REARVIEW MIRROR

THE 1970S

REFORM OF

WOMEN'S ROLE

IN DIPLOMACY

A participant recounts the beginnings of women's quest for career equity five decades ago.

BY MARGUERITE COOPER



Marguerite Cooper, a Foreign Service officer from 1956 through 1986, was president of the Women's Action Organization of State, USAID, and the U.S. Information Agency (1976-1978) and vice president for State (1978-1980). Upon retiring, she worked on the presidential campaigns of Michael Dukakis and Bill Clinton and several congressional and local races (1987-1992). Returning to California in 1994, she led the South and Central California FS Alumni group until 2012. From 2000 to 2022, she was an officer of the National Women's Political Caucus.

It is helpful in moving forward to look back to see where we have come from as we seek a diplomatic service reflective of the American population and values. This article will briefly summarize what near ground zero looked like 50 years ago for women and their struggle to end the discriminatory policies and practices that had restricted their status and roles in the foreign affairs agencies. It is based on my own experience as a woman Foreign Service officer at the

State Department, as well as interviews conducted at the time by others and held in Radcliffe College's Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America.

The 1960s and 1970s were a time of ferment in America. The country was torn by conflicts over civil rights, the Vietnam War, and political issues, including the so-called "liberation" of women. The leadership and personnel systems at the Department of State and other federal agencies reflected some protective but outworn assumptions about "proper" gender roles. That put women's rights and responsibilities on the reform agenda, as described by Barbara Good in her January 1981 *FSJ* article, "Women in the Foreign Service: A Quiet Revolution."

Where We Were

It seems ludicrous now, but when I joined the Foreign Service in 1956, women made up only 4.6 percent of FSOs and

1 percent of the senior ranks; most women FS employees were secretaries. Women FS employees of all ranks and positions were expected to resign upon marriage. They were not hired if they had dependents, and their allowances were lower than their married male colleagues. There was only one career woman ambassador. Many women Civil Service employees were in dead-end jobs. Discrimination on the basis of sex (as well as race, color, religion, and national origin) had been outlawed in federal employment in 1967 by President Lyndon B. Johnson, based on the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

For women FSOs, gender bias seriously harmed their hiring, assignments, performance evaluations, and promotions. At the time, the quota for women and Black people was one hired every other year, according to the transcript of Alison Palmer's 1971 equal employment opportunity hearing. Their assignments were limited by the State Department due to the widely held beliefs that they would be looked down on in the Middle East and Asia and face machismo in Latin America, danger in Africa, and compromise behind the Iron Curtain. For more details, see my article, "Twenty Years After the 'Women's Revolution': A Personal View," in the February 1991 *FSJ*.

Women FSOs' advancement was also severely limited by their assignment largely to the consular cone and some administrative functions, with few senior positions available. In the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), women were clustered in the cultural function, not information. At the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), women officers abroad, largely in nutrition and home economics functions, were the first to go when cuts were made. None were in policy or supervisory positions in Washington, D.C. Few, if any, women were chiefs of mission or in program direction in the three agencies, and their promotions were substantially slower than for men.

The Foreign Service Staff Corps (FSS) was largely made up of women secretaries and male communicators. Secretaries served everywhere, but the ban on marriage left few chances for professional advancement. They had to share their housing, work unpaid overtime, were often without diplomatic status, and were frequently excluded from official functions. They felt disrespected both as professionals and as people.

Adding to the discontent were the wives of FSOs, especially of younger and lower-ranking officers, who chafed at the barriers to their working overseas, the tradition of being subject to the demands and whims of the senior wives at post, and the fact they were evaluated as part of their husband's efficiency reports.



COURTESY OF MARGUERITE COOPER

Mary Olmsted, the first president of the Women's Action Organization, receiving the Woman of Courage award in 2010. The National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC) presented the award in honor of Ms. Olmsted's leadership of WAO. At right, NWPC President Lulu Flores; at left, the author, Marguerite Cooper, then NWPC vice president.

Stirrings of Reform

The first shot across the bow in the fight for FS women's equality was the grievance filed by FSO Alison Palmer in 1968 with the Civil Service Commission. Palmer charged discrimination when her assignments to three African posts were refused or abridged by the ambassadors. It took three years, but she won her case in 1971 on appeal.

In early 1970, State's Deputy Under Secretary for Management William Macomber oversaw a program to craft a more flexible and responsive State Department, with parallel systems for sister agencies—USAID and USIA. Thirteen interagency task forces looked at a broad range of personnel and management issues, held large open hearings from April through June, and drafted recommendations for change.

The previously cited *FSJ* articles by Barbara Good and myself addressed the development of a group at this time intent on seeking redress of issues of concern to women employees and families. An Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of Women (later the Women's Action Organization, or WAO) sought relief at first through the reform task forces.

At a critical Aug. 26, 1970, meeting of the ad hoc group with Macomber and his staff, we found him to be sympathetic to the career aspirations of women. Although the deputy under secretary denied our request for separate women-focused task force subcommittees, he invited the group to make recommendations for "serious consideration." As Macomber said at the time: "It was stupid to require women employees to resign at marriage: if the woman employee intended to continue her service, the department would attempt to find appropriate assignments for



State Department Deputy Under Secretary for Management William Macomber meeting with Women's Action Organization members in 1972. Facing the camera are Macomber (next to podium); his assistant, Gladys Rogers (to his left); Barbara Good, from State; Elaine Fry, from USIA; Idris Russell, State WAO vice president; and Viessa Jackson, USAID WAO vice president.

both employees. If that was not possible, one could take leave without pay for the duration of the other's assignment."

The ad hoc group got to work to provide data-driven evidence of discrimination with 28 recommendations for policy changes. None of them appeared in the task forces' final report, "Diplomacy for the 70s."

Over the next year or two, WAO maneuvered within the system on some of their desired changes in personnel policy: for instance, an end to the ban on marriage and dependents for women; an end to discrimination in FSO assignments; and adjustments for the staff corps in their allowances, housing, and opportunities for upward mobility.

The Personal Dimension

The personal dimension in this progress was critical. Moving from statements of support from Macomber and his Special Assistant for Women's Affairs Gladys Rogers, the group followed up to draft implementing policy statements. Because staff was busy with the task force-required changes, WAO drafted changes to the implementing regulations for review, editing, and publication. As Rogers said, the ad hoc committee provided "a coherent, timely, integrated approach."

Macomber himself said that the WAO approach on these early issues was practical, and he appreciated our willingness to express thanks for work accomplished. WAO's broad membership of men and women, Foreign Service and Civil Service, grew to 1,000 in all three agencies, led in the beginning by an FS-1, Mary Olmsted.

Much has been written about the discontent of employees' wives. Briefly, it was taken up in 1971 as an issue in the Secretary's Open Forum, then called the Open Forum Panel (OFP), following the backlash to a 1970 policy statement restricting the demands senior wives could make on others. That statement had been drafted at the Foreign Service Institute's wives seminar chaired by Dorothy Stansbury.

Richard Williamson led an OFP committee that focused on the legal status of wives in negotiations with Macomber and other senior officers for a policy statement that included appreciation for spouses' contributions through their representational and charitable activities. But dependent spouses were declared to be "independent persons," not government employees, and thus unable to be ordered to take on duties or included in their employee spouses' efficiency reports.

Other issues of concern to spouses abroad were the ability to work and family support. Tandem couples predominantly included a secretarial spouse who would be able to continue her career under the new guidelines. But others sought work abroad, some at missions on a part-time, intermittent, or temporary basis.

While I was president of WAO (1976-1978), a group of spouses sought WAO's help with a host of family concerns they wanted to take to Director General Carol Laise. These early efforts led to creation of the Family Liaison Office (now the Global Community Liaison Office) and the spouses' skills bank, led by Hope Meyers and Cynthia Chard, respectively. For more information, see *Married to the Foreign Service: An Oral History of the American Diplomatic Spouse* by Jewel Fenzi with Carl L. Nelson (1994).

A Turning Point

The fight for women in the Foreign Service took a serious turn in 1976 when Alison Palmer filed a class action lawsuit charging sex discrimination of FSOs and Foreign Service applicants.

In her March 2016 *FSJ* article, "Foreign Service Women Today: The Palmer Case and Beyond," former FSO Andrea Strano credited the lawsuit with causing State to either cease the unfair practices or make progress on such problems as out-of-cone and initial cone assignments for women FSOs, the lack of stretch and deputy chief of mission assignments for women, the disproportionate promotion of men, discriminatory hiring practices and processes, and the reclassification of awards. But this remarkable progress took 34 years to accomplish, on appeal, bit by bit, as described in Palmer's 475-page autobiography, *Diplomat and Priest: One Woman's Challenge to State and Church* (2015).

At the time, WAO agonized over whether to join the suit. We believed that the agencies discriminated, and despite the advances made in 1971-1972, there was much left to be done to achieve an equitable system. A good deal of the problem with discrimination in initial grade and cone assignments, efficiency reports, and future potential was the result of subconscious attitudes. The lawsuit could document such discriminatory actions, based simply on statistical analysis, much of which WAO had collected.

A year later, in 1977, the WAO board and I, personally, filed a class-action lawsuit. It was, as Barbara Good has written, a controversial decision: WAO lost some members. The reasons for joining were several. Following Macomber's reassignment, WAO had less access to senior ranks. Worried about "not lowering FS standards," Director General Laise was much more skeptical of our mission, and her staffs were less responsive.

The State Department's affirmative action program was focused on bringing in professional women from the *outside* to fill senior positions. A program to fast-track promotions or assignments of outstanding mid-level women career officers was perceived as "reverse discrimination" and never got off the ground. It appeared to us that management was counting on a "trickle-up" result so as more women FSOs were recruited at the bottom, over time more would make it to the senior grades. We were afraid that continued bias in efficiency reports, promotions, assignments, and the fewer senior positions in the consular and administrative cones would result in a continuation of women's proportionally lower rank and status.

The class action lawsuit was certified, and a D.C. court consolidated the two cases but rejected WAO's standing as a plaintiff. With the addition of up to seven other plaintiffs, we provided the basis for covering a broader range of personnel issues than would have been true for the Palmer case alone. The Palmer-Cooper lawsuit made a huge difference for women FSOs and probably also provided spillover effects benefiting both the Foreign Service staff corps and the Civil Service. WAO continued its educational programs to raise employees' awareness of opportunities for upward mobility and improvement in job skills. In congressional hearings we testified for a more diverse, inclusive, equitable, and accessible Foreign Service, one that is more family friendly.

We have come a long way in 50 years but always with more work to be done to reach a diplomatic service that reflects the best in America's population and values. What we know is that the initial breakthroughs for women in foreign affairs required the complementary efforts of management programs, pressure by employee groups, and court action. The department's current modernization efforts will keep that search for equality going. ■

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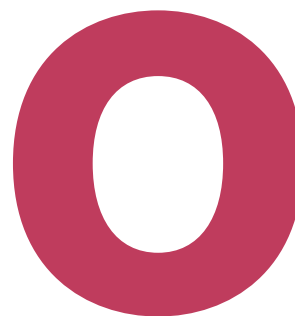
A senior FSO opens up about the legal effort to gain consideration for members of the FS and their families with medical conditions.

BY PAUL M. CARTER JR.



Paul M. Carter Jr., Ph.D., is a Senior Foreign Service officer and currently serves as the diplomatic adviser to General Paul M. Nakasone, commander of U.S. Cyber Command and director of the National Security Agency. Carter's career has primarily focused on

Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union, and his most recent overseas assignment was as consul general in Yekaterinburg (2017-2019). Other postings included Poland, Russia, Greece, and Sri Lanka. Domestically, he has served on the Poland, Russia, and Ukraine desks, as senior adviser to the Helsinki Commission, as a senior fellow at the U.S. Institute for Peace, and as director of U.S. operations of the Afghan relocation efforts, among other assignments.



On Jan. 17, 2023, the Department of State announced an agreement to settle the long-running *Meyer, et al. v. U.S. Department of State* class-action case concerning applicants to the Foreign Service with medical conditions. Under the settlement, the department will, among other things, cease requiring that appli-

cants receive Class 1 medical clearances as a condition for hiring and broaden the concept of “worldwide availability” to accommodate candidates with medical conditions.

As we mark this milestone in the department’s observance of legal obligations and diversity principles, I would like to share my family’s case from more than a quarter century ago. Although not previously publicized, it was significant for the evolution of the State Department’s attitude toward people with disabilities and medical issues.

Indeed, as far as I know, our case was the first to crack open the department's rigid position on worldwide availability for career candidates and their family members. Upon settlement of our case, State ended its long-standing policy of requiring that applicants' family members receive Class 1, worldwide-available medical clearances and uncoupled the hiring of new Foreign Service applicants from the medical clearance status of family members.

For me personally, that earlier settlement meant that I could begin a career as a Foreign Service officer that would otherwise have been barred to me.

A Long Trek

We reached that point only after a lengthy trek through bureaucratic procedures and emotional highs and lows. Fulfilling a long-held dream, I passed the Foreign Service oral assessment in September 1994 and began the entry process, including the security clearance and medical examinations for myself, my spouse, and our daughter and son. Both children were born with congenital cataracts and had developed glaucoma as a result of corrective surgeries.

Their glaucoma was well controlled with eye drops, and our pediatric ophthalmologist was confident we could safely manage overseas. State's Bureau of Medical Services (MED) disagreed, however, and in February 1995 determined the children were Class 5, unavailable for worldwide service. (At the time, pre-employment candidates and family members could receive either Class 1 or Class 5 medical clearances; Class 2, post-specific clearances, were available only to currently serving officers and dependents.)

The decision surprised and disappointed us. We began a lengthy appeal process but met resistance at each stage from MED and the recruitment office of the Bureau of Human Resources



The Carter family, Moscow 2000.

(HR, now the Bureau of Global Talent Management). It was frustrating to know that the same officials who were so dead set against us would work hard to accommodate us if I were already serving. Some officials implied or outright accused us of being poor parents for trying to take our children abroad, despite the fact that we already had spent a year in the Soviet Union with our daughter in the mid-1980s on a scholar exchange. Others expressed concern about the potential costs to the department because of our children's conditions.

The first step was informal consultations between our ophthalmologist and the assistant medical director (AMD) at State, then between my wife and me and the AMD. He was not persuaded, accusing the children's ophthalmologist of having a "cavalier attitude" toward their conditions. We followed up with letters from other prominent pediatric ophthalmologists endorsing our plan. When that didn't work, we requested a review of the MED decision by the Employment Review Committee (ERC), a panel of nonmedical State officials, who also denied our request, in March 1995.

Despite the ERC denial, things seemed to look up when the AMD contacted the ophthalmologist MED regularly consulted. I was told that he "enthusiastically" endorsed our proposed treatment/monitoring plan. The AMD would re-present our case to the ERC with a positive recommendation and was "very optimistic" about the outcome. Just before the meeting, however, his perspective again soured. He told us that in the current political environment, in which downsizing at State was the order of the day, the ERC was more likely than in the past to weigh my potential value as an FSO against potential problems with the children. His assessment of the ERC proved correct, and we received another denial in June 1995.

Indeed, as far as I know, our case was the first to crack open the department's rigid position on worldwide availability for career candidates and their family members.

On the EEO Track

We then entered the equal employment opportunity (EEO) process and were assigned a counselor, who attempted to mediate a resolution. Our counselor spent hours discussing the case with the parties involved, as well as with various officials in the EEO office. The issue of “reasonable accommodation” under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 often came up. Senior officials in HR's recruitment office believed that the ERC process itself was evidence of the department's efforts to offer reasonable accommodation. Others argued that the potential expense of the medevac of our children, if that ever became necessary, was beyond what could be considered reasonable.

The case was eventually brought before the ERC for a third time, in August 1995, with the same negative result (the four FSOs on the panel voted no, while the EEO lawyer and the handicap coordinator voted yes). The director of the recruitment office sent me a letter in September 1995 informing me of the ERC result and adding that my FSO candidacy would be terminated.

Down but not out, I filed an EEO complaint, which was accepted for investigation. It was around this time that we sought legal counsel. I was not a regular reader of the Metro Section of *The Washington Post*, but one day, by a happenstance that in hindsight seems providential, I read an article on the case of female guards at Lorton Prison and their representation by the D.C. Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights. We called the Lawyers' Committee to request assistance. They evaluated the case and put us in touch with attorney Warren Asher, a skillful, methodical, and fervent advocate of disability rights with the prestigious firm of Wilmer, Cutler, and Pickering. Mr. Asher agreed to take the case pro bono in December 1995.

With Mr. Asher on board as representation, our role in managing the case decreased. We had to provide testimony; but, otherwise, the case slowly wound its way through the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and reached the top of the Justice Department. Then, after months of alternating apprehension

and cautious hope, we got a call from Mr. Asher in July 1996 with news that the department wanted to settle. He said the Justice Department had told State its case was very weak, and it needed to resolve the issue. Papers were quickly drawn up for signature. I agreed to keep the terms of the settlement confidential, but I can say that we never asked for anything other than the job.

I was assigned to the 80th A-100 class for incoming officers, which convened in September 1996—almost three years after I had passed the written exam. While I prepared to enter the class, we learned that a memo circulated in the department after our settlement changing the hiring policy: candidates' employment no longer would be contingent on the medical conditions of family members. In addition, family members could henceforth receive Class 2 clearances during preemployment medical exams, though FSO candidates were still required to receive Class 1.

The Process of Historic Change

Although we had prevailed, Mr. Asher was disappointed that the State Department was not required to eliminate preemployment medical exams for candidates, as well as family members. Tragically, he succumbed to cancer within a year of the conclusion of our case. His efforts, however, though not meeting his own high standard of success, contributed to a historic change in how the State Department treated the family members of incoming officers. Almost 27 years later, the *Meyer, et al.* settlement reforming the policy of worldwide availability to accommodate persons with medical conditions goes a long way toward reaching his goal.

The case was a long, hard battle. Reading through the records while drafting this article, I was reminded how hopeless our predicament at times appeared. I also relived some of the stress and self-doubt my wife and I suffered as State MED and HR questioned our judgment and stonewalled our quest for fair and equal treatment. But it reminded us, too, of the people who saw the injustice in our case and provided us with so much help. I realized, as well, that the confidentiality agreement I signed as part of the settlement created a psychological barrier to my sharing the story all these years.

As I now approach age-out retirement as a Senior FSO, I can look back on a successful, productive, and rewarding career serving my country. Were it not for some luck, determination, and the help of a few intrepid allies, however, my opportunity to serve may have been snuffed out by discrimination, arrogance, and bureaucratic inertia. I will note in closing that, contrary to the department's grave warnings, we only ever served at hardship posts; our children never had to be medevac'd for their eye conditions; and, now approaching middle age, they still enjoy healthy eyesight. ■

FROM UNDOCUMENTED TO U.S. CAREER DIPLOMAT

An FSO with USAID shares his story.

BY JESSE GUTIERREZ



Jesse Gutierrez joined the Foreign Service with USAID in 2010. He is currently serving at USAID Mission Somalia in Nairobi. He recently completed a Master of Legal Studies degree at the Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law. He also holds a B.S. and M.S. in civil engineering from the University of California, Irvine, and California State University, Fullerton. He is part of a USAID FS tandem couple and has an energetic young daughter.

had always been ashamed of my background and never spoke out about my past, but the recent focus on the importance of diversity has chipped away at the stigma and encouraged me to speak about my experiences.

After a meeting to set up a new diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) council for USAID/Somalia, I stayed behind to chat with a local employee. He talked about how it felt to start school for the first time as a teenager and other struggles he had growing up as a member of a minority group in Kenya. I shared something about my childhood, and we were both surprised by the similarities. A story that I had been hiding for decades started rising from deep inside. Before that time, I had only shared it with my wife when we began dating. I wanted her to know everything.

The officer denied the permit to go to Los Angeles, confiscated my border crossing card, and deported me to Mexico.

With the inspiration of many conversations and articles in this publication, I first told it as a bedtime story for my 4-year-old daughter. After she fell asleep, I stayed up for hours writing it down.



I grew up going back and forth across the border between Calexico, California, and Mexicali, Mexico. I was born in Mexicali, but with one parent from each side of the wall, I felt at home on both sides. It wasn't until my mom had brain surgery in 1992, when I was 11, that my parents decided to settle on the side with better health care. Dad lost everything to take care of Mom. He scattered the kids with family members in Mexico while Mom relearned how to walk and speak.

Slowly, all her memories returned, and in six months she was ready to reunite the family. But we didn't have a place to live, so Tía Lupe, from El Centro on the American side, offered to convert her stand-alone garage into an apartment. Tía Teresa, an architect from Mexicali, sketched plans to fit our family of six.

The day before construction started, the whole family came to celebrate cousin Luís, who was leaving for Army boot camp. He was 18 years old. I heard the grown-ups reason that if he was old enough to go to war, he was old enough to drink alcohol. So he did. He was hungover the following day when Tío José Luís assigned us to cut the two-by-fours. I measured and marked, and he handled the circular saw. I also had to take the wood scraps to the dumpster, so I held the scrap ends while Luís cut. On the last piece, Luís dropped the saw on my hand, and my severed ring finger fell into the palm of my hand.

I squeezed it with two remaining fingers and ran to tell Tío José Luís. He gave me a towel and ran to start the car. I was wrapping my hand with the towel when I met Mom on the way to the car. I did not want to worry her and pretended it was nothing. She saw the drenched towel and instinctively devised a tourniquet with a sock and a stick. I sat on her lap in the front

seat of my uncle's Astro van. My hand was burning and pulsating, and it took all the conviction I could muster to hold back tears on the way to the hospital. I did not want to distress Mom, who was still recovering from surgery.

Tío José Luís decided to take me to a hospital in Mexico that was at least 30 minutes away, not counting the wait to cross the border. He was concerned that converting his garage into an apartment without permits would create issues with his home insurance and the city's building department. And besides, he said, "*El niño no tiene papeles* [The boy doesn't have papers]." That was when I learned I was undocumented.



My great-grandparents migrated from Mexico to Chicago in the 1920s when my grandfather was a kid. They were legal residents. In 1936 the whole family, except for my grandfather, was deported. As the Great Depression saw unemployment sweep across the country, hostility to immigrant workers grew, and the government deported up to 2 million Mexicans, including citizens and lawful residents, between 1929 and 1939 through the Mexican Repatriation Act.

Grandpa followed his family to Mexico, settled in Mexicali, and went back and forth to California to work in newspaper press rooms. He married, and his children were born in America. The family stayed on the Mexican side to be near the deported relatives who could not return to America.

Although my father has birthright American citizenship, and all the rights enshrined in the 14th Amendment, I was born in Mexico and did not. At that time, the law was that citizenship only passed automatically if the citizen parents could prove they had resided in the U.S. for one year before the child's birth.

In the mid-1980s, my parents hired someone they believed to be an immigration attorney in Calexico to process immigration documents for Mom and the four kids. Mom got her permanent resident card, but we kids were denied for using the wrong forms. Thousands of dollars went down the drain. We did not have enough money to reapply until years later.



The surgeon in Mexico did the best he could to save my finger. But the following summer, Mom took me to a community clinic in Calexico to see if they could fix my hand. They referred me for surgery at the Shriners Hospitals for Children in Los Angeles. The nonprofit hospital even offered free transportation from the border to Los Angeles.

On surgery day, we went early to the U.S. Customs Port of

Entry in Calexico to request a permit to cross the Salton Sea border patrol interior checkpoint. I had a border crossing card, a type of visitor visa, and was not allowed to go beyond 50 miles from the border. The immigration officer quickly found that we, indeed, lived in California, in El Centro. The officer also decided that I did not have the right documents to reside in America and that I could not live with my family. The officer denied the permit to go to Los Angeles, confiscated my border crossing card, and deported me to Mexico. (Whether or not the deportation was legal is another story.)

Mom pleaded, but the agent threatened to take her green card and deport her, too. I had to pull her in tears across the border into Mexico. The Shriners shuttle left without me (and it was 25 years before I got hand surgery).

It took three months to get smuggled back home to California. It was the peak of summer, when temperatures top 120 degrees Fahrenheit in the Imperial Valley. Crossing through the desert was out of the question, and I have never been a good fence-jumper. The weekend before starting high school, an aunt picked me up in Mexicali. She had my brother's border crossing card and a few cousins in the car. We all crossed the border as if going to McDonald's any other Sunday after church.



Now back in El Centro, I was genuinely undocumented. I had no pretensions that having a U.S. citizen parent could protect me from deportation. I avoided going out to play for fear of being separated from my family again. When most of my friends went out to play, I stayed inside our studio apartment reading. I worried every day about the border patrol taking my siblings or me.

By the time I was a freshman in high school, Mom had saved money to pay for immigration applications and lawyer fees for the four kids. (It wasn't enough: We were evicted from our studio apartment for missing rent the month after we paid for the applications—but that is yet another story.) I remember the day we went to submit the forms in the Downtown San Diego immigration office as if it were yesterday. We left El Centro at 3 a.m. We were sure we were going to be the first in line. To our surprise, a dozen people were in front of us when we arrived at 4:30 a.m. After submitting the applications, all we got was a receipt that looked more like an old bodega cashier's register receipt than an official acceptance of the applications.

I was always a good student but did even better with all that indoor time to avoid the border patrol. Still, Mr. Benson, my academic counselor in high school, advised against wasting money

Dad hired a “coyote” van to take me across the interior border patrol checkpoint from Calexico to Irvine.

on university applications, saying kids like me are not allowed. I applied anyway to the three University of California campuses closest to my hometown and went to Irvine. I had a complete aid package with grants and loans but no ride to Irvine. Dad hired a “coyote” van to take me across the interior border patrol checkpoint from Calexico to Irvine. I jumped into the back of a van with no windows, with nine men who had just crossed the border illegally, and we headed north through back roads.

I arrived at my new life in the dorms, where I pretended to be an ordinary college student who parties and studies. I only understood how I slipped through the university gates a couple of weeks before the end of my first academic quarter, when I turned 18. I received a letter from the admissions office that explained I had derived residency from my father; but as an adult, I no longer qualified to be a student there. My world crumbled.

After classes that day, I took three buses to the Santa Ana train station. I took the last Pacific Surfliner Amtrak train to Downtown San Diego. Then I walked a few blocks to the Greyhound bus station and took the last bus to El Centro. I arrived home before midnight and went through the family files looking for the receipt, which had the application case numbers and a phone number to get status updates.

Armed with the “bodega” receipt, I searched for my application in every Naturalization and Immigration Services office in Southern California. It turns out that my application was archived by mistake and had been lost for a few years in a San Diego field office. To my great relief, I received interim papers just days before I was to be expelled from school.



Those documents gave me the right to dream and the hope that those dreams could become real for the first time. I dreamt of going on a study abroad program. Unfortunately, I did not have the resources or the type of papers to study overseas, so I did the next best thing. I volunteered to build homes and schools across the border in the slums of Tijuana.

I empathize with and relate to refugees and USAID's beneficiaries because I have been in their shoes.

After graduating, I joined the private sector as a civil engineer. I worked on billion-dollar construction projects in Southern California but never felt I was using my skills to make a difference. Working to reduce someone's commute through Santa Monica by 15 minutes doesn't compare to working to end extreme poverty while furthering America's interests abroad.

By then, I had my U.S. citizenship and all other requirements to qualify for a federal government job. Volunteering in Tijuana gave me enough overseas experience to eventually

qualify for an interview for a Foreign Service officer position with USAID. I got an offer—no doubt, America is the land of opportunity. Today, after 12 years and five Foreign Service tours, I have worked in 17 countries. I count my blessings because many undocumented friends never got an opportunity to pursue an education and dreams.

I am better off for the struggles I went through. I think my life experiences make me a better development professional. I had slept on the floor, been homeless, used subpar health facilities, and been separated from my family as a kid. I empathize with and relate to refugees and USAID's beneficiaries because I have been in their shoes.

It speaks eloquently about the power of the American Dream that someone that the government deported, a descendant of someone that the government expelled in the mass deportations of the 1930s, could be entrusted by the same government to dispense international aid and conduct diplomacy on its behalf. ■

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The Real Heroes in Getting Out of Saigon

U.S. FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS

A young banker's firsthand account of the unofficial evacuation when Saigon fell.

BY D.Z. STONE

Ralph White, author of the recently published memoir, *Getting Out of Saigon: How a 27-Year-Old American Banker Saved 113 Vietnamese Civilians* (Simon & Schuster, 2023), noticeably flinches when asked if he considers himself a hero. “The heroes,” White says, “were the Foreign Service officers [FSOs] who defied U.S. policy and their delusional ambassador, risking their careers and their own lives to evacuate thousands of at-risk Vietnamese who had worked for Americans. The only Vietnamese officially allowed to leave the country were intelligence assets and dependents of Americans.”

Indeed, if White had not chanced upon a clandestine evacuation program operated out of the U.S. embassy by a small group of FSOs without Ambassador Graham Martin’s knowledge, he never would have found a way out for the entire Chase Manhattan Bank Saigon staff and their families—113 people. “What’s

interesting,” White notes, “is that getting everyone out was never part of my mission.”

During an evening-long conversation, I asked Ralph White about his Saigon experience. Remarkably, I had first met White more than 20 years ago at Columbia University and never had a clue until recently that he had saved these people.

A Temporary Assignment

White’s Saigon assignment began in mid-April 1975, just two weeks before the fall of the city, when he was an entry-level banking officer with Chase in Bangkok. Asked to temporarily head up the Saigon branch, this young man from a small New England town who enjoyed scuba diving, riding motorcycles, and piloting small planes welcomed the stint as an adventure. “I already knew the country and spoke some Vietnamese, thanks to my first job out of college, a year managing the American Express Bank on a military base in Pleiku.” White would replace Cornelius “Cor” Termijn, Chase Saigon’s country manager. Termijn was leaving while there were still daily Pan Am flights out. He feared if he stayed too long, his Dutch passport made it less likely the U.S. embassy would help him evacuate.

White was tasked with keeping the Chase Saigon branch open for as long as possible and to close it only if necessary: “I was told if I had to close, I was to contact the embassy for help in getting the four top bank officers and their families out of the



D.Z. Stone is a journalist and author. Her articles have appeared in The New York Times and Newsday.

White was tasked with keeping the Chase Saigon branch open for as long as possible and to close it only if necessary.

country.” At first, he didn’t see any reason to be too concerned. “I was pretty casual about it. I was drinking beer and going to girly bars. I went to ‘Luuu Night’ at the embassy. I really bought the bank’s story that eventually the embassy was going to help us.”

On his first full day in Saigon, April 15, 1975, White made his initial visit to the U.S. embassy. Termijn and John Linker, the Chase senior executive for Asia, went with the young banker to introduce him to the relevant U.S. diplomats. First, White met James “Jim” Ashida, the commercial attaché. When White asked about his banking counterparts, Ashida said both the Bank of America and First National City Bank had already pulled their American staff. “Not a comforting thought to be the last American banker in Saigon,” White later noted.

Next, White met Shepard “Shep” Lowman, the embassy’s political attaché. Both Termijn and Linker made it clear to Lowman that Chase wanted its Saigon branch to remain open as long as possible and didn’t want their employees to leave yet. They supported the ambassador’s position on this. They needed assurance, however, that the U.S. embassy would help evacuate their top banking officers, all Vietnamese nationals, when the time came. Lowman was direct: The embassy could not promise them that the U.S. government would help their Vietnamese Chase staff leave the country.

“I wondered what was going on. I didn’t quite understand,” says White. “Cor and Linker took it in stride, so I didn’t make a fuss. ... At some point it became clear that the U.S. embassy was not going to be our friend. Ambassador Graham Martin and Deputy Chief of Mission Wolfgang Lehmann were both dead set against (a) the bank closing and (b) evacuating unrelated Vietnamese.”

Because the Chase staff were “unrelated” Vietnamese—not married to or dependents of Americans—they did not qualify for the exit visas their government required to leave the country. Both Ambassador Martin and DCM Lehmann insisted on complying with South Vietnam’s stance on exit visas. However, as Lowman revealed, there were exceptions: Unrelated Vietnamese who were considered intelligence assets were being taken out of the country on CIA transports.

“If all they [Martin and Lehmann] did was slavishly adhere to the host country’s exit visa law, then they have a prima facie defense,” White explains. “The problem with this is they failed to recognize that the war was irretrievably lost, making early no-doc escape essential for all Vietnamese vulnerable to reprisal for their employment by Americans. They didn’t really care about those people who were intelligence assets. They cared about what they would reveal under torture.”

Stumbling upon a Secret

What White still did not know was that Shep Lowman, whose wife was Vietnamese, was running a clandestine program to help evacuate her family and the embassy’s doctor and 20 members of the doctor’s Vietnamese wife’s family—and who knows who

else. “Why didn’t Lowman tell me? Well, if you’re running a secret evacuation operation under the nose of your ambassador, who refuses to face the reality that the war is over and there’s a need for evacuations, that’s not something you reveal to someone on first meeting. I eventually stumbled upon the clandestine operation when I started looking for ways to get Chase staff out,” says White.

Two days after his initial visit to the embassy, White had a message that Lucien Kinsolving, a first secretary, would like to speak to him. White went straight to the embassy.

“Have you met Ken Moorefield?” Kinsolving asked.

Moorefield, an aide to Ambassador Martin, headed up the new Evacuation Control Center (ECC) at Tan Son Nhat Airport. Every couple of hours, a C-130 would land to fly out Americans and their dependents as well as Vietnamese. The next day, White shared a taxi to the airport with Cor Termijn, who was leaving on a Pan Am flight from the civil aviation terminal. White let Termijn assume he rode along as a last chance to speak to the departing country manager. But he had another stop in mind, as well.



1953 HARVARD LAW SCHOOL YEARBOOK

Shepard “Shep” Lowman.

Housed in a former gymnasium on the air base, the ECC was packed with former GIs looking to marry their Vietnamese girlfriends and adopt their children so they could get them out on Pacific Air Command military transports. “The ECC was the brainchild of idealist Harvard Law School graduate Shep Lowman,” says White. “It was a massive undertaking, brilliantly located, efficiently executed, and despite its veneer of propriety, its document requirements were ‘flexible.’ It was on the air base where there was nothing but an abandoned pool, abandoned bowling alley, and abandoned gym. When Ambassador Martin heard about it, I’m sure he heard *control*, and assumed its purpose was to prevent unauthorized evacuation, that exit visas were required. God bless Shep Lowman.”

Not finding Moorefield at the ECC, White went outside to explore. At Tiger Air, a commercial airline operating in Asia, he entered an unlocked DC-3 and considered “borrowing” the plane to fly himself and the top Chase banking officers and their families to Thailand. “I don’t know why I thought that was viable,” says White. “I had a pilot’s license to fly single engines and had only flown two-seat Cessnas and Pipers. I was young and quite confident that I could fly the cargo plane from Tan Son Nhat with Chase staff and families. But that would have killed us all.”

Later that evening, White went to the Chase Saigon offices to make sure the account settlement calculations were done. This is when he made an irresponsible promise. “Mr. Cuong, the deputy bank manager, was supervising a group of clerical workers,” White

White knew that evacuating employees was impossible, so he told the vice consul they were his family.

relates. “I knew they viewed me as David Rockefeller’s man who was going to get them out. Otherwise they’d have joined the refugee trails. They feared a retributive bloodbath for working for Americans.” One of the young women clerical workers asked White what would happen to them. Will he take them with him, or will they end up in a pile of dead bodies?

The words fell from White’s mouth. He said, “I’m not leaving without you,” then directed Cuong to make a list of all employees as well as the names of their spouses and children.

The next day he went to the U.S. mission warden’s office at the embassy to find out what short wave frequency they’d be using in an emergency. There he found the deputy warden typing Vietnamese names into a flight manifest. “That’s the first evidence I had that there was a clandestine program to evacuate undocumented Vietnamese. When I saw the flight manifest, I was stunned. It was totally by chance that I found out,” says White.

The Way Out

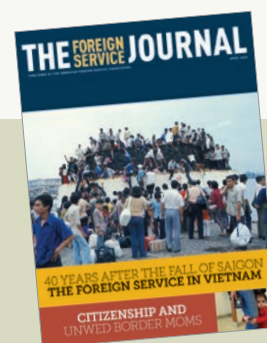
So began White’s frantic effort to get the Chase



COURTESY OF RALPH WHITE

U.S. Army Captain Kenneth Moorefield (left) and his Vietnamese counterpart Captain Ngan. Moorefield was an Army captain in Vietnam when he was badly wounded. White says the Chase Manhattan Bank can be grateful that he then joined the U.S. Foreign Service.

The Foreign Service in Vietnam



In addition to Lowman and Moorefield in Saigon, to save at-risk Vietnamese, a small group of FSOs also operated outside normal working channels at the State Department. In his 2015 piece for the *Foreign Service Journal*, “Mobilizing for South Vietnam’s Last Days,” Ambassador (ret.) Parker W. Borg detailed this under-the-radar effort.

According to Borg: “The core group included, Frank Wisner (Director for Management in Public Affairs), Paul Hare (Deputy Director of Press Relations), Craig Johnstone (Director of the Secretariat Staff), Lionel Rosenblatt (on the Deputy Secretary’s staff), Jim Bullington (who worked on the Vietnam desk and could keep us informed about desk-level actions) and myself (who had been working on Secretary Kissinger’s staff).”

Remarkably, two members of this group, Lionel Rosenblatt and Craig Johnstone, even flew to Saigon on their own to help save former colleagues.

Borg says the men “stashed some 200 Vietnamese former work colleagues in vehicles, slipped them past Vietnamese security and pushed them aboard departing aircraft.”

The FSJ’s April 2015 special edition on the 40th anniversary of the fall of Saigon spotlights “The Foreign Service in Vietnam” and contains first-person accounts of the unofficial evacuation effort and other reflections from diplomats on the ground. Read here: <https://bit.ly/FSJ-April2015>.

—The Editors

staff out via the clandestine program. “There was new urgency as Xuan Loc had fallen, and the North Vietnamese Army was expected to enter Saigon in a matter of days,” he explains.

White’s quest led him to Colonel William Madison, head of the political section in the defense attaché office. Madison told White he would need military buses to get his people past the airport checkpoints. His advice was to get them on buses and into the airport, then shelter them at the ECC until exit policies were changed, which he expected would be soon. Madison warned White to be discreet about this, as Lowman was putting himself on the line.

On April 24, 1975, White got the call from Jim Ashida. He had 70 seats on a bus to the airport for Chase people leaving that night. Even though White needed more seats, 70 would cover the priority list Cuong had drawn up. He told Cuong, then followed procedure to close down Chase Saigon. White himself also needed to be on that bus because Pan Am was flying its last commercial flight out of Saigon that very day.

Once on the air base, White found a shady place for the Chase staff to wait and went into the ECC gymnasium. He got in a line for people without papers. The line ended at a table labeled “Vice Consul.” White knew that evacuating employees was impossible, so he told the vice consul they were his family. The vice consul asked if White was willing to take financial responsibility and make them his wards. White said yes, and the vice consul asked him how many. When White said 68, the vice consul handed him a stack of papers. White filled out a form for each Chase staff member.

“Ken Moorefield, standing behind the consul, took responsibility for the unconventional adoption,” says White. “I’ve received recognition for the rescue of my employees, but without Ken Moorefield’s ‘flexible’ interpretation of the regulations, they could all have been executed.”

Leaving the gymnasium, White ran into Ashida, who had another bus for the next day that could fit 70 more. Was White interested? He was. He left a bank officer in charge of the group at the airport and went back to Saigon. The remaining employees were notified they would leave the next day. At the ECC, White would do it again, filling out a form for each staff member. All in all, the 27-year-old adopted 113 people.

After spending a night sleeping on the ground, White and the second group left on April 26, 1975. On April 28, 1975, Tan Son Nhat Airport was bombed. Saigon fell on April 30, 1975.



After Saigon, FSO Shep Lowman worked with Vietnamese resettlement and became the State Department’s Deputy Assistant Secretary for Refugee Programs. He passed away in 2013. Ken Moorefield remained in the Foreign Service, rising in rank to become our ambassador to Gabon (2002-2004). From December 2005 to 2007, Moorefield served as senior State Department representative on the Iraq/Afghanistan Transition Planning Group. He subsequently joined the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General as Deputy General Inspector for Special Plans and Operations. In May 2022, Ralph White nominated Moorefield for a Presidential Medal of Freedom. ■

Results: 2023-2025 AFSA Governing Board Election and Bylaw Amendments

The AFSA Committee on Elections is pleased to announce the results of the 2023-2025 AFSA Governing Board election and bylaw amendments vote. A total of 2,555 valid ballots were received (2,512 online and 43 paper). This represents 16 percent of the eligible voting membership. The following AFSA members have been elected:

Board Officer Positions

- President:** Thomas Yazdgerdi
- Secretary:** Sue Saarnio
- Treasurer:** Hon. John O’Keefe
- State Vice President:** Hui Jun Tina Wong
- USAID Vice President:** Randy Chester
- FCS Vice President:** Joshua Burke
- FAS Vice President:** Lisa Ahramjian
- Retiree Vice President:** John K. Naland

Board Constituency Representatives

- Full-Time State Representative:** Gregory Floyd
- State Representatives:** Lynette Behnke, Kimberly Harrington, David Josar, C. Logan Wheeler, Whitney Wiedeman
- USAID Representative:** Christopher Saenger
- Alternate FCS Representative:** Jay Carreiro
- Alternate FAS Representative:** Zeke Spears
- APHIS Representative:** Joseph Ragole
- USAGM Representative:** Steven L. Herman
- Retiree Representatives:** Mary Daly, Edward G. Stafford

Bylaw Amendments

The Governing Board proposed nine bylaw amendments to be voted on during the 2023 AFSA Election cycle. The results are as follows:

(1) On the amendment to shorten the AFSA Governing Board election voting period:

Total Votes Cast	2,429
Yes/Approve	2,225
No/Do Not Approve	204

(2) On the amendment to change procedures for accepting write-in candidates in Governing Board elections:

Total Votes Cast	2,330
Yes/Approve	2,097
No/Do Not Approve	233

(3) On the amendment to change Governing Board residency and participation requirements to allow for virtual participation by some members:

Total Votes Cast	2,474
Yes/Approve	2,307
No/Do Not Approve	167

(4) On the amendment to change requirements for Committee on Elections membership, and make the Governance Committee and Legal Defense Committee permanent committees:

Total Votes Cast	2,427
Yes/Approve	2,326
No/Do Not Approve	101

(5) On the amendment to constrain the Governing Board’s ability to enter into nonessential multiyear financial commitments:

Total Votes Cast	2,348
Yes/Approve	2,032
No/Do Not Approve	316

(6) On the amendment to change the threshold for member-initiated referenda and bylaw amendments:

Total Votes Cast	2,311
Yes/Approve	2,013
No/Do Not Approve	298

(7) On the amendment to remove the requirement for Governing Board approval of AFSA associate members:

Total Votes Cast	2,334
Yes/Approve	2,054
No/Do Not Approve	280

(8) On the amendment to streamline wording on post representatives and AFSA chapters:

Total Votes Cast	2,359
Yes/Approve	2,295
No/Do Not Approve	64

(9) On the amendment to allow the Governing Board to meet and cast votes virtually during public emergencies:

Total Votes Cast	2,368
Yes/Approve	2,306
No/Do Not Approve	62

All amendments go into effect immediately. Questions regarding the results should be referred to the AFSA Committee on Elections at elections@afsa.org.

Congratulations to all those who were elected and to those who demonstrated their dedication to AFSA by declaring as candidates. The new Governing Board will be sworn in on July 15.



Looking Back on Four Years as State VP

When AFSA President Eric Rubin, an old friend who I had known since joining the State Department in 1991, called me in January 2019 and asked if I would consider running for AFSA State vice president, my first impression was: His timing is great ... how does he know that I still don't have an onward assignment?

I am so glad he called. Without that call, I would not have had the incredible and rewarding experience of the last four years working with such a talented and committed group of elected officials representing AFSA's six member agencies and with the amazing AFSA professional staff that makes it all happen.

Access is key. AFSA is a service organization whose goal is to achieve good outcomes for our members on both a collective and individual basis. For that to happen, we need access not only to high-level department officials but to influential members of Congress and the national media.

When I look at our big wins—a much better Special Needs Education Allowance (SNEA) process; getting 20 hours of administrative leave per pay period during the COVID-19 pandemic; ensuring funding for the legal expenses of our members who had to testify during the Ukraine impeachment hearings; and HAVANA Act

legislation that provided benefits to those suffering from Anomalous Health Incidents (AHIs)—I realize that access was critical to those results.

We continue to have regular meetings with the Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources (D-MR), the Under Secretary for Management (M), and the Director General and her staff, among many others.

Many of these senior officials are also AFSA members. They realize the importance of AFSA and respect what we do, not least because more than 80 percent of active-duty FS members have joined our ranks. Of course, we may not always come to agreement, but there is an open dialogue and willingness to engage.

Freedom to engage with Congress and the media.

When we engage with Capitol Hill or the media or any outside organization, there is no need to clear anything with anyone—a liberating departure from State Department policy.

As an AFSA elected official, I speak for AFSA and not the department. AFSA pursues its own agenda for our members in a way that we deem most likely to succeed. Of course, we are careful to comment only on personnel issues and not on matters of foreign policy, which is not our writ, although admittedly it is sometimes difficult to find that dividing line.

Influential members in Congress from both parties want to know what AFSA thinks should be included in legislation that affects Foreign Service work.

Influential members in Congress from both parties want to know what AFSA thinks should be included in legislation that affects Foreign Service work, as well as our opinion on critical issues such as the department's assignment restrictions policy and if members suffering from AHIs are getting the treatment they need.

Now that we have started to have annual State Department authorization bills, this engagement is more important than ever.

AFSA engages with major media to communicate our views and help get the changes we need. Like Congress, the media wants to know what AFSA thinks and has often sought us out for comment.

We used this to good effect to spur the department, for example, to devote more people and resources to resolving the myriad problems caused by the 2021 introduction of a new payroll system. I am convinced that this engagement produced a better outcome for members, ensuring that all affected were made whole by receiving interest on back pay.

Looking forward. As of this writing in mid-May, I have just learned that I was elected AFSA president for the 2023-2025 Governing Board term. I am deeply honored and appreciative of the trust placed in me. I hope to follow the example of AFSA President Rubin, whose wise counsel and collegial outlook led us through some tumultuous and unprecedented times.

I look forward to working with the new Governing Board and using the experience and contacts I have gained in the last four years to earn even more wins for members. (More to come on that in my September 2023 President's View column.)

In the meantime, have a great summer and please keep your comments, questions, and requests for assistance coming to member@afsa.org. ■



(Best) Places to Work—Let’s Do Better

Each day, we are inspired by our agency’s mission, even as we and our families face professional and personal challenges over the course of our careers.

As we strive each day to improve the lives of others, we also seek to improve USAID’s operations and systems. In this context, the Partnership for Public Service’s (PPS) annual “Best Places to Work” 2022 rankings point to some very real challenges that warrant our attention, including that USAID is ranked 23 out of 27 on the overall “Engagement and Satisfaction Score” among mid-size agencies.

I am hopeful that we can use this data to learn and rededicate efforts toward the shared goal of strengthening our agency.

A quick technical note: The “Best Places to Work” rankings are based on the scores of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and are produced by PPS in conjunction with the Boston Consulting Group.

Per the site, “the rankings and data give leaders a way to measure employee engagement and satisfaction across the federal workforce.” For those interested in more details, methodology, and comparisons to other agencies, please visit the PPS website.

And keep in mind that the past few years have been

Category	Rank	2022	2021	2022 vs 2021 Score
Effective Leadership: Empowerment	16 of 24	54.3	59.1	-4.8
Effective Leadership: Supervisors	20 of 24	82.9	84	-1.1
Pay	16 of 24	60.4	65.4	-5
Teamwork	21 of 24	73.3	74.6	-1.3
Work-Life Balance	23 of 24	66.7	67.3	-0.6
Performance: Agency	19 of 23	77.1	78.9	-1.8

unusual (!) for all public servants and our places of work, no doubt influencing scores and perceptions.

A range of challenges are reflected in the select set of USAID scores and ranking for the past two years, as shown in the chart.

The “Empowerment” subcategory measures the extent to which employees feel empowered with respect to work processes, and how satisfied they are with their involvement in decisions that affect their work.

USAID’s score decline here is concerning, particularly in light of President Joe Biden’s oft-repeated declaration: “It is the policy of the United States to protect, empower, and rebuild the career federal workforce.”

To be clear, I firmly believe the agency *wants* employees to feel empowered; more frequent and deeper consultations with employees and active listening will help, and I am hopeful that USAID’s “burden busting” initiative will further engage employees and strengthen their sense of empowerment.

“Pay” is always a sensitive issue, particularly in the Foreign Service, where we are paid based on a “rank-in-person” versus “rank-in-position” basis. Many, if not most, USAID FSOs serve large portions of their careers in positions of higher rank than their personal grades, with no extra pay or recognition come promotion time.

Colleagues in USAID’s Human Capital and Talent Management (HCTM) Office are looking at this dynamic, but the agency’s myriad hiring mechanisms make “pay equity” a particularly complex and thorny issue.

Our rank and score-drop in “Teamwork” warrants agency attention. No doubt remote work, telework, hybrid meetings, and changing workplace dynamics have complicated communications, collaboration, and camaraderie.

Nonetheless, our mission cannot be achieved without strong, sustained teamwork, and we need to get to the root causes and do better. What will be the effect if and when the agency moves

toward increased in-person work? Stay tuned.

Finally, worrisome to me both as an FSO and as AFSA’s VP, is our rank of “23 out of 24” in “work-life balance,” measuring “the extent to which employees consider their workloads reasonable, and managers support a balance between work and life.”

This has long been a concern at USAID, where many sacrifice self-care in pursuit of the agency’s goals. Understaffing and inability to prioritize and bureaucratically triage our work, despite periodic attempts, leave people overstretched and under-resourced.

It is not in USAID’s nature to say no or postpone action—but we must take care of our people.

The “Best Places to Work” results highlight a lot of concerns—and that’s OK. USAID does not shy away from challenges, and I am hopeful that we can come together, openly acknowledge the issues, dedicate necessary resources to them, and continuously improve our agency for all. ■



The Journey Continues

This month, I complete my 12th year on the AFSA Governing Board. During my service as president, State vice president, and now retiree vice president, I have written more than 100 essays and articles in *The Foreign Service Journal*. The essay that generated the most positive feedback was my September 2008 president's column, "The Journey."

That column advocated viewing a career in the Foreign Service as a journey rather than a destination. It argued that colleagues who focus on rushing up the promotion ladder risk "always becoming but never being" by not making the most of where they are at each given moment.

Instead, the column encouraged focusing on day-to-day experiences and contributions—both in the office and with family and other non-work activities. The column acknowledged that, due to needs of the Service, even those who try

In the column I encouraged focusing on day-to-day experiences and contributions—both in the office and with family and other non-work activities.

to enjoy the journey must take their fair share of difficult and even dangerous assignments. But it encouraged maintaining a healthy work-life balance over the long run.

I wrote that column as an active-duty FSO preparing to deploy to Iraq on a one-year unaccompanied tour leading a provincial reconstruction team. Now, as a retiree 15 years farther down the road of my own journey, my philosophy remains the same—to try to make the most of where I am now. But I have gained a deeper understanding of the bumps along the way.

I recently became the primary caregiver for a close family member. While the challenges are substantial, it also gives me a new purpose in life. I strive to make the

most of every day—knowing that the number is finite. Being a caregiver is now my primary job, but I continue to try to contribute elsewhere to maintain a healthy balance of activities.

If you face unexpected difficulties or disappointments, I encourage you to draw on the resilience skills that we learned in the Foreign Service. They include focusing on what is under your control, understanding that you control your reaction to events, focusing on core values that motivate and guide you, knowing when to pivot to Plan B, and asking for help when needed.

If you do suffer a setback, keep in mind the words of Nelson Mandela: "Do not judge me by my success; judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up." ■

CALENDAR

Please check www.afsa.org for the most up-to-date information.

July 3-4
Independence Day
AFSA Offices Closed

July 10
FAS Global Attaché
Conference at USDA

July 15
2023-2025 AFSA Governing
Board Takes Office

July 19
10 a.m.-12 p.m.
Youth Awards Ceremony
and Reception

July 19
12-2 p.m.
First Meeting of the
2023-2025 AFSA
Governing Board

July 20
Welcome Lunch for
State Class

August 16
12-2 p.m.
AFSA Governing
Board Meeting

September 4
Labor Day
AFSA Offices Closed

September 22
7:05 p.m.
Foreign Service Night
at Nationals Park

PCS: Know Before You Go

AFSA's advocacy and public policy issues team has rounded up the newest legislation affecting FS members, particularly as they make permanent change of station (PCS) transfers.

Breaking leases and ending contracts. The

AFSA-supported Foreign Service Families Act in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022 (NDAA) extends provisions of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) to the Foreign Service regarding the termination of certain

leases and contracts. For years, AFSA had advocated for the Foreign Service to receive exceptions parallel to those enjoyed by military members.

The Foreign Service Families Act gives FS members the ability to break residential and motor vehicle leases and telephone service contracts

without early termination charges when given orders to serve overseas, in accordance with 50 U.S. Code sections 3955 and 3956 or sections 305 and 305A of the SCRA.

Building on this advocacy win, AFSA also worked with

Continued on page 69

Foreign Service Day Remembrances and Activities



JDAQUN SOSA

Secretary of State Antony Blinken embraces a family member of Foreign Service Specialist Elbridge Lee, who died after contracting COVID-19 at post overseas.

Moments before the ceremony began, Secretary Blinken and Ambassador Rubin held a private and tearful meeting with the families of both colleagues. One family member said she would remember the day for the rest of her life.

In a moving Foreign Service Day memorial ceremony on May 5, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and AFSA President Eric Rubin delivered remarks honoring Foreign Service personnel who died in the line of duty.

The State Department's commemoration of the 58th annual Foreign Service Day took place in person in the C Street lobby before the AFSA Memorial Plaques. The plaques bear the names of 321 U.S. diplomats and consular officers who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their country.

This year, a new bronze plaque was unveiled on the southeastern end of the lobby, memorializing those in the FS community who lost their lives due to COVID-19, contracted while serving at post overseas.

Honoring Service and Sacrifice

Specifically honored at the event were Foreign Service members Elbridge Lee (New Delhi) and Thomas J. Wallis (Lima), both of whom died from the illness in 2021.



U.S. EMBASSY BEIJING



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

During the AFSA Memorial Ceremony on Foreign Service Day, Secretary of State Antony Blinken (right) and AFSA President Eric Rubin hang the remembrance wreath in front of the memorial plaques in the State Department's C Street lobby.



U.S. EMBASSY AMMAN

U.S. embassy staff in Amman observe a moment of silence to honor fallen colleagues on Foreign Service Day.



U.S. EMBASSY MOGADISHU

The cascade of FS Day moments of silence continues around the world as embassy staff in Mogadishu (above) and Beijing pay their respects to those who gave their lives in the line of duty.

Rubin also acknowledged the U.S. embassies and consulates around the world that participated in a moment of solemn silence, and led the audience in a moment of silence as well. The U.S. Armed Forces presented the colors, and FSO Amirah Ismail played the national anthem on her violin.

“With this new plaque,” Secretary Blinken said in his remarks, “we honor the permanent mark that [Elbridge Lee and Thomas J. Wallis] made on this department, and on our country. By carrying out their dedication and compassion—and continuing the spirit of service that runs through every single name on these walls—we will work to keep their legacies alive.”

He then embraced and shook hands with the Lee and Wallis family members as the event concluded.

A recording of the ceremony can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/Blinken-FSDay2023>.

AFSA Hosts FS Day Events

Continuing a tradition begun in 2018, AFSA hosted a day of networking and special events during an open house on May 4, the day before Foreign Service Day.

AFSA welcomed active-duty FS personnel and alumni to its headquarters for free professional headshots, ideal for resumes and social media use, taken by photographer Joaquin Sosa. Complimentary Peruvian fare, served up by Peruvian Brothers Food Truck,



AFSA co-hosts a Foreign Service Day reception with DACOR in the garden of the historic DACOR Bacon House.

and Ben & Jerry’s ice cream were also on offer.

AFSA staff were on hand to answer questions and share information and materials relating to membership benefits, retirement services, *The Foreign Service Journal*, and outreach and advocacy.

Several members who stopped by also shared with AFSA staff their questions and concerns, including their disappointment that the State Department had not organized more events for retirees on the occasion of Foreign Service Day. AFSA will continue to urge the department to bring back the pre-pandemic level of programming for Foreign Service alumni to celebrate the day next year.

Together with Amb. Rubin, AFSA’s Director of Congressional Advocacy Kim Greenplate hosted a virtual event reviewing the association’s work over the past year to promote the interests of the Foreign Service on Capitol Hill. She discussed working in a divided government to ensure bipartisan consensus for support of the Foreign Service.

She also outlined AFSA’s ongoing priorities for the

118th Congress, including: extending the rest of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to the Foreign Service; seeking new hire pay equity during orientation; treating internet as a utility when serving overseas; addressing pet travel challenges; providing Home Service Transfer Allowance flexibility; and removing the reemployed annuitant working wage and hour caps for retirees.

A recording of this event can be found at <https://bit.ly/FSAdvocacy2023>.

AFSA Social Media Campaign

Seizing a timely opportunity to inform the American public about the work of U.S. diplomats, AFSA’s outreach team launched a social media campaign prompting FS members to take to their social channels to explain why they are proud to serve. Participants used the hashtag #FSProud and tagged AFSA’s social media handles in their responses.

On Twitter, the campaign generated more than 100 mentions. The #FSProud hashtag garnered almost 1 million impressions, and the

hashtag #ForeignServiceDay obtained 700,000 more, for a total number of impressions—a metric tallying the number of times a user is served a tweet—three times greater than last year’s campaign.

The biggest boosts to the campaign came from Ambassadors Nick Burns and Luis Moreno, as well as Senators Chris Van Hollen and Ben Cardin, both of Maryland.

“I’m #FSProud to help U.S. farmers, ranchers, and agribusinesses get their high-quality food and agricultural products into the hands of consumers across the globe and to enhance global food security,” tweeted Foreign Agricultural Service Officer Lisa Ahramjian.

Ambassador (ret.) Laura Kennedy tweeted, “I am #FSProud because of the dedication of colleagues who work in over 170 countries to advance our nation’s security, prosperity, and values.”

Social media continues to be a useful tool for reaching new and younger audiences. Retweets by notable personalities, such as members of Congress and current or former ambassadors with robust followings, are particularly effective in spreading the word and “going viral.”

Sharing the content AFSA posts across digital channels helps to amplify the message and raise awareness of the Foreign Service—so keep using that #FSProud hashtag! ■

AFSA Co-Hosts Book Launch Event

On May 17, AFSA joined the Center for Maritime Strategy in co-sponsoring the launch event for the book, *Boots and Suits: Historical Cases and Contemporary Lessons in Military Diplomacy* (Marine Corps University Press, 2023).

Held at the Navy League National Headquarters in Virginia, the event brought together retired and active-duty members of the military and the Foreign Service, policy-focused nongovernmental organizations, and academics to celebrate the book's release.

Welcome remarks were offered by Admiral (ret.) James G. Foggo III, dean of the Center for Maritime Strategy. Guests then heard from AFSA President Eric Rubin and Ambassador (ret.) Philip Kosnett, editor of the book and former career diplomat.

In his remarks, Ambassador Rubin spoke of the long history of collaboration between the U.S. military and the diplomatic corps in facing and ending conflicts. "Where once our agencies didn't communicate well with each other, we're now in a much better place," he said.

A cultural exchange between military and civilian agencies was critical to foreign policy after 9/11, he pointed out, particularly as more than one quarter of American diplomats served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Amb. Kosnett described the book as "a blueprint, a textbook for a whole of government approach to deterring war or bringing it to a rapid and successful conclusion."

Written by a team of scholars, military officers, and diplomats, including



Amb. (ret.) Philip Kosnett.

several AFSA members, the book offers insights into military diplomacy and civil-military cooperation by examining little-known historical events, such as the Ottoman Empire's efforts to negotiate access to Western military technology, the Confederacy's attempt to gain European support during the American Civil War, and U.S. strategy in the 1970s to build influence in the Persian Gulf through arms sales.



AFSA co-hosted the book launch event.

Other chapters analyze contemporary issues, such as the evolution of U.S. and NATO policy on assistance to Ukraine, while a "Lessons Learned" section details the experiences of military officers and muddy-boots diplomats in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Haiti.

A full review of *Boots and Suits* will appear in the September issue of the *FSJ*. ■

Senate Recognizes Foreign Service Day

AFSA would like to thank the Senate Foreign Service Caucus co-chairs, Senators Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska) and Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), for introducing a Senate resolution celebrating May 5, 2023, as Foreign Service Day.

The resolution, S. Res. 199, was approved by the full Senate the day before Foreign Service Day. This year marks the fourth year in a row that

the resolution has been introduced and passed in the Senate—a pattern AFSA hopes will continue.

"America's Foreign Service officers do so much for our country, often with little fanfare or recognition," said Sen. Sullivan in a joint press release. "They are tasked with promoting America's interests, strengthening national security, and assist-

ing U.S. citizens in the far corners of the globe. Today, we salute the courageous, dedicated members of the U.S. Foreign Service, and mark this vital diplomatic corps' 99th anniversary."

"Day in and day out, our Foreign Service professionals work tirelessly to strengthen America's diplomatic relationships, promote our values, and provide vital assistance to

U.S. citizens abroad," Sen. Van Hollen added. "The work they do is essential to our standing on the world stage, and we are deeply grateful for the sacrifice they and their families make. This bipartisan resolution recognizes the critical importance of their service to our nation and underscores why we must continue working to support our diplomatic corps." ■

Book Notes

The Secret Gate with Mitchell Zuckoff

On May 3, AFSA was pleased to host author Mitchell Zuckoff for a virtual discussion of his newly released book, *The Secret Gate: A True Story of Courage and Sacrifice During the Collapse of Afghanistan* (Random House, 2023).

The book examines the final days of the U.S. evacuation from Kabul through the experiences of U.S. Foreign Service Officer Sam Aronson, who volunteered to join the skeleton team at Kabul International Airport in August 2021, and Homeira Qaderi, an

challenges of FSOs responding in crisis. It's often not a question of bureaucracy, but of an urgent human response to the crisis underway."

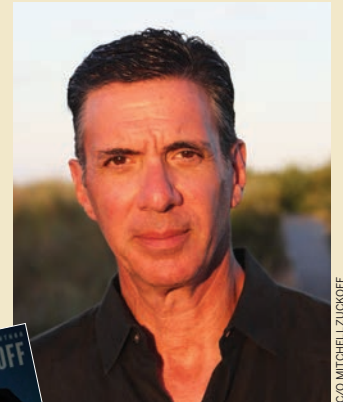
Zuckoff responded that he favors featuring the individuals who create history: "As a narrative writer, I believe a policy book would not hit you in the gut because you can't attach to it quite so much."

"Any person who cares about humanity was tuned in during August of 2021 to what was happening in Kabul," Zuckoff said, "and

distant settings realistically, his rigorous fact-checking process, and his commitment to earnestly untangling the motivations of the real people he writes about—particularly Aronson, who bends U.S. protocol in his efforts to assist Qadari and a dozen other families who were not authorized to enter the airport.

"Very few people, I'm going to guess, join the State Department to get rich," Zuckoff noted. "These are mission-driven people who are determined to do what's right wherever they can. Those people also often find themselves frustrated by larger systems, bureaucracies, forces beyond their control. The people in Washington dictating these shifting rules—they weren't trying to be difficult for the people on the ground. They were trying to do the best they could to fill planes quickly and efficiently with a priority list [of evacuees]."

"So how do we reconcile that on the ground? I start from a place of believing that these are people of goodwill trying to do what's right. When I come across actions that deviate from that, it helps me ask, what could have been his or her motive?"



Author Mitchell Zuckoff.



Certainly, people who were on the ground in Kabul had this mission-centric approach and if they deviated from it,

there may have been a good reason. I need to respect that, honor that, and reflect that in my work."

Mitchell Zuckoff is a professor of journalism at Boston University and the author of eight previous works of nonfiction, including the New York Times bestseller, *13 Hours: The Inside Account of What Really Happened in Benghazi*, which became the basis of the Paramount Pictures movie of the same name. As a member of the *Boston Globe's* Spotlight team, he was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in investigative reporting and is the recipient of numerous other writing awards.

AFSA members can view the entire book talk at <https://afsa.org/video>. ■

These are mission-driven people who are determined to do what's right wherever they can.

—Mitchell Zuckoff

Afghan woman who sought his help to flee the Taliban.

Hosted by AFSA President Eric Rubin and moderated by Ambassador (ret.) P. Michael McKinley, who served as ambassador to Afghanistan from 2014 to 2016, the conversation began with commentary on the book's focus: the hands-on work of the Foreign Service.

"Few narratives give a real flavor for what the Foreign Service does, especially when we're overseas and working in extreme circumstances," Amb. McKinley pointed out. "Your book brings to life the

fearful that the Taliban's return meant death or disaster for tens of thousands of people. I really appreciated something that [Senior Foreign Service Officer] Jim DeHart told me. He talked about how the outpouring of people who were trying to help others get out was the product of 20 years of relationships between Americans and Afghans."

That rapport, he continued, was a result of the work of U.S. diplomats and servicemembers.

Zuckoff also discussed his method for describing

AFSA Welcomes Newest FS Members

At a series of events in May, AFSA was pleased to welcome new members of the Foreign Service and introduce them to the work of the association on their behalf. The events included in-person lunches with the State Department's joint Foreign Service orientation 168-214 class and with USAID's C3 Class 35.

AFSA President Eric Rubin welcomed the State Department group, explaining who the association represents and outlining its ongoing work for members, collectively and individually.

The new State class, which was split into three lunches on May 1 and May 15, was made up of 98 generalists (23 consular, 23 economic, 17 management, 16 political, and 19 public diplomacy cone) and 122 specialists (with the largest subgroups consisting of 45 Diplomatic Security special agents, 17 office management specialists, and 16 information management specialists).

It contained 11 former Consular Fellows, one former Embassy Science Fellow, and two Presidential Management Fellows.

Fifty-nine are former State Department employees, while 61 have served in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Among the class members are individuals who have participated in a Super Bowl halftime show,



AFSA hosted the State Department's joint Foreign Service orientation 168-214 class for in-person luncheons in May.

experienced mutiny at sea, become a certified venomous snake handler, ridden to the Arctic Circle and back on a motorcycle, and coached the Chinese women's national lacrosse team in their first World Cup.

Languages spoken include the six official languages of the U.N., as well as Afrikaans, American Sign Language, Bemba, Bulgarian, Burmese, Cantonese, Danish, Farsi, Georgian, German, Greek, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Khmer, Kinyarwanda, Kiswahili, Korean, Luo, Macedonian, Malagasy, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Swedish, Tamil, and Turkish.

The newest USAID class, which met with AFSA USAID Vice President Jason Singer on May 9, is made up of 10 members across four back-

stops: one program officer, four financial management officers, two legal officers, and two humanitarian assistance officers.

These new FSOs speak Arabic, Bambara, French, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Spanish, Turkish, and Yoruba.

They have worked or studied in 26 different countries, and three already have experience working for USAID.

Some class members have climbed Mount Fuji twice, dined with al-Qaida, and participated in mounted archery. ■



AFSA met with USAID's C3 Class 35 on May 9.

AFSA Hosts Road Scholars

As AFSA marks its 27th year of collaboration with the Road Scholar lifelong learning organization (formerly known as Elderhostel), the association led two of its three annual Washington, D.C., programs with the group to educate participants about the work of the Foreign Service.

On March 26-30 and again on April 16-20, AFSA members gave presentations at the "Inside American Diplomacy: Stories of the U.S. Foreign Service" collaboration between Road Scholar and AFSA.

The presenters for the two sessions included AFSA

Governing Board Retiree Representative and retired Foreign Agricultural Service FSO Philip Shull, State FSO Ann DeLong, AFSA U.S. Agency for Global Media Vice President Steve Herman, AFSA Foreign Commercial Service Vice President and FSO Charles Ranado, retired USAID FSO Beth Hogan, AFSA Director of Professional Policy Issues Julie Nutter, Foreign Commercial Service FSO Dao Le, and retired USAID FSO James Bever.

The speakers discussed their respective agencies and shared their experiences as diplomats with a

combined total of 64 Road Scholar participants.

As part of the program, the group also visited key diplomatic institutions. They took a simulated language class at the Foreign Service Institute, had lunch at the historic DACOR Bacon House, and received a tour of the U.S. Institute of Peace.

Participants said they were impressed by the depth of experience showcased by presenters, and that the program was an effective instruction tool.

"As a former teacher, I was pleased to be taught at my reach level," one participant said. "It was fun to be at

graduate school level again. An A+ for all!"

Another added, "This was an excellent program with specialized speakers who educated us without repetition. I felt respected as well as enlightened."

AFSA's next program in collaboration with Road Scholar will take place Sept. 10-14, 2023. It continues to be a highly successful outreach and constituency-building vehicle. For more on AFSA's programs and course offerings through Road Scholar, visit <https://afsa.org/road-scholar>. ■

AFSA Webinars Help Active-Duty Members Prepare for Retirement

On April 25, AFSA's Vice President for Retirees John Naland held two webinar sessions on early- and mid-career retirement planning.

The virtual events, which contained the same information but were scheduled throughout the day to accommodate an audience spread across time zones, drew a total of 390 attendees.

As a three-term VP for retirees and former director of the State Department's Office of Retirement, Naland is AFSA's resident expert on retirement-related issues. His presentations offered

tips on how to avoid major oversights in retirement planning and how active-duty professionals can best position themselves for life after the Foreign Service.

He also provided viewers with two lists highlighting key considerations at various career junctures: a mid-career checklist and a checklist for those one year away from retirement.

More information on these and related topics is available in the Retirement Services section of the AFSA website at <https://www.afsa.org/retirement>.

AFSA's federal benefits programming is designed as a continuum that offers guidance and support to members every step of the way, from early in their careers into retirement. This

added value motivates many members to maintain their membership after retiring.

Members can view the webinar at <https://afsa.org/afsa-videos>. ■



AFSA Governing Board Meeting, May 17, 2023

The Governing Board met in person at AFSA headquarters.

Associate Members: The board approved the applications of two new associate members. ■

PCS: Know Before You Go
Continued from page 62

Congress to have the department establish a mechanism for third parties to verify the employment of, and the validity of PCS orders received by, members of the Foreign Service, in a manner that protects sensitive employee information. AFSA understands that the department is working to implement this mechanism.

The verification is meant to ease implementation of the Foreign Service Families Act and was passed in the 2022 State Department Authorization Act as part of the FY23 NDAA.

Foreign Service Clause—tenants. Whether you are or plan to be a tenant or a landlord at a residential property, AFSA encourages members of the Foreign Service to include the “Foreign Service Clause,” which allows one to break residential leases under certain conditions, in any rental agreements.

If your residential lease has already begun, AFSA encourages you to ask for an amendment to an existing agreement. While federal law now allows Foreign Service tenants to break leases without penalty upon production of government orders, having the Foreign Service clause in a rental agreement adds an extra layer of protection and alerts the landlord up front to this exception.

For FS tenants, note that the SCRA has an enforcement mechanism for any

person who knowingly seizes, holds, or detains the personal effects, security deposit, or other property of a member of the Foreign Service, their spouse, or dependent who lawfully terminates a lease. The person can be fined or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both.

Also note that, while early termination charges have been eliminated, fees associated with wear or other obligations and liabilities of the lessee in accordance with the terms of the lease can still be collected.

Extending these provisions of the SCRA to members of the Foreign Service was a top AFSA priority, and we are pleased that they have gone into effect. However, we urge members to read 50 U.S.C. sections 3955 and 3956 to make sure the terms governing the termination of residential housing leases, motor vehicle leases, and telephone service contracts are understood for your situation.

Foreign Service Clause—landlords. If you are a landlord, a Foreign Service clause in your lease for tenants protects you if you need to return to the U.S., for example, if you are evacuated and cannot return to post.

There is no stand-alone legal protection in the SCRA and the Foreign Service Families Act for FS landlords, so please remember to include the Foreign Service clause (sometimes called the

Federal law now allows Foreign Service tenants to break leases without penalty upon production of government orders.

“diplomatic clause”) in your tenant’s lease.

In-state tuition. The Foreign Service Families Act mandates that public institutions of higher education must grant in-state tuition rates to Foreign Service members, their spouses, and dependents in their state of domicile.

While this provision does not take full effect until the first period of college enrollment that begins after July 1, 2024, some state university systems have already adopted it for the fall 2023 semester, including in California and Nebraska. More information on the new provisions and how to prove domicile for in-state tuition purposes can be found at <https://bit.ly/qualify-in-state>.

The University of California’s Board of Regents recently approved the Regent’s Policy 3105 to immediately extend full implementation of the Foreign Service Families Act. The new policy goes into effect on July 1, 2023. Students in the UC system should submit a residence petition after July 1, but before the first day of the fall 2023 term, in order to be considered for an in-state tuition rate during the upcoming school year.

In 2019 the Virginia General Assembly passed into state law a provision that extends in-state tuition eligibility, regardless of domicile, based on physical presence for members of the Foreign Service and their dependents in Virginia. This law lowers the in-state tuition residency requirement to 90 days for those who receive official government orders that necessitates a move overseas immediately following the 90-day residency and who continue to be assigned overseas. The law is retroactive prior to 2019, as long as the other requirements are met.

Virginia residents. AFSA worked with the Virginia General Assembly during the 2023 legislative session to pass a bill into state law that would allow dependents of Foreign Service members who are Virginia residents and who are currently overseas to apply to Virginia Governor’s Schools. The new law mandates that children of federal employees serving under Title 22 or Title 50 orders are now included under the current military exemption from the one-year Virginia physical residency requirement for eligibility to compete for admission to these schools.

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AFSA NEWS

Traveling with pets.

In March 2023, the State Department announced new allowances to cover

pet travel. These include \$4,000 for pet transport costs (including immunizations and blood tests) under the Foreign



Transfer Allowance (FTA) or Home Service Transfer Allowance (HSTA), \$1,000 for Authorized/Ordered Departure (AD/OD) evacuation pet transport, and \$550 for quarantine expenses for FTA, HSTA, or evacuation travel.

AFSA understands that the other foreign affairs agencies have adopted the same reimbursement policy related to pet travel.

AFSA is currently advocating for the removal of Fly America Act requirements for government employees on official orders when an American airline cannot or will not ship a pet. We are pursuing these efforts through the National Defense Authorization Act, as it would apply to government employees beyond the Foreign Service.

EFM employment on a DETO agreement. Last year, AFSA advocated for its priorities in the State Department Authorization Act that was included in the FY23 National Defense Authorization Act. One of those priorities was providing locality pay to members of the Civil Service on DETO agreements, as many are spouses of FS members. Previously, they received no locality

pay, resulting in significant pay cuts only due to their spouses' employment.

AFSA's advocacy resulted in members of the Civil Service on DETO agreements receiving locality pay or overseas comparability pay (whichever is less). Overseas comparability pay is equivalent to what FS members receive on DETO agreements.

International road safety and ASIRT country reports.

AFSA recently concluded a member survey on overseas road safety. The survey asked members to recount overseas auto and auto/pedestrian crashes in which they were involved, what the specific circumstances of the crashes were, and which improvements in road safety or driver behavior could have prevented these crashes.

In the final survey section, members were asked whether they are comfortable with the level of road safety information they received either pre-move or when they arrived at post. The survey results can be found at <https://bit.ly/OverseasRdSafety>.

AFSA also negotiated a discounted price on road safety country reports from the Association for International Road Safety (ASIRT). The country reports are usually \$50 each but are offered to AFSA members at \$40. To purchase a report, visit <https://bit.ly/ASIRT-report>. ■



2021-2023 AFSA Governing Board Term Report



The 2021-2023 AFSA Governing Board.

You have before you our 2021-2023 term report, detailing AFSA's work and many successes on behalf of our members during the term of our outgoing Governing Board. This document is our way of officially reporting AFSA activities to our members.

We hope you find this report informative and illustrative of the many ways AFSA supports its members. Thank you for your membership.

—Ásgeir Sigfússon, Executive Director

President's Message

As my second and final term as AFSA president draws to a close, I can't help but feel immense pride when I reflect on the dedication and resilience of our members, Governing Board, committee members, and professional staff during this turbulent moment in history. The past few years have not been easy—from a global pandemic to the Kabul evacuation to Russia's egregious invasion of Ukraine—but they have also been full of opportunities and victories for the Foreign Service and AFSA alike.

In November 2022, I pleaded in my *FSJ* column: "Can't anybody here play this game?" quoting 1962 New York Mets manager Casey Stengel. As I write, I still find myself asking that question about senior diplomatic staffing.

The Biden administration's slowness with ambassadorial nominations and Senate delays on confirmations have significantly harmed the United States' diplomatic footprint. We have had long-term vacancies in essential posts—Brazil, India, Saudi Arabia, Colombia, and more. China has no such vacancies in its diplomatic posts. Our ability to influence and shape policy has greatly suffered as a result.

When I joined the Foreign Service, it was more family-friendly, more accommodating to tandem couples, and in some respects (the Senior Foreign Service and the corps of career chiefs of mission) even more diverse than it is now in 2023. AFSA fought to reinvigorate some aspects of this culture in the Service, and we have had many wins, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

AFSA was a key player in crafting and advocating for the Foreign Service Families Act, which ensures that Foreign Service families are afforded more of the same rights as military families. When the State Department unnecessarily separated tandem couples with faulty reasoning, we protested. When the department banned breast pumps in controlled access areas, even though other medical equipment is allowed, we protested and won.

For years, we protested the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's pet travel restrictions that continued to make our members' lives difficult. Many of our members battled tedious red tape regulations on vaccine certifications, and spent thousands of their own dollars and hundreds of hours just trying to reunite with their beloved pets. In March 2023, the department announced that pet shipments are to be included in the Foreign Transfer and Home Service Transfer Allowances, which we applauded.

We fought against the department's lack of engagement on Anomalous Health Incidents, have seen real improvement in the official response and support, and will continue to advocate that our members get the care they need.





Every month, State Vice President Tom Yazdgerdi and I have met with the Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources to bring these important issues to the table, straight from our membership and inboxes. We also met biweekly with Bureau of Global Talent Management leadership, as well as employee organizations (formerly called affinity groups), to hear their concerns and priorities. We have ardently defended and maintained our status as the voice of the Foreign Service.

AFSA programming is back to firing on all cylinders after the pandemic. We reinvigorated in-person events, including our sorely missed welcome lunches for new members of the Foreign Service and member happy hours.

We also returned to nationwide travel for AFSA outreach. In 2023, I completed five trips across the country in just six months. I spoke to a variety of educational institutions, retiree groups, and community organiza-

tions. We are educating people across the U.S. about the Foreign Service, and perhaps inspiring the next generation of FSOs in the process.

After 38 years in the Foreign Service, it is time for me to retire and move on to other opportunities. I will not stop fighting for the U.S. Foreign Service and our great country, and I plan to stay actively involved with AFSA and efforts to reform and modernize our Service.

To our members: it has been my honor to serve you as AFSA president. Keep fighting the good fight. I sincerely thank you for your service, courage, resilience, and patriotism.

Diplomacy and international development work are the main alternatives to war, conflict, poverty, and suffering across the globe. We can and should be proud of what we do every day to defend our country's security and to make the world a safer, better home for all of humanity.

—Ambassador Eric Rubin, AFSA President

Executive Director's Report

As the 2021-2023 AFSA Governing Board was taking office in July 2021, AFSA as an organization was slowly settling into the post-COVID-19 reality. We officially reopened fully on Sept. 7, 2021.

With the onset of the Omicron variant in late 2021, we had a few weeks of voluntary full telework, but we are now approaching a full two years in the post-pandemic work environment. The outgoing board's tenure overlapped with these significant changes, and they are in large part thanks to the openness of the board's members to entertain new ways of working and delivering for our members.

We have spent a good deal of time focusing on the possible silver linings of a global pandemic. We have found ways to conserve resources (i.e., member dues) and expand access by moving multiple events and meetings online.

For instance, judging panels for awards and scholarships (about 20 per year) no longer meet in person with

the attendant mountains of paper and catered lunches. These now happen online, which is also a better use of participants' time.

Online events have also made it much easier for us to reach our members abroad, who can now take part in

town halls, book talks, and other programs from the comfort of their homes in Quito, Dakar, or Chennai. More than 60 percent of AFSA members are abroad at any time, which means we are now able to meet them where they are.

AFSA has also embraced telework, with nearly every

employee teleworking at least one day a week. This kind of flexibility makes AFSA a more attractive place to work when we need to hire and strengthens our hand in retaining talent.

The outgoing board has shown a great interest in internal improvements at AFSA, whether physical or professional. For instance, we were proud to double our parental leave starting in 2023. This board has committed AFSA to a biannual salary survey by an outside

A lot of this work is behind the scenes and invisible to members, but this is what keeps AFSA a thriving, relevant, fiscally sound organization that attracts and retains excellent employees.



consultant, ensuring that we are competitive as an employer. We have invested in technology that allows hybrid, remote participation in events and meetings.

Two significant infrastructure projects were completed during this term: the replacement of all windows at the AFSA headquarters building and the replacement of our aging HVAC system, to include high standards of filtering and clean air.

We completely rewrote our investment policy to ensure compliance with all financial regulations and to maximize any possible return on investment of your member dues. A wideranging proposal for bylaw changes was presented to the entire membership for a vote during the 2023 election cycle, with an eye toward making AFSA's operations more reflective of today's

working world and communication possibilities.

As I wrote in the 2019 Governing Board term report: A lot of this work is behind the scenes and invisible to members, but this is what keeps AFSA a thriving, relevant, fiscally sound organization that manages to attract and retain excellent employees. Rest assured that we come to work every day to make sure that your interests are well represented. We believe that taking care of our employees is the best starting point to do so.

As we prepare for the incoming board's arrival, I want to thank outgoing board members for their service to AFSA and its membership. Without an engaged and informed Governing Board, we cannot do our work. Consider this a soft pitch to think about volunteering for the 2025-2027 board in two years!

Finance

As with many investment portfolios over the last few years, the value of our assets declined significantly. We ended 2021 with assets valued at \$33,798,574 and ended 2022 with a valuation of \$30,711,750, a drop of 10 percent. We expect some recovery as the market drifts upward in fits and starts.

The Finance Committee (consisting of the president, the executive director, the finance director, and the treasurer) reworked AFSA's investment policy, which had not been updated in more than 20 years. The new policy takes a cautious approach to how we manage our money and ensures sufficient reserves to cover unexpected expenses and other contingencies.

Despite the drop in asset value, AFSA remains in good financial health with operating reserves of \$3.7 million.

The AFSA Scholarship Fund, founded in 1924 to help Foreign Service families with university tuition for their children, now stands at \$10.5 million, a growth of 3 percent over the past two years. We awarded \$210,000 in needs-based scholarships and \$115,500 in merit-based scholarships in 2022, and we expect to match or exceed that amount this year. The fund is self-sustaining, drawing no money from our general revenue and defraying the staff costs for administering the fund.

The Fund for American Diplomacy, whose mission is to educate the American public on the role of the U.S.

Foreign Service, has \$297,643. Our Legal Defense Fund, which helps our members offset extraordinary legal expenses not fully covered by the Department of State, such as during the first impeachment hearings in 2019, has \$327,125 remaining.

Advertising remains AFSA's second-largest source of revenue after member dues, and this period saw steady growth in this category. Total ad sales in 2019 were \$295,726 but were up to \$562,528 in 2022—an impressive upward trend. And, of course, sales of AFSA's book, *Inside a U.S. Embassy*, continue to increase. Combined revenue from this effort in 2021, 2022, and the first quarter of 2023 was \$70,000.

We saw a decline during the pandemic in new AFSA membership from entering specialist and generalist classes, largely due to the absence of in-person briefings on the benefits of AFSA membership. We reversed this trend in 2022 and in the first quarter of 2023. In 2022 we showed an increase in retirement dues, thanks to the efforts of our excellent staff and the vice president for retirees.

In 2022 our total operating expenses reached \$6,516,322, a 7.2 percent increase over 2021, with an operating surplus of \$47,202. We hope increased membership will enhance revenue sufficiently to eliminate this operating deficit in 2023. The Finance Committee will review our first-quarter performance and, if necessary, suggest remedies to the incoming board.



Labor Management

The 11 staff members of the AFSA Labor Management Office provide support to the vice presidents and representatives of the six foreign affairs agencies, as well as to our approximately 16,600 members, on a wide range of issues relating to conditions of Foreign Service employment, including issues pertaining to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility; make whole relief for Diplomatic Security agents promoted by a 2018 reconvened promotion board; and lactation devices in controlled access areas, to name a few.

LM spent many hours in 2022 in communication with the Bureau of the Comptroller and Global Financial Services in Charleston on the fallout from the introduction of new payroll software in early 2021.

In February 2022, our members—particularly those overseas—were still experiencing problems with allowances, differentials, and leave accounting. In March 2022, we filed a cohort grievance, which resulted in interest being paid on all late payments. Most interest payments were small, but there were 40 cases in which the member received more than \$600. By the end of 2022, most payroll-related issues had been corrected, but members were still reporting problems with leave accounting and overtime payments.

After several years of work, LM's effort to bring more transparency, fairness, and accountability to administration of the Special Needs Education Allowance (SNEA) concluded successfully in 2022. Revised language in the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM), which AFSA insisted on, substantially clarified SNEA eligibility and the approval process and incorporated an appeal mechanism. As a result, more control is now in the hands of parents rather than a faceless bureaucracy.

LM's efforts to seek better treatment and care for members affected by Anomalous Health Incidents (AHIs) continued throughout the 2021-2023 term. In 2021 we focused on reducing lag time between initial contact by injured employees to the State Department's AHI taskforce and a response from the Bureau of Medical Services (MED), and we successfully pushed for access to treatment at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and other Centers of Excellence for affected Foreign Service employees.

LM facilitated the first meeting between the depart-

ment's senior AHI adviser and affected employees; and the department agreed to provide administrative leave to these employees on a case-specific basis. Advocacy efforts in 2023 centered on pressing the department for explanations on behalf of otherwise medically eligible employees who were denied relief after applying for HAVANA Act benefits.

While LM's pursuit of reforms in the department's assignment restriction (AR) program dates back more than a decade, significant progress was made during the past two years. LM advocacy led to the removal of Diplomatic Security (DS) as the final decision-maker in the new AR appeal process, and we secured a 30-day turnaround time for initial review of an AR appeal by DS' Office of Personnel Security and Suitability.

The new procedures also set a 60-day time limit for a final appeal decision by the Security Appeals Panel.

Over this term, LM also saw a marked drop in the number of ARs in place pursuant to the department's audit of the AR program. We are now pressing the department to negotiate FAM regulations that will memorialize similar appeals processes and procedures in a related program, the "pass-through objection process" that governs employees' assignments to critical threat posts.

After months of urging, we were pleased to learn that the White House agreed to resume its long-standing practice of sending names to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee with a request that the effective date of promotion be retroactive to the date of the promotions recommendation (for example, for those employees whose promotions had been put on hold due to an open investigation or whose file had not been reviewed due to administrative error). This practice had been halted in 2017 under the previous administration. LM filed several implementation disputes as well as two unfair labor practice charges (ULPs) during the 2021-2023 governing board term.

The Foreign Service Grievance Board partially ruled in AFSA's favor in an implementation dispute challenging the manner in which USAID selected promotion board members. LM filed a second dispute against USAID alleging a violation of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) relating to the appointment of Foreign Service Limited employees and a dispute against the Foreign Commercial Service, alleging the agency violated an MOU relating to

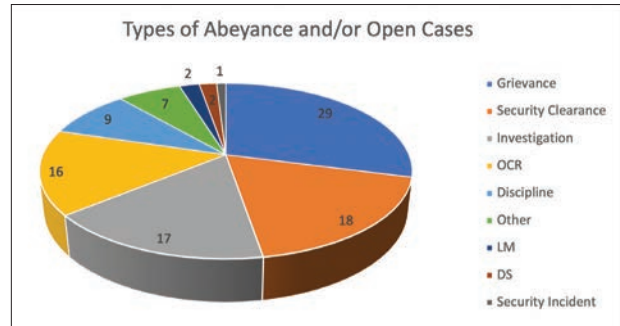


the procedures for making certain Washington senior assignments. These disputes are pending.

The ULPs were filed, first, against the State Department for failure to provide documents that formed the basis of a discipline decision and, second, against USAID relating to what we view as a pattern of bad faith bargaining. The ULPs are pending with the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

All these issues, among others, led to a higher number of requests for assistance in the current board term—more than 4,000 at the time of this drafting. That is roughly 1,000 more in a period that is two months shorter: July 2019 to May 2021 was 3,200, whereas July 15, 2021, to March 2023 is just shy of 4,200.

In our database tracking, at time of drafting 398 cases had been opened, most from State (328), followed by



Labor Management is currently overseeing 776 cases, whether open or in abeyance, on behalf of AFSA members.

USAID (50). The most common categories were grievances (92), investigations (74), office of civil rights complaints (60), and discipline-related issues (48). A total of 776 cases remain open or have been put temporarily in abeyance while awaiting agency action (see figure).

Membership

AFSA's membership team works with the class orientation coordinators at each agency to find a time to introduce the association to new Foreign Service colleagues. Traditionally, new classes are welcomed for lunch at AFSA headquarters. When in-person events became impossible during the COVID-19 pandemic, we turned to virtual formats to introduce AFSA and its work in support of members throughout their career.

In May 2022, we were grateful to host once again in-person lunches—the first in two years! It has been wonderful to welcome new members in person, and we have developed a roster of table hosts—active-duty and retired FS members—to participate in these events.

The change to a combined orientation for generalists and specialists at State has resulted in having not just one, but a series of three lunches to welcome everyone in classes that can include more than 200 people each. We have continued in-person lunches for all agencies hosting orientations in Washington, D.C., hosting more than 1,000 new colleagues.

AFSA's overall membership remains steady at just over 16,600, and we are proud to say that more than 80 percent of active-duty members choose to join AFSA. We have also seen growth in retiree membership over the past two years as more members retain their membership post-Foreign Service.

Programming is now accessible to members regard-

less of where they are, as AFSA continues to offer frequent virtual programs on a variety of topics. We've had more than 7,500 attendees for our virtual programs during the 2021-2023 Governing Board term.

In addition to traditional programming, including town halls, author talks, and presentations on retirement benefits and professional issues, AFSA has designed webinars on topics of interest such as "How to Write Your Best EER Ever!" and "Volunteerism: How Can the Foreign Service Best Contribute?"

AFSA also offered in-person events focused on bringing members together, including happy hours to celebrate USAID's 60th anniversary and, this year, the 50th anniversary of AFSA as a union.

In recognition of Foreign Service Day on the first Friday in May, AFSA organized a variety of activities during that week each year, including the rolling moment of silence at embassies and consulates around the world, the memorial plaque ceremony at the State Department, a social media campaign to raise awareness of the work of the U.S. Foreign Service, and AFSA's annual open house for members.

The long-standing AFSA post representative program helped us keep in contact with members overseas, and we thank those who volunteer to serve in these roles. In coordination with post reps, President Rubin has continued to meet with first- and second-tour (FAST) officers to share AFSA's advocacy priorities and hear from our members.



Advocacy on the Hill

The 2021-2023 Governing Board term presented AFSA ample opportunity to push the organization's advocacy priorities through annual legislative vehicles, resulting in historic progress regarding parity with the military for the Foreign Service.

AFSA also established a policy analyst position to oversee AFSA engagement on state- and local-level legislative initiatives, expanding the footprint of the organization's advocacy work.

First and foremost, AFSA continued to defend the International Affairs Budget (IAB), which saw its most significant increase in about six years. From FY22 to FY23, the IAB increased by 6 percent, and operational accounts for foreign affairs agencies all increased above the previous year.

During this period, AFSA's Governing Board, in collaboration with the Advocacy and Professional Policy Issues team, created a formal list of reform priorities in response to calls from the administration and Congress for modernization of the foreign affairs agencies.

In 2021 AFSA helped craft and advocate passage of the Foreign Service Families Act, the most significant piece of military parity legislation the Foreign Service has seen become law.

The Foreign Service Families Act grants parity in two important areas: It extends provisions from the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act that allow members of the Foreign Service given diplomatic orders to serve overseas the ability to break a residential, vehicle, or cell phone contract without penalty. The law also ensures an in-state tuition rate in one's state of domicile at public institutions of higher education for members of the Foreign Service, their spouses, and dependents.

During this board term, AFSA also saw Congress pass its first comprehensive State Department Authorization Act in nearly two decades. This law addressed assignment restrictions by ensuring that State Department employees subjected to an assignment restriction or preclusion have the same appeal rights as those experiencing denial or revocation of a security clearance, which should be resolved 60 days after the appeal is filed.

The State Authorization also included a report to Congress analyzing the effect of overseas allowances

and compensation on the assignment of FSOs. AFSA hopes the final report will help build support for the third and final tranche of overseas comparability pay (OCP).

In 2022 Congress saw merit in continuing the trend of passing State Authorization bills, and again provided AFSA with a legislative vehicle for other Foreign Service reforms.

The State Department Authorization Act of 2022 provides members of the Civil Service on domestic employees teleworking overseas (DETO) agreements at least OCP or two-thirds of D.C. locality pay. Prior to this change, members of the Civil Service (many of them Foreign Service family members) on DETOs received no locality pay and took a significant pay cut to work overseas alongside their families.

The 2022 Authorization Act also establishes a mechanism for third parties to verify the employment of, and the validity of permanent change of station orders received by, members of the Foreign Service in a manner that protects sensitive employee information.

As we near the end of this board term, Congress has called for another State Authorization Act—for the third year in a row. AFSA will continue to encourage regular authorization for the foreign affairs agencies, while facing the advocacy challenges associated with divided government, in the 118th Congress.

Outreach

AFSA has focused on expanding outreach to new and nontraditional audiences who may not be familiar with the work of the U.S. Foreign Service. We reached audiences in 47 states across the U.S., and our reach keeps growing.

We strengthened collaboration with strategic partners by chairing the Educational Outreach Roundtable group and inviting new organizations with similar mandates into the group, including the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy at Georgetown University and The Elliott School of International Affairs at The George Washington University.



Social media has proven to be an important tool, particularly when it comes to younger audiences who use social media for the latest news and education about issues and events. Our followers and engagement with our content on social channels have grown significantly. In the past two years, we expanded our presence to LinkedIn and Instagram, allowing us to connect with different and important new audiences.

The two virtual series we launched in 2021, *Inside Diplomacy* and *Diplomats at Work*, continue to be popular.

Inside Diplomacy invites foreign policy leaders to offer perspectives on current issues and the role of the Foreign Service in those issues. AFSA hosted USAID Administrator Samantha Power, then–Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, and then–Assistant Secretary of State Monica Medina, among others. The series has proven to be a good platform for foreign policy leaders who want to update the foreign affairs community on new strategies, programs, and developments.

Diplomats at Work, which focuses on attracting younger audiences through storytelling, has hosted active-duty FS members from across the foreign affairs agencies and gathered a solid following of educators and students from around the country. Members also see the benefit of this series and have frequently contacted AFSA to ask to be featured on a program. Both series

enjoy a substantial “live” audience, and their recordings continue to attract many views.

Our partnership with the *American Diplomat* podcast, which reaches yet another audience, continues to be productive, allowing us to share relevant stories, highlight speakers, and promote AFSA’s work.

Our traditional Speakers Bureau programming has recovered from the effects of the pandemic. We continue to receive requests and place speakers now both in-person and virtually, taking advantage of greater flexibility in finding expertise regardless of location.

After inactivity during the pandemic, our partnership with Road Scholar remains strong, with AFSA designing three programs each year in Washington, D.C.

To keep our growing audience engaged, we developed an outreach newsletter that features new AFSA programming, content from *The Foreign Service Journal*, and items of interest from AFSA partner organizations. This newsletter has nearly 3,000 subscribers in 47 states across the U.S.

In February, AFSA formally kicked off planning for the 2024 Foreign Service centennial. The centennial celebration is an excellent opportunity for public outreach, to raise awareness of the work of the U.S. Foreign Service on behalf of America for the past 100 years.

In early 2023, AFSA renewed its agreement with the Cox Foundation, which will support AFSA activities in preparation for the centennial this year.

Professional Policy Issues

During this board term, the Professional Policy Issues (PPI) and Advocacy teams organized several opportunities for the AFSA Governing Board to engage in detailed reviews of AFSA’s advocacy and reform priorities. In shaping the agenda for these events, PPI drew on member survey feedback, consultations with employee groups in multiple Foreign Service agencies, and a review of current external reform-oriented reports, such as the American Diplomacy Project’s *Blueprints for a More Modern U.S. Diplomatic Service*.

PPI also closely consulted with AFSA’s advocacy director to steer the choice of agenda items in the direction of clear congressional interest, so that if AFSA pursued reform solutions legislatively, there would be

at least a fair chance of congressional support.

PPI has continued to refresh AFSA’s advocacy priorities via feedback from a continuing series of town halls, first- and second-tour (FAST) employee brown bags, employee group meetings, and engagement with agency management. We believe that through our deepened member engagement, AFSA is now successfully reflecting—and, in some cases, anticipating—the issues that most concern our members.

During this period, AFSA has conducted multiple, complex surveys, including the Survey on Bias in the Foreign Service Workplace, the Foreign Service Leadership and Management Survey, and the Future of Foreign Service Work Survey.

In many ways, these surveys were groundbreaking



AFSA / CALEB SCHLABACH

AFSA 2022 award sponsors and recipients (from left) Christine Peterson, AFSA President Eric Rubin, Susan Johnson, Elisabeth Zentos, RaeJean Stokes, Michael White, Ambassador Anne W. Patterson, Steven May, Dr. Sushma Palmer, Benjamin Dille, Sharon Papp, Jon Clements, and Ambassador Charles Rivkin.

and provided AFSA and senior agency management with information that they could not have obtained themselves, partly due to agency constraints in the use of demographic information. AFSA has built up an excellent reputation for conducting insightful surveys. State's Bureau of Medical Services partnered with AFSA to conduct a survey on mental health in the Foreign Service, and the Overseas Briefing Center and the Administrative Bureau partnered with us on a survey on the myriad costs of pet transport in the Foreign Service, respectively.

PPI also introduced the Advocacy Update newsletter to keep our members informed. With contributions from AFSA's Labor Management Office, director of advocacy, vice president for retirees, and representatives, the

newsletter is issued every four months to maintain a constant rhythm of disseminating information. This newsletter, along with articles in the *FSJ*, periodic town halls, and continuing consultations with employee groups, helps to keep members updated on organizational priorities.

PPI continues to look for ways to increase the professionalism of the Foreign Service by offering member events such as the very popular EER writing session, featuring an assistant secretary as one of the speakers.

We also ensured that, given it was a midterm election year, our members were reminded of the provisions of the Hatch Act and the Anti-Lobbying Act via AFSAnet messaging.

The addition of a policy analyst to PPI staff has improved our capacity to assist members with issues related to the implementation of the Foreign Service Families Act, including our ability to send letters to landlords and companies informing them of the consequences of noncompliance with the law.

We will continue to monitor the implementation of provisions regarding obtaining in-state tuition for Foreign Service members and dependents who meet domiciliary requirements, a potentially huge cost-saving measure for our members.

Scholarships, Awards, and Plaques

A FSA gave \$399,500 in scholarships to children of AFSA members in 2023, and a similar amount in 2022. This total is split between merit scholarships and financial aid scholarships. No AFSA membership dues are used in the AFSA Scholarship Program, which has disbursed more than \$5 million to more than 2,500 students during the past 28 years.

The AFSA awards program continues to honor exemplary performance and dissent in the U.S. Foreign Service. While the 2020-2021 awards ceremonies did

not take place as usual because of the pandemic, in October 2022 we returned to a full in-person ceremony where we honored all winners from the previous three years.

We also returned to in-person events for Foreign Service Day in 2023, including the first in-person memorial plaque ceremony since 2019. AFSA's plaques now honor 321 individuals who died in service abroad.

This year, we also unveiled a new plaque honoring those members of the Foreign Service who died after contracting COVID-19 while posted abroad.



Publications/FSJ

During the 2021-2023 Governing Board term, *The Foreign Service Journal (FSJ)* took on major international developments and conflicts through a diplomacy and Foreign Service lens (from the U.S. withdrawal from

Afghanistan to the Russian invasion of Ukraine), in addition to pressing institutional and career issues such as diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) and Foreign Service reform.

The *FSJ* received several awards, including a Gold TRENDY Award in the category of “Monthly Professional Society Magazine” (October 2022 edition, focus on Ukraine), a Gold Tabbie Award for best special section (September 2021 edition, focus on 9/11 20 years later), a Silver TRENDY Award in the category of “Monthly Professional Society Magazine” (September 2021), a Bronze Tabbie Award for best single issue (May 2021 edition on Arctic diplomacy), and a Bronze Excel Award for best single issue (again, May 2021).

The *FSJ*'s reach continued to increase. One piece in particular, May 2022's Speaking Out, “On Our Own—Diplomats Deserve Equal Access to Reproductive Health Services,” gained national media attention and helped lead to reform at State. By highlighting this employee-led effort to solve a problem faced by Foreign Service women overseas—the lack of adequate reproductive health care—the *FSJ* article sparked attention and action from State Department leadership to acknowledge and alleviate the problem.

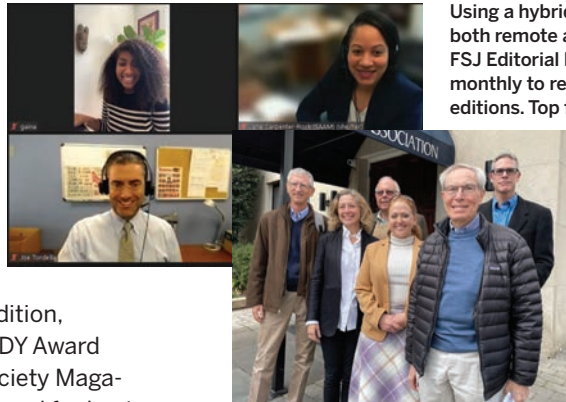
Publications staff attended several conferences in 2022 to boost outreach, circulation, and advertising, including the American Library Association and the National Society of High School Scholars. In 2022 promotional materials were offered on-site at additional conferences: Alliance for Peace Building's PeaceCon, the American Camping Association, and the National Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations.

In early 2023, advertising sales were trending upward, showing an increase from 2022: 23 percent across all mediums and 31 percent for the *FSJ* alone.

The *FSJ* introduced a new feature called “Straight from the Source” in October 2022, with articles from State's Board of Examiners and FSI's Language Testing



Award-winning *FSJ* issues include the May 2021 edition, the September 2021 edition, and the October 2022 edition.



Using a hybrid system to accommodate both remote and in-person attendees, FSJ Editorial Board members meet monthly to review content for upcoming editions. Top from left: Gaiña Dávila, Jane Carpenter-Rock, Joe Tordella. Bottom from left: Ambassador (ret.) Larry Wohlers, Vivian Walker, Ambassador (ret.) Bob Beecroft, Bronwyn Llewellyn, Harry Kopp, and Chair Alexis Ludwig. Not pictured: Aileen Nandi.

Unit. It is intended to be a space for officials to tell the community what the foreign affairs agencies are doing, what new policies are being put in place, and why.

The AFSA/*FSJ* style guide was finalized and announced for use in February 2023. We rolled out our adoption of the serial, or “Oxford,” comma earlier, with the October 2022 edition.

The *FSJ*'s online presence continues to grow and evolve through the addition of new channels as well as strategic efforts on existing ones. In July 2021, the publications team developed a “digest”-style email campaign to share articles from both the latest editions and from the archive on a weekly basis. This newsletter was rebranded in 2022 as the “*FSJ Insider*” and, as of March 2023, has accumulated more than 1,500 organic subscribers. The *FSJ* LinkedIn account, established May 2021, has steadily climbed to more than 2,200 followers by May 2023.

The third edition of *Inside a U.S. Embassy* (FS Books, 2011) continues to be a backlist powerhouse and went into its ninth printing in late 2022, selling hundreds of copies each quarter. The second edition of *The Voice of the Foreign Service: A History of the American Foreign Service Association*, authored by Harry Kopp, retired FSO and current *FSJ* Editorial Board member, entered into production in early 2023 for a May 2024 release for the Foreign Service and AFSA centennial.



State Department

The 2021-2023 Governing Board term for State VP Tom Yazdgerdi was a busy one during which AFSA continued to help members both collectively and individually.

One of the biggest challenges for members was the introduction of a new payroll system that caused significant errors in pay, differentials, leave hours, and Thrift Savings Plan disbursements, among other problems.

We responded immediately to the mounting frustration of our members, many of whom had to wait months for their issues to be resolved amid a less-than-responsive customer service process. Through tireless advocacy, we insisted that the State Department pay interest on back pay and devote more resources and people to resolve the thousands of complaints it received.

AFSA was instrumental in supporting our members and all State employees suffering from Anomalous Health Incidents (AHIs) to access the treatment and care they needed. In June 2022, when the rule was published implementing the HAVANA Act (HA)—legislation instigated by AFSA that guarantees benefits to those with AHIs—we successfully pushed for a change that expanded the definition of “medical provider” so that more employees could be included as beneficiaries.

As a result, we saw a high number of HA requests accepted; but we continue to press for an explanation on those relatively few, but otherwise eligible, AHI cases that were denied relief.

After lobbying over the past two years for expansion of 3 FAM (Foreign Affairs Manual) 3660 benefits to include cases occurring in countries beyond Cuba and China, the department has agreed to augment the list—a victory for consistent treatment of all AHI cases. This will allow those who have successfully filed a workers’ compensation claim to receive funds.

In another big win, we recently learned that AHI cases included those occurring before Jan. 1, 2016—the HA precludes these cases from eligibility—will now be able to seek treatment at Centers of Excellence, including Walter Reed, for as long as they are experiencing symptoms.

Working with the Asian American Foreign Affairs Association, supporters on Capitol Hill, and others, AFSA tackled the sensitive issue of assignment restrictions. AFSA believes that many of these restrictions, put in place by the department ostensibly to check the influence of

adversarial foreign governments, are unnecessary and do not allow for a fair and transparent appeal process.

In 2022 we successfully advocated for congressional language mandating establishment of procedures for employees wishing to appeal these restrictions, and in subsequent negotiations with the department, succeeded in removing Diplomatic Security (DS) as a final decision-maker on the grounds that DS imposes the initial restriction.

In early January 2023, the department published new FAM regulations that mandate a 60-day time limit for a final decision once the employee has appealed to the Security Appeals Panel. Now, employees requesting an appeal will benefit from an independent review of their assignment restrictions. As of mid-May, we are told that more than 70 percent of assignment restrictions have been lifted. We are currently pressing for similar reforms in the department’s “pass-through objection” process.

As part of our efforts to improve the department’s culture, AFSA strongly encouraged the establishment of an office to address bullying and other toxic workplace behavior, especially from those in supervisory positions.

In January 2023, the department sent formal notification to Capitol Hill that it intends to create an Office of Bullying and Harassment Intervention within the Bureau of Global Talent Management. AFSA pushed for this office not only to be fully staffed and resourced, but for it to have the means to compel both sides in a workplace conflict, particularly the alleged offender, to engage. We hope that once established, this office will start to change a department culture that for too long has tolerated toxic workplace behavior.

AFSA, which first began considering this idea in 2018, was pleased to learn that in December 2019, the department had agreed to the creation of a new full-time State representative position to deal primarily with the concerns of Foreign Service specialists. As of this writing, there are two candidates running in the AFSA election for this position, which is a two-year pilot that coincides with the upcoming Governing Board term.

Throughout this Governing Board term, the State VP and the Labor Management team continued to engage the department on overarching issues of Foreign Service reform. This included AFSA’s priorities of making the assignment and assessment processes more transparent and useful.



Retiree Services

The past two years saw multiple examples of the unfortunate reality that bureaucratic glitches do not always end at retirement. In each instance, AFSA's retirement services team stepped in to help members.

Many retirees were adversely affected by the information technology "upgrades" in State Department payroll software, the Thrift Savings Plan website, and the Annuitant Employee Express website. AFSA Counselor for Retirees Dolores Brown (herself a Foreign Service retiree) worked one-on-one with more than 100 members, helping them to navigate the new logon procedures. She teamed up with AFSA Retiree Vice President John Naland to produce clear written guidance explaining the new procedures. That guidance was emailed to all retirees and posted on the AFSA website.

In addition to tackling issues that affected all retirees, the team also assisted numerous members every month with individual concerns or questions. When appropriate, AFSA raised those individual cases with senior managers in the Office of Retirement or the Bureau of the Comptroller and Global Financial Services. The team also met on a regular basis with those two offices to discuss issues affecting all Foreign Service retirees. Dolores Brown assisted the AFSA staff and Governing Board members at USAID in their efforts to improve retirement services at that agency.

AFSA also continually added new or updated content to its website's Retirement Services page. A Frequently Asked Questions section was created to share guidance on common issues.

The Retirement Services section now offers more than 100 resources on federal benefits issues and post-retirement activities. They include fact sheets, videos of AFSA benefits presentations, checklists of key retirement issues, and copies of official State Department guidance. AFSA encourages members who have not visited the webpage recently to do so—what you don't know *can* hurt you.

In addition to online guidance, AFSA continued to email members bimonthly retirement newsletters for active-duty employees and retirees, highlighting important federal benefits topics.

AFSA also continued to mail retired members the nearly 250-page annual AFSA Directory of Retired Mem-

bers, offering the means to connect annuitants to friends and colleagues, as well as providing two dozen pages of information on Foreign Service retirement issues.

John Naland (a former director of the State Department's Office of Retirement) presented several webinars on federal benefits issues, some attracting more than 500 registrants.

In addition, Dolores Brown moderated other programs geared toward retirees, but of interest to all AFSA members, including "Building a Digital Brand in Foreign Affairs and Beyond," with social media experts; "Pathways to Financial Independence: Financial Planning for the Foreign Affairs Community," with William Carrington; and AFSPA's Paula Jakub on the FEHB Open Season.

John Naland represented AFSA on the Federal-Postal Coalition—a group of 30 organizations including Civil Service unions representing 2.7 million federal employees and 2.6 million federal retirees—which conducts advocacy work on federal governmentwide benefits issues.

As COVID-19 travel restrictions eased during the past two years, AFSA President Eric Rubin resumed visits to regional Foreign Service retiree groups, speaking to those in Florida, Maryland/Washington, D.C., Northern California, and Northern Virginia. He also met with retirees on outreach trips to Minnesota and North Carolina.

These multifaceted efforts to provide members with value for their dues produced a rise in AFSA retiree membership to its highest level in at least 10 years.

U.S. Agency for International Development

During the 2021-2023 Governing Board term, AFSA welcomed USAID Administrator Samantha Power and new political leaders. Inspired by the president's declaration—"It is the policy of the United States to protect, empower, and rebuild the career Federal workforce"—AFSA affirmed existing relations and forged new ones with agency counterparts.

AFSA's USAID VP met regularly with the deputy administrator for management and resources; the agency



counselor; the assistant to the administrator for human capital and talent management (HCTM) and chief human capital officer (CHCO); the chief diversity officer and her team; the HCTM Foreign Service Center leadership and employee and labor relations team; and the Foreign Service Performance Management and Promotion Task Team.

AFSA also worked closely with USAID counterparts in the Office of Civil Rights, the Backstop Coordinators Council, and bureau and mission stakeholders.

AFSA welcomed 11 classes of USAID officers comprising 285 new Foreign Service (FS) members, including numerous Payne Fellows. AFSA hosted regular town hall sessions, met with a range of employee resource groups, and strengthened relations with the USAID Alumni Association, the Society for International Development. AFSA achieved a number of important accomplishments detailed below.

In December 2022, AFSA and USAID signed a new Framework Agreement (or collective bargaining agreement), replacing the one first signed in 1993. The new agreement covers areas such as union rights and representation, management rights and responsibilities, and negotiation procedures. It also clarifies the status and role of the USAID AFSA vice president and strengthens AFSA-USAID communication processes.

AFSA's advocacy with agency and congressional stakeholders informed the development of USAID's Global Development Partnership Initiative (GDPI), leading to increased career FS hiring. The GDPI is a three-year effort designed to shift away from an overreliance on the use of non-career mechanisms and increase the permanent Foreign Service to 2,500 by Fiscal Year 2025.

AFSA collaborated with the agency and the American Federation of Government Employees on USAID's Future of Work (FoW) effort designed to modernize and adapt the agency's work model in a post-COVID-19 environment. Conveying member concerns, AFSA helped shape the initiative and continues to engage on FoW-related policies and procedures such as telework, remote work, etc.

AFSA negotiated several Automated Directives Systems chapters, including the first on Senior Leadership Group (SLG) policies and procedures. AFSA and the agency codified the SLG chapter via a memorandum of understanding, ensuring clarity and defining terms for this agreement.

AFSA continues to advocate for improved retirement and benefit services for current and retired USAID FSOs. While the agency has strengthened its benefits team and made significant improvements, more is needed.

Drawing from the Office of the Inspector General's

findings and other reports, improved strategic workforce planning remained a focal point for AFSA efforts, including the appropriate use of non-career hiring mechanisms. AFSA held discussions with an array of members, including a small-group discussion with non-career Foreign Service Limited appointees whose interests included how AFSA might help advance their goals to secure permanent GS positions.

We continue to advocate for increased career hires and caution against the agency's use of the Foreign Service Act as a budgetary workaround to appoint temporary hires.

Additionally, AFSA has advocated for increased resourcing of USAID's HCTM office, noting the extended vacancies in the positions of the CHCO and deputy CHCO and requesting that the agency remove its prohibition against Foreign Service officers serving in the CHCO role.

AFSA regularly engaged with the agency task team charged with improving the performance and promotion processes, resulting in several operational improvements. We regularly responded to member requests for career counseling and promotion-related concerns, including concerns over repeated stretch position service.

The AFSA vice president hosted virtual meets-ups where HCTM presented highlights and fielded questions on its Foreign Service Promotion Data Report, a breakdown of promotions by sex, racial, or ethnic group, and backstop for the 2017-2021 period.

The new USAID leadership embarked on another Washington-focused reorganization effort. AFSA, responding to members "reorg fatigue," is engaged with agency counterparts on the current reorganization, focusing on impact to both individual members and the Foreign Service voice in Washington.

To better prepare agency leadership for their critical roles, AFSA presented at several sessions of the New Field Leaders Seminar, a forum designed for new mission directors and deputy mission directors.

Responding to member concerns, AFSA and the agency collaborated to better educate and inform individuals on the president's executive order on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA). AFSA pushed for improved data, transparency, and analytics needed to understand the state of DEIA at USAID and to make evidence-based decisions.

AFSA is engaging on USAID's "Foreign Service Strengthening" initiative, a multiyear effort driven by the front office and meriting consideration by and input from FSOs. This initiative is active and will continue into the next Governing Board's term.



Foreign Commercial Service

A FSA has worked diligently to enhance the posture of the Foreign Commercial Service and promote the well-being of its officers through a comprehensive and strategic approach. During this term, these efforts were led by our prior AFSA FCS VP, Jay Carreiro, and current VP, Charles Ranado.

After months of persistent collective bargaining, in late December 2022, AFSA was able to finalize a memorandum of understanding with the agency, reaching agreement on 10 of 13 proposals, including an updated and flexible language policy, new procedures on directed assignments, established deadlines on the vetting of Senior Foreign Service (SFS) promotions, and the need to modernize the performance appraisal system, among other issues.

All 10 agreed-on proposals will benefit officers and provide greater clarity and structure on important issues. AFSA was disappointed that we were unable to reach a compromise on all 13 proposals, and we are considering impasse options on the remaining three, including the need to adjust the Commercial Service's time-in-service requirements for FS-01 through FS-04 officers, currently the shortest among all Foreign Service agencies.

AFSA has worked closely with Global Markets management to ensure that significant delays experienced during 2021 and 2022 in areas such as the approval of SFS pay and awards, promotion announcements, and onward assignments are not repeated.

For 2022-2023, AFSA was pleased to note that promotion announcements were made in a timelier manner (although, still not in line with a new rating period), most onward assignments were announced prior to Feb. 1 (months ahead of the previous year), and interactions indicate that SFS pay and awards will be executed before the end of the 2023 calendar year, Q1—all topics AFSA has raised often since early fall of 2022.

Yet challenges remain that we look forward to resolving with the agency, namely, proposed changes to the selection of the deputy director general (DDG), deputy assistant secretary, and executive director positions.

AFSA agrees that these represent some of the most important positions within the Commercial Service, and as such, the selection of each should honor all prior AFSA-agency agreements. Of note, the selection of the DDG must include the representation of an SFS commercial officer on all proposed panels to ensure that as Global

Markets' largest constituent, the Foreign Commercial Service's voice is heard.

AFSA continued to engage in congressional outreach and was pleased that Global Markets received a significant increase year-on-year to their 2023 budget.

However, AFSA has stressed that this increase still does not adequately allow Global Markets to execute their strategy to increase human capital and offices globally, nor does it allow for our Service to meet the growing demand to counter malign actors, promote trade, advocate on behalf of U.S. business, ensure commercial and economic policies are respected, and promote SelectUSA.

Simply put, we need funds to do more. Further internal stakeholder engagement, including with our retired officers' groups, Women Commercial Officers group, and regions, is invaluable, as it has provided AFSA with niche perspectives that allow us to further refine our priorities.

Foreign Agricultural Service

During the 2021-2023 Governing Board term, FAS VP Lisa Ahramjian was a fierce advocate for FAS, its Foreign Service, and its Foreign Service officers.

One of AFSA's top priorities was to embark on renegotiation of the FAS-AFSA collective bargaining agreement (CBA), which was last substantively renegotiated almost three decades ago.

The CBA serves as the rulebook for policies affecting our Foreign Service, from assignments to selection boards and prerequisites for the Senior Foreign Service (SFS). During the current term, AFSA persuaded FAS to take a fresh look at this critical tool and formally launched renegotiations in February 2023. As it developed positions in specific articles, AFSA led teams of FSOs to identify potential changes and then sought feedback from all FSOs.

Another AFSA priority was to significantly improve human resources (HR) support at FAS. At the beginning of the board term, the 2021 transfer season led to major payroll errors for many FAS FSOs. AFSA immediately began advocating for the new, in-house HR team to make FSOs whole and create process improvements to prevent future errors.



AFSA REPORT

When progress stalled, President Rubin sent a letter to Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack to request his assistance in resolving long-standing payroll issues. This outreach led to the Secretary's written commitment to correct payroll errors within 90 days and to provide interest on back pay.

In March 2023, AFSA again engaged with USDA leadership to address concerns related to SFS pay. At the time of writing, AFSA is working with FAS to establish a fair and transparent approach to SFS pay within USDA's executive pay structure. Additional changes may follow during CBA renegotiations.

More broadly, AFSA continues to hold HR accountable for paying FSOs on time and correctly and understanding the unique complexities of the Foreign Service from an HR standpoint, and welcomes FAS' effective process improvements.

AFSA also focused on two key linked issues affecting the long-term health of FAS' Foreign Service: FSO flow-through and morale and retention.

In July 2022, AFSA published a detailed report from its morale and retention survey, which outlined FSO concerns ranging from leadership accountability and an untenable administrative burden to not feeling valued,

both individually and as a Foreign Service.

The report led to continued engagement with FAS leadership on how to address employee concerns. In November 2022, AFSA published an analytical piece, *A Sustainable Path to 180 FSOs*. This report advocates thoughtful rebuilding of the FAS Foreign Service, which is currently recovering from decades of attrition and related challenges.

AFSA also developed an accompanying tool that allows the user to map out how promotion rates, FSO intake, and other decisions affect our FS through 2030, and will update it in advance of promotion and assignment cycles to reinforce key recommendations.

Finally, in March 2022, AFSA requested that Congress increase its appropriation to FAS, which would help expand and provide better resources to overseas offices and bolster headquarters support. AFSA also sought an increased allocation of two-year funds, increasing flexibility for programming throughout the fiscal year.

Through these strategic engagements with USDA, FAS, and Congress during the Governing Board term, AFSA took important steps to address FSO concerns and strengthen our Service, ensuring that FSOs remained engaged and informed.

U.S. Agency for Global Media

The small but influential Foreign Service component of the U.S. Agency for Global Media (formerly the Broadcasting Board of Governors) is bracing for a return to the existential challenges it faced under former director Amanda Bennett, who left the role in 2020 but was confirmed for another three-year term in September 2022.

USAGM Representative Steve Herman, Voice of America's White House bureau chief, speaks for career foreign correspondents of the VOA, as well as supervisors and engineers at isolated overseas sites that provide shortwave, mediumwave and FM broadcast transmissions for Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, Radio Free Asia, and Radio Sawa.

When Bennett was director of VOA, she made clear her desire to remove VOA correspondents from the Foreign Service, believing erroneously that FS membership denoted State Department influence, or the appearance thereof, over the journalists.

AFSA has held intermittent discussions with USAGM management to attempt to clarify the broadcasting agency's stance on the future of Foreign Service journalists, both for the VOA correspondents and the USAGM technical staff who serve in some of the most remote locations for any members of the U.S. Foreign Service.

In December 2022, AFSA USAGM Representative Steve Herman was suspended from Twitter for following the development of ElonJet, a Twitter account that tracked the private jet locations of new Twitter CEO Elon Musk, which is public information. AFSA released a statement calling for the reinstatement of Herman's account, asserting that he was exercising his right to free speech and diligence as a journalist.

The VOA Foreign Service dates back to when the broadcaster was under the U.S. Information Agency, which was dissolved in 1999 and its broadcasting functions were moved to the newly created BBG. ■

A Prime Mover for Disability Rights

Judith Heumann 1947–2023

BY DONNA SCARAMASTRA GORMAN

Disability rights activist and author Judith Heumann, 75, died in Washington, D.C., on March 4, 2023. Often called “the mother of the disability rights movement” by activists around the world, Ms. Heumann served as the State Department’s first special adviser on international disability rights from 2010 to 2017, a position that was created after the U.S. signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Disabilities Treaty).

In her role as adviser, Heumann traveled to numerous overseas posts to meet with people with disabilities, civil society organizations, and government officials, teaching others to champion and advocate for disability rights in their countries. Heumann also worked to ensure that the needs of people with

disabilities would be addressed in international emergency situations and coordinated the interagency process for ratification of the Disabilities Treaty.

Sadly, the U.S. remains one of a few countries that still have not ratified the treaty. In a 2016 TED talk, Heumann pushed for the U.S. Senate to “do its job” and ratify the treaty, reminding her audience that they should join the fight for disabled rights. “Disability is a family you can join at any point in your life,” she added.

After Ms. Heumann’s death, State Department spokesperson Ned Price released a statement: “To say Judy was instrumental in the disability rights movement is an understatement. She embodied the collective fight for the rights of all people with disabilities throughout a multitude of roles and platforms—legal, political, and social. Legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities would not exist without Judy’s leadership alongside her pioneering fellow advocates.”

Ms. Heumann was born in 1947 to parents who fled Nazi Germany as children; her grandparents and other family members were murdered in the Holocaust. When she contracted polio as a toddler and lost the use of her legs, her parents refused to institutionalize her, perhaps, as she wrote in her



Donna Scaramastra Gorman's articles have appeared in Time Magazine, Newsweek, The Washington Post, the Christian Science Monitor, and the FSJ. A Foreign Service spouse and former associate editor for the Journal, she has lived in Amman, Moscow, Yerevan, Almaty, Beijing, and Northern Virginia.

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Special Adviser for International Disability Rights Judith Heumann participating in an August 2015 Google Hangout, discussing the influence of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and its effect in the U.S. and Latin America.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE



memoir, *Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist* (2020), because they came from a country where families were routinely separated as “part of a campaign of systemic dehumanization and murder.” Instead, they fought to have her admitted to her local public school.

Heumann planned to be a teacher, but after graduating from Long Island University with a degree in speech therapy and theater in 1969, she was told she could not teach in New York City schools because she’d be unable to assist in the event of an evacuation. She sued the school district and won, along the way becoming known as a disability rights leader.

She went on to push for federal anti-discrimination laws, which were signed by then-President Richard Nixon, and to demonstrate for the passage of Section 504, a federal statute prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disabilities, leading a group in a 26-day occupation of a federal government building in San Francisco.

Disability only becomes a tragedy when society fails to provide the things we need to lead our lives. —Judith Heumann

The “504 Sit-in” represented the first time that people with differing abilities joined forces to enact legislation, and it worked: When authorities cut power and phone lines to the building, deaf participants used sign language to maintain contact with outside supporters, allowing protestors to continue their sit-in.

After earning a master’s degree in public health from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1975, Heumann co-founded the landmark Berkeley Center for Independent Living, serving as deputy director until 1982. She then co-founded Berkeley’s World Institute on Disability.

In 1993 Heumann moved to Washington, D.C., to join the Clinton administration as assistant secretary of education overseeing all federal educational programs for children with disabilities. She then worked for the World Bank from 2002 to 2006 before becoming the State Department’s special adviser on disability rights during the Obama administration.

AFSA President Eric Rubin remembers meeting Heumann when she visited Moscow while he was serving as deputy chief of mission (DCM): “Judith visited Embassy Moscow in 2010 during the Passover holiday, and we invited her to join us for our Passover Seder. She asked if our residence was accessible to someone in a wheelchair, but after extensive consultation with our embassy team, we concluded that there was no way for someone in a wheelchair to enter the DCM residence without being carried up the steps. Judith thanked us for the invitation, but said that as a matter of principle, she was not willing to be carried. This was a significant reminder of the need for accessible housing, and the practical cost of having inaccessible U.S. government facilities.” (In 2023 the DCM residence in Moscow is still not wheelchair accessible.)

NPR correspondent Joseph Shapiro recalls that in 1987 Heumann told him: “Disability only becomes a tragedy when society fails to provide the things we need to lead our lives—job opportunities or barrier-free buildings, for example. It is not a tragedy to me that I’m living in a wheelchair.”

Heumann was featured in a 2020 documentary, “Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution,” about Camp Jened, a pioneering summer camp for children with disabilities. She also co-wrote a book for young readers, *Rolling Warrior: The Incredible, Sometimes Awkward, True Story of a Rebel Girl on Wheels Who Helped Spark a Revolution* (2021). She was the host of the podcast *The Heumann Perspective*, which featured conversations about disability culture, entertainment, and advocacy.

Heumann is survived by her spouse, Jorge Pineda, and her brothers, Ricky and Joseph. ■

■ **Scott Wilmer Cullum**, 53, a Foreign Service specialist, passed away on April 17, 2023, after an illness.

Mr. Cullum was born in Bel Air, Md., to Roland “Neil” and Mattie Vencill Cullum. He grew up in Harford County, Md.

In 1999 he met Mary “Kelly” Niewenhaus when the two were working as managers at a restaurant in Bel Air. After she joined the Peace Corps, Mr. Cullum followed her to Kazakhstan—an adventure that sparked his interest in joining the Foreign Service. This desire was further solidified after the events of 9/11.

The couple were married in 2001 and then moved to the Washington, D.C., area, where Mr. Cullum worked in the information technology sector as a contractor on projects with a variety of organizations, including the World Bank.

In 2005, shortly after obtaining his master’s degree in information security from University of Maryland University College, Mr. Cullum joined the Department of State as a Foreign Service specialist in information technology.

Over the course of his 18-year career, he served in Sierra Leone, Turkmenistan, Cuba, Azerbaijan, and Jordan, in addition to several offices in Washington, D.C., with the Bureau of Information Resource Management (IRM). He began a doctorate in cybersecurity management from Nova Southeastern University in Florida and was also selected to be part of IRM’s Executive Development Program from 2015 to 2017, when he attended the National Defense University.

Curious about the world, Mr. Cullum loved to explore with his family and especially enjoyed sampling the food wherever he went. Always one to make the best of any situation, he was known as a pizza chef for friends and colleagues at several posts where there was no pizza to be found.

Whether fishing off the coast of West Africa, spending time with friends in First Park in Ashgabat, riding his dirt bike along Havana’s Malecón esplanade, searching for waterfalls across Azerbaijan, or watching the sun set over the Dead Sea, he lived life to the fullest.

Mr. Cullum gave of his time generously to help colleagues and loved serving his country. He cherished most his time spent with family, watching his children, nieces, and nephews grow up.

He is survived by his wife, Mary “Kelly” Niewenhaus Cullum (an FSO); children Sierra and Rory Cullum; mother Mattie Cullum; brothers Greg Cullum (and wife Carol), Brian Cullum (and wife Dimitra), and David Cullum (and wife Alexandra); and numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.

■ **Maureen A. Howard**, 78, a former Foreign Service officer, passed away on Jan. 5, 2023, in Tacoma, Wash., after a yearlong battle with cancer.

Ms. Howard was born in Cloquet, Minn., to George and Mary Matter. The family moved to Longview, Wash., when she was a young child.

She earned a B.A. in biology from Fort Wright College in 1966, a B.A. in education from Eastern Washington University in 1968, an M.A. in liturgical studies from the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind., in 1977, and also completed her doctoral coursework in theology there in 1982.

Over the course of her career, Ms. Howard served as a public diplomacy officer in the Foreign Service from 1995 to 2003 and was also an educator. But she was best known for her work as an affordable housing advocate, spending more than 40 years as a champion for the unhoused.

She began her work in housing as director of the Martin Luther King Ecu-

menical Center in Tacoma, where she built a program that, by the time she left the role in 1992, provided direct support to 600 homeless men, women, and children.

She was a founding member and president of the Washington State Coalition for the Homeless, executive director of Habitat for Humanity of Washington State; and, up until the time of her passing, she was the driving force behind the Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness.

Ms. Howard won many awards, including the Margret Sevey Lifetime Achievement Award from the Washington State Housing Finance Commission in October 2022 and the Social Justice Award from The Conversation 253 in January 2023. Those who knew her described her as a person who got things done and a fearless yet gracious leader in challenging oppression and bureaucracy.

She was passionate about singing, travel, and family. She also enjoyed tracing her genealogy, which she shared by creating family heritage photo books to welcome babies, congratulate newlyweds, and celebrate family members who had passed.

Ms. Howard is preceded in death by her parents, brother Mark, sister Loretta Jeanne, brother Anthony Matter, and nephew Gordan King.

She is survived by husband Jeremy Kunz; daughter Elisabeth Howard (and husband David Langmack); several grandchildren; and siblings George (and wife Donna) Matter, Kurt (and wife Joanie) Matter, Margaret (and husband Robert) King, Kathleen (and husband Timothy) Gallagher, James (and wife Susan) Matter, and Mary Jo (and husband Marcus) Thompson, as well as her former husband, Rogers Howard.

■ **James G. Lowenstein**, 95, a retired Foreign Service officer and former

ambassador, passed away on Jan. 3, 2023, at his home in Washington, D.C., due to complications from a fall the day before his death.

Born on Aug. 6, 1927, in Long Branch, N.J., Mr. Lowenstein grew up in nearby Shrewsbury and, later, Scarsdale, N.Y. He was the son of Katherine (Goldsmith) Lowenstein and Melvyn Lowenstein, a prominent estate attorney, based in Manhattan, whose clients included Babe Ruth.

Mr. Lowenstein graduated from the Loomis School in 1945 and received his bachelor's degree in international relations at Yale University in 1949. He then entered government service and went to Paris, where he worked for the Economic Cooperation Administration overseeing the Marshall Plan for postwar European recovery.

He served in the U.S. Navy from 1952 to 1955, completing his naval reserve service with the rank of lieutenant, after which he entered Harvard Law School.

His legal pursuits were cut short, however, by a bout with bulbar polio, which left part of his face paralyzed. By the time he recovered, he was far behind his classmates, and he left school after a year to join the U.S. Foreign Service.

He received his commission in early 1957 and had assignments in Washington, D.C., Sri Lanka, and Yugoslavia, where he worked under George F. Kennan.

In 1965 Mr. Lowenstein took a leave of absence from the department to work for Senator J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.) and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

With his diplomatic background, he soon became a valued member of the committee's staff, accompanying senators on their own fact-finding trips abroad.

In 1967 he went with Senator Philip Hart (D-Mich.) to South Vietnam. When he returned to Washington, he conveyed his impressions to Mr. Fulbright, who

weeks later came out forcefully against the war. The senator also decided that he needed his own source of information from the field, and put Mr. Lowenstein and Richard M. Moose, another former FSO, on the case.

Their report, released in a redacted version to the public in early 1970, was a bombshell. The administration's plans, they wrote, "seem to rest on far more ambiguous, confusing, and contradictory evidence than pronouncements from Washington and Saigon indicate."

The pair returned to the region several times, coming back with more damaging revelations. In Cambodia, they discovered that the United States was secretly expanding its support for the country's military against communist forces, raising fear of a spillover conflict. And in Laos, they found a secret, long-running effort by the CIA to train pro-American guerrillas.

A trip to Greece, which was then under the control of a military junta, revealed that the U.S. ambassador in Athens was biased in favor of the junta and had been sending misleading reports to Washington.

The Lowenstein-Moose investigations on Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines, Greece, and nuclear weapons in Europe made national headlines, setting the precedent for later Senate inquiries.

After returning to the State Department in 1974, Mr. Lowenstein became principal deputy assistant secretary of State for European affairs under Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

He then served as the ambassador to Luxembourg from 1977 to 1981 before retiring from the Foreign Service in 1982.

He later worked as a consultant and election monitor and was vice chairman of the French-American Foundation, which he co-founded in 1976 to improve relations between the two countries.

He held the rank of officer in the French Legion of Honor and was decorated with the Luxembourg Grand Croix of the Couronne de Chêne.

Ambassador Lowenstein was married twice, with both marriages ending in divorce.

He is survived by his daughter, Laurinda Douglas, of New York; his son, Price, of Bermuda; his brother, Peter, of Greenwich, Conn.; his longtime partner, Audrey Wolfe; and three grandchildren: James and Haley Lowenstein and Alex Douglas.

■ **Ambler H. Moss Jr.**, 85, a former Foreign Service officer and ambassador, passed away peacefully at his home in Coral Gables, Fla., on Dec. 27, 2022.

He was born in Baltimore, Md., in 1937 and completed his bachelor's degree at Yale University in 1960. In 1970, he received his J.D. from The George Washington University.

He was an officer in the U.S. Navy (submarines) and a life member of the American Legion and Navy League. He was a member of the Bars of Florida and the District of Columbia.

Mr. Moss joined the U.S. Foreign Service in 1964. He served in Spain, in the U.S. Delegation to the Organization of American States, and as Spanish desk officer in Washington, D.C., before leaving the Service in 1971 to work as a resident attorney with the law firm Coudert Brothers in Brussels from 1972 to 1976.

He returned to the State Department in 1977 as a political appointee on the U.S.-Panama Canal negotiating team and was then named deputy assistant secretary of State for congressional relations.

He served as ambassador to Panama from 1978 until 1982, having been appointed successively by Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan.

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He also served as a member of the U.S.-Panama Consultative Committee from 1978 to 1982 and from 1995 to 2001.

Ambassador Moss was counsel to the law firm of Greenberg Traurig in Miami from 1994 to 2010. He was a member of the Steering Committee for the first Summit of the Americas in Miami in December 1994.

He wrote numerous articles and book chapters, spoke on subjects relating to inter-American affairs and European Union-U.S. relations, and taught courses at the University of Miami.

He was a member of the Council of Foreign Relations (New York), Royal Institute of International Affairs (London), the International Institute of Strategic Studies (London), and the Institute of Catalan Studies (Barcelona).

He received decorations from the governments of Catalonia, Spain, Panama, and Argentina. He has also received the Harold Weill Medal from New York University School of Law, and the U.S. Department of the Army Commander's Award for public service. He was also awarded the "Lawyer of the Americas" citation by the Inter-American Law Review of the University of Miami.

Amb. Moss was fluent in Catalan, Spanish, and French. He was an avid reader, a sailor, and a masterful paella chef.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 52 years, Serena Welles Moss; four children, Ambler H. Moss III, Benjamin S. Moss, Serena M. Moss, and Nicholas G.O. Moss; and three grandchildren, Slater Serle Moss, Acadia Serle Moss, and Oliver Moss.

■ **John M. "Mike" Joyce**, 84, a retired Senior Foreign Service officer, died Feb. 21, 2023, at the Terrace Nursing Home in Jacksonville, Fla.

Mr. Joyce was born on May 8, 1938,

in Alamosa, Colo., to Mable and William Joyce. He was the youngest of four children. His mother, a practicing Mormon, was a teacher, primarily in a one-room schoolhouse, from the age of 16 until she retired in the 1960s. His father, a Protestant of Irish heritage, was the postmaster general in Antonito, Colo., where Mr. Joyce grew up. He began school at age 7, starting in the second grade.

At 17, he enrolled in Brigham Young University, which most of his friends attended. He spent two years studying civil engineering—he always loved cars—and then quit college to join the U.S. Air Force.

The Air Force immediately assigned Mr. Joyce to attend Russian-language training for one year at Syracuse University. He then spent the next three years in the back of huge military planes, filled with electronic equipment, flying close to the Soviet border and translating radio transmissions from Russian to English. He was based at that time in West Germany.

After leaving the Air Force, Mr. Joyce returned to BYU and graduated with a degree in political science and Russian studies.

He met his wife, Karen, in a class at the University of Colorado, Boulder. She was a senior and he was a graduate student. Their first date took place on his birthday in May 1965. That day they also celebrated his acceptance by the Department of State into the U.S. Foreign Service. By that time, he already spoke both Russian and German.

After a short courtship, the couple married on Dec. 31, 1965—a marriage that lasted 58 years—and Mr. Joyce began his career as a Foreign Service officer and Russia specialist.

Mr. Joyce's first assignment was to Manila in February 1966. Successive

assignments included Rangoon, Stuttgart, Garmisch, Moscow, Managua, Havana, and Washington, D.C.

He spent nearly nine years in total in Moscow across three separate tours, serving as deputy chief of mission on his final tour.

He retired from the Foreign Service in 1995 after a 35-year career. The Joyces' oldest son, Patrick, was born in Bangkok, and their youngest, Rob, in Stuttgart.

In December 2001, Mr. and Ms. Joyce moved permanently from their home in Oakton, Va., to Palm Coast, Fla. They spent the next 22 years living on the ocean on a barrier island in The Hammock of Palm Coast.

Mr. Joyce was an avid golfer and an extremely diverse reader of books on science, technology, history, and the origin of languages. He maintained his language skills by reading novels in Russian, German, and Spanish, which he thoroughly enjoyed. He also loved to do crossword puzzles.

In 1984 Mr. Joyce published an article in *Foreign Policy* magazine, "The Old Russian Legacy," which was assigned widely in university courses. In the 2000s, he wrote a column on foreign affairs for the *Daytona Beach News-Journal*.

Mr. Joyce is remembered as a highly intelligent, always curious, sensitive, kind, generous, and thoughtful person, who led a meaningful and gratifying life. Primarily an introvert, he chose a career as a diplomat that entailed many social responsibilities.

Luckily, the family recalls, his partner, best friend, and wife was an extrovert. Their marriage of 58 years stood the test of time as a productive and loving relationship.

Mr. Joyce is survived by his wife, sister Patricia Boling, sons Patrick and Rob and their wives, and four grandchildren.

■ **John Marshall Louton**, 80, a retired Foreign Service officer with the U.S. Information Agency, died in Seattle, Wash., on Jan. 19, 2023.

Mr. Louton was born on Sept. 4, 1942, in Chicago, Ill., and raised in nearby Woodstock. He attended Ohio State University and ultimately received his doctorate in Chinese philosophy from the University of Washington. Mr. Louton worked on translating classical Chinese texts and poetry the rest of his life.

From 1986 to 2006, he served as a Foreign Service officer in Zambia, India, Albania, Taiwan, and China (Beijing and Chengdu). One career highlight was his involvement in the opening of the U.S. embassy in Tirana in 1991 after decades of communism.

Mr. Louton was passionate about the Fulbright Foreign Student Exchange Program and believed in the importance of cultural understanding for successful diplomacy.

After retiring in 2006, he and his wife, Betsy, settled on Orcas Island, Wash., where he served on the Orcas Center Board of Directors and taught a class on Chinese philosophy at the library.

An avid hiker, he explored the countryside wherever he was, including the Cascade Mountains of the Pacific Northwest, Zambia's bush country, and the parks and mountains of Taiwan and China.

At home, he worked tirelessly moving rocks, digging holes, fixing gates, and weeding alongside his wife. He also advocated for campaign finance reform by writing letters to his political representatives. He was at his happiest walking in the woods with his dogs.

Mr. Louton will be deeply missed by his wife, Betsy; daughters Amy and Samara; daughter-in-law Rosemary Caperton; son-in-law Michael Frank;



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grandchildren Gavyn, Maya, William, and Elliot; brother Tom Louton; and sister-in-law Barbara Putz.

■ **Jay Thomas Smith**, 69, a retired Senior Foreign Service officer, passed away at his residence in Bloomington, Ind., on April 15, 2023.

He was born to Jack and Virginia Smith of Oakland City, Ind., on Aug. 26, 1953. He graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 1975, and a year later he married Jacqueline, whom he had met in France while on a study abroad semester there.

Mr. Smith followed his passion for international affairs and joined the Department of State as a Foreign Service consular officer in 1980.

His overseas assignments included Malawi, Indonesia, France, Zaire, the Philippines, Jamaica, Romania, Haiti (twice), and Senegal. He spoke French, Romanian, Lingala, and Indonesian.

In more than 30 years of public service, he traveled to nearly every country in Africa and lived all over the world alongside his loving wife. Mr. Smith was also a proud graduate of the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pa., in 1995.

Retiring with the rank of Minister Counselor in the Senior Foreign Service in 2014, Mr. Smith was known for his passion for helping others, honoring the ideals of the country he loved to serve, and motivating countless public servants in the pursuit of American ideals overseas and in the United States.

His brother, Jack, and sisters, Janet and Joyce, remember him for his love of baseball, fierce devotion to his family, and dedication to his country. Mr. Smith loved vintage cars, crossword puzzles, and learning.

Never one to stay idle, he devoted much of his time to following politics,

world events, and the happenings of his family. He will always be remembered for his dedication to those he loved.

Mr. Smith is survived by his wife of 46 years, Jacqueline Smith; their five children: Jeffrey Smith (an Army colonel), Veronique Guillermet (a Foreign Service officer), Juliette Dickens, Francis Smith, and Emma Smith; and four grandchildren: Alexandrine, Damien, Margaux, and Isaac, who was born shortly after his passing.

■ **Perry Jesse Stieglitz**, 102, a retired Foreign Service officer with the U.S. Information Agency, died on Jan. 25, 2023.

Mr. Stieglitz was born on April 18, 1920, in Yonkers, N.Y., to Abraham Charles and Goldie (Klein) Stieglitz.

In 1941 he received a B.A. degree from New York University and did postgraduate work at both Harvard and University of Lausanne, Switzerland. He served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy from 1942 to 1946.

From 1956 to 1959, he worked as both a lecturer at Hunter College in New York City and an English teacher at Hunter High School. He was a Fulbright grantee in Laos from 1959 to 1960, which led to his joining USIA. After a four-month assignment to set up four posts in Finland at which Americans would teach English, he was posted to Savannakhet in Laos in 1961. A year later he was called back to Vientiane as the information officer.

Mr. Stieglitz served as assistant cultural attaché in Paris from 1963 to 1967 and as cultural attaché in Vientiane from 1967 to 1968.

He then served as American consul in Marseille (1968-1970), and as cultural attaché in Bangkok (1973-1976) and in Brussels (1976-1980).

Following retirement from the Foreign Service in 1980, he was the Washington bureau chief for the *Bangkok Post* of Thailand from 1984 to 1985 and the

American representative of the Thomson Foundation of England from 1986 to 1988. Beginning in 1988, he was director of the Gibraltar Information Bureau in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Stieglitz received a meritorious award from the U.S. Information Agency in 1967. He was a member of the Cercle Royal Gaulois de Bruxelles, DACOR, and the University Club of Washington.

■ **Paul J. Steere**, 82, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on March 7, 2023, of natural causes in Semiahmoo, Blaine, Wash., with his wife by his side.

Mr. Steere was born in Grants Pass, Ore., to Jason and Emily (Smith) Steere, the youngest of three children. He was raised in a loving Christian environment, where his father was a minister and missionary, and his brothers continued along that path. His love of books and swimming started at an early age.

At the age of 17, Mr. Steere enrolled in the Army, where he was an intelligence analyst from 1958 to 1967. He served in Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, and three times in Vietnam (1961, 1963-1965, and 1966) with security, intelligence, psychological, and covert operations units.

He was honorably discharged with a 10 percent disability in 1967. Awards included Vietnam Service and Army Commendation Medals.

Mr. Steere met his wife, Muoi “Ying” Truong, in Vietnam, and they married in 1963. Their oldest son was born in Saigon. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Steere took advantage of the GI Bill and received a bachelor’s degree in East Asian studies and political science and master’s degree in library science at the University of Washington in Seattle, where his second son was born.

Mr. Steere’s passion for books and travel led him to Aschaffenburg, Ger-

many, where he served as central cataloging chief for 110 U.S. Army libraries across Europe. He returned to the U.S. to head up the Air Force base library in Mountain Home, Idaho, where in 1974 he learned he had been accepted into the U.S. Foreign Service.

His first assignment was Karachi as an assistant cultural affairs officer with responsibility for five U.S. Information Service libraries in Pakistan and regional commitments for library and related information programs in Abu Dhabi, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Sri Lanka.

He returned to Washington, D.C., as chief of library programs, directing USIA's worldwide system of 156 libraries and information centers. Subsequent postings include Taipei as the cultural affairs officer of the American Institute in Taiwan and Vienna as the field program librarian at U.S. Embassy Vienna.

There, he coordinated 17 USIA-sponsored information centers and library-related programs covering Bulgaria, former Czechoslovakia, former East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, former USSR, and all six republics of former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Steere was responsible as field program librarian at U.S. Embassy Bangkok for information distribution and programs for 16 USIA information posts throughout Burma, China, Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand. He was also selected for special cultural diplomatic missions in Ulaanbaatar (1990) and Vientiane (1991). He retired in 1991.

His insatiable passion for learning, books, and adventure led him to Northern Marianas College on the island of Saipan, where he worked as director of library services, and then to the University of Guam as dean of learning resources.

In 2000, he moved to Nairobi as field director for the Library of Congress—the pinnacle of all libraries. He finished his career in Heidelberg as regional librarian for 35 U.S. Army libraries across Europe.

After 17 years with the Foreign Service and a total of 48 years of dedicated U.S. government and military service, Mr. Steere and his wife, Ying, settled in Seattle and, eventually, idyllic Semiahmoo, Blaine, on the northernmost border of Washington State.

Their marriage spanned nearly 60 years of love and joy for all the gifts that life gave them, including family, friends, reading, wine, and travel.

Mr. Steere is survived by his wife; two sons, John in Singapore (and spouse Rita) and Jason in Amsterdam (and spouse Caroline); and five grandchildren: Josie, Mya, Sasha, Nevan, and Tia.

■ **Colette Stermer, 90**, wife of a retired Foreign Service officer, passed away peacefully on March 4, 2023, in La Grange Park, Ill.

Born on July 17, 1932, in Paris, France, she was the second of two children of Rita Sciaky and Peppo Benveniste. Ms. Stermer arrived in Chicago in the summer of 1941 with her family and cousins.

She attended the Laboratory School in Hyde Park, finishing high school in only two years by passing an entrance exam to the University of Chicago.

Three years later, she graduated from that university. In 1951, she entered the Art Institute of Chicago to pursue a bachelor's degree in interior design. On June 20, 1954, she married Charles Lester "Les" Stermer at Thorndike Hilton Memorial Chapel on the University of Chicago campus.

Ms. Stermer worked as an interior designer for several years, but when her husband joined the State Department

in early 1957, she moved with him to Northern Virginia, where they started their family.

The Stermers lived overseas in Seoul and Rangoon, during Mr. Stermer's career as a diplomat. In 1973 the couple returned to Northern Virginia.

In 1981 the couple relocated to Chicago, where Mr. Stermer accepted a position as executive director of the International House at the University of Chicago. Ms. Stermer ran the gift shop at the I-House, as it was known, from 1981 until 1994.

The pair then moved to Kiawah Island, S.C., in 2001 for fourteen years of tennis, painting, oyster roasts, and potluck dinners with friends before returning to Chicago in 2015 to live at Plymouth Place.

To her friends and family, Ms. Stermer was known for her interests in painting, tennis, and bridge. She and her husband loved to travel, and she will always be remembered for her generosity and devotion to her family, as well as her world-famous chocolate chip cookies.

Ms. Stermer was preceded in death by her older brother, Samuel, and by Les Stermer, her husband of 63 years.

She is survived by three sons: Marc (and wife Judy) Stermer of Burton, Ohio, Dean (and wife Rowena) Stermer of Hinsdale, Ill., and Todd (and wife Lisa) Stermer of Saudi Arabia; and five grandsons: Cooper, Griffin, Jackson, Mitchell, and Davis. ■



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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.

Small Screen, Big Step Forward

“The Diplomat”

Created by Debora Cahn, 2023, Netflix,
<https://www.netflix.com/title/81288983>.

REVIEWED BY BARBARA J. STEPHENSON

It is all too easy to collectively roll our eyes at “The Diplomat,” the Netflix series depicting the surprise appointment of career Foreign Service Officer Kate Wyler (played by Keri Russell) to the Court of St. James’s. After all, *Foreign Service Journal* readers are the ultimate insiders, the kind of readers who know that confirmation is a long slog and that the post of U.S. ambassador to the U.K. always (with one sole exception) goes to a wealthy donor, not a seasoned career officer.

I don’t want to spoil the watch parties with fellow insiders—it is fun to point out knowingly that that is not Winfield House, which has a much smaller front garden and wouldn’t film nearly as well.

But don’t overlook the chance to use “The Diplomat” as a springboard to talk to friends, family, and fellow Americans beyond your circle of insiders about what diplomats do and why it matters enough to make the sacrifices required. The series contains gems of dialogue about life in an embassy, and although the writing around the love plot(s) is sometimes excruciating, I admire the writing about the interplay of the security and political forces at work around the central “whodunit?” question—as in, is Iran really responsible for the explosion that cripples the HMS *Courageous*?

We, as members of the Foreign Service, have long lamented that, when we are depicted in films, we are invariably at some cocktail party in lavish surroundings making superficial conversation.



Don’t miss the chance to talk to fellow Americans about the deeper truths “The Diplomat” unveils.

WikiLeaks, while undoubtedly costly, challenged the narrative of us as feckless fops by showing that we knew everyone and were adept at not only figuring out exactly what is going on in a country but also in influencing events without leaving messy fingerprints.

Kate Wyler and her fellow FSO husband, Hal (played by Rufus Sewell), are adept at getting the analysis right, and they are committed to doing so as a matter of duty. Hal knows the consequences of wrongly accusing Iran, and he knows his friend in Italy (which does have diplomatic relations with Iran) will say yes to a request to pass a message to the Iranian deputy foreign minister, with whom Hal developed a relationship of trust during the Iran nuclear talks.

While Hal, who is as charming as Kate is high strung, knows how to navigate a web of relationships around the world to gain an accurate picture (and move the chess pieces toward America’s goals), Kate knows the vast U.S. national security bureaucracy inside out, adding almost a “meta” level to Hal’s rogue effort to learn the truth—did Iran do it, or not?

She knows that learning the truth is only the first step; the story has to be believable and believed. And the third step, perhaps what I find juiciest in this series, is that the case for doing the right thing for national and international security sometimes has to overcome stiff political headwinds, as when an elected official has a short-term agenda that is at odds with national security.

We in the Foreign Service wrestle mightily with finding the ethical high ground in such circumstances. “The Diplomat” creates a welcome opening for exploring the fine lines we need to observe to keep faithful to our oath to defend the Constitution.

It helps that “The Diplomat” distances this delicate exploration a bit from our lived experience by making it about struggles of the British Foreign Secretary, who knows full well that “the house is on fire” but equally as well that he lacks the clout to take on whatever scheme the U.K. prime minister is pursuing.

As the first female Foreign Service officer to be selected for the post of deputy chief of mission (DCM) in London, which

came with an extended stint as chargé, I could relate to the scenes at Winfield House—where I hosted both Robert Redford for a Sundance Festival event and the 4th of July celebration in 2013.

As a career officer, I may have known all the right players to work an issue and been adept at navigating the U.S. national security apparatus, but, like Kate, I owned “no art” and sometimes struggled with the wardrobe requirements.

Unlike Kate, though, I enjoyed giving speeches and talking to the London media, and I couldn’t help wondering how she got as high up in the Foreign Service as she did without an interest in mastering those essential skills. Kate did remind me that I haven’t lost the habit of briefing breathlessly, in short bursts, a carryover from my years as a staffer.

For all the overdone drama in the depiction of the marriage between this tandem couple of ambassadors—including the painful scene of Kate beating up her husband in Winfield’s garden—Kate and Hal Wyler also remind me of the best FSOs I know.

When someone asks you whether “The Diplomat” is “realistic,” I urge you to seize the moment to share your best story (the unclassified version, of course) about a Foreign Service colleague who saved the day—by tapping into relationships of trust, by getting to the bottom of things and averting bloodshed, by making sense of things, and navigating with great skill so that America could do the right thing.

Nor does the show get everything about Foreign Service romantic relationships wrong. Eidra Park, the CIA station chief (played by Ali Ahn), struggles over whether to pursue a promotion in Cairo if that means leaving behind her partner, Stuart Hayford, the DCM (played by Ato Essandoh). The pair struggle together to find the right time to make their relation-

ship public, knowing that it will come at a cost to their credibility. Eidra games the scenario, observing that things would be different if they arrived at a new post as an established couple.

Go ahead and scoff at the absurdity of the station chief in London (home of the richest bilateral intelligence partnership in the world, as Eidra accurately explains at one point) seeking a *promotion* to Cairo. Go ahead and point out that the DCM would be in a heap of HR trouble for sleeping with a subordinate (although the chief of station technically reports to the ambassador rather than the DCM).

But don’t miss the chance to talk to fellow Americans about the deeper truths “The Diplomat” unveils about the difficulty of establishing and sustaining a romantic relationship or marriage in the Foreign Service. This is one of the more profound sacrifices we make: All that moving around, with tour lengths and bidding cycles among agencies not aligned, are among the many obstacles to finding a suitable partner either inside or outside the embassy.

“The Diplomat” does us all a service by bringing this built-in sacrifice to the forefront. We all know how to talk about the health risks of exposure to malaria and dengue fever and even dysentery, and we often revel in stories about incoming fire, but we tend to suffer our aloneness in silence. “The Diplomat” makes a conversation about this sacrifice a much lighter lift.

And let’s be honest, the show is entertaining and even fun. And putting two career diplomats as the heroes of any movie or TV series feels like a big step forward for the public image of the U.S. Foreign Service.

During a 34-year Foreign Service career, Barbara J. Stephenson served as consul general in Belfast, ambassador to Panama, and deputy chief of mission (DCM) and chargé d'affaires for U.S. Embassy London, among other assignments. She was president of AFSA for two terms from 2015 to 2019. Ambassador Stephenson is the inaugural vice provost for global affairs and chief global officer at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

A Missed Opportunity

“Transatlantic”

Created by Anna Winger and Daniel Hendler, 2023, Netflix, <https://www.netflix.com/title/81473474>.

REVIEWED BY ÁSGEIR SIGFÚSSON

Kate Wyler of “The Diplomat” isn’t the only Foreign Service officer gracing the Netflix home screen these days. Only two weeks prior to the show’s release, the streaming giant offered up a very different look at American diplomacy with “Transatlantic.” This other one is

historical and based on a true story—well, mostly true.

Inspired by Julie Orringer’s 2019 novel *The Flight Portfolio*, this seven-episode limited series takes place in Marseilles in 1940. The protagonists are involved with the (American) Emergency Rescue Committee (ERC) operating in the city at the time. Their focus is on rescuing well-known Jewish scholars, artists, and intellectuals from the Nazi regime by providing documents—authentic or not—for passage to the United States. Some of these real historic figures—Hannah Arendt, Marc Chagall, Max Ernst, Marcel Duchamp, Walter Benjamin, and Peggy



Guggenheim—appear as characters in the show.

The three main “heroes” are all real individuals, as well: Chicago heiress Mary Jayne Gold (portrayed by Gillian Jacobs of “Community”), ERC leader Varian Fry (Cory Michael Smith, best known for playing the Riddler on the TV series “Gotham”), and Jewish refugee Albert Hirschman (Austrian actor Lucas Englander). The series takes some artistic license with their real stories, which is not particularly surprising in a dramatized account.

Every story needs villains, in addition to the mostly unseen Nazis, and “Transatlantic” is not afraid to scrape the bottom of the stereotype barrel by making the American consul general in Marseilles (played with a menacing sneer by Corey Stoll) a complete jerk. This character, Graham Patterson, may be partly based on Hugh Fullerton, the U.S. consul in Marseille at the time.

At a 2006 event on Capitol Hill, Hiram “Harry” Bingham’s granddaughter said that Fullerton told Bingham: “The Germans are going to win the war. Why should we do anything to offend them?” Suffice to say, Fullerton followed the U.S. government policy of the time, which was neutrality.

It is remarkable that a true hero—the career Foreign Service Officer Hiram “Harry” Bingham IV—is relegated to about 20 minutes of screen time.

For a series that is focused on rescuing Jews in World War II-era France, it is remarkable that a true hero—the career Foreign Service Officer Hiram “Harry” Bingham IV—is relegated to about 20 minutes of screen time. We do see him work on creating exit visas for those in need without the knowledge of the evil Patterson or a well-placed Gestapo spy, but the series makes it plain that Gold, Fry, and Hirschman are the ones we should really thank for saving all those lives.

It is a regrettable decision on the part of the show’s creators, Anna Winger and Daniel Hendler, because Bingham’s story is well known, dramatic, courageous—and just so happens to be true and not in need of embellishment.

Aside from the missed opportunity to feature a heroic American diplomat, is “Transatlantic” any good as entertainment? It’s six of one, half dozen of the other. It is difficult to maintain narrative and dramatic tension when the story’s outcome is either general knowledge or a very quick Google search away.

Therefore, the series needs to create excitement through contrived, fictionalized events and characters, including two West African brothers who work at a local hotel, a mysterious British spymaster, and the gay owner of the villa outside Marseilles where many of the refugees could hide, not to mention a surprisingly helpful little dog who has a Forrest Gump-ian ability to be in the right place at the right time.

The creators clearly desired to create “prestige television,” a phrase generally

applied to such iconic TV shows as “The Sopranos,” “Breaking Bad,” “Game of Thrones,” “The Crown,” and so on. The problem is that to do so, you need a sufficient budget and really accomplished actors. In this reviewer’s estimation, they fell short on both accounts.

The acting is sometimes borderline cringeworthy. Jacobs, in particular, as Mary Jayne Gold looks lost in her role, often seeming to mistake emotion for overacting. Smith as Fry appears generally on the verge of a tearful panic attack, which seems an odd choice for a man who, if nothing else, needed to always be on top of details, names, and plans.

Stoll as Graham Patterson chews up the scenery and seems to have wandered in from a different type of TV show altogether. On the plus side, the great Moritz Bleibtreu (“Run, Lola, Run”) is excellent as Walter Benjamin, and Jodhi May is hilarious as Peggy Guggenheim as well.

If you need a bit of a laugh, I encourage viewers to stay for the hilariously overwrought and pretentious end credits.

Overall, “Transatlantic” is a miss for those of us who care about seeing America’s diplomats depicted accurately on screen. Using the “evil diplomat” character is a huge strike against the show, and minimizing Bingham’s role is bizarre. While it’s always good to see the Foreign Service in popular media, I think we can do better than this. ■

Ásgeir Sigfússon is the executive director of the American Foreign Service Association.

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Is Iran Back to 1979?

BY GEORGE LAMBRAKIS

As the last political counselor (and interim deputy chief of mission) at the American embassy in Tehran from 1976 through the 1979 revolution that drove out the shah, I am increasingly impressed by the many similarities to today's Iran—despite the passage of four decades.

Iran Then

I went to Tehran in 1976 after a highly eventful half year as chargé d'affaires in Lebanon at the start of its civil war, serving at times under four different ambassadors or special envoys, one of whom was assassinated. I assumed that Iran was an interesting but stable post at which people thought I needed to recuperate. The shah had put down several threats from the left and right and was a good and secure friend of the United States.

The last months of 1976, under Ambassador Richard Helms, the former CIA director, were uneventful, as were the first six months of 1977 (when I was acting deputy chief of mission). Nevertheless, rumors of problems to come were circulating and were discussed by us in the embassy with the three officers in one-man field posts in north, central, and south Iran.

President Jimmy Carter had estab-

You cannot negotiate with a movement that so far has no clear leader.

lished the State Department Bureau of Human Rights in 1977, and our prodding reminded the shah of previous threats from President John F. Kennedy to cut aid to Iran if he did not rein in the brutality of SAVAK (Iran's secret police at the time) in treating political opposition.

The shah created the Rastakhiz (Resurgence) Party in the parliament and seemed to have told SAVAK to go easy on false arrest and torture of those incarcerated. In time, he permitted a small resurgence of free speech and assembly by the old National Front intelligentsia who had survived the post-Mossadegh purges of 1953, with whom the embassy restored some contact.

And there were a small number of clerics, such as Ayatollah Shariatmadari, who were rumored to be opposing the clerical anti-shah movement led from his exile by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. They favored compromise with the shah if he reformed. (But we were unable to establish direct contact with them. Their suspicions of the U.S. were too strong.)

This trend came to be seen as a degree of liberalization, though it did not

prevent demonstrations and abuse from Iranian students and their sympathizers toward the shah when he visited the U.S. Indeed, I was amazed that I never heard anyone in Iran openly defend the shah despite the many who had made money and otherwise benefited from his rule.

The shah's mood lightened when President Carter made a brief stop in Tehran on New Year's Eve 1977-1978 and praised the shah for governing an island of stability in a disturbed Middle Eastern sea. However, the shah began complaining to Ambassador Bill Sullivan and others of the "red and the black" ganging up on him.

While we in Tehran, and even more those in Washington, recognized the theoretical threat of a leftist opposition backed by the Soviet Union, there was much more doubt as to the importance of the "black" threat from the Muslim clergy.

After all, the Muslim establishment had taken the shah's side against the leftists in 1953. And although they opposed the shah's White Revolution in the 1960s (which took away a lot of their property and gave rights to women), the threat appeared to be contained by the imprisonment or exile of the leading clerics who had opposed him.

Who could imagine direct government of a major country in the 20th century by religious clerics? (Khomeini later made



George Lambrakis is the author of the memoir So You Want to Be a Diplomat? An American Diplomat's Progress from Vietnam to Iran, Fun, Warts and All, which contains the relevant chapter on Iran in his 31-year Foreign Service career.

good use of this train of thought, promising to stay out of direct governance.)

In February 1978 rioting in the holy city of Qum in response to a newspaper article questioning the Ayatollah's morals was put down by security forces. There were a number of deaths. The demonstrations spread, and "martyrs" multiplied.

The *bazaaris* (merchants) became important participants in the political scene after being forced by police to limit their prices in Iran's inflationary economy that was caused by the shah throwing all his oil earnings into an effort to raise Iran to one of the most important countries in the world. We were reliably informed that their efforts to reason with Khomeini in Paris were fruitless.

Warnings about the evils of the shah's regime came regularly to us from prominent American professors who visited Tehran, but the predictions had no timelines and seemed to assume that the fall of the shah would lead directly to democracy.

Among other things, we never predicted the arrival of democracy. (For what it is worth, my own guess was, and still is, that a continuing popular uprising will be followed by a military takeover.)

My own 1978 mission to Washington on behalf of Ambassador Sullivan was to tell our highest leaders in Washington (with the exception of President Carter) that the fear of a communist takeover with Soviet assistance being broadcast by the shah was wrong and that Khomeini's clerics would control the security situation, however poor their economic policies could be.

Carter (and Sullivan in Tehran), of course, had to deal with contradictory advice from National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski (who was responding to Iran's ambassador in Washington, whose father helped return the shah to

It is not difficult to imagine that private discussions must be taking place in Iran's military ranks.

his throne in 1953) and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance (who was responding to our embassy's pleas not to repeat the 1953 American intervention that was remembered so vividly by most Iranians).

Iran Today

Today many Iranians are suffering economic hardship due to American and other sanctions combined with the obvious enrichment of the ruling mullahs.

A surprisingly well-informed article in the French weekly *Paris Match* (Feb. 2-8, 2023) provides details from several sources on how toman (the Iranian currency) earnings from organizations, enterprises, and drugs or other illegal activities now controlled by the Revolutionary Guard are moved by the regime's Mahan Airline to Turkey for conversion into other currencies and then flown around Europe to hide their provenance. It estimates that \$10 billion has left Iran in the last few months, part of an estimated \$100 billion stashed away for when the regime falls and they need to escape.

In addition, strikes and public protests by essential elements of the Iranian economy such as the Tehran bazaaris, the oil workers, and reportedly even members of the elite such as religious leaders in the city of Qum, remind one of similar events in 1978-1979.

The widespread protests in the wake of the September 2022 killing of a young woman for not wearing her hijab hair covering to the satisfaction of the religious police are openly led by women (in 1978-1979, the strong support from women was behind the scenes) and have

caused surprise by their endurance.

Additional clues as to the seriousness of this challenge to the government are the reportedly widespread cries of "Death to Khamenei," Iran's aging supreme leader. These echo the cries of "Death to the Shah" that became widespread in 1979, which by their nature would be heard only when people thought it was safe to shout them. Ironically, these can be contrasted to the frequent post-revolutionary cry of "Death to America" intended to indicate the direction of public loyalty.

The brutal efforts by this government to repress the current protests appear even more drastic than those of the shah's SAVAK secret police, the regular police, and some units of the army.

One could argue that the shah fell because of his failure to gauge the strength of the opposition he faced, his frequent indecision, and his final decision to avoid the widespread chaos and bloodshed that his army's intervention might cause, despite the apparent readiness of his generals to try.

If the protests continue today, the religious government, led almost entirely by aging men, will face a similar conundrum: Do you continue to suppress and antagonize more and more of your primarily young citizens backed by their families, or do you make concessions that amount to opening a Pandora's box only partway—as the shah did and failed?

One problem is that you cannot negotiate with a movement that so far has no clear leader. Ayatollah Khomeini would not negotiate with the shah, but he was

opposed by other ayatollahs who preferred to settle for letting the shah remain in power if he substantially moderated his rule.

Today's demonstrators do not appear to be challenged by such opposing views and are sustaining their battle, even with no apparent leader. How far can suppression go before stirring up new opposition to the government?

The players who have not yet entered domestic politics are the regular armed forces. They far outnumber the Revolutionary Guard and the Basij militia and have the heaviest weapons. But according to the same *Paris Match* article cited above, one Amir Hamidi, described as an "American-Iranian spy," claims that a recent leak showed that more than 4,000

soldiers have resigned from the regular army and that the "guardians of the revolution" have imprisoned at least 80 of their members.

A major handicap today is that the United States has no embassy in Iran, and friendly embassies there are not welcome recipients of government information. Iran watchers have to depend on leaks, deserters, family visitors to Iran, information provided by Israel and Iranians in California and all over the world, with little ability to check on the veracity of sources.


Nevertheless, whatever the validity of such reports, it is not difficult to imagine that private discussions must be taking place in Iran's military ranks. These could suddenly blow very loud indeed. Would

this government chance a civil war?

Unless world press and other reports are mistaken, the current demonstrations in Iran appear more long-lasting and effective than those put down by the government in the past. It looks like this ancient, benighted government has lost the confidence of its modernizing people.

The recent Chinese-mediated Iran-Saudi détente may provide breathing space to Iran's government, but it is unlikely to last. Saudi relations with the U.S. and even Israel count more today than with Iran. And the (Sunni) Saudis are reducing religious involvement in their governance, unlike (Shia) Iran.

The 1979 overthrow of the shah developed over a year. We shall see how long this takes. ■



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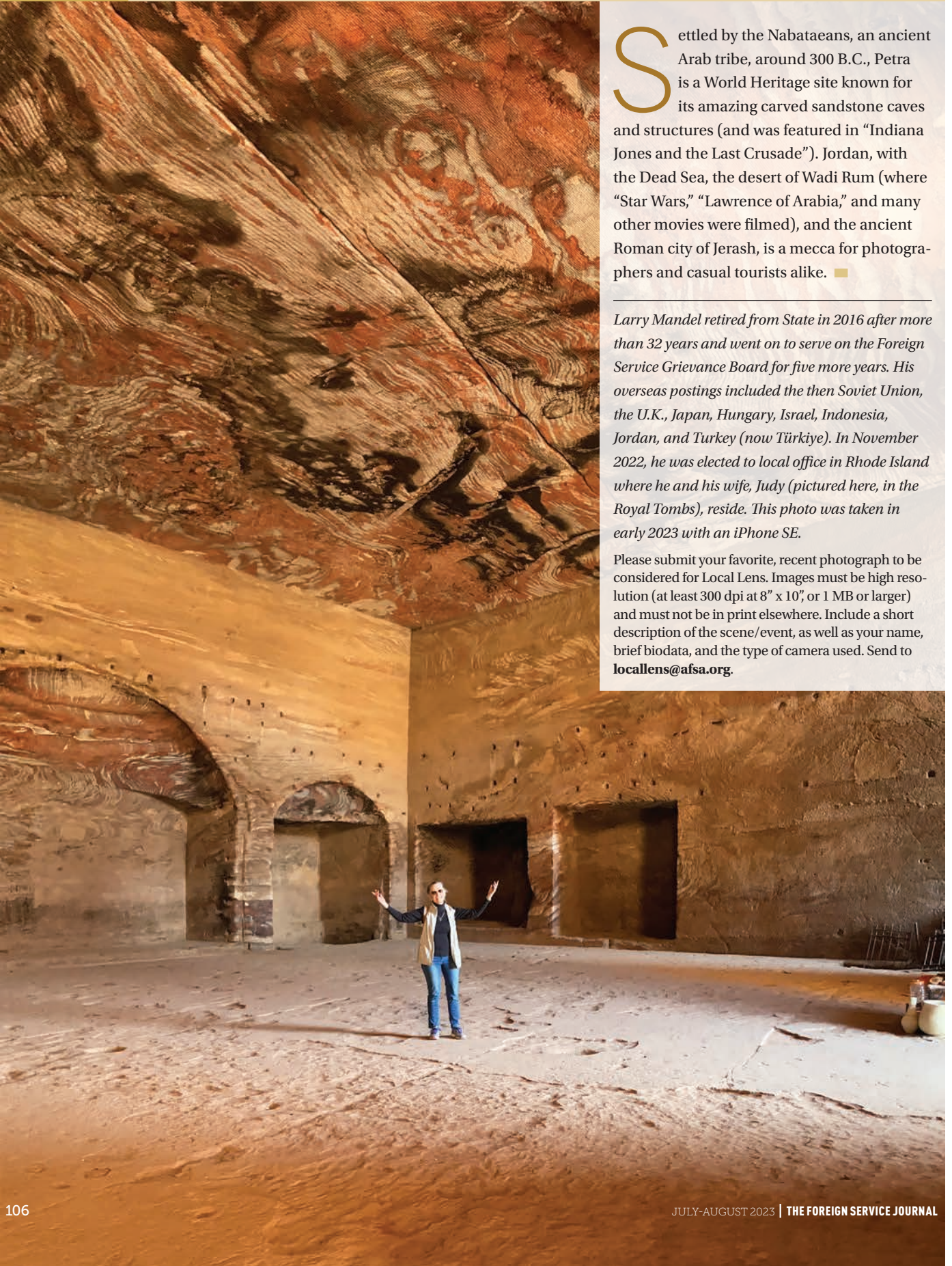
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Larry Mandel retired from State in 2016 after more than 32 years and went on to serve on the Foreign Service Grievance Board for five more years. His overseas postings included the then Soviet Union, the U.K., Japan, Hungary, Israel, Indonesia, Jordan, and Turkey (now Türkiye). In November 2022, he was elected to local office in Rhode Island where he and his wife, Judy (pictured here, in the Royal Tombs), reside. This photo was taken in early 2023 with an iPhone SE.

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