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# PRESIDENT'S VIEWS

## *Sisyphus Chained: Overseas Locality Pay Sacrificed to "Budget Reality"*

By J. ANTHONY HOLMES

Let me abandon my usual diplomatic reticence and speak frankly. It was a huge blow to the Foreign Service that the House Republican leadership decided at the end of the December lame duck session to jettison the heart and soul of the small foreign affairs authorization bill we had spent eight months working on.



In order to convince Congress to legislate Overseas Locality Pay, the State Department is going to have to put much more into the effort this year than it did in 2006. Secretary Rice will need to spend some of her abundant personal political capital, weighing in early and often directly with the key senators and representatives in both parties. Both those members concerned with foreign affairs issues and those holding the line on the budget need to understand clearly that eliminating the overseas pay disparity is truly a top State Department and Bush administration priority. Very few are aware of that presently. Congress needs to understand that this is not a pay-raise bill, but a pay-equity bill to remedy 13 years of increasing unfairness and disadvantage that is both depressing FS morale and acting as a disincentive to meeting the Secretary's call for increased time spent overseas.

Please don't get me wrong. A lot of good, highly competent people worked long and hard to get our bill

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*J. Anthony Holmes is the president of the American Foreign Service Association.*

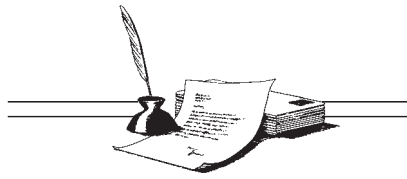
passed. AFSA appreciates their efforts very much. But unfortunately, the vast majority of that effort was spent working at the necessary, but clearly not sufficient, congressional staff level. Much of that effort also occurred during three lost months when we were chasing our tails trying to achieve a legislative product that fulfilled the State Department's promise of a fair pay-for-performance system for non-senior employees (the quid pro quo we had to accept to get OCP) that would duplicate the system that has worked reasonably well since early 2004 for the Senior Foreign Service.

This delay was compounded by the Secretary's decision, as she put it in her recent cable to the field, to make "a personal appeal to Hill leadership (only) when the legislation had taken final shape." While appreciated, this appeal came so late that the key House leaders did not understand, and weren't sensitive to, our issue. The case for priority must come from the top and be made well before the end-game, lest Congress get the idea that our bill is not really a top department priority. We understand that there were lots of sound reasons for the Secretary to be doing other things. In the end, it comes down to priorities, but the result speaks for itself. One senior State official contrasted for us the department's effort here with that devoted to getting the U.S.-India Civilian Nuclear Agreement through Con-

gress, where very heavy lifting indeed was required, was provided, and proved successful. Neither outcome was an accident.

Ultimately, it was the price tag of providing OCP to the nearly 70 percent of the FS stationed overseas that was the issue. Congressional rules require "scoring" the cost by projecting it out five years. We had focused on the \$128 million cost this year to bring those folks up to Washington pay levels. But the official five-year figure of \$570 million added an element of sticker shock that proved decisive, despite our arguments that the funds were built into the administration's budget request and did not require new appropriations.

We have already begun to prepare for the next Congress and to work with our many friends and allies on Capitol Hill and at State. It is difficult to assess our prospects for the next two years, though, given the changes of both the House and Senate leaderships. The FS community can help us do two things: first, sound off to convince State and other foreign affairs agencies that this is truly, by an order of magnitude, your top priority, and let them know you expect our political-appointee leaders to deliver and get this unfair pay disparity ended. Second, let Congress know the same thing. Please do not let a codel pass through without making this point, and help us ensure that we don't fail again for lack of clear understanding of just how important this issue is. ■



# LETTERS

## **The Necessary Civilian Force**

The Cato Institute's Justin Logan and Christopher Preble misrepresent the mission of the State Department's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization ("The Case Against State's Nationbuilding Office," November *FSJ*). By labeling S/CRS a "nationbuilding office," they attempt to give a derogatory name to an organization that eventually could fill a key gap in U.S. capabilities.

S/CRS's main purposes are to be a coordinator and civilian force provider for U.S. operations abroad. Prior experience has demonstrated that U.S. military missions often need greater civilian expertise in order to succeed. For example, by providing vital human services, civilian resources can enable the U.S. troop presence to be tolerated rather than opposed by local populations. The sorts of functions that S/CRS would undertake do not involve "building nations" from scratch — quite an impossibility — but constitute a balanced approach to problems the U.S. must surmount if it is to advance its interests and values.

If S/CRS develops a civilian cadre, it will offer valuable knowledge and skills to a wide range of stability, humanitarian and reconstruction operations. Given the course of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, it is surprising that Logan and Preble seem to conclude that the U.S. should have fewer resources on the civilian side of the national security apparatus and diminished capability to conduct integrated civil-military operations. There will be

contingencies, far different than Iraq and Afghanistan, that require the U.S. to have more deployable civilian expertise than it has now to complement its military firepower. Securing the peace is no less difficult than winning the battle, but requires a different set of tools, quantitatively and qualitatively, than the U.S. currently possesses.

S/CRS is not expected to fix global instability writ large, but at critical moments the U.S. will be called upon to perform stability and reconstruction operations. We live in an era in which geographical and political boundaries have become increasingly porous. In such an environment, instability in Africa or the Middle East can, in fact, have disproportionate global repercussions. Whether we like it or not, developing the capabilities to meet emerging threats is a necessity.

*Dr. Jeffrey Nadaner  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
of Defense  
Office of Stability  
Operations  
U.S. Department of Defense*

## **U/S Burns Defends Karen Hughes**

I am writing to express my strong disagreement with several assertions made in Shawn Zeller's October article, "Damage Control: Karen Hughes Does PD," as well as with the overall thrust of the piece.

As a career officer who has worked closely with Under Secretary Karen Hughes, and as a member of AFSA

since 1982, I first of all take issue with the notion that she is "wary of the Foreign Service" and has surrounded herself with political appointees. This is simply untrue. Karen is an inclusive leader who has shown great respect for the Foreign and Civil Service since taking office. It is also my impression that the officers who work in her office feel a great sense of loyalty to her. Her chief of staff is a senior FSO, and the vast majority of her staff, including most of her senior advisers, are career Foreign Service and Civil Service employees. She relies on her career staff to carry out all of her initiatives.

To say that "Foreign Service officers are deeply skeptical of whether Hughes is doing enough to tap the expertise around her" is an unfounded generalization that is not at all accurate, in my judgment.

Neither is it accurate to state that she is focused overwhelmingly on media outreach. That is indeed one piece of the public diplomacy puzzle, but this misleading assertion ignores the wide range of short-term and long-term programs that Karen has promoted to bring Americans together with citizens of nearly every country on earth, from exchanges to cultural events to Web chats. In that regard, our recent efforts to reach out to the people of Iran through renewed exchanges and educational initiatives is precisely the kind of long-term investment in improving America's engagement with the world that Zeller says we need more of. Karen has



## LETTERS



played an indispensable role in launching those efforts and has made them a priority in terms of her time and her engagement.

There is no doubt that the U.S. government can and should do more to improve our public diplomacy efforts around the world. Karen Hughes and her team are working flat-out to do just that. I regret that the *Foreign Service Journal* gave such short shrift to those efforts, and by extension, to the hundreds of career employees around the world who are dedicated to advancing them.

The State Department is comprised of both political appointees and career officers. Both groups of people, in my experience, understand that our success depends on trusting each other and working well together. It is such a tired old chestnut to assume conflict between the two when it needn't always exist.

Karen Hughes is a compassionate and generous person who has bent over backward to rely on our career service for advice and guidance. I would hope a more generous attitude toward her and other political appointees would prevail in our Service, and that we would not assume conflict where it does not exist.

*R. Nicholas Burns*  
*Under Secretary of State for*  
*Political Affairs*  
*Washington, D.C.*

### **A Valuable Issue**

I have been intending for the last month to compliment the *Journal* staff on the October edition of the *FSJ*. It is a very useful report on the current state of the program.

In particular, Joe Johnson's article, "How Does Public Diplomacy Measure Up?" stimulates thought about the future of this field — both the problems it raises for the conduct of international relations and what must be done to mobilize and prepare to

discover opportunities and to capitalize upon them. Perhaps there is literature elsewhere on the subject, but the *Journal* has done an important service by assembling and publishing this collection of high-quality articles.

*William J. Cunningham*  
*FSO, retired*  
*Associate Professor*  
*Emeritus, Center for*  
*International Studies*  
*University of St. Thomas*  
*Houston, Texas*

### **PD Officers in PD Jobs**

The articles evaluating the performance of Under Secretary Karen Hughes made very interesting reading, but I would like to point out an obvious omission. Many entry-level PD officers joined the department as part of the buildup known as the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative. Motivated to serve our country, they looked forward to addressing a weakness that has been pointed out by numerous fact-finding bodies, including the 9/11 Commission. All of these inquiries found that the U.S. government has failed to properly promote or explain American policy and culture.

Considering the obvious need to address this situation, one might think that there would be plenty of opportunity for entry-level officers in this area. In fact, there is extremely little opportunity for PD-coned officers to serve in that area until their third tour when, presumably, they have acquired tenure and are part of the department's middle ranks.

The overwhelming majority of PD-coned entry-level officers will not have the opportunity to serve in a public diplomacy position during their first two tours. A look at the most recent bidding cycle will only confirm this sad fact. As just one example, there was only one available PD slot in all of the Western Hemisphere Affairs Bureau. Other regions were hardly better.

As I consider the backgrounds of the PD officers in my A-100 class, many of whom had made a mid-career switch and possess formidable experience in journalism or marketing, am I mistaken to believe that it is an incredible waste of human resources to delay or mitigate their ability to contribute to the department in this crucial area?

Today, unfortunately, I must conclude that we are misusing some of our human resources. But must it remain that way? Even taking into consideration the number of consular positions that must be filled each cycle and the benefits of using consular work to introduce new officers to State Department culture, I would contend that the department would be better served by getting these officers some experience in their cone as early as possible. In fact, the goal should be to get all entry-level officers some experience in their cone before the end of the second tour.

Obviously, the changes required to do this in public diplomacy (opening up more PD positions to entry-level officers or creating more rotational assignments) won't be accomplished overnight. But in order to begin addressing this situation, there has to be a recognition that the problem exists. I sincerely hope that U/S Hughes will share my view that a problem exists and use her considerable influence to address it.

*Russell K. Brooks*  
*FSO*  
*Embassy Tegucigalpa*

### **Welcome Advice**

In "What I Wish I Had Known," (FS Know-How, November), Robin Holzhauer has written a must-read essay for young Foreign Service officers — and for junior careerists in almost any field. Great work!

One additional thing to keep in mind, I believe, is the mantra that officers of all grades make themselves

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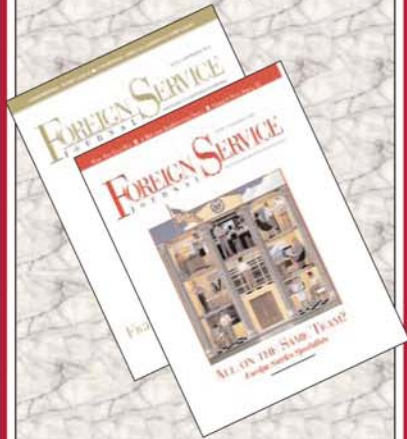
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## LETTERS

look terrific if they take time to make their bosses, their colleagues and any subordinates look good while they themselves are trying to excel.

*R.T. (Ted) Curran  
FSO, retired  
Frankfort, Mich.*

### AFSA & Comparability Pay

The President's Views column in the October *FSJ* took my breath away. For AFSA to back away from endorsing overseas comparability pay because of the 'egregious flaws' outlined in the piece is stunning. To forgo supporting a 17-1/2-percent increase in the pay of the majority of its membership is traitorous. Have the Senior Foreign Service members and those FS-1s and below who are more like the permanent party back there taken the reins and whipped AFSA senseless?

The director general said in his Oct. 12 message (State 171592) that pay modernization is the department's number-one management priority. I, as an FS-2 who has been overseas for over 10 years and lost tens of thousands of dollars in compensation due to our blatantly unfair system, stand beside the DG and State management. The idea of AFSA bragging that the issue is dead on arrival, due at least in part to their withdrawal of support, makes me unfathomably angry. Where was AFSA when the SFS got its piece of the pie and the rest of us were left in the cold?

Taking this position, AFSA has given cover to our adversaries. Those who would deny us the compensation so long overdue now have AFSA to thank. Many in Congress would like nothing more than to see this fail. Why? Because all the major federal employee unions are against it and members of Congress will win support if they can convince the union bosses that State's program to accept pay for performance was derailed at their behest. Has Congress and/or the

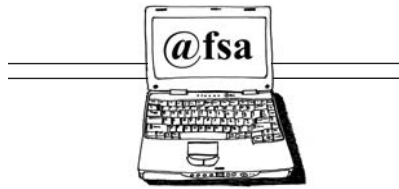
leadership of other unions co-opted our leadership? I, like the key administration officials referenced in the president's piece, am astonished. AFSA should have allowed all of us serving in the FS overseas, continuing to suffer serious pay deficiencies, to have our best shot at taking the money and running — to use the AFSA president's phrase.

I call on the membership of AFSA to stand up and refuse to support the position that our leadership has taken on this critical issue. Tell your AFSA elected officials they have lost their way on OCP.

Beyond acting internally, voice your opinion to your elected representatives in Congress. Letting them believe that AFSA speaks for its membership on this issue is going to lose us our best shot at getting pay parity. We in the field have suffered while the SFS and Washington folks feast — it's time to say enough is enough.

*Thomas L. Schmitz  
FSO  
Embassy Ashgabat*

*AFSA President J. Anthony Holmes replies:* Mr. Schmitz confuses AFSA's refusal to accept the flawed original version of the bill, as offered by the administration in April, with the acceptable version that emerged in mid-August after AFSA's four months of negotiations with the administration and Congress. AFSA has worked flat-out the past 24 months to get Congress to legislate overseas comparability pay, including the past three months in concert with State Department management. We are determined, however, to avoid having to sacrifice the long-term interests of the nation by politicizing the FS as the price for overseas comparability pay. AFSA's approach has the overwhelming support of our members according to our extensive surveying and member feedback. ■



# CYBERNOTES

## ***Intellipedia: 21st-Century Intelligence-Sharing?***

In late October, officials from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence began talking publicly about a promising initiative to address one of the key findings of the 9/11 Commission: the dangerous inefficiency of stovepiped intelligence work. Known as “Intellipedia,” the initiative is using the Internet to cut through the barriers of structure, rivalry and habit that have hobbled previous intelligence-sharing efforts.

A project of ODNI’s Intelligence Community Enterprise Services office, *Intellipedia* was launched in April 2006. It uses the same open-source software that runs *Wikipedia*, the collaborative, “living” encyclopedia that is continuously developed and updated by users. All 16 intelligence agencies have access to *Intellipedia*’s top-secret version, which contained 28,000 pages and had 3,600 users as of October (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intellipedia>).

The program is still being developed, but may offer an alternative to current — admittedly faulty — procedures for creating intelligence reports for the president and other policymakers. At present, preliminary findings are being assembled for a National Intelligence Estimate on Nigeria ([www.latimes.com/technology/la-na-intellnov01,1,3120459.story](http://www.latimes.com/technology/la-na-intellnov01,1,3120459.story)), and the system is being used to put together the State Department’s annual country reports on terrorism.

Unlike *Wikipedia*, *Intellipedia* does not enforce a “neutral point-of-view policy.” Instead, because collabora-

view my number-one task to be a change in the tone and tenor of U.S. foreign policy. I am an internationalist and a multilateralist. ... I will do my utmost to persuade countries literally across the globe that we take them seriously, we listen to their views with respect whether we agree with them or not, and we should find avenues of cooperation, collaboration and alliance, depending on each individual case.

— Rep. Tom Lantos, D-Calif., incoming chairman of the House International Relations Committee; the Council on Foreign Relations’ Capital Interview, Nov. 20, [www.cfr.org/publication/12054/](http://www.cfr.org/publication/12054/)

tion and, ultimately, the attainment of a consensus view are the aims, viewpoints are attributed to the agencies, offices and individuals participating. Like *Wikipedia*, *Intellipedia* has administrative safeguards to prevent misuse of the system.

Officials admit there are risks in making more sensitive information more widely available, but in the words of Michael Wertheimer, ODNI deputy director for analysis, “The key is risk management, not risk avoidance” ([www.metimes.com/storyview.php?StoryID=20061103-075107-4557r](http://www.metimes.com/storyview.php?StoryID=20061103-075107-4557r)). While there is reluctance among the traditional intelligence community, the new generation of analysts are comfortable with the system and, in fact, prefer working this way.

“Analysts in different agencies that work X or Y can go in and see what other people are doing on subject X or Y and actually add in their two cents’ worth ... or documents that they have,” explains Richard Russell, deputy assistant director of national intelligence

for information sharing and customer outreach at ODNI. “What we’re after here is decision superiority. We have to get inside the decision cycle of the enemy. We have to be able to discover what they’re doing and respond to it effectively” ([www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/issues/2006/November/SecurityBeat.htm#Wik](http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/issues/2006/November/SecurityBeat.htm#Wik)).

*Intellipedia* allows for constant shared updating with new information and analysis, which offers the possibility of more accurate assessments in real time. And, as some officials have pointed out, dissenting views will be more prominent and doubts about sources will surface earlier and be more difficult to ignore.

A work in progress, *Intellipedia* gives every indication of proving that the whole is indeed greater than the sum of its parts.

— Susan Maitra, Senior Editor

## **Spreading the Word**

Ron Hornbaker’s goal is to “make the whole world a library.” So far his Web site, [www.bookcrossing.com](http://www.bookcrossing.com),

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## CYBERNOTES

has inspired thousands of booklovers around the world to join in the effort. The idea is simple: *Book Crossing* instructs members to follow the three Rs — read, register and release. Users register and label their books, which receive unique ID numbers, or BCIDs, and leave them at bookshops, bus stops or other places. Once caught, books are reported back on the Web site and recirculated for more unsuspecting readers to find.

A completely free service, *Book Crossing* boasts over 515,000 members in almost 200 countries, who have put nearly four million books into circulation. Booklovers around the world gather at one of several *Book Crossing* conventions each year.

Though the capture rate is only around 20 percent — that's not counting the number of books that go unreported — the phenomenon is slowly but surely gaining momentum. The Web site has been receiving much press attention and in 2005 won two Webby Awards. As the homepage proudly notes, the word 'bookcrossing' has even been included in the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* ([www.askoxford.com/pressroom/archive/coed11new/](http://www.askoxford.com/pressroom/archive/coed11new/)).

Hornbaker, who works with the software and Internet developer Humankind Systems, Inc., was inspired to create *Book Crossing* while browsing through Phototag.org, a similar project that releases disposable cameras into the world unchaperoned. The cameras are equipped with return postage so that phototaggers can take a picture, pass it on and eventually mail the camera back. The photos and travel statistics are then posted online. For example, one gallery shows a camera named Turtle making the long journey from Boston to India! For more information, visit [www.phototag.org](http://www.phototag.org).

— Lamiya Rahman,  
Editorial Intern

### Crossing the Digital Divide

In developing countries, deep poverty, poor infrastructure and weak governance have long fueled concern over a "digital divide." Yet, as statistics show, cellular technologies are already revolutionizing the lives of many millions in the Third World.

Mobile phone use is rapidly increasing in poorer nations: Fifty-nine percent of the world's 2.4 billion cell-phone users live in developing countries, with over 400 million cell-phone users in China, the world's largest mobile-phone market; 100 million in India, the fifth-largest market; and 152 million in Africa, where, at 65-percent growth a year, cell-phone use is rising fastest ([www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/HJ28Df02.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/HJ28Df02.html), [www.learningpartnership.org/resources/facts/technology](http://www.learningpartnership.org/resources/facts/technology), and <http://web.mit.edu/eprom/whyafrica.html>).

Wireless communication transcends the inefficiency of costly, poorly-constructed landlines by offering a cheaper and more convenient alternative. In fact, the number of cell-phone users has already surpassed that of landline subscribers. Once-isolated rural populations can now use phones to find jobs, earn better wages and transfer money to relatives. This is ground-breaking in regions where such basic tasks as going to the bank or finding information on markets can otherwise take hours, if not days, of arduous travel.

In many countries, farmers and fisherman use cell phones to enhance businesses and increase their leverage over traders. Previously, isolated villagers had no information on other markets, and were often forced to accept the low offers at hand. As Kevin Sullivan writes in the *Washington Post*, however, Indian farmers can now contact various markets to find prices for produce, while fisherman can call several ports to find the agents that will offer the highest pay,



thereby increasing their competitiveness ([www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/14/AR2006101400342\\_2.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/14/AR2006101400342_2.html)).

Cell phones have also revolutionized banking in poor countries. In South Africa, where more than half of adults do not have a bank account, mobile-phone banking — M-banking — offers a convenient and secure tool for money management. Instead of carrying around large amounts of cash or paying drivers to deliver money to relatives, mobile-phone owners can access accounts with the click of a button. As *The Economist* reports, “About half a million South Africans now use their mobile phones as a bank. Besides sending money to relatives and paying for goods, they can check balances, buy mobile airtime and settle utility bills” ([www.economist.com/printedition/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=8089667](http://www.economist.com/printedition/displaystory.cfm?story_id=8089667)).

Mobile phones have also empowered the jobless. In Bangladesh, the Grameen Bank (see *Cybernotes*, December 2006) provides loans to poor women to start mobile pay phone businesses. These “phone ladies” rent out their cell phones, providing a method of communication in their villages and a source of income for themselves. The Indian company Shyam Telecom runs a similar venture, fitting mobile technologies on rickshaws, while Uganda’s MTN Publicom mounts phones on four-wheeled bicycles ([www.textually.org/textually/archives/cat\\_mobile\\_phone\\_projects\\_third\\_world.htm?p=1](http://www.textually.org/textually/archives/cat_mobile_phone_projects_third_world.htm?p=1)).

The benefits of cell phones are not limited to economics. A project of the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory at Columbia University is currently under way to create a database of arsenic levels in Bangladeshi villages. Villagers building wells can avoid health hazards by accessing the database through their phones ([www.textually.org/textually/archives/2006/](http://www.textually.org/textually/archives/2006/)

[10/013938.htm](http://www.textually.org/textually/archives/2006/10/013938.htm)).

As the use of cell phones in the developing world continues to expand, many companies are tailoring products specifically for these Third World clients. In 2005, Motorola began producing cheaper phones — at \$30 or less — for developing markets. Perhaps a more innovative example is ReCellular, Inc., which collects used cell phones from the United States and sells them at lower prices to developing countries ([www.recellular.net/home/home.asp](http://www.recellular.net/home/home.asp)).

While huge disparities persist between the developed and developing worlds, mobile phones are slowly but surely creating new opportunities for the poor. As cell-phone providers catch on to the great potential of these poorer markets, new innovations are bound to keep improving the lives of billions around the world.

— *Lamiya Rahman,*  
*Editorial Intern*

### Kazakhstan On the Map

Jagshemash! Over the past year, Kazakhstan has gained renown as a nation where women supposedly live in cages, the beverage of choice is fermented horse urine and inhabitants gather once a year to celebrate the Running of the Jew. The once little-known country has now become a household name thanks to the fictional Kazakhstani journalist, Borat

Sagdiyev, played by British comedian Sacha Baron Cohen on his weekly television show “Ali G in da USAiii.” Sagdiyev travels around the “U.S. and A” to learn firsthand about American customs.

With the November release of the greatly hyped mockumentary, “Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan,” moviegoers around the world met the loutish, lewd and lovable character, and Kazakhstan was firmly placed on the map of mainstream consciousness.

Borat shows us that cultural stereotypes can be as hilarious and revealing as they are disconcerting. But the real nation of Kazakhstan has little in common with the country described in Borat’s adventures, as many angry Kazakhstani officials have tried to point out.

Contrary to the destitute image of the country portrayed in “Borat” (which was actually shot in Glod, Romania), Kazakhstan’s large cities have received major construction and renovation. Indeed, as Matthew Yeomans of *Slate Magazine* notes, “The first things you notice about Astana, Kazakhstan’s capital, are not the grandiose, glistening new government buildings that dominate the skyline ... The city’s most abundant physical feature is the good old construction crane — scores and scores of them dotted across the city

### 50 Years Ago...

The Foreign Service needs many things — especially the esteem of its fellow man, the esteem and honor of the American people. No group so merits and has less of these.

— Clare Booth Luce, to a November 1956 luncheon at AFSA upon her retirement as ambassador to Italy, in “News to the Field,” *FSJ*, January 1957.





like some sort of mechanical aviary” ([www.slate.com/id/2103893/](http://www.slate.com/id/2103893/)). In Almaty, Kazakhstan’s commercial center and former capital, “[streets] are jammed with expensive SUVs; restaurants are packed; and boutiques offer fine Italian shoes” ([www.mercurynews.com/ml/mercurynews/living/16101902.htm](http://www.mercurynews.com/ml/mercurynews/living/16101902.htm)).

These large-scale modernization efforts have been sparked by the vast oil reserves that have helped boost the country’s standard of living. In 2000, having successfully moved from communism to a market economy through various reforms and sound policies, Kazakhstan became the first ex-Soviet republic to pay off its debts to the IMF, doing so seven years ahead of schedule (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kazakhstan#Economy>). Currently Kazakhstan enjoys a GDP growth rate of over 9 percent and is

working to become one of the 50 most competitive states in the world.

While Kazakhstanis won’t really have to wait until 2041 for an election, as Borat claims, it is not clear when they will get a free and fair one. The government has come under fire from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for elections that did not meet international standards, and has also been accused of stifling opposition groups and media. This will pose a problem for Astana’s quest of the OSCE rotating chairmanship in 2009 ([www.rferl.org/feature/article/2005/11/093c2712-1bed-4129-88d8-fdc65d8a14d4.html](http://www.rferl.org/feature/article/2005/11/093c2712-1bed-4129-88d8-fdc65d8a14d4.html)).

With regard to social freedoms, women in Kazakhstan hold government positions, own businesses and have always been allowed to ride, despite the movie’s claim, *inside* the buses. Kazakhs also enjoy a great

degree of religious freedom and Jews form an integrated and respected community. Indeed, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry concedes, “Anti-Semitism is not prevalent in Kazakhstan and rare incidents are reported in the press. None have been reported in the last two years” ([www.slate.com/id/2152789/](http://www.slate.com/id/2152789/)).

One thing the country has not been lauded for is a sense of humor. Kazakhstani officials have gone to great lengths to defend their nation’s honor in the face of Borat’s pranks. In 2005, the government shut down his Web site, [www.borat.kz](http://www.borat.kz), and threatened legal action against the comedian. Recently, however, its stance has softened, perhaps because Kazakh officials began to understand what Borat is really about. As Cohen points out, “The joke is not on Kazakhstan. I think the joke is on people who can believe that the Kazakhstan that I describe can exist” ([www.rollingstone.com/news/coverstory/sacha\\_baron\\_cohen\\_the\\_real\\_borat\\_finally\\_speaks/page/1](http://www.rollingstone.com/news/coverstory/sacha_baron_cohen_the_real_borat_finally_speaks/page/1)).

More likely, though, Kazakhstani officials have finally realized that, as President Nursultan Nazarbayev remarked in a recent trip to London, “any publicity is good publicity.” Following release of the “moviefilm,” there has been a 300-percent increase in Web searches for accommodations in Astana, and the Kazakhstan embassy in Washington now gets 100 calls a week from potential tourists ([www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2089-2483771,00.html](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2089-2483771,00.html)). “Borat” has even been nominated by noted novelist Sapabek Asip-uly for the Kazakh Club of Art Patrons’ annual award, for sparking “an immense interest in the whole world in Kazakhstan, something our authorities could not do.” ■

— Lamiya Rahman,  
Editorial Intern

### Site of the Month: IBCtoday.com

Tyler Cavell, founder of the Montreal-based Internet Broadcast Corporation, wants to “do for international news what CNN has done for local news in the U.S.” — that is, provide frequently updated international headlines. **IBCtoday.com**, Cavell’s TV news site, adds a new spin on global reporting. Bypassing the often-biased reporting found in North American media, it draws on stories from over 130 countries to present local points of view on regional news.

The concept is simple, yet revolutionary. To offer more balanced and accurate reports, the IBC relies on partnerships with local broadcasters in various regions around the world in addition to leading news providers, such as the BBC and the Associated Press. The stories carried on *IBCtoday* are uncut and unedited, shown in their original language with English subtitles.

The site, which broadcasts up to 90 new stories a day, is updated every half-hour. Users can browse through seven categories — business, entertainment, environment, history, politics, war and world news — or search by region and country.

Registered users can also take advantage of some innovative tools. For instance, advertisements, *IBCtoday*’s main source of profits, are user-specific, displaying only products and services that match up with a user’s profile information. In addition, members can contribute to the site by submitting their own news videos.

— Lamiya Rahman, Editorial Intern



# SPEAKING OUT

## *Long-Term Senior Interagency Education Could Be Privatized*

BY JOHN BUSHNELL

For 46 years, the State Department sponsored and ran the most senior long-term foreign affairs education program in the federal government: the Senior Seminar. About half the 25 to 30 students each year were Senior Foreign Service officers; the rest came from each of the military services and intelligence agencies, as well as USAID, Commerce, Agriculture, FBI, Treasury and other agencies.

In addition to a broad focus on foreign policy formulation and execution, the course featured a major segment on the domestic roots of foreign policy, with visits throughout the U.S. to understand the concerns of the general public and various interest groups. While interagency coordination was not the major focus, exposure to leaders of many agencies and working with colleagues from other departments inevitably facilitated such cooperation in future assignments. And, as a bonus, the program was intentionally long enough to give officers a break between high-stress assignments to recharge their batteries and concentrate on ways to improve their future effectiveness.

Despite these benefits, in 2004 State discontinued the Senior Seminar to concentrate resources on short-term training, make some instruction available to all personnel and expand language training. Those objectives are, of course, worthy. But since the program's demise, the Senior Seminar Alumni Association, an organiza-

*As the world  
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tion of some 325 graduates, has been advocating re-establishment of long-term senior education, with an increased focus on interagency coordination and leadership.

The SSAA believes such senior interagency education is so important for future U.S. security that if State is unwilling to take the lead, the initiative should be taken by private organizations with at least initial financial support from the private sector. The National Security Council has the responsibility for foreign affairs coordination at the most senior level, but no organization has assumed the responsibility for preparing career interagency leaders to implement foreign policy and contribute to its formulation. As the world has become more complex and U.S. international programs and interests more extensive and diverse, preparing senior officials to coordinate overseas federal activities is a high national priority.

For many years FSOs have been the single largest group of career interagency leaders — on the NSC staff, as ambassadors and DCMs, and as assistant and deputy assistant secretaries, in State and even in other agencies. If FSOs are to continue to provide such senior leadership, they need preparation on entering the senior ranks to expand their interagency knowledge and their coordination and leadership skills.

In the immediate future State may not be able to provide enough FSOs to fill half the seminar, as it once did. But in the 21st century the international importance of intelligence, law enforcement, economics and science probably indicates a larger role for other agencies, in any case. The proposed seminar would be particularly valuable for the Department of Homeland Security, as a new agency where coordination with other departments and among such components as the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Division and the Coast Guard is crucial.

To justify the expenditure of private and public funds on senior education, the officers benefitting from the proposed program should generally serve a decade or more in senior government positions after graduation. Thus, high-achieving officers, who had been promoted more rapidly than average, should be assigned soon after (or in some cases just



before) entering the senior officer ranks.

### **Identifying a Private Host Organization and Funding**

Leadership for the proposed new interagency seminar might come from a private institution with strong international education interests, such as a university. Georgetown, George Mason, Johns Hopkins, American and George Washington are all obvious candidates.

Hosting such a seminar for senior career professionals would be a prestigious challenge. It would also offer many opportunities to relate the proposed program to other university activities. For example, parts of the seminar could be open to university faculty and graduate students. Various professors could prepare curriculum segments on issues of their specialty, and their interaction with seminar participants would be mutually beneficial. Seminar members could be mentors for students doing foreign affairs research and those interested in foreign affairs careers.

The primary administrative contribution of the host institution would be a secure seminar meeting room and offices for the seminar staff. Only a dean and assistant dean plus one administrative assistant would be needed if the institution's administrative apparatus could handle budgeting, security and other support functions. (It might be desirable if either the dean of the seminar or the assistant dean were a university dean or department head, giving only half time to the seminar.)

All agencies would be expected to continue the salary and benefits of the officers assigned and to contribute speakers and exercise personnel. In addition, the uniformed services would be expected to provide transportation for visits to military facilities.

To initiate this advanced education program an initial grant of only \$4 million would be required. These funds would finance the first three seminars and about a year of work developing the curriculum and diplomatic exercises before the first seminar convenes. Once a track record of providing educational development of great value is established, it is envisioned that annual appropriations would be provided by Congress. In the meantime, funding of the startup by a foundation or other NGO would allow the seminar to start quickly.

### **Developing a Core Curriculum**

During the preparatory year the dean and assistant dean would coordinate activities. They would draw on the experience, wisdom and talents of active and retired officials from many agencies and on the experience of participants in earlier senior interagency education programs, as well as on the resources of the sponsoring institution. Retired FSOs would be a major resource in developing the overall curriculum, including specific roleplaying exercises and other programs.

The program content would encompass the following themes:

**Current foreign policy issues**, with an emphasis on interagency coordination in both policy formulation and implementation. National Security Council staff and agency officials would be supplemented by representatives from academia, NGOs, think-tanks, businesses and the media in these presentations.

**Agency-by-agency familiarization** focused on approaches and problems in implementing policies. Leaders from each agency, both political and career appointees, would describe how they accomplish their missions, how they are organized and

something about the culture of the organization.

**The embassy country team.** Retired ambassadors known for innovation in maximizing the effectiveness of their team might explain their methods. Roleplaying exercises would give participants practical experience as they play the roles of country team members confronting a series of challenging situations.

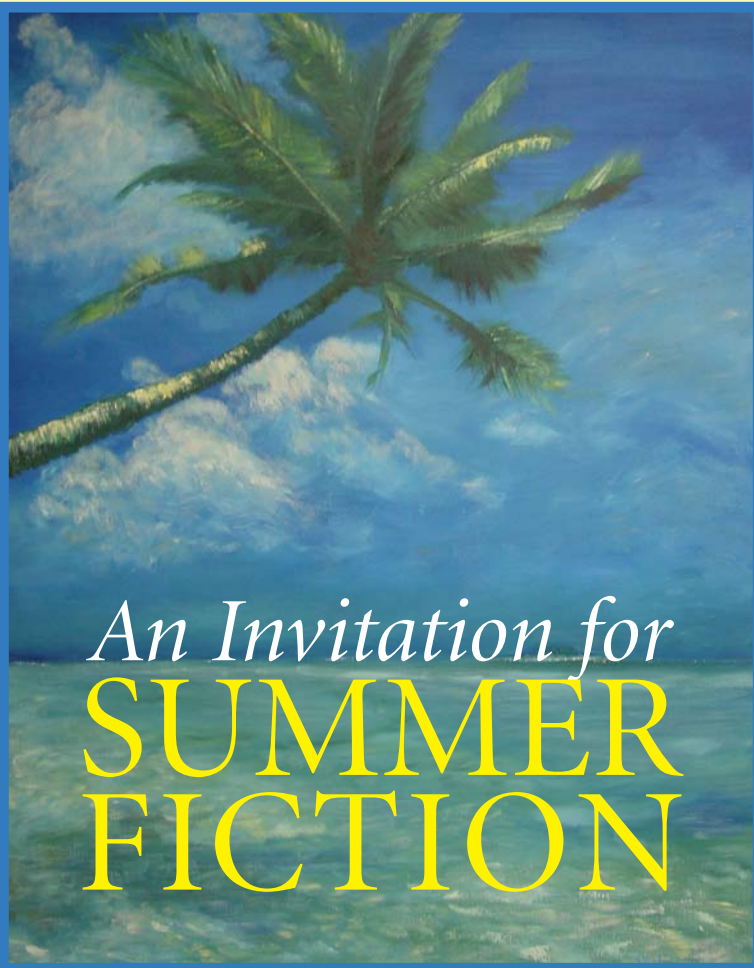
**Military organizations below the Pentagon level**, particularly the specialized and regional commanders who bear the primary responsibility for planning and implementing. The commanders-in-chief are particularly important because they interact so closely with the countries in their region and with the U.S. embassies there.

The military has substantial capability for designing and running war games that often have a substantial diplomatic component and other facets. It already runs courses for newly promoted general officers; war/diplomatic exercises with such new generals and the members of the proposed seminar would be particularly useful for both groups. The seminar would bring together a diverse group of largely civilian officials to join in such games.

**Development of leadership skills.** Significant time should be devoted to analysis of various models and discussion of best practices in interagency leadership, both in terms of policy formulation and implementation.

**Roleplaying exercises and war/diplomatic games.** Such exercises would give a real-world feel to problems seminar members may face in the future while providing valuable leadership and interagency team-building experience. For example, an exercise based on a global epidemic might be developed drawing on the considerable work already done by





Once again the *Foreign Service Journal* is seeking works of fiction of up to 3,000 words for its annual contest. Story lines or characters involving the Foreign Service are preferred, but not required. The top story, as selected by the *Journal's* Editorial Board, will be published in the July/August issue; the runners-up will be published in subsequent issues as space permits. All winning stories will be posted on the *Journal's* Web site at [www.fsjournal.org](http://www.fsjournal.org). The writer of each story will receive an honorarium of \$250, payable upon publication.

## Deadline for submissions is March 1.

### Please also note the following:

Authors are limited to one entry, which should be unsigned.



All stories must be previously unpublished.



Submissions should include contact information and a short biographical statement.



Entries will only be accepted by e-mail (preferably in the form of Word or Word Perfect attachments and with the text copied into the body of the message).



Please send submissions (or questions) to the attention of Andrew Kidd, *Journal* Business Manager, at [kidd@afsa.org](mailto:kidd@afsa.org).

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*Leadership for the  
proposed new  
interagency seminar  
might come from a  
private institution with  
strong international  
education interests, such  
as a university.*

---

the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Toward the end of each seminar the members might develop a new exercise, with the subject selected to fill a gap in the exercises they experienced.

**The domestic roots of foreign policy.** Much less time might be spent on travel than took place under the original Senior Seminar; two or three domestic trips should suffice to allow participants to interact with a wide variety of domestic interests. For many groups and interests a more efficient approach would be to invite leaders to meet with the seminar in Washington.

**Congress.** The seminar should address techniques for maximizing the utility of overseas congressional visits, preparing and giving testimony, and handling correspondence from the Hill. The Office of Management & Budget should explain its role in managing the interface between the executive and legislature. The Government Accountability Office should describe its role, and detail how legislation is developed.

The above elements need not be discrete segments with the focus on

one and then another, but rather should be covered throughout the nine-month program in mutually reinforcing ways. For example, it is logical to focus on policy and the agency-by-agency orientation early in the program as the basis for roleplaying exercises.

The interactions among seminar members are as important as the presentations by speakers. One technique to promote the effectiveness of the seminar might be to assign a task group of three to five members to lead the questioning of each presenter or each agency visited. Members would research the matters to prepare probing questions and to ensure that questions about interagency coordination and best practices are addressed.

#### **Criteria for Selection of FSOs**

Limiting candidates to those promoted into the Senior Foreign Service significantly more rapidly than their peers puts most of the selection burden on the established and generally well-regarded promotion system based on annual performance evaluations. Generally, those promoted most rapidly have more years available before optional or mandatory retirement. However, the separation of FSO promotion decisions from assignment decisions means many just-promoted senior officers will have two or more years remaining in their current assignments.

Complicating FSO seminar assignments further, many officers consider attendance at the National War College the primary marker for promotion into the Senior Foreign Service. Thus, the appeal a few years later of senior education may be limited. However, once the seminar is well established, many high-performance officers may opt for the seminar instead of the NWC. In the meantime, there are officers available who

## SPEAKING OUT



were promoted in recent years while there was no seminar.

Because the Foreign Service assignment process involves self-selection and considerations of hardship assignments, time limits on domestic assignments and language qualifications, as well as ever-changing departmental priorities, an established priority process will be required to maximize selection of the best officers. Perhaps each year the director general could review the records of SFS promotees with less than average time in the Service and place these outstanding candidates on a list for whichever upcoming seminar fits the officer's next reassignment. Then, before the bidding cycle begins, the officers could be notified, and those sufficiently high-ranked could be designated for the seminar. Inevitably, a few of these candidates will have their current assignment extended, decide to take a high-priority alternative assignment, or even become sick. The director general would then work down the candidate list for available substitutes. Whatever system is developed, giving the director general full authority may be key.

However these details are worked out, the Senior Seminar Alumni Association will do its best to make long-term interagency senior education a reality once again. ■

*John Bushnell, an FSO from 1959 to 1992, attended the 1976-1977 Senior Seminar. His overseas assignments were Bogota, Santo Domingo, San Jose, Geneva, Buenos Aires and Panama City, where he coordinated the 1989 operation to restore democracy. He also served on the NSC staff and as principal deputy assistant secretary of Treasury (International) and State (Latin America). Since retiring, he has been special assistant to the New York District Attorney.*

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# IN RESPONSE

## *The U.S. Is Engaged in the South Pacific*

By C. STEVEN MCGANN

I would like to respond to Kevin Stringer's article, "The Pacific Microstates and U.S. Security" (November 2006 *FSJ*). Mr. Stringer makes a compelling case for U.S. engagement in the Pacific, and is correct in pointing out the many obstacles the region faces. Unfortunately, Mr. Stringer overlooks the fact that the U.S. government is already taking many of the actions he prescribes.

While some retrenchment did occur in the 1990s, the U.S. government never disengaged from the region. In fact, the U.S. has recently expanded its presence: in 2006 the State Department approved the establishment of new regional environmental and public diplomacy hubs in Suva, with a mandate to expand our programs and enhance our efforts in those two key areas in the Pacific.

The nontraditional security concerns highlighted in the article are real, and the U.S. is acting on them. The State Department, along with other U.S. government entities such as the Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Pacific Command, is working to strengthen maritime security architecture in the region. The practical result of such cooperation will be a Pacific in which the ability of terrorists, organized crime syndicates and other mala fide operators to act is drastically curtailed. We also work closely with Australia and New Zealand in addressing these threats.

*Far from retrenching,  
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presence in  
the region.*

Despite Mr. Stringer's contention that "Beijing's expanding influence in Oceania has gone almost unremarked in Washington," the U.S. is not only aware of China's diplomatic and commercial forays in the region, but has engaged with China and Taiwan on a variety of fronts to encourage them to temper their actions, and with the island states to sensitize them to the risks of unbridled "checkbook diplomacy." Despite these efforts, the reality is that China/Taiwan competition will affect the region for the foreseeable future. The U.S. therefore has been and will be committed to pressing donors to use foreign assistance in a manner that enhances transparency and promotes good governance.

In the article's final section, Mr. Stringer suggests the U.S. can fill the "strategic vacuum" in Oceania by "renewing U.S. diplomatic engagement in the region through physical presence, personal diplomacy and aid." We agree. To that end, high-level officials from the departments of

State, Interior, Defense and other agencies travel frequently to the region to consult with key officials. In the last few months, Pacific Island leaders have been able to meet with high-level State Department officials, both on the margins of the U.N. General Assembly in New York and in Nadi, Fiji, at the Pacific Islands Forum Post-Forum Dialogue. These meetings happen on a yearly basis and are characterized by frank, mutually beneficial, high-level dialogue.

The U.S. government sees Vanuatu as a worthy aid recipient; that is why the Millennium Challenge Corporation inked a compact with Vanuatu in early 2006. This compact will eventually provide over \$60 million dollars in assistance to the country, and is a potential model for other countries that aim to sign compacts with the MCC.

There are other ways in which the U.S. remains engaged in the Pacific, too. We provide, via the South Pacific Tuna Treaty, some \$18 million to South Pacific states in order to have access to their waters for tuna fishing. The U.S. gives tens of millions of dollars per year in grants to Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands through its Compacts of Free Association with those nations. The Peace Corps plays an important role in promoting sustainable development and people-to-people ties in many countries in the region. There are other examples, too.

## IN RESPONSE



*The U.S. is proud that support for our positions at the U.N. by Pacific Island states is among the strongest in the world.*

Finally, Mr. Stringer touches on the number of U.N. votes represented by the nations of the Pacific. The U.S. highly values this fact and, in multilateral fora, does not take the Pacific lightly. The U.S. is proud that support for our positions at the U.N. by Pacific Island states is among the strongest in the world. Moreover, Pacific Island countries pull more than their weight in participating in global and regional peacekeeping and stabilization operations, working alongside the U.S. and/or its allies in such places as the Solomon Islands, East Timor, Iraq, Haiti and Cote d'Ivoire, to name a few.

The coup in Fiji, rioting in Tonga, and ongoing troubles in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea all demonstrate that the Pacific is an area that requires our close attention. The assertion that the U.S. has somehow disengaged from Oceania is erroneous. The reality is that we have remained engaged in the region, and are actively considering new ways to advance our interests in this important part of the world. ■

*Mr. McGann is director of the Office of Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Island Affairs in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs.*

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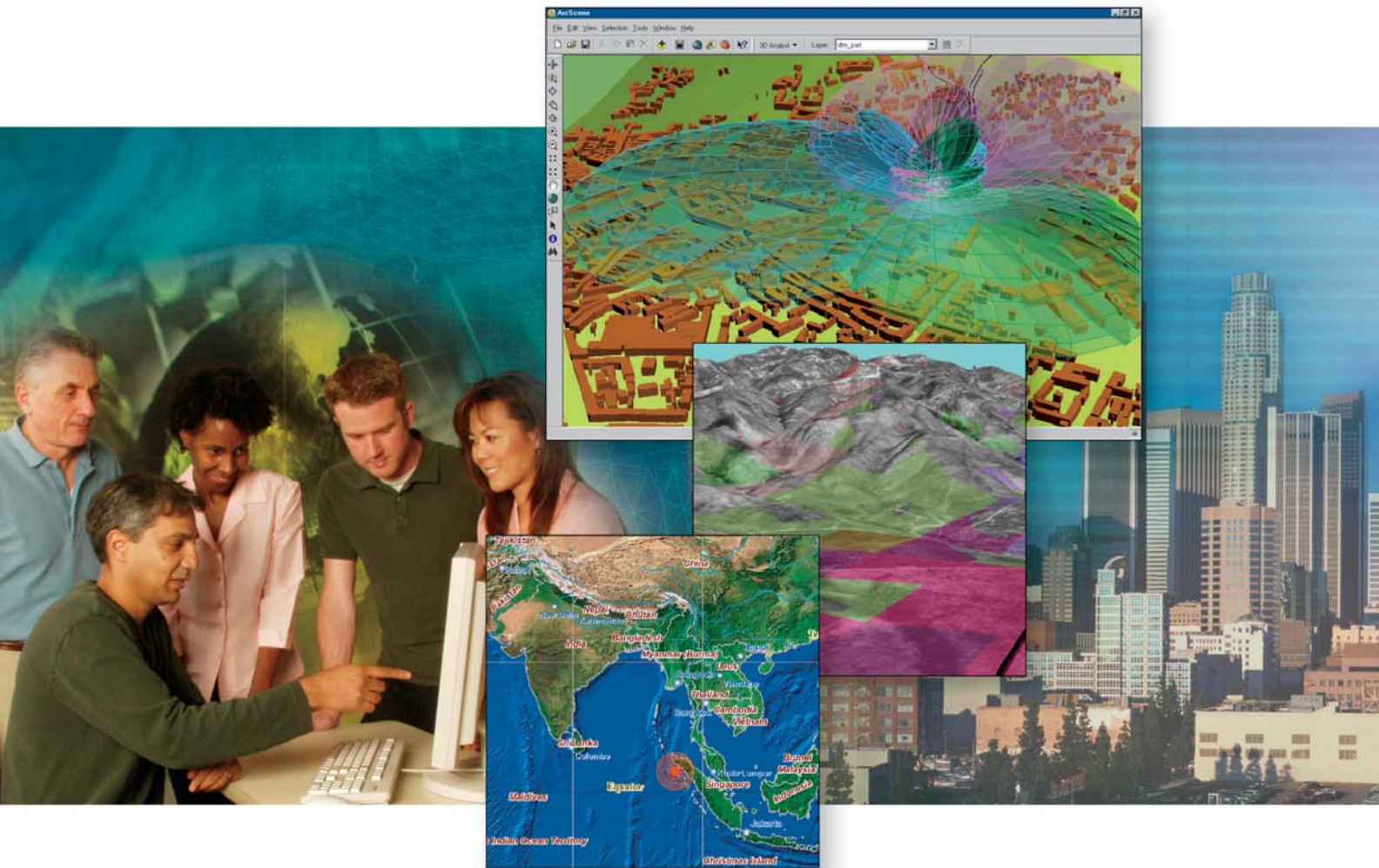


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# POST REPORTS, AFSA STYLE



OVER 1,300 AFSA MEMBERS RESPONDED TO OUR SURVEY OF THEIR EXPERIENCES LIVING AND WORKING AT OVERSEAS POSTS. HERE ARE THE RESULTS.

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BY STEVEN ALAN HONLEY

**A**FSA regularly asks its membership for their views about all manner of issues. But as far as I can determine, this is the first time the *Journal* has conducted and reported on its own survey of the best and worst overseas Foreign Service posts. Our thanks to all who participated!

We are pleased to report that over 1,300 Foreign Service personnel completed the online survey in November and early December, offering feedback on their experiences living and working at more than 200 posts — embassies, con-

## COVER STORY

ulates, USAID missions, commercial offices and provincial reconstruction teams — at some point during the past four years. Several hundred others filled out at least some sections of the questionnaire. All responses were anonymous, though we did request general demographic data (e.g., number of years in the Service, grade and professional specialization).

Judging from the results, most of you are relatively happy with your assignments and say that morale at post is generally good despite security restrictions. Of course, that is not to gloss over the problems associated with life abroad: staffing gaps, difficulty in finding employment for spouses and partners, and air pollution, among others.

We asked respondents to assess the overall experience

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*Steven Alan Honley is the editor of the Journal. During his 12-year Foreign Service career (1985-1997), he served in Mexico City, Wellington and Washington, D.C. Had he taken this survey while he was an FSO, he would have given Mexico City a 5 and Wellington a 9.*

of living and working at the post, using a scale from 1 to 10 (worst to best). The resulting distribution of ratings favored the top end by a significant margin: 24 percent gave their post an 8, 13 percent gave it a 9 and 7 percent gave a 10. Less than a third of respondents gave their post a 4 or lower.

A question about post morale using the same scale elicited only slightly less enthusiastic results: 19 percent gave it a 7, 18 percent an 8, 10 percent a 9 and 7 percent a 10. At the other end of the spectrum, just a quarter of respondents said post morale was a 4 or lower.

Not surprisingly, then, 74 percent said they would recommend their post to friends who are bidding, while 26 percent said they would not.

In coming up with the following “top 10” lists, we counted the number of times the post came up in the comments section. Note: Because so many different posts were cited, the results in each category do not show a large spread, either among the top vote-getters or even between them and the also-rans.

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# COVER STORY

**What is your current or most recent overseas Foreign Service posting? (Please evaluate only one post where you have served within the past four years.)**

*Most Frequently Evaluated Posts (in descending order)*

Rome  
Santo Domingo  
Seoul  
Cairo  
Kabul  
New Delhi  
Tokyo  
Hong Kong  
Mexico City  
Ankara

As one might expect, most of these 10 posts are large embassies. But it is striking that only one (albeit at the top of the list) is in Europe, and that two other heavily evaluated posts are considerably smaller: Santo Domingo and Hong Kong.

**Which post in your career do you consider to have been the best? And why (briefly)?**

*Best Posts (in descending order)*

Tokyo  
Bangkok  
Cairo  
Mexico City  
London and Paris (tie)

New Delhi  
Nairobi  
Pretoria  
Warsaw and Madrid (tie)  
Manila

Although every geographic bureau can claim at least one of these posts, clearly Asia and Western Europe are the most popular regions to serve in. A sampling of member comments begins on p. 24. Comments on the best and worst posts address post management — admittedly a moving target — as well as country features and conditions.

**Which post do you consider to have been the worst? And why (briefly)?**

*Worst Posts (in descending order)*

Moscow  
Beijing  
Lagos  
Baghdad  
Frankfurt and Kingston (tie)  
Conakry  
Santo Domingo  
Abidjan  
Riyadh  
Addis Ababa

The complaints members submitted about their posts tend to fall into two categories. The ones located in First World countries frequently cite the lack of interesting

## On Methodology

Though well over 10 percent of the current active-duty Foreign Service work force responded to the survey, we make no claims that our findings are statistically valid. Nor, recognizing that we are not pollsters, would we claim that our methodology was scientific; indeed, as many respondents informed us, some glitches crept into the process.

First of all, sincere apologies to all members of the management cone for the anachronistic references to “administrative” sections (though we did at least get the nomenclature right in the question that asked respondents to evaluate the post management section). In addition, as several members from USAID and other foreign affairs agencies pointed out, the wording of some questions reflected an unintended, and unwarranted, assumption that all respon-

dents would be State Department employees. (Of course, the vast majority of them were, but we still regret not being more inclusive.) And a few questions, such as the one about opportunities for athletics, were apparently more confusing than illuminating, judging from the responses.

Finally, we neglected to offer an “other” category for responses to several questions; most notably (and regrettably) the one asking respondents to identify the section of the post they worked in. Similarly, due to a software glitch, the survey did not include a free comment field after the final set of “quality of life” questions (though respondents could offer those comments elsewhere).

Nonetheless, we believe our survey has elicited some worthwhile, candid insights into life at overseas posts.

## BEST POSTS

### **“Which post in your career do you consider to have been the best? And why (briefly)?”**

Accra is an easy city to live and work in. Lots of opportunities to visit interesting historic, natural and cultural locations/events.

Addis Ababa was my first post, but I've enthusiastically recommended it to others because it offers untenured officers excellent opportunities to prove themselves. Senior officers at post, particularly in the beginning of my tour, were superior mentors.

After only a few months, I am enjoying myself in Hong Kong more so than any of my previous assignments. The staff is competent enough that overtime is rarely needed, and things here generally work so well inside and outside the office that stress (for me) is quite low.

All have been good, but Madrid is the best. Morale is high; the Spanish are wonderful; the mission is cohesive and professional; everything is available on the local market; cultural offerings are splendid; public transportation is first class; the weather is wonderful.

Amman's GSO is the best I have ever seen in the FS and housing there, even for singles, was very adequate. We had a great CLO and she planned events for singles and families.

Ankara. Great front office, great FSNs, interesting work, great for traveling and shopping and easy to travel to other places in the region. Great food, too!

Baku, because post management made an effort to help in housing (best GSO crew we've ever worked with) and morale issues. Schools were great for our kids, and the expat community was active and engaging.

Bangkok — exotic yet with modern conveniences, excellent travel opportunities and infrastructure; good admin support.

Bangui — very small, personal and focused on “teamwork” to tackle challenges; excellent ambassadorial leadership.

Beijing — excellently managed, great travel/cultural opportunities, good cost of living, fascinating work.

Bishkek — fantastic morale and interesting work.

Bombay, because of its great diversity in people, religions, foods, music, art and travel possibilities.

Both as a post and a place to live, Guadalajara is hard to beat. At the heart of Mexican culture, it is a great base for exploring the rest of the country.

Brasilia — very well-run embassy, great weather, wonderful FSNs and a welcoming country. Also loved the food and the international community.

Bratislava. I had a junior officer rotational tour with just enough time in both sections. The management at the time was supportive and produced great EERs. And as a bonus, I met my partner there.

Bucharest. The country is poised to undergo a tremendous transformation. I feel that my contribution is noticed and appreciated. Romania is a fascinating country with a dynamic market.

Budapest. Outstanding GSO, outstanding RSO, outstanding FSNs, travel, residences, commissary, internal embassy team cooperation, attitudes, actions. Support from upper management was amazing.

Cairo — a great comraderie among all agency personnel. Best balance of work, lifestyle and outside friends/interests. Great in-country travel opportunities. Very good living quarters.

Canberra. The weather, geography, people, work — everything was wonderful.

Chengdu. I had a very exciting job detailed to the Department of Commerce as that part of China was opening up. They were glad to have the interaction with me and the consulate.

Chennai — strong sense of community, very friendly and approachable “locals,” much to see and do in the consular district and the country.

Despite the difficulties of living in Dhaka, the embassy there is extremely well run and has experienced, motivated and highly knowledgeable FSNs that make work there very pleasant.

For family, Munich: Great school, great city, interesting society. For work, Islamabad: Fascinating, vital issues. There was a palpable sense that your contributions made a difference. Excellent front-office leadership and support, especially from the DCM.

For quality of life, South Africa — perfect climate, wonderful shops, great game parks, all reasonably priced. For professional life, definitely Mali — great challenges, great culture, great chance to make a difference.

Geneva had everything, workwise and in every other way.

*Continued on page 26*

## COVER STORY

work, but usually have few major complaints about living conditions. Conversely, those serving in less developed places tend to enjoy what they do, but feel isolated and vulnerable to health problems, crime, etc. A sampling of member comments starts on p. 28.

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### **If you could choose any post today, where would you want to be? And why (briefly)?**

*“Dream” Posts (in descending order)*

Rome

London

Bangkok

Madrid

Buenos Aires

Paris

Tokyo

New Delhi

Istanbul

Bogota

This was the only question in the entire survey not necessarily based on direct personal knowledge. And the responses to it certainly confirmed the old saying that one person’s dream post is another’s nightmare. Some members elected to describe the attributes of an ideal post, or to say that anywhere in a particular region would suit them. Others philosophized about wanting to do meaningful work even if living conditions were difficult or, conversely, wanting to be posted where they (and their families) could get to know the country and enjoy life outside the office. And many said they would like to stay right where they are — or would go anywhere else.

A sampling of member comments begins on p. 32.

### **Demographics of Respondents**

The response rates track closely with each foreign affairs agency’s share of the Foreign Service population. State Department employees account for 84 percent, followed by the U.S. Agency for International Development with 12 percent, the Foreign Commercial Service with 3 percent, the Foreign Agricultural Service with 1 percent, and the International Broadcasting Bureau at less than 0.5 percent.

The largest contingent (39 percent) joined the Foreign Service within the past four years. As many respondents in this category noted, their newness to the Service meant they had the least experience to draw on

in making comparisons. But it also meant that their responses reflect the current situation at their posts, a tradeoff we felt was worthwhile.

Another quarter of the respondents joined the Service between 1996 and 2001, and another quarter entered between 1985 and 1995. Though we did not ask for current employment status, presumably at least some of those members are retirees who served in a temporary or When Actually Employed capacity. However, from other answers we received, it appears that the bulk of survey participants are active-duty.

We asked for each individual’s cone or specialization, but as noted above, we inadvertently failed to give non-State personnel a way to be counted in that respect. Our apologies. Of those who did answer that question, Foreign Service specialists collectively accounted for 29 percent of responses, the largest single grouping. Generalists in the management cone represented 18 percent of respondents; consular, 16 percent; economic, 13 percent; political, 12 percent; and public diplomacy, 11 percent. Asked what section they worked in at post; management and consular section employees were tied at 26 percent each, and political and USAID officers were tied at 13 percent; the remaining respondents were split among economic, public diplomacy, FCS and FAS.

Seven in ten respondents (69 percent) were at the post they evaluated in 2006, and another 18 percent had been there as late as 2005. A clear majority (62 percent) are in middle management, while another third are untenured; just 5 percent are in the Senior Foreign Service.

Of the 69 percent who are married, 14 percent are serving at unaccompanied posts, while 5 percent are tandem couples. Twenty-seven percent of the respondents identified themselves as single, while another 4 percent are unmarried with members of household at post. The majority have no children with them at post; of the remainder, 22 percent have two children with them and 16 percent have one child.

### **Working Conditions**

The core of the survey was a series of positive statements divided into three categories: working conditions, family issues and quality of life. Respondents were asked to react to each statement, drawing on their own experience, according to the following scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree somewhat; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree

## COVER STORY

*Best Posts • Continued from page 24*

Ho Chi Minh City. Great morale, great staff, high quality of life, great leadership from front office.

I served in Ghana for two years and loved the country, the people and the wonderful culture. To me, Africa *is* the Foreign Service!

In terms of creature comforts, Sydney. In terms of intellectual challenge, Bishkek.

Jerusalem: Good post cohesion, great CLO and nice community feeling.

Kathmandu. The city is not overwhelmingly large and is relatively safe. The Nepali people are warm and friendly. The country is full of amazing beauty and lots of sight-seeing opportunities, and is relatively safe to travel around. The climate has four distinct but mild seasons. The American school (Lincoln) is welcoming and caring, making all students feel at home; and the school has a high level of parent involvement. One feature that makes Kathmandu a particularly wonderful post — and an especially great family post — is the embassy's fantastic recreation club (Phora Durbar) which offers lots of activities in a safe and beautiful setting at an affordable price. I would serve there again.

Kigali. Great people, American and Rwandan; exciting circumstances; interesting work.

Kuala Lumpur has it all — and what it doesn't have, the management actively seeks to provide.

La Paz had the best mix of traits (job, housing, schooling, travel, expenses).

Lilongwe, because it was good for the family and the employees.

London. Even if your job stinks, it's London!

Ljubljana. Everything worked and people, both inside and outside the embassy, appreciated what we did.

Manila, because of the competence of the FSNs and the overall efficient manner in which things function in the embassy.

Mexico City. Crime and pollution are huge issues, but the country and work are fascinating and accessible. We loved traveling in the country and both got two promotions out of our tour.

Minsk, because the work was very interesting and morale was good. The infrastructure of the city and its location made it possible to enjoy the tour, despite the hostile policies of the host government.

Moscow. The quality of life and schooling is pretty

good; demanding, challenging job keeps me on my toes.

Muscat. Best blend of job satisfaction and quality of life conditions.

My wife and I say Paris, but my children say Yaounde. Small and cozy African schools cannot be matched in the developed world.

New Delhi and Maputo were the two best. Delhi had so much to offer for off-duty activities and sporting events. Maputo is well located for the beach, mountains and game parks. Both had great food.

None of the IBB posts have been bad; all have been good for different reasons.

Ouagadougou offers lots of good restaurants, good household help, caring management, and lots to do. It should not be the joke of the Foreign Service!

Paris, for all the obvious reasons and one more: the FSNs and Americans socialized together more than at any other post I've been. There wasn't the barrier between FSNs and the American community that there is at most posts.

Prague: Wonderful city, lovely country. The embassy was well-organized and well-run. Issues were interesting enough, but without being so important as to make work all-consuming (like Moscow).

Quito, for its vast offerings of outdoor trips (mountains, jungle, cloud forest, seaside, etc.) at affordable prices.

Riyadh! I love the wide open spaces, the big cars and appliances, the souks and the exotic "call to prayer."

Sarajevo has the best FSNs in the world.

Seoul, because the work was challenging, visible and important, and the culture was fascinating.

Shenyang was a great post, with challenging work and great people. I found it personally fulfilling. Still, any post is a combination of the physical environment and the people. It's never the same place, good or bad, even two years later.

Tunis is the all-around best post I've served at due to the housing, safety, availability of goods and services, excellent telecommunications and infrastructure. Excellent international school. The country and living experience is excellent. The workload keeps you busy, but not so much as to drain you daily.

Vatican City, one of the oldest institutions in the world, is a unique diplomatic posting. It is intellectually challenging, in a culturally rich city, with an extraordinary range of official visitors and challenging work.

## COVER STORY

somewhat; 5 = agree strongly; 6 = non-applicable/unable to answer.

A clear majority, 54 percent, agreed strongly that “The work I do at post is interesting.” Another 28 percent agreed somewhat. But there was less concurrence with the view that “The language/professional training I received prior to arriving was adequate to prepare me for my assignment here.” Only 42 percent agreed, while 30 percent disagreed (half strongly, half somewhat).

It’s a good thing that most respondents like their work, because there is plenty of it for them to do. A plurality (41 percent) agreed strongly with the statement, “I regularly put in overtime to keep up with my workload.” Another 25 percent agreed somewhat, while just 24 percent said they did not agree. Even

***Over 1,300 Foreign Service personnel completed the online survey, offering feedback on their experience living and working at more than 200 posts.***

more tellingly, nearly two-thirds of respondents (64 percent) said they and their colleagues have experienced “extensive staffing gaps requiring employees to cover for colleagues over long periods.” On the other hand, three-quarters said they were able to take reasonable amounts of leave and R&R.

Two questions geared to untenured personnel elicited mixed responses. About a third agreed strongly or somewhat that “I am allowed to choose between financial compensation and time off for my overtime work,” while a quarter disagreed. A 52-percent majority of entry-level officers “have received mentoring and have been given opportunities for professional development.” Just 20 percent disagreed with that assessment.

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**WORST POSTS**

**“Which post do you consider to have been the worst? And why (briefly)?”**

Abidjan. The front office was completely dysfunctional, taskers were at cross purposes, no support whatsoever.

Addis Ababa. Nasty city, nasty work environment, poor housing; the school is iffy; roll up your windows when you drive past the boneyard. Mission management doesn't have a clue. Oh, don't forget that it's considered rude to eat in public; but never mind all the men urinating wherever they feel like it. “3,000 years of history uninterrupted by progress.”

Amsterdam was a good place to live, but I would still have rated it negatively in every way in this survey for poor support of staff, inattentive management, overwhelming workload with little time off, lack of resources to get the job done, no embassy support, and a high cost of living.

Asuncion has got to be the most boring place in Latin America, and opportunities for spousal employment and family recreation are nil. There's nothing to do outside work.

Baghdad, because of a perceived lack of concern on part of post management/State management about the safety and security of employees — in particular, failure to provide safe housing (trailers in place of hardened structures like the ones USAID built for its employees).

Beijing is so understaffed that all you do all day is put out fires. There is no time at all to manage or plan ahead. Then there is the terrible air pollution and lots of frustrations in everyday living.

Belize City. Too many mosquitoes and too much crime; generally a dirty and grotty place.

Bogota — Our movement was restricted and we put in many long hours of uncompensated labor on the visa line.

Bridgetown (and I've also served in Baghdad). Terrible morale. Lousy management support. Issues are inconsequential. Outdated facilities.

Brussels. Extremely high cost of living, tiny living quarters, lousy weather. Top-heavy in senior grades, leaving the rest treated like stepchildren. The only plus I found was that it was easy (but expensive) to get into a car, train or bus

and visit other places.

Cairo is the most disorganized. Lagos was the most corrupt. Abidjan and Lagos were both very dangerous.

Chennai — Relentless overwork, no opportunities for professional development, insufficient institutional support.

Ciudad Juarez — high crime rate and drug problem.

Conakry. Awful in nearly every sense imaginable. The school is absolutely inadequate. No one with school-age children should ever have to go there.

Copenhagen. Low post morale, pointless work, dreary place.

Damascus. The front office declared open season on admin cone employees and actually encouraged negativity from others in the embassy community. Made it a horrible tour workwise for admin folks.

Dar es Salaam — harsh climate, power cuts, horrible roads, bugs, rats, etc.

Depends on the stage of life. Karachi was a horrible place in a lot of ways, but I was young and single, and had a great time. Mexico City, on the other hand, is a great place, but I had small kids, and found the traffic and crime overwhelming.

Dhaka. Single females, in particular, have a difficult time pursuing activities. Housing was OK depending on grade and family size. Travel was difficult.

Doha. This post is nicknamed Doha the Dull because there's little of interest here. Because Diplomatic Security won't let us travel through 30 kilometers of the only land neighbor, Saudi Arabia, this peninsula becomes an island with expensive flights and no ferries. Qataris appear arrogant and lazy, but it is hard to tell because our only personal interactions with them are when they hit us with their Land Cruisers — an annual occurrence.

Frankfurt's housing created a “fishbowl” environment, and its separated annexes complicated operations.

Georgetown — nothing to do, isolated, poor infrastructure, poor post management.

*Asuncion has got to be the most boring place in Latin America, and opportunities for spousal employment and family recreation are nil.*

*Continued on page 30*

## COVER STORY

Half of those taking the survey (52 percent) concurred that “The front office manages the post’s operations in a way that brings out the best in all employees (including Foreign Service Nationals) and shows it values our input.” Even higher percentages praised the FSN staff as competent and helpful (52 percent agreed strongly, while 29 percent agreed somewhat); felt that “Post security procedures are sufficient to cope with local threats but still allow us to make contacts and do our jobs” (76 percent total); and agreed that “The management section meets requests in a timely, responsive manner” (60 percent).

### Family Issues

For most of the questions in this section, the “non-applicable/unable to answer” option garnered the most

### *The response rates track closely with each foreign affairs agency’s share of the Foreign Service population.*

responses, though a clear majority (59 percent) agreed, somewhat or strongly, with the statement that “Post management is family-friendly (e.g., it grants leave to stay home with a sick child).” Though more than half of the sample had no opinion as to the adequacy of local schools, those who felt they were fine (35 percent) considerably outnumbered those who disagreed (8 percent). Similarly, 40 percent agreed somewhat or strongly that “Child care is available and affordable,” with just 7 percent taking issue with that assessment.

Family member employment was a similarly divisive issue. Only a quarter of respondents said their spouse or partner was able to find satisfactory employment in the embassy, while 22 percent disagreed somewhat or strongly. The situation in the local economy was even more dire: 24 percent reported that their spouse/part-

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## COVER STORY

*Worst Posts • Continued from page 28*

Guayaquil, because of a disconnect with the embassy. Financial problems abounded and the consulate always got the short end of the stick. But I understand some of these issues have changed for the better.

Helsinki — Endless summer days and endless winter nights; hard to adjust to.

Islamabad. Security, high stress, isolation, high workload.

Istanbul. There is a disconnect between the “tourist” literature and the daily existence in the city/country. One is unable to walk safely around the city (without fear of being mugged, harrassed or conned). When you are in a town where you are advised not to ride public transportation for fear of a bomb, you should get danger pay — which we don’t.

It’s a toss-up between Oslo and Santo Domingo. Neither was adequately funded or supported by their respective bureaus. Bad schools. Oslo has only a very poor English-system school.

Jakarta, for the pollution, traffic and very limited work opportunities for spouses. Also, the embassy community is split geographically and resources go almost exclusively to those living near the American Club.

Kiev was the worst. Housing was atrocious and the embassy was worse. My wife almost left me because of working conditions. The school was really bad.

Kingston: Poor management, lack of transparency and a tendency for tenured officers to push more duties on to untenured.

Kinshasa. Stressful, too many micromanagers and not enough autonomy. No jobs for spouses.

Lagos. High crime rates; poor health conditions (internal parasites, TB, cholera, malaria, etc); dangerous travel, whether driving or flying; miserable climate.

Lilongwe. The security situation was abysmal, yet State and USAID billed it as a family post. Also, post management was not family-friendly in the slightest. Schooling was also terrible.

London. The embassy was large and impersonal, and one had the feeling that the FSNs ran the place instead of

the American supervisors.

Maputo — poor morale because of weak leadership, both within USAID and State.

My current post, Muscat. Why? Because we are 50 percent below full staffing, so we are drowning in paperwork and suffer from the high number of hours we have to put in every week.

New Delhi. Oppressive poverty, disease and health concerns, unpleasant climate, filth and environmental degradation, noise and congestion.

Port-au-Prince: disastrously bad management, horrible living conditions, country in a tailspin.

Reykjavik — poor morale and winter darkness, plus it’s so expensive you cannot live on the local economy even with the COLA. It’s also boring for teens.

Riyadh, because of the constant threat of terrorism and the accompanying stringent security restrictions, plus the onerous restrictions placed on women.

Tijuana has been a disappointing post so far. Post management has been slow to respond to spousal employment issues and the needs of junior officers.

Tripoli. The department went about establishing the post in haphazard fashion, and ignored the post’s pleas for help after the new employees arrived

there. Local conditions also left much to be desired.

We in Baghdad received no support from State while working at the Coalition Provisional Authority, whether force protection, personal body armor or the armored vehicles necessary to do our jobs. And when the embassy formed, those of us who were seconded to DOD were treated like outsiders and continued to receive very little support from the embassy.

Yaounde had no mail service when I was there because of the anthrax scare. It was difficult to travel because of bad roads and plentiful traffic accidents. There were limited cultural options, and it was hard to connect with local people of equivalent social/economic status. There was no ability to repair anything, no Internet access for almost my entire tour, and poor medical care.

Yerevan: A two-year camping trip, without heat or electricity.

***It’s a toss-up between  
Oslo and Santo  
Domingo. Neither  
was adequately funded  
or supported by their  
respective bureaus.***



## COVER STORY

ner was not able to find satisfactory employment outside the embassy, while just 23 percent said they were. But a third of respondents (34 percent) credited post management with assisting their spouse or partner in the search, while just 23 percent said otherwise.

Two-thirds of survey takers (65 percent) say their community liaison officer is active and enjoys front-office support. And the assertion that "Either through the CLO or on our own, my family has been able to find fun activities" attracted even greater support: 49 percent agreed strongly, with another 28 percent agreeing somewhat.

In something of a surprise, 53 percent of respondents agree strongly that "Post housing is adequate in terms of space, location, furnishings, etc."

**Seventy-four percent  
said they would  
recommend their post  
to friends who are  
bidding, while  
26 percent said they  
would not.**

### Quality of Life Issues

The final set of questions, about life outside the workplace, garnered similarly enthusiastic feedback. Two-thirds of the respondents (69 percent) felt that their salary and differential/allowances are sufficient to cover the cost of living at post. However, some members did note their intent to seek an assignment back in Washington in order to collect locality pay.

Asked about medical services, 78 percent said the post either provided adequate care or made appropriate referrals to local providers. It appears

that many employees have an incentive to avail themselves of those services, for the single biggest complaint in the entire survey was about air pollution. Asked whether it was a major concern, 50 percent said it was (including 29 percent who feel that way strongly), while

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## DREAM POSTS

**“If you could choose any post today, where would you want to be? And why (briefly)?”**

A post that is safe and friendly toward Members of Household. That's all.

A small consulate or embassy in a country where the national government is actually trying to improve the lot of its people.

A small hardship post with minimal CODELs!

Abidjan. Despite the problems the post was the right size, the society was interesting and complex, and I was able to make good friends.

Afghanistan — because I want to make a difference.

Africa (writ large): challenging environment, more opportunity to see the direct results of one's work, and a continent that desperately needs good, committed officers.

Any Andean nation for the the culture and natural beauty, opportunity to do significant development work, and still manageable anti-American sentiment.

Any place in Europe, because the work is interesting and my spouse can find something to do. If State were to get its act together on spousal employment (i.e., facilitated with real headhunters, job skills bank, etc.), then the geographic options could be much expanded. But I'm no longer holding my breath.

Anywhere my work would involve interesting consular issues with third-country nationals (especially involving outreach to the Muslim community).

At this point, I look for good secondary education for my children. Later, I'll look for a unique and different place.

Baghdad, to be part of history and earn some money.

Bangkok. I love Asian culture and living in big cities. Plus, the cost of living is cheaper than my present post and it offers a wealth of recreational activities.

Buenos Aires — rapidly developing country, lively cultural life, opportunities to improve U.S.-Argentine relations.

Cairo. Great housing, great school, lots of things to do, lots of travel opportunities, great staff. Sense of community despite its size.

Chiang Mai because of the people and the culture, plus the medium smallness of the consulate combined with a broad range of issues.

Copenhagen — important small country that contributes to transformational diplomacy.

Dubai, because the work is interesting and important; the post is small enough to permit management to be sup-

portive of all personnel; and the economy is large enough to provide employment opportunities for my spouse.

Every posting has had good and bad points. I don't have a 'dream' post.

Flexibility and problem-solving are key to any good post. People who understand the critical nature of housing, shipping and customs, etc. to morale are very important. Can-do people are the most important thing in the FS. There are too many people who just interpret the rules so they can say no.

Generally, I would like to be someplace where the front office cares about the staff (though I know I'm dreaming on this one). More specifically, I miss having seasons.

Geneva. Because my wife has told me that after 20 years of putting up with lousy places, if I don't get this for her, I'm out!

Guadalajara or Mexico City. Good cities with plenty for the family to do and plenty of interesting work.

Hanoi or Rangoon — beautiful cities, low cost of living, lovely locals and interesting work.

Hong Kong, because the commercial work is interesting and the lifestyle is fantastic.

I am enjoying my tour here in Ouagadougou. We call ourselves Team Ouaga and the local staff are all super nice, helpful and friendly.

I cover six countries as a Regional English Language officer, and I've been impressed with the atmosphere in Chisinau. It's small, but housing is substantial, the staff is friendly, and FSOs have productive, effective access to the GSO and the front office.

I'd probably work anywhere in the world with a good team and a good leader who treated everybody equitably and respectfully and had good interpersonal skills. Working for jerks can be very stressful (expensive posts can also be stressful if you're raising a family on one salary). Also, I'm just plain tired of staffing gaps, and excessive hours; I never get to have dinner with my kids. State needs to look at work/family balance and not just promote the workaholics who were staff aides working 12 hours a day — because those folks, when they become principals, then expect everybody else to be workaholics with no family life.

*Continued on page 34*

## COVER STORY

just 39 percent said it was not.

Most employees said they were able to travel easily and safely to work and within the community (70 percent), and around and into/out of the country (65 percent). But only a slim majority (54 percent) agreed that “Crime is not a problem for post personnel, and host-country officials react promptly to reports of offenses against Americans.” Fifteen percent disagreed strongly with that characterization, and another 15 percent disagreed somewhat.

Sixty-five percent of respondents described the general quality of household help (nannies, maids, gardeners, etc.) as satisfactory, while 59 percent found local personal services (repairs, tutoring, etc.) available and affordable. Similar proportions agree that “Internet connections are adequate” (71 percent); “TV

***In something of a surprise, 53 percent of respondents agree strongly that “Post housing is adequate in terms of space, location, furnishings, etc.”***

and radio programming is satisfactory” (64 percent); and “Mail delivery is adequate” (69 percent).

A comfortable majority (59 percent) said “There is a wide range of cultural offerings in the community.” And about two-thirds (65 percent) said they had been able to make friends outside the mission. Only about half the sample answered a question geared to single employees — “It is feasible to date/seek romantic partners here.” They split right down the middle: 24 percent agreed, while 23 percent disagreed.

### **Wherever You Go, There You Are**

For the many reasons noted at the beginning of this article, no AFSA member should make bidding decisions

*Continued on page 36*

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## COVER STORY

*Dream Posts • Continued from page 32*

I would go back to Mali. I thoroughly enjoyed my tour there but was single at the time. Would love to go back with a family so that my kids could experience West Africa.

I would like to serve in Western Europe, because I have bid many times on posts there but have not been successful. To round out my Foreign Service experience, almost all of which has been in greater hardship or developing countries, I would enjoy the opportunity to “crack through the EUR barrier.”

If USAID reopened an office in Cameroon, I would want to be there because that's where I did Peace Corps and that's where my husband's family is. Other than that I would choose an Asian country like Cambodia next.

Impossible to say — there seems to be an inverse relationship between the postings I would find interesting (e.g. Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia) and my perception of the quality of post management in those countries.

India, Kenya, or other posts with access to good high schools and accommodations for children with minor

learning disabilities. This is a much bigger problem than the office of overseas schools is willing to recognize.

It would have to be Pristina. Challenging/interesting work, high morale and a front office that cares about staff. It's good to be working in an office where what we do is meaningful and noticed back in Washington.

Kabul, Abidjan, Khartoum, Port-au-Prince, Addis Ababa, Nairobi — pick one. These are all interesting, challenging places of importance and emphasis.

Kampala, Harare, Dar es Salaam.

Latin America, to be close to our aging parents.

London — Back to civilization. Things work. Lots of cultural offerings.

Madrid. I have never loved a city as much as I love that one. Good employment options for my husband, as well.

Morocco. The USAID mission is friendly; strong FSN staff; good outside community to live in.

My ideal post is one that recognizes and supports singles instead of shunting them aside to take care of families



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## COVER STORY

and their children. Since I do not have children, I do not need bigger housing or an education allowance or special-needs schools or extra airline tickets, etc. I wish somehow we singles could be rewarded or recognized for our part in saving the government money.

Nairobi. Wonderful post management; employees could excel and be recognized for their efforts. Wonderful community closeness.

New Delhi or Hanoi — great work, good-sized posts and fine living conditions

One of the consulates in Brazil. Growing economy, the chance to learn Portuguese, vibrant culture.

Paris, but only in a adequate-size city apartment. I'm a specialist who has served almost 16 years and because of my grade/rank and being single, I am penalized with insufficient housing. Housing is 75 percent of morale, but post housing boards do not understand this.

Phnom Penh. I extended twice here on a previous tour and lobbied heavily to get a return tour. The new embassy

provides an excellent work environment. Not a glitzy place, it isn't exactly First World, but it does offer a comfortable life outside of work. If in-country medical care would improve, it would be even better.

Rome. The history, culture and art, quality of life, cuisine, travel opportunities, and the people.

Santiago — a modern, forward-looking country and city with an excellent local and American staff.

Somewhere where I and my pets are safe.

Tehran — once it reopens.

The "Stans," because there is still real work to be done to win hearts and minds, and the region is vast to travel in, whether for business or pleasure.

Tripoli. I want to be involved in setting up a relatively new embassy. It's one of those untouched places — a place to discover before others do. There aren't many places like that in the world anymore.

Wellington. A developed country with a small capital; good for outdoor activities and exploration.

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## COVER STORY

*Continued from page 33*  
solely on the basis of these findings. For one thing, some of the specific comments underscore the truth of the old Foreign Service cliché: Some people carry their unhappiness with them wherever they go.

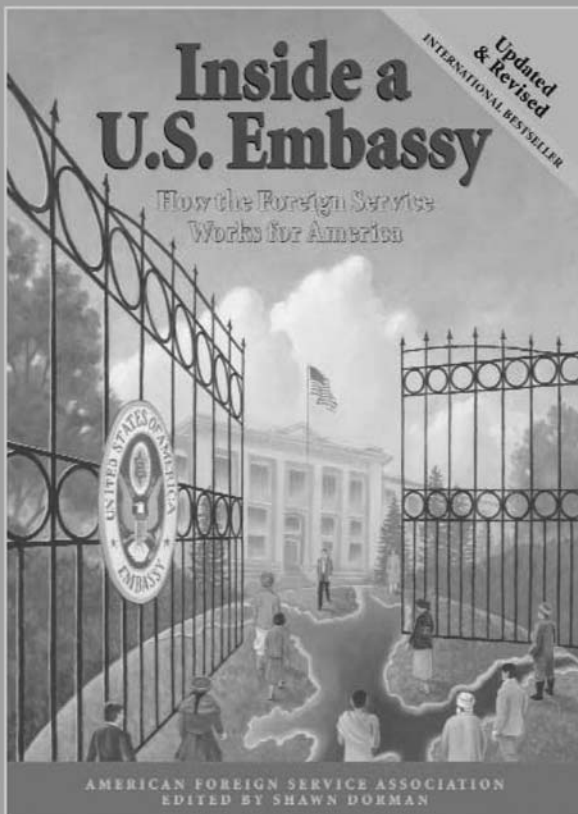
At the same time, other members of the Service seem to thrive, no matter how objectively miserable their working or living conditions. Indeed, some people seek out hardship assignments

*Some comments  
underscore the old  
Foreign Service cliché:  
Some people carry  
their unhappiness with  
them wherever they go.*

because they enjoy the professional challenges (or the rewards for enduring them, as the case may be), so they aren't bothered by shortcomings that would turn off others.

All that said, we hope we have provided some useful information and perhaps suggested some issues that you might not otherwise have considered as you prepare to bid on your next assignment.

As always, we welcome your feedback. ■



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# LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION ...

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GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS ARE POWERFUL TOOLS FOR VISUALIZING COMPLEX PROBLEMS. BUT, DESPITE WIDESPREAD INTEREST, THE TECHNOLOGY IS STALLED AT STATE.

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BY CAROL CHRISTIAN

**I**n the early morning of Oct. 8, 2005, thousands of Pakistanis were shaken out of their beds as a 7.6 magnitude earthquake struck Central Asia, centered just outside Muzaffarabad. Many thousands lost their lives, and government leaders implored other nations for rescue support and assistance. United States government agencies, including the Department of State, responded promptly. Answers to critical questions about the condition of infrastructure, location of affected populations, existence of assets and the distribution of State personnel with skills applicable to support the relief and assistance efforts were crucial for deployment of our resources. Coordination between organizations was important and progress on our efforts had to be monitored in the course of organizing personnel and supplies as critical issues continued to arise.

This scenario is reminiscent of many others, including the devastating Asian tsunami crisis of Dec. 26, 2004, and, more recently, the Indonesian earthquake of May 26, 2006. Foreign policy and diplomatic activities are intrinsically associated with information tied to a locality, region, country or larger area. In disasters, a quick, visual situation analysis such as an annotated map or “common operational picture” is critical for understanding where and how to best apply assets and coordinate with other organizations.

State personnel assess many other situations and issues that may affect U.S. national interests, including current con-

ditions and trends in the economic, agricultural and political fields. Of course, security concerns, boundary negotiations and humanitarian issues, such as trafficking in persons and disaster response, and the ability to track commodities, are all critically important. Monitoring environmental data to ensure compliance with international treaties is another example. Within the department the management of grants, visa applications, personnel and physical assets — all tied to a location — is routine.

In all of these activities, a “smart map” is a potentially invaluable tool — a picture worth more than the proverbial thousand words. Geographic information system technologies capable of integrating, storing, editing, analyzing, displaying and regularly updating important textual information to a specific location or region are already in use in many federal agencies and international organizations. At the State Department, however, use of GIS systems remains limited — despite widespread interest and convincing testimony of the benefits.

## The Power of GIS

We are reminded of the power of mapping and visualization systems every time we consult [mapquest.com](http://mapquest.com) (*Mapquest*) or [maps.google.com](http://maps.google.com) (*Google Maps*), Web sites that display streets and addresses selected by the user. These online tools also can display information from various databases such as “nearby hotels” or “shoe stores” on the same map by placing labeled icons on the map. The user can click on the icon and obtain more specific information such as the address, a telephone number and other relevant information, including hypertext links to other related material. Such mapping tools are in regular use through simple Internet browsers.

Some sites such as [maps.google.com](http://maps.google.com), [earth.google.com](http://earth.google.com) and [local.live.com](http://local.live.com) also allow users to display satellite imagery for recognition of features and landmarks, espe-

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*Carol Christian served as a science fellow at the State Department from 2003 to 2006. She is an astrophysicist at Hubble's Space Telescope Science Institute. Her expertise is in information technology, visualization, education technology, instrumentation and studies of stellar populations. She thanks the many individuals in several bureaus who assisted and collaborated on demonstrations and consulting on GIS within the department.*

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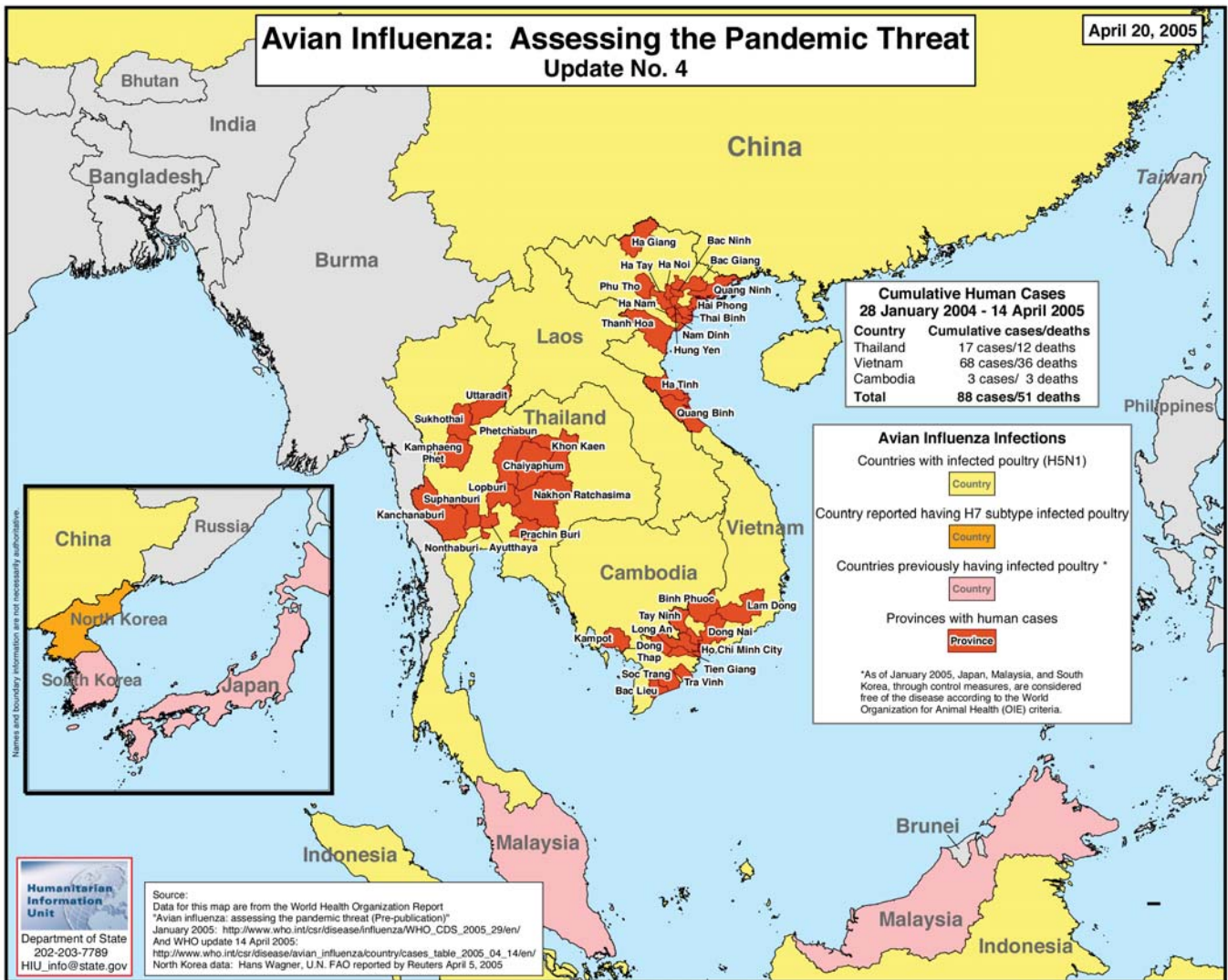
cially in urban areas. The latter two sites also include other capabilities for finding interesting locations and allowing the user to add their own "placemarks," or personalized markers linked to other information provided by the user.

Going beyond simple visualization, GIS technologies can analyze and model data, usually residing in a database or spreadsheet, in a graphical map form. The technology is useful for integrating large databases that can then be visualized showing patterns, trends and relationships that might otherwise go unnoticed or be unappreciated. Such systems can also facilitate data sharing among diverse organizations. GIS technologies can be made available through online — and, if desired, interactive — tools that department personnel, including decision makers and problem-solvers, could be using to merge diverse yet up-to-date material affecting the policy issues addressed daily.

Many federal and international agencies use GIS effectively. The United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for example, publishes maps and situation reports for disasters worldwide. Maps of the region affected by the Muzaffarabad earthquake, including an overview of the affected area and the flood risk were published on the OCHA Web site ([www.ocha.org](http://www.ocha.org)). The Defense Department uses GIS extensively, both domestically and in the field for operations. And the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration all use GIS for a wide variety of situation analyses, strategic planning and long-term analysis, as well as day-to-day programmatic and operational activities.

Other organizations, such as the Red Cross, use GIS software products and then select data that is publicly





Though most often associated with maps, such as this assessment of the avian influenza threat, a map is only one type of possible product generated by a GIS system's unique geographic data integration and analysis features.

available on the Internet. This latter strategy was particularly successful for documenting the location of Red Cross relief centers, operating schools and hospitals and other infrastructure after Hurricane Katrina. All of these agencies have data to share in GIS format, as do many commercial organizations.

### GIS at State

Though currently limited to certain pockets, GIS technology is already used at the State Department. Some GIS software has been approved for OpenNet systems and a number of offices hold licenses for GIS tools.

The Bureau of Intelligence and Research's Geographic Information Unit has a long history of providing support in the form of maps — depicting crisis situations, border negotiations and the location of Americans abroad, among other topics. But in crisis situations information can become outdated quickly, and INR can be overloaded with high-priority requests. GIS technology not only increases efficiency in providing essential information, but can ensure its relevance through automatic updating.

INR's Humanitarian Information Unit routinely uses GIS to monitor the timelines of crises, and is currently

examining new GIS tools from a variety of sources in cooperation with the Bureau of Information Resource Management's Business Center. GIU and HIU applications demonstrate clearly the utility in using the technology: the precise coordinates (obtained in the field with a Global Positioning System unit) of locations are essential to accurately deliver assistance, humanitarian aid and avoid unnecessary confusion (What school? Which hospital? What intersection?).

Several other offices already rely on GIS technology, as well. The Bureau of Administration uses it to record grants and contracts and allow posts to

report back to Washington. The Office of Strategic and Performance Planning within the Bureau of Resource Management actively uses GIS to augment performance planning activities as well as strategic planning, and produces numerous map products for a variety of bureaus.

In the field, Consulate Chengdu embraced the technology several years ago at the initiative of then-Consul General Jeff Moon, with expert support from the GIU and eDiplomacy Office. The results have been impressive. Officers are able to monitor economic trends, plan and document travel within the consular district, and report on various events within the region using GIS tools approved for use on OpenNet. A digital camera with a GPS unit records the precise position of digital images used to depict diplomatic visits and situations of policy interest. These pictures are then linked within the GIS so that, with a click of a mouse button, the image can be viewed along with ancillary documentation, all tied back to a specific location for visual clarity. The consulate has also succeeded in using satellite imagery imbedded in the GIS as a “base layer” to enhance understanding of the topographic features (and challenges) of the consular district.

Similar techniques are employed by Embassy La Paz, where, among other things, a recent science fellow at post created visual documentation on various safe routes in and out of the city for embassy personnel.

Recently, IRM’s eDiplomacy office assisted a number of offices in exploring the utility of GIS technology in their work. The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs’ Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs created a basic interactive online map derived from *Google Maps* to provide news feeds and current information pertaining to specific countries or regions. The Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, working with the eDiplo-

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macy office and the Bureau of Human Resources, has tested mechanisms to regularly produce GIS products that visually depict various economic indicators and trends around the world. For example, how does raising the price of oil a specific amount affect the gross domestic product of countries (e.g., in the Middle East) in terms of gains and losses? It is much easier to grasp the information in visual representations than shuffling multiple spreadsheets or textual documents; and once the basic template is constructed, the GIS system allows the user to look at historical data, trends and projections.

**Survey Reveals Widespread Interest**

A survey of individuals in the department, conducted in early 2006 by eDiplomacy in collaboration with other offices, revealed that interest in GIS is widespread. Survey results showed that there are numerous issues that could benefit from representation via this technology. Respondents described applications spanning the full range of the department’s strategic interests: crisis monitoring, regular reporting on international economic and political developments, domestic concerns and routine internal administrative and logistical work. Staff from many bureaus and quite a few posts described a wide range of data that they collect, review, analyze and report

on, noting that the sources of such data are largely external to the department.

Personnel are interested in obtaining additional varied data, in fields ranging from economics, narcotics, crime, trafficking, the environment, and consular affairs, to descriptions of U.S. physical assets and the distribution of our human resource expertise across the globe. All those surveyed expressed a keen interest in data that State could make available department wide, such as infrastructure location and integrity, populations, political boundaries and city data.

Many respondents lamented the fact that customary reporting is usually text-based, often giving incomplete or confusing information that could be better represented through visual tools. Not surprising, perhaps, the preferred method for reporting is e-mail with attachments or PowerPoint; cables rank lower on the preference list due to their text-only nature. Although there is neither widespread demand nor expectation — and no recommendation by management — employees do realize that trending, analysis and depiction of related but disparate data are best done visually.

A number of individuals noted that interactive Web-based materials would be quite useful, in addition to paper products and static digital renditions of maps such as those embedded in a presentation or made available on a Web site.

In light of the favorable response from the work force, what will it take to motivate the department as a whole to take advantage of the power of GIS? Many employees already realize the value of using such tools and have expressed as much in the survey responses, in e-mail feedback and the strong positive response to sporadic GIS users’ meetings in the past. Can the department as a whole push its text-based culture to adopt such productive visual technologies? Or, as retired USIA FSO Wilson Dizard

posits in his 2001 book, *Digital Diplomacy: U.S. Foreign Policy in the Information Age*, will State maintain its "tendency to move slowly in adopting digital technologies to foreign policy operations"?

### Moving Forward

Though a number of demonstrations and discussions have engaged a variety of individuals at State, no "tipping point" has been reached for adoption of the technology. Perhaps a prototype system that incorporates some key data from a few segments of the department might break through some of the current barriers. Cultivation of individual pockets of interest would be beneficial also. GIS users, for their part, recommend that a small office be established in IRM, RM or INR to deploy such a prototype and provide help to individual offices in finding appropriate entry-level software, arrange for initial

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***Can the department as a whole push its text-based culture to adopt such productive visual technologies?***

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training and consult on more complex GIS problems. This approach was successful when used to introduce other new resources such as Web sites, weblogs and OpenNet remote access.

Further, users feel that modest investments in a dedicated, shared desktop system for their office would be beneficial and also suggest that a staff member be allowed to become

the local GIS expert for simple applications. Employees in Washington and abroad expressed interest via the survey in receiving training to become aware of the capabilities of GIS. This was the approach taken in Chengdu: as a result, even if Foreign Service officers did not become local experts, they at least were aware of how GIS could support their work and readily interacted with someone who was expert in using the tools.

GIS has enjoyed strong growth ever since the 1990s: it is a technology that is here to stay. In transforming how we conduct diplomacy, the adoption of tools such as GIS can enhance our productivity and augment our situation awareness.

More information on the GIS survey and on other technologies beneficial to State Department work can be found at the eDiplomacy Web site and the Transformations community Web site on OpenNet. ■

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# JUDICIAL ASSISTANCE

A CONSULAR CASE THAT STARTS WITH A PRESUMPTIVE DEATH IN A RUN-DOWN BALKAN HOTEL ENDS UP MAKING EVERYBODY HAPPY, PURSUANT TO THE FAM.

BY ANN B. SIDES

**T**he room was cold. The witnesses and the two lawyers sat stiffly around the long table, their faces sallow in the weak winter daylight. Blast tape cross-hatched on the windows made a diamond pattern on the wall. I sat at the head of the table, a small American flag beside me to give the occasion dignity.

I called the first witness. "Please stand and take the oath."

He was the hotel security officer. I made him take off his cap and put down his cigarette before he raised his right hand.

"Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?"

"I swear."

I nodded to the lawyer for the plaintiff.

"Witness, you were on duty on the morning of April 20, 1991. Tell us what happened in connection with the dead American."

"Missing American," hissed the lawyer for the insurance company. "Consul, I object."

"This is not a trial, Advocate," I said. "We are taking sworn testimony to be submitted to a civil court in America. Your objection will be noted in the official transcript."

I tried to sound stern, in control. During my career in the consular service I had played many roles: cop, social worker, registrar of births and deaths, immigration officer, undertaker, priest. Now I was judge for a day. Testimony before an American consul is the cheap route to collecting witness evidence from abroad. The Foreign Affairs Manual calls it "judicial assistance."

I nodded to the witness to continue.

*Editor's Note: "Judicial Assistance" by Ann B. Sides and "Phototropism" by Adrienne Scherger (see p. 50) were the runners-up in the 2006 Foreign Service Fiction Contest.*

"It was almost three years ago, just before the war. The night manager called me at my post and asked me to accompany him to Room 65. The chambermaid was waiting for us.

"She said she tried several times that day to get in and make up the room but the guest — the American citizen Donald Brady — did not answer her knocking. When she tried to use the passkey, she could not turn the lock.

"I looked into the keyhole and realized the door was locked from the inside. So I pushed the key out of the lock with a screwdriver, and used the passkey to enter the room."

"What did you see inside the room?"

"There was nobody there, Advocate. The room was empty. His things were there, but he was not."

"Was there any other way the American could have gotten out?"

"Only the balcony door, Advocate. But the balcony overlooks the river and it's a six-story drop."

"Was there any sort of rope or ladder or other means by which he could have lowered himself from the balcony?"

"We found nothing of that kind."

"Please tell us what you *did* find in the room."

"An electric shaver, a toothbrush, some toilet articles. There were clothes in the closet and a pair of shoes by the bed. On the dresser he had left his wallet and a photo of himself with a woman and two young people — his wife and children, I suppose. Next to the photo was a letter."

"Is this the letter, in the plastic envelope with the photo?"

"Yes, Advocate. I don't know English so I don't know what it said."

"Consul, I submit this letter as Exhibit A," said the lawyer for the plaintiffs.

He passed me the plastic envelope. Brady, in the snapshot, was a tall, lean man in a track suit with thinning hair and aviator glasses. His wife was an elegant-looking brunette. The two teenagers had trendy haircuts and looked as if they'd

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rather be somewhere else. The family was the reason we were here, taking sworn testimony in a run-down Balkan hotel. They were suing Brady's insurance company, trying to make a case for presumptive death in order to collect on his life policy. Two local barristers represented the insurance company and the Brady family.

Brady's last message to his family was written in ballpoint pen in large, looping handwriting across the back of one of his company's order forms.

"I'm sorry," the note said. "This is the only way. Please forgive me and try to be happy."

I wrote "Exhibit A" on a tag, and carefully embossed it with my seal.

The security officer's testimony done, I administered the oath to a police detective. His testimony lasted almost an hour and added up to very little. There was no forensic evidence to suggest a crime. Suicide was a possibility, but there was no proof. Brady's case file remained open. He was listed as a missing person.

When the proceeding finally ended, I went outside to the walkway between the wall of the hotel and the river. Looking up, I realized Brady could not have jumped straight down into the river. He would almost certainly have been splattered on the sidewalk.

I walked back to the embassy past grimy drifts of snow piled in the gutters. The air reeked, as usual, of sulphurous soft coal. Dispirited groups of refugees queued up by the Social Services Ministry, waiting for the daily distribution of ration tickets. Black marketeers slouched on the street corners, selling flour with the USAID

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*Ann B. Sides is consul general in Athens. She served previously in Belgrade, Zagreb, Sarajevo, Dublin, Dakar, Oran and Niamey, as well as Washington, D.C. Before joining the Foreign Service in 1983, she was a journalist.*

handclasp symbol on the sacks and medicine pilfered from the UNICEF warehouse.

I found myself looking into the grey and weary faces of the people on the street, sorting quickly, eliminating the women, the kids, the very young, the very old; looking at tall men with glasses. I realized I was looking for Brady's face in the crowd, for I didn't believe he was dead.



Back at the office, I pushed the case from my mind and began interviewing visa applicants. Most of them were displaced people desperate to join relatives in America. I recited the refusal formula over and over again, and handed out the form letter citing Section 214(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. I issued renewal passports for two American aid workers and witnessed a will for a frazzled-looking journalist. Then I turned to my overloaded in-basket. At the top of

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*My insistence  
on following the letter  
of the law was not,  
I suspected,  
career-enhancing.*

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the pile was an acerbic letter from the State Department's most unyielding critic on the House International Relations Committee, demanding we issue a consular death certificate "forthwith, and without further delay" in the case of Donald Brady.

I drafted a reply. It was short, polite and negative. I brought it to the DCM for clearance.

"You know I never interfere in consular stuff," the DCM began, "but couldn't you issue a certificate of presumptive death? Brady's family is very close to the congressman. If we could find a way to make the congressman happy — within the regs, of course — it would be a feather in your cap with the ambassador. At this point you could use one."

In the Foreign Service there's a thin line between "scrupulous" and "uncooperative." In the chaotic, corrupt, brutal atmosphere of a country ripped apart by civil war, I clung to the tidy certainties of the FAM as a drowning man clings to a life raft. My insistence on following the letter of the law was not, I suspected, career-enhancing.

"Take it from an old hand," the DCM said. "There are ways of making the rules work *for* you."

"I'll think about it," I said.



In the weeks that followed, I heard

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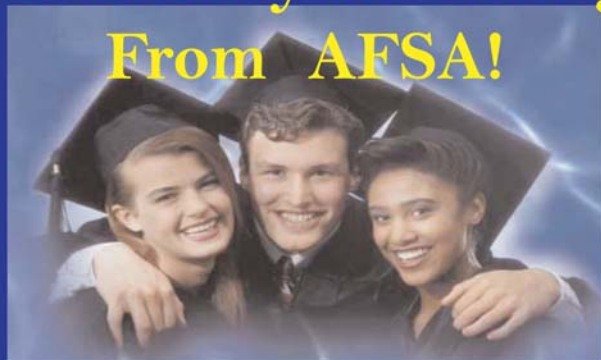
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nothing further about the Brady case. Winter was nearly over and an early thaw had turned the snowdrifts to blackish slush when I found a blue-and-white congressional envelope in my in-basket with the franked signature of Donald Brady's choleric congressman. Surprisingly, the congressman had a new request. A constituent of his owned a house on the front lines. It had been seized by the local militia as a sniping post, and its owner, now living in the U.S., wanted it back.

Happy to tackle a problem I might actually be able to solve, I drew a four-wheel-drive from the motor pool and headed east, across the shell-pitted countryside toward the front lines. The shattered villages were a depressing sight: houses smashed by mortar fire, shops burned, churches vandalized, doors gaping open. Grumpy policemen stopped me at a checkpoint and breathed brandy fumes at my face as they slowly leafed through my car documents, looking for an irregularity that might net them a bribe. Their command post was the battered shell of a schoolhouse. There were bullet holes in the walls, and brown stains on the floor.

At my destination, the provincial capital, I found the mayor in a freezing, windowless office. I made my pitch for the return of the American's house. We went to the house. It was roofless. The windows had been roughly bricked up except for firing loopholes. The mayor introduced me to the militia colonel in charge of the district. Bemused, he handed me the key to the house, which no longer had a door.

The two men invited me to join them for a drink.

"You're the first American diplomat to visit us since the war," the mayor said.

The four-month-old cease-fire had brought back street life to the battered town. Rubble had been cleared from the once-elegant main square,



and it was crowded with grubby-looking militiamen and their girlfriends, strolling in the chilly sunshine. My hosts led me to a relatively intact café.

I don't speak the local language really well, and my mind wandered as the mayor and the militia colonel traded war stories. Between sips of the revolting brandy — it smelled like prune juice and tasted like cleaning fluid — I scanned the crowd in the café. They were mostly thin, dark, shabby men. Suddenly, my eyes locked onto a man with thinning blond hair, much taller than the group seated around him. He seemed to be wearing silver-rimmed aviator glasses. Anxious to get a closer look, I muttered "toilet" to my companions and headed across the crowded, smoky room. I paused near the blond man.

Without the photograph for comparison I couldn't be absolutely sure it was Brady, but I'd never seen any native of the country wearing aviator

glasses. I tried to overhear his conversation, and pick up his accent, but his companions were doing the talking.

Back at my table, I asked the mayor about the blond man.

"He looks like an American," I said. "If he is, I'd like to meet him. We're supposed to register all Americans in the consular district."

"I know him very well," the mayor said. "He is an English teacher in our secondary school. A brave fellow who kept teaching here all through the siege. When those scum on the other side bombed our school, he moved classes to the shelters and kept on teaching. He also served as a stretcher-bearer on the front lines. But he is not an American. He is an Irishman. The colonel also knows him."

The militia colonel nodded. "I myself pinned a medal on him. Some of our wounded fighters owe their lives to Mr. Brady."

My companions offered to intro-

duce me to their star English teacher, but I declined. At last I had a chance to resolve the Brady case, placate the congressman, and make the ambassador happy. I wanted to approach Brady alone.



I waited the next day outside the school and followed Brady as he walked home. He was accompanied by a gaggle of enthusiastic adolescents, and I could hear their awkwardly phrased English trailing in the air behind them as they tried to impress their teacher.

In the market square a militia man on crutches hugged Brady and pounded him on the back. An old lady in black kissed his hand. The students drifted away. Brady crossed the shell-pocked square, heading for the same café where I'd seen him the night before. He sat down alone at the same table, perhaps waiting for the same friends to join him. He took out a

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paperback book, *The Collected Poems of Lord Byron*.

I approached the table.

"Excuse me," I said. "I see you know English. Can you tell me if there's a john in this place?"

"At the back by the door."

"Thanks. I didn't know there were any Americans living here."

"I'm not American. I'm Irish," he said. He tried to put on an Irish accent, but it sounded wrong.

"You're Donald Brady, and you're American," I said. "Your family's been looking for you for years."

"I'll show you my Irish passport," he said.

"Anybody with an Irish granny can get one of those," I replied. "I'll bet it shows your birthplace as the U.S."

"Oh shit," Brady said, forgetting his Irish accent. "Who are you?"

I told him who I was, and related the series of events set off by his disappearance. He told me his story. It was

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*Between sips of the  
revolting brandy — it  
smelled like prune juice  
and tasted like cleaning  
fluid — I scanned the  
crowd in the café.*

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long and sad and unsurprising. An unhappy marriage to a woman with religious objections to divorce. Spoiled, demanding kids. A job he hated. About to return home from an unsuccessful business trip, he'd decided to fake suicide but didn't want to leave his possessions and the note on the river bank, where they'd be stolen.

His flight from his locked hotel room was easier than I'd imagined. He used a bungee cord from his suitcase to lower himself onto the balcony below. Then he whipped the cord sharply to unhook it from the balcony rail, entered the empty room below by the window, and left the hotel quietly through a back entrance. He was looking for an unguarded border crossing when the war broke out, and took a job teaching English when the regular teacher was called up. He was learning the local language. He was happy.

"And the Irish passport?" I asked.

"I got it years ago. It's like you said. My grandmother was born in Ireland. There are no Irish people here, so there's nobody to know I'm not the real thing."

Brady and I moved to a small table at the back to avoid his friends, and ordered coffee.

"All right," he said. "You've found

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me. Where do we go from here?"

"Your family has to be notified that you're alive," I said. "Whether or not you go back to them is your business, but if you want to go home I'll help you make the arrangements."

"Look," he said, "I'm married here. I've got a kid, and another on the way. My wife — my wife here — has no idea about my other family. Do you think I want her to find out I'm a bigamist and our children are illegitimate?"

"What about your American family?" I said. "Don't you owe them some sort of explanation?"

"I couldn't possibly ever explain this to them. They're better off thinking I'm dead."

"Donald, they care. They've even gotten a congressman involved."

Brady smiled. "I'll bet I know which congressman. He was my wife's high school sweetheart. He dropped out of school when his dad died and

worked in my father's factory. She figured he was a loser and dropped him for me. But she guessed wrong. He went to college and law school at night. Then he went into politics, and the rest is history.

"The congressman got divorced some years ago, and he's had his eye on my wife ever since. When I'm declared dead he'll marry her, and I'll bet they'll use the insurance money to finance his run for the Senate. I'm happy; she's happy. The congressman's happy. If you go back and make a report you'll just destroy a lot of people's happiness."

"It's nothing personal," I said. "It's the regulations. I'll have to report this, unless ..." I paused, thinking through the implications of Brady's tale, "...unless, of course, you refuse to sign a waiver of the Privacy Act."

I fished the Privacy Act form out of my briefcase and handed it to him.

"The Privacy Act," he said. "Jesus,

I'd forgotten. God bless America."

He took the waiver form and tore it into long, narrow strips. Then he tore the strips into little squares, so tiny they looked as if they came from a shredder. He put the fragments in an ashtray. He lit them. We watched them burn down to cinders.

"I take it your decision is final," I said.

"Yes, it is," Brady said. "One word about me to anyone and you'll be breaking a federal law."

He stood up and held out his hand, "Nice meeting you, consul."

"Nice meeting you, Mr. Brady," I said. "It's always nice to chat with Irish people. Don't forget to register with the Irish embassy. The nearest one's in Vienna."

I stepped out into the square and felt the warm sun on my face. All traces of the snow had melted, and in a nearby shell crater a daffodil bloomed. ■

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# PHOTOTROPISM

A YOUNG AMERICAN WIFE ABSORBS THE SHOCK OF BEING TRANSPLANTED TO  
LUSAKA AND FINDS THAT SHE CAN FLOURISH.

BY ADRIENNE BENSON SCHERGER

She hadn't expected to feel the shock to her system. She hadn't expected the panic, the visceral instinct she felt; her body, her cells, veins and tissues, all leaning away from here, cringing away from here, pulling her thoughts back toward the familiar, like the way a plant in a dim room curves and stretches toward a distant band of light. She hadn't expected to yearn and stretch for her old life so much. Moving here was supposed to be an adventure, a partnership, a way for Jane and her husband to try something new together. She hadn't expected to feel so uprooted.

Their assigned house had come with a man who cleaned and cooked. "It is imperative," another embassy wife had told Jane. "With the lack of supermarkets, and all the bugs and dust, cleaning and shopping just takes too long." It was funny to think of that now. She had nothing but time on her hands. The other embassy wives she'd met were so different. They had kids, or jobs to go to. They seemed breezy and confident, and comfortable here. They spoke of Lusaka as they spoke of their children — pesky and frustrating, but beloved. Jane had tried to socialize, but she found words stuck in her throat. Her roots had been dug up, her branches cut back; she had nothing here — no job, no friends, nothing that was hers alone; even her speech had been clipped.

At first she'd forced herself to hope that she'd fit in, that somehow she'd become one of the people she admired, who shopped in the market and walked through town and didn't

blanch at the smells of freshly slaughtered meat hanging in the open-air butcher shop; who didn't flinch when the little children selling candy and single cigarettes flocked around her trying to make a sale. She'd gone to the market once to search for gardening supplies. It was her husband's idea. She wanted to bring order to something, and her husband had suggested the garden. "It could be beautiful with your green thumb," he'd said, gesturing one evening at the overgrown space behind the house. "Anything will grow here, in this soil, this climate. Make it your own."

But at the market she'd gotten lost among the stalls of produce and piles of clothes. She was stretched too tautly toward home to make the effort to understand this place. Her attempts at bravery winked out, like the tiny pop of filament in a burnt-out light bulb. Most days now she just stayed at the house, digging up weeds in what could be flowerbeds, fantasizing about the hyacinths and peonies in the garden she'd left at home. Her husband was wrong. Neither of her favorite flowers would grow here.



The houseman's name was Moffat. Moffat sounded like old, soft slippers shuffling along through the rooms of their house. She tried to avoid him, but the house was small and he seemed determined to dust and mop in every nook. She was always relieved when he left on his daily shopping trip. She'd listen for the rusty creak of the gate, and then she'd leap up from where she usually sat at the back of the garden and watch him wheel his bicycle to the street and hop on. It wobbled under him as he made his way up the road. She tried to make herself invisible when Moffat was in the house, tried to make him believe that she was busy as she sat at the outside table or poked at the dirt with her trowel, struggling to imagine gathering the energy to commit to a garden.

One day, Moffat didn't come. She wondered what had happened and how she could get in touch with him. Jane

---

*Adrienne Benson Scherger grew up traversing Africa with a USAID father. As the spouse of a former Peace Corps staff member, she has lived in both Ukraine and Albania, where she was the CLO. Currently, she and her husband and two sons reside in Syracuse, N.Y. She is a freelance writer, and is working on her first book, I Never Had a Birdcage Hairdo.*

had been to his house only once, when she and her husband had dropped him there in the car one rainy afternoon when his bicycle was broken. Moffat had invited them in for tea, and her husband had smiled and accepted with no hesitation. Later, he had berated Jane for her uncertainty.

She'd been uncomfortable in Moffat's little house. She felt she was intruding on him. The whole time they'd been there she'd sat stiffly in the rickety chair he'd offered, and tried not to gag as she looked around at the dirt floor and the spider webs high up the in the corners of the corrugated tin walls. The roof, also strips of tin, wasn't fully covered, and over the open corner was a flapping sheet of wet plastic. Jane kept her eyes on the cut flowers in a tin vase on the table, huge pink blooms with blue-black centers. They looked a bit like daisies. Moffat had noticed her curiosity, "My wife grows them in the back," he said. "She sells them." Jane's husband had gulped down his tea with abandon, as if points were given for enthusiasm.

Moffat's house was surrounded by hundreds of others just like it in a maze of a neighborhood. Who knows if she could even find the house without Moffat as a guide? His home, for four children and two parents, had a hard-packed dirt floor, an iron bed, a broken wooden table with a too-short leg, two plastic chairs, a few water-stained boxes, a shelf that held a small collection of enamel plates and some cups and cooking things, a fire-ring in a corner of the floor where tea or stew bubbled, and a small, scratched mirror. It also had flowers, but no telephone for her to call, no way to ask why he hadn't come.

It was much later when Jane heard the familiar click of the gate latch, and then the scrape of metal against the concrete of the walkway. She stood up from her patch of weeds in the yard, laid her trowel aside and wiped the dirt from her hands. She could see Moffat and a woman she didn't recognize walking slowly up to the front door.

The woman was tall and sinewy; the bare arms under the puffed sleeves of her blouse were lean and muscular. Her skin was smooth and vaguely shiny, like she'd been dipped in molasses. "Come in," Jane said, gesturing at Moffat like he was an expected guest. She wondered how one was supposed to talk to the houseman when he appeared at the front door, late, and with a guest. Should she be stern? Beatific? She led the pair into the living room and sat down in an armchair, embarrassed about the mud smeared on her legs and under her fingernails. Moffat and the woman huddled on the couch. "This is my wife, madam," Moffat said. Jane was surprised. Moffat looked ancient and mousy. His wife looked elegant and clear-eyed and, sitting ramrod straight on

the couch, she towered over Moffat.

There was a pause, and Jane wondered if she should offer the couple tea. Yes, she would, she thought, and moved to get up. Just then Moffat and his wife rustled, and spoke to each other in hushed voices. They looked at Jane expectantly and she sat down again.

"Madam," Moffat began, "we had a thief in our house last night." Jane listened while the story unfolded. A pair of robbers had slid into Moffat's house late the previous night. They had come in through the plastic sheet that covered up the unfinished part of the roof. Jane wondered what the robbers would have been after. There was nothing to steal in the house, the only beauty those flashing flowers on the table.

"My wife heard the thieves before I did, madam; she fought with them." Jane glanced at the tall woman on her couch. "There was a fight, madam; one of the thieves, he cut my wife," Moffat turned to his wife again, and nodded abruptly.

Jane watched as Moffat's wife reached up to her head-scarf and pulled one side of the colorful fabric aside to reveal her neck. It was streaked with blood. "They cut her head, madam," Moffat said. Jane saw the gash that had been hidden; it curved along the side of her dark head above her ear. It was clotted with black, drying blood, a glint of bone visible. Jane swallowed and tried not to recoil. She felt like she might cry. "Madam, we need to ask you for a ride in your car to the teaching hospital. My wife needs to see a doctor. Maybe they need to sew her skin."

"Umm ... now?" Jane asked, swallowing her tears of horror, and longing for her chair in the yard, her trowel and her weeds. She rubbed ineffectively at the dirt on her hands.

"Let me get my keys," she said.

Moffat's wife sat still and calm on the couch. Her thin, straight body and the knot of brilliant cotton on her head made her appear as exotic as a statue.



The teaching hospital lay on the outskirts of Lusaka. Jane proceeded hesitantly, for she hated driving here. She was nervous, the streets were rutted with deep holes, and people and animals and other cars tended to appear without warning. She sat stiff and gripped the wheel tensely, leaning forward with concentration. The sun was in her eyes, and she fumbled to pull down the visor. She crawled along through the traffic, unsure exactly where to go, which turns to make. Occasionally Moffat would lean forward from where he sat in the back seat with his wife and point one way or another, and Jane would dutifully turn.

The halls of the hospital were filled with people. Moffat

---

*Moffat's house  
was surrounded by  
hundreds of others  
just like it in a maze  
of a neighborhood.*

---



Andrew Kidd

# Summer Fiction Contest

All winning stories will be posted on the *Journal's* Web site at [www.fsjournal.org](http://www.fsjournal.org). The writer of each winning story will receive an honorarium of \$250, payable upon publication.

●  
Stories must be 3,000 words or less and previously unpublished.

●  
Include contact information and a brief bio.

●  
Limit one entry per author.

●  
Top story will be published in the July/August issue.



Please send submissions in Word format to the *FSJ* Business Manager at [kidd@afsa.org](mailto:kidd@afsa.org).

**Deadline for submissions is March 1, 2007.**

guided Jane to a space on a wooden bench against the wall. He motioned to her to sit. "We'll try to find the doctor, madam; you can stay here." Jane stayed. The space on the bench was small. A young woman pressed up against her on one side, and on the other side was an old man with a shriveled arm who appeared to be asleep, his head lolling back against the wall, his mouth slightly open and his eyes shut. Jane sat stiffly, trying not to touch her neighbors. As other people sat down, the space between them got smaller and smaller and Jane felt herself being squished. The old man's wilted arm lay like a flower against her leg, the woman's elbow was almost in her lap. The hallway grew hotter and hotter and the air grew thick and smelled of skin and sickness.

Jane felt herself growing lightheaded and angry. Why was she stuck in this horrible hallway, pressed skin to skin with all these strangers? "God," she thought. "I'll wait five more minutes and then I'm leaving." Jane sat restlessly, shifting her weight, trying to be comfortable and wishing she could shuck the man's arm off her leg where it lay, heavy and unmoving. "Forget it," she muttered. "I'm better off standing." She stood, and like water poured into a void, all the bodies on the bench slid over to fill the space she'd vacated.

Jane pressed her way down the hall, people staring as she passed; she pushed hard, almost frantically. She didn't bother looking for Moffat; the moment she'd gotten up from the bench, she'd felt a desperate need for a breath of fresh air, to feel sun on her face and space around her. She pressed toward a shaft of light she saw at the end of the hallway.

It was a courtyard. A small, square space, rung with hospital walls and doors, but open to the sky. The ground was covered in paving stones that had begun to be taken over by

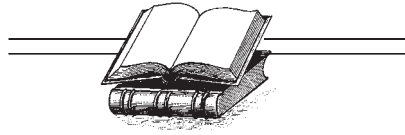
tenacious grasses, the soft green tips of which had pushed up the stone's corners and made them uneven. In the middle was a stone bench, built in a circle, around a massive tangle of flowers, blooming brilliantly in pink and cream and yellow, their blue-black centers staring out at the sky, soaking in the sun. They were the same flowers Jane had seen on Moffat's table. "They're lovely," Jane whispered aloud.

"African daisies, madam," a passing voice informed her.

Of course, Jane thought. She looked at the flowers for a long time; she leaned over and breathed deeply the smell of their dark green leaves, and their stems. She poked her fingers into the warm dirt, testing the weight of the soil. Just then Moffat appeared. "Madam, they are seeing my wife now. They gave her medicine to make her sleep so they could sew her up. Maybe they will have to take skin from her leg and make a patch. You should go now; we will be here for a long time."

Jane's husband came home late that night. She had already eaten, showered, and gotten into bed. She was drifting off to sleep when she heard him in the room, undressing quietly so as not to wake her. He slid into the bed next to her. Jane stretched out her legs and nestled close to her husband. He felt cool and clean, and as smooth as a seed. She wondered what he'd done that day, off at work in the embassy. She wondered if he'd be surprised at what she'd spent the day doing. Tomorrow she'd tell him about it. Tomorrow.

And tomorrow she'd look out at her garden again, across that stretch of weeds. She would grow flowers there, native flowers. She would give some to Moffat to take to his wife. She would keep a vase of them on her table. They would be her fresh start. In her garden, their roots would find a hold in the soil, they'd stretch their faces to the sun, and they would grow straight up. ■



# BOOKS

## The “Go Home” Option

### Out of Iraq: A Practical Plan for Withdrawal Now

George McGovern and William R. Polk, *Simon and Schuster*, 2006, \$15, paperback, 135 pages.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT V. KEELEY

As I write this review shortly after the midterm elections, parties on all sides of the Iraq War are awaiting with great anticipation the report of the Baker-Hamilton “Iraq Study Group.” Whatever that effort produces, an exit strategy is already available in this short, aptly titled book by two well-known experts on the Middle East.

After he retired from politics, Senator George McGovern resumed his prior profession of teaching history and headed the Middle East Policy Council in Washington for six years. William R. Polk taught Middle East history and politics at Harvard and Chicago, published many books on the region, and has closely studied Iraq since he first visited Baghdad in 1947. In 2005 he published *Understanding Iraq*, a highly readable 213-page history.

The two authors have collaborated on a book that recaps what Iraq is and who the Iraqis are, analyzes the effects of the invasion and occupation on Iraq and on America, and then lays out in a single chapter a 24-point exit strategy, followed by a brief warning about the dire consequences of our not making a reasonably rapid exit.

Insisting that the plan must be

*McGovern and Polk offer a 24-point exit strategy and warn of dire consequences if we do not leave Iraq soon.*

implemented as a coordinated whole, they foresee a phased withdrawal of all foreign military troops by June 30, 2007, including the 25,000 mercenaries euphemistically called “Personal Security Details” provided by 50 foreign firms. They put their plan’s cost at about \$14 billion — a true bargain considering projections that another two years of the occupation would cost at least \$350 billion.

To facilitate the transition, McGovern and Polk urge the Iraqi government to request the short-term services of an international force to help police the country during and after our withdrawal, perhaps remaining for as much as two years. This force should be drawn from Arab and/or other Muslim countries, whose personnel would have a better understanding of the culture, religion, language and traditions of the Iraqi populace as they carry out police work.

There is not space here to describe the plan’s other 22 points in detail, but a good many are worthy of mention. For instance, the authors view the training of a permanent Iraqi national police force as essential, but oppose re-creation of a national army, which in

the past has been more disruptive than helpful. They also call for Washington to release all prisoners of war and to close our detention centers as soon as possible. To counter the impression that we plan to stay in Iraq for the long term we must cease construction of some 14 “enduring” American military bases now under way (five of which are as large as cities). For similar reasons, we should vacate the Green Zone by the end of 2007.

The authors also urge the U.S. to fund a project to hire and train Iraqis to find and destroy mines, unexploded ordnance and depleted uranium; pay reparations for loss of lives and property; and allow Iraq to renegotiate oil contracts entered into during the occupation.

Finally, though it may be hard for us to do, America should express its condolences for the large number of Iraqis killed, incapacitated, incarcerated and tortured. This gesture would help greatly to restore our reputation in Iraq, the region and the world.

McGovern and Polk close by calling on all Americans to acknowledge the debt we owe to the men and women who served in Iraq, and to treat them as well as were the returning veterans from World War II: “Now is the time for healing the wounds of war and trying to understand its lessons. The veterans of the war in Iraq especially need and deserve a comprehensive rehabilitation — physically, mentally, educationally and economically, including the highly successful offerings of the World War II G.I. Bill of Rights.”

This brief book provides a reasonable, workable and inexpensive road

map for extricating ourselves from the Iraq quagmire. It should be essential reading not only for all decision-makers and their advisers in Washington, but for all Americans.

---

*Retired three-time ambassador Robert V. Keeley operates Five and Ten Press, a small, independent publishing company he founded to bring out original articles, essays and other short works of fiction and non-fiction that have been rejected or ignored by mainstream outlets.*

## Calling a New Mr. or Ms. X!

---

**Forging a World of Liberty under Law: U.S. National Security in the 21st Century (Final Report of the Princeton Project on National Security)**

*G. John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter, Princeton University, 2006, <http://www.wus.princeton.edu/ppns/report.html> (not for sale, only available online), 96 pages.*

REVIEWED BY KEITH W. MINES

Back in 1998, writer Eliot Cohen called for a new “Mr. X” (the late great George Kennan’s nom de plume) to define the post-Cold War world and save America from its “brain-dead two-war strategy.” Five years after the 9/11 attacks there is a new foe on the scene, making such a quest all the more urgent. Alas, no Mr. X (or Ms. X) has stepped forward, and we have no compelling foreign policy doctrine to provide that overarching, synthesizing concept.

To fill the void, dean of Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School Anne-Marie Slaughter and Wilson School Professor G. John Ikenberry

set up the Princeton Project on National Security in 2004, bringing together some 400 policymakers and academics to write a “collective Mr. X article.” They reasoned that it would take that many people “to do together what no one person in our highly specialized and rapidly changing world could hope to do alone.” The scope of the undertaking was breathtaking, including on its roster such luminaries as Francis Fukuyama, Tod Lindberg, Joseph Nye, Ivo Daalder, Walter Russell Mead, Richard Haass, Dan Kurzer and George Shultz.

The participants formed various working groups to analyze how the United States “must deal with a series of profound changes in the international landscape, including rising new powers, a tightening energy market, increasing anti-Americanism and a globalized economy.” They then looked at “serious security threats that emanate from instability in the Middle East, Islamic radicalism, global terrorist networks, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the spread of infectious diseases and global warming.” On a more positive note, they also examined the “tremendous opportunities for the advancement of democracy, prosperity and respect for human rights in much of the world.”

The report argues for “an American grand strategy of forging a world of liberty under law by supporting popular, accountable and rights-regarding governments; building a liberal international order; and updating rules on the use of force.” Embedded in its pages are a number of really good ideas.

For instance, the study acknowledges the importance of nationbuilding in a way that is reminiscent of Thomas Barnett’s description of “core” and “gap” countries in his 2004 book, *The Pentagon’s New Map*,

and echoes his call for the U.S. to assist and encourage popular governments that are accountable. To rebuild the broken system of international institutions, the group envisions a concert of democracies that would “institutionalize and ratify the democratic peace” while fixing the U.N. and NATO. And to fight terrorism, the group suggests a global counterinsurgency campaign “that utilizes a range of tools, particularly law enforcement, intelligence and surgical military tools.”

There are similarly interesting ideas on stemming the proliferation of nuclear weapons and global pandemics, promoting energy security and building a protective infrastructure, many of which deserve to be tried.

That said, I found myself longing for a single author to cut through what feels like a very limiting exercise in groupthink. It is clear that the price for participation for many of the luminaries was that their ideas be reflected somewhere, somehow. That approach yields a series of lists that, however worthy, simply don’t add up to Cohen’s praise for Kennan’s formulation of containment: “a superb strategic concept; simple, sweeping and flexible.”

There may well have been a new Mr. or Ms. X somewhere in the mix. But if so, his or her voice was probably snuffed out, either by the process of collaboration or by the demands of editing. In the end, what this project best establishes is that if a new Mr. or Ms. X is to arise, it will be as the result of a lonelier enterprise. So, calling Mr. X?

---

*Keith Mines is a political officer in Ottawa. An FSO since 1991, he has served in Tel Aviv, El Salvador, Port-au-Prince, Budapest, Al Anbar (Iraq) and Washington, D.C.*



## A Sordid Tale

### The Wonga Coup: Guns, Thugs and a Ruthless Determination to Create Mayhem in an Oil-Rich Corner of Africa

Adam Roberts, *Public Affairs Books*, 2006, \$24.00, hardcover, 276 pages.

REVIEWED BY DAVID CASAVIS

Wonga, a British slang term for large sums of money, came into use in recent years. Although the word is not of African origin, Adam Roberts, a correspondent for *The Economist* magazine who covers central and southern Africa, uses it tellingly in this account of an ill-starred 2004

coup attempt in oil-rich Equatorial Guinea.

Simon Mann, a British millionaire, had already amassed a fortune in the murky world of mercenaries, diamonds, oil and other forms of resource extraction when he masterminded the plot to overthrow that country's brutal dictator, President Teodoro Obiang Nguema. After recruiting veteran mercenary soldiers from South Africa, Mann arranged for a shipment of small arms to be supplied by the Zimbabwe Defense Industries.

Next, he arranged for a rival political leader-in-exile, Severo Moto, to fly into Equatorial Guinea and assume control after the fighting. Finally, after getting the Spanish navy

to station ships in the country's waters, he organized a small uprising among the local population.

What could have been a lightning coup was foiled by many little things: helicopter failure, uncoordinated movements, poor follow-up. But even worse, the plotters bragged, telling anyone who would listen what they were up to. They did everything but take out an ad in the newspaper, and were quickly arrested.

Perhaps the weakest link in the plan was bringing Mark Thatcher, son of the former British prime minister, into it. Although his role was limited to funding a helicopter, his involvement spotlighted what would have otherwise been just another squalid coup attempt by ex-merce-

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## BOOKS

naries and rich expatriates in a forgotten part of Africa.

Thatcher went on trial in South Africa after the coup failed, then sounded out the U.S. embassy in Pretoria on how his subsequent conviction would affect his visa. He was told that he could still enter the U.S., but this proved to be false. His American wife then divorced him.

The fate of the other plotters was far worse, with many of them imprisoned and tortured. Simon Mann, in spite of attempts to bribe his way out, is still in prison.

So why did the plotters scheme to destabilize such a small and obscure place, the only Spanish-speaking country in sub-Saharan Africa? The answer is simple: wonga. Thanks to offshore oil reserves, EG already

takes in \$60 million a month in revenues, an amount expected to rise substantially as production increases. Yet despite having one of the highest per capita incomes in Africa, the population remains desperately poor and politically supine.

Regrettably, Roberts' coverage of the coup is overstuffed with minutiae, perhaps reflecting his training as a correspondent. The narrative is so cluttered with details and testimony that the reader has to keep referring to the list of characters in the front of the book just to recall who's who.

Though he spends little time on it, Roberts recounts an episode from 35 years ago that has become a Foreign Service legend. In 1971, not long after the United States briefly opened an embassy in Malabo, the

chargé d'affaires murdered his code clerk by cornering him in the vault, tying him up, and then stabbing him 10 times with a 14-inch pair of government-issued scissors. He was convicted of voluntary manslaughter and served 10 years.

On a more positive note, Roberts suggests that the days of mercenary buccaneers are over. The attempt to seize and loot Equatorial Guinea may be remembered as the end of the era when a few rich Europeans could recruit ex-soldiers and create mayhem in Africa. ■

*A regular book reviewer for the Journal, David Casavis has worked for the Commerce and Homeland Security departments. He has just completed a book on visa fraud.*

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# AFSA NEWS

American Foreign Service Association • January 2007

WE ASKED, YOU ANSWERED

## State Members Respond to Opinion Poll ... en Masse!

BY STEVE KASHKETT, AFSA STATE VICE PRESIDENT

**S**tate Department members of the Foreign Service worldwide harbor strong and often diverse opinions about their careers and life overseas. They share many serious concerns about Iraq, unaccompanied postings, political appointees, family-friendliness and the future of our diplomatic profession, and very much want their voices heard. These are among the clear messages that emerge from a comprehensive electronic

survey of the active-duty State membership, which AFSA conducted in November.

More than 3,400 Foreign Service members completed the poll, an astonishing figure considering that the entire State FS workforce only numbers around 11,000. Considering that most reputable opinion polls of the American general population require only 1,500 respondents, this is comparable to a poll of American public opinion that

Continued on page 62

AFSA DISSENT AND PERFORMANCE AWARDS

## Last Call for Nominations for the 2007 AFSA Awards

BY BARBARA BERGER, PROFESSIONAL ISSUES COORDINATOR

**I**n these times of challenge and change for the foreign affairs agencies, it is vitally important to recognize the traditions of excellence, courage and integrity that are the hallmark of the Foreign Service and exemplify our contributions to our country.

We urge you to procrastinate no longer, and submit your nomination for one of AFSA's Constructive Dissent Awards or for one of the awards for exemplary performance.

Help us continue AFSA's proud tradition of recognizing and honoring those members of the Foreign Service who have taken an unpopular stand, gone against conventional wisdom and challenged the status quo for what they believe, regardless of

the personal consequences.

The Foreign Service is a corps of professionals in diplomatic affairs whose expertise in the conduct of our country's foreign policy is needed as never before. No other government-related organization recognizes those among its membership who are willing to speak out and disagree with their superiors because their principles and belief in their professional training demand it. AFSA offers four separate awards for constructive dissent:

- **The Tex Harris Award for Foreign Service Specialists**
- **The Averell Harriman Award for Entry-Level Officers (FS 6-4)**

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LAST CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

## Join the AFSA Governing Board

**I**f you've ever considered getting more involved in AFSA, helping AFSA represent you and all your Foreign Service colleagues, then this is the time to raise your hand and run for a position on the 2007-2009 AFSA Governing Board. Or, nominate a colleague.

There are 24 positions on the AFSA Board, from the full-time president to the constituent vice presidents and the volunteer representative positions. The new board will take office July 15, 2007, and serve for two years.

Consider your options for joining the AFSA team and submit a nomination today. □



Nomination Deadline: Feb. 1  
Details at [www.afsa.org/elections/](http://www.afsa.org/elections/)

# AFSA NEWS BRIEFS



## AFSA Scholarship Fund Receives Generous Planned Gift

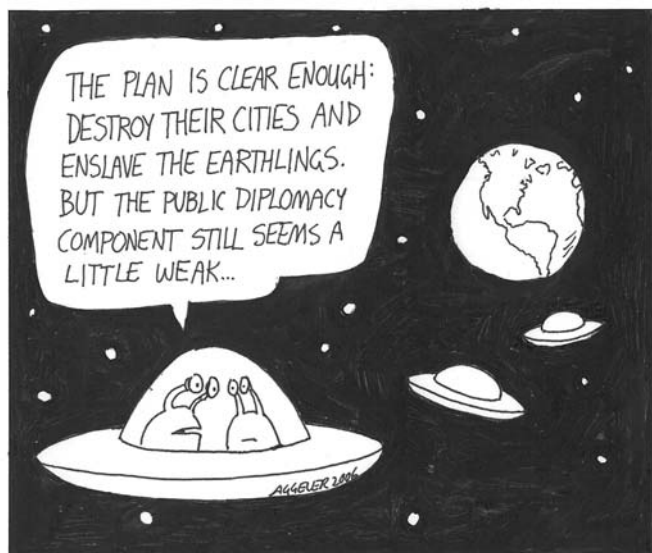


The AFSA Scholarship Fund received a \$157,000 planned gift from the Charitable Remainder Trust of Brockman M. Moore, who passed away in 2005. These monies will be added to the perpetual scholarship Moore established in his wife's name, the Marcia Martin Moore Financial Aid Scholarship, when she died in 1980. Mrs. Moore was a Foreign Service officer for 28 years and served in Guatemala, Japan, Italy, Vietnam, England, West Africa and Austria. She retired in 1976 following her last assignment, in the Department of State's Bureau of African Affairs. The couple had no children.

For those active-duty or retired Foreign Service employees who would like to explore AFSA planned giving options or would like to know more about the AFSA college scholarship program, please contact AFSA Scholarship Director Lori Dec toll-free at 1 (800) 704-2372, ext. 504, or [dec@afsa.org](mailto:dec@afsa.org). Please also visit the AFSA scholarship Web page at [www.afsa.org/scholar/](http://www.afsa.org/scholar/) for further scholarship information.

## Life in the Foreign Service

BY BRIAN AGGELER



## Generous December Donations

AFSA would like to recognize the following individuals who have made generous gifts to established scholarships in December.

Jeff Rogers and his wife, Kathryn Beaumont, made a \$1,000 donation to Jeff's parents' perpetual AFSA scholarship, the Adele Langston and William P. Rogers Memorial Financial Aid Scholarship. The scholarship was established in December 2001 by friends and family of Langston and Rogers.

Eric D. K. Melby made another \$1,000 donation to his parents' perpetual AFSA scholarship. The Clara C. and Everett K. Melby Memorial Financial Aid Scholarship was established by friends and family in 2003. Melby has made such a gift in December every year since 2004.

Stephen Hubler, the pol-econ chief in Skopje, renewed an annual financial aid scholarship he established in 2005, and increased his donation to a \$1,500 award. This scholarship will be bestowed in the 2007/2008 school year as the Carl Boyle Memorial Scholarship to honor his friend, a tireless worker in the labor rights movement who died of cancer in March 2006. AFSA hopes to offer the award to a Foreign Service undergraduate student pursuing labor rights/human rights as an area of study.

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### STATE VP:

[kashkett@state.gov](mailto:kashkett@state.gov)

### RETIREE VP:

[42reuwash@earthlink.net](mailto:42reuwash@earthlink.net)

### USAID VP:

[fzamora@usaid.gov](mailto:fzamora@usaid.gov)

### FCS VP:

[donald.businger@mail.doc.gov](mailto:donald.businger@mail.doc.gov)

### AFSA News

Editor Shawn Dorman: [dorman@afsa.org](mailto:dorman@afsa.org)

(202) 338-4045 x 503; Fax: (202) 338-8244

On the Web: [www.afsa.org/news](http://www.afsa.org/news)

### Staff:

Executive Director Susan Reardon: [reardon@afsa.org](mailto:reardon@afsa.org)

### Business Department

Controller Steven Tipton: [tipton@afsa.org](mailto:tipton@afsa.org)

Accounting Assistant Jon Reed: [reed@afsa.org](mailto:reed@afsa.org)

### Labor Management

General Counsel Sharon Papp: [papps@state.gov](mailto:papps@state.gov)

Labor Management Attorney Zlatana Badrich: [badrichz@state.gov](mailto:badrichz@state.gov)

Labor Management Specialist James Yorke: [yorkej@state.gov](mailto:yorkej@state.gov)

Grievance Attorneys Neera Parikh: [parikhna@state.gov](mailto:parikhna@state.gov) and

Charles Garten: [gartenc@state.gov](mailto:gartenc@state.gov)

Office Manager Christine Warren: [warrenc@state.gov](mailto:warrenc@state.gov)

USAID Senior Labor Management Adviser Douglas Broome: [dbroome@usaid.gov](mailto:dbroome@usaid.gov)

USAID Office Manager Asger Sigfusson: [asigfusson@usaid.gov](mailto:asigfusson@usaid.gov)

### Member Services

Director Janet Hedrick: [hedrick@afsa.org](mailto:hedrick@afsa.org)

Representative Cory Nishi: [nishi@afsa.org](mailto:nishi@afsa.org)

Web-site & Database Associate Sheng Zhao: [zhao@afsa.org](mailto:zhao@afsa.org)

Administrative Assistant Ana Lopez: [lopez@afsa.org](mailto:lopez@afsa.org)

### Outreach Programs

Retiree Liaison Bonnie Brown: [brown@afsa.org](mailto:brown@afsa.org)

Director of Communications Thomas Switzer: [switzer@afsa.org](mailto:switzer@afsa.org)

Congressional Affairs Director Ian Houston: [houston@afsa.org](mailto:houston@afsa.org)

Executive Assistant to the President Austin Tracy: [tracy@afsa.org](mailto:tracy@afsa.org)

Scholarship Director Lori Dec: [dec@afsa.org](mailto:dec@afsa.org)

Professional Issues Coordinator Barbara Berger: [berger@afsa.org](mailto:berger@afsa.org)

Elderhostel Coordinator Janice Bay: [bay@afsa.org](mailto:bay@afsa.org)

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## The Iraq Report and the Foreign Service



Many members of the Foreign Service welcomed the Iraq Study Group Report because it opened a long-needed debate about the need to find a new direction for U.S. policy in the Iraq crisis. Considering the multiple effects that the war has had on our profession, on our assignments and promotion systems, on our families and on morale within the Service, it is an understandable relief to our members that this debate is underway.

Buried within the report, however, are a few recommendations that are cause for alarm among the people of the Foreign Service. Recommendation 74 asserts that “if not enough civilians volunteer to fill key positions in Iraq, civilian agencies must fill those positions with directed assignments.” Recommendation 76 exhorts the State Department to “train personnel to carry out civilian tasks associated with a complex stability operation outside of the traditional embassy setting.”

These two recommendations may sound good on paper, but they utterly fail to take into account the daily reality of Iraq and the most fundamental obstacle to the effectiveness of civilian employees there: deteriorating security. The fact that the country remains a live-fire war zone — by most accounts a worsening war zone — overshadows everything concerning the role of the Foreign Service.

Our members serve at hardship and high-threat posts all the time, but they are not accustomed to trying to survive and do their jobs in the middle of a war, particularly a war in which Americans are a target. As has been repeatedly written in the pages of this magazine, unarmed diplomats can only carry out their duties if they have the freedom to move about a country, to develop expertise on the local culture and society and to cultivate professional relationships with a wide range of key interlocutors involved in the political and economic life of the country. Do the drafters of the Iraq Study Group Report really believe that diplomats are able to undertake these tasks in the streets of Baghdad? In Basrah? In Ramadi?

Violence in Baghdad and in the provinces severely constrains the movements of Foreign Service members outside of the tightly-controlled International Zone and U.S. military forward oper-

ating bases, and it limits the amount of direct contact that our members can have with ordinary Iraqis. These security-driven conditions call into question the notion that our members can effectively accomplish their assigned tasks. A “complex stability operation outside of the traditional embassy setting” is a fancy phrase, but in practical terms, unarmed diplomats can only tack-

le this mission once the war has ended, once the country has been largely pacified.

Similarly, the dire security problems in Iraq have a direct effect on volunteerism among civilian employees. Over the past four years, out of a sense of patriotism and duty, our people have been willingly offering themselves in significant numbers to spend a year in Iraq without their families, but it is becoming more difficult to attract eager volunteers as the war has spread from

neighborhood to neighborhood, town to town, region to region.

In recent months, I have written in this column about the many negative consequences of directed assignments of civilians into a combat zone, but the bottom line is that directed assignments would not be necessary if this civilian-led “complex stability operation” was being undertaken in a more credible security environment. It makes no sense for the Iraq report authors simultaneously to propose scaling back the U.S. military presence and beefing up the presence of unarmed U.S. diplomats in a combat zone.

Members of the U.S. Foreign Service are, by nature and temperament, an adventurous and highly motivated crowd who love a good challenge in a tough foreign spot. Give us a well-defined mission and reasonable security conditions in which to operate, and most of us will gladly embrace “complex stability operations outside of the traditional embassy setting.” And we will *not* need directed assignments.

Former Secretary Baker and his colleagues, in preparing their Iraq report, spoke to a great many U.S. military officers; perhaps they should have spent a bit more time talking to the career professionals of the Foreign Service who have put their lives on the line struggling to salvage Iraq. □

It makes no sense for the Iraq report authors simultaneously to propose scaling back the U.S. military presence and beefing up the presence of unarmed U.S. diplomats in a combat zone.

## AFSA Is Your Insurance Policy

If you think the Dilbert cartoons are nonsense, don't read any further.

If you think management is always right, don't read any further.

If you think insurance is not smart, don't read any further.

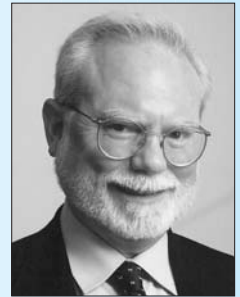
If you are still reading this, you have a healthy sense of skepticism. You understand that Congress controls your benefits and the State Department administers them. You also understand that they can err in the performance of their duties. But what you may not have recognized is that AFSA, as the collective voice for Foreign Service retirees from all the foreign affairs agencies, is your only insurance policy when manage-

**AFSA is the major squeaky wheel in State's feedback loop on retiree issues. That's why AFSA membership is a good insurance policy for retirees — the benefits to retiree members are significant.**

ment threatens to jump the tracks. AFSA performs a vital oversight role on your behalf and deserves your support.

We all know of the State Department's discovery in 2004 that it overpaid some retiree annuities. Since State cannot be sued for negligence and the regulations clearly state that the employee is responsible for the proper calculation of annuity benefits, retirees were caught in a nightmare. Dozens of elderly (some frail) retirees received dunning notices for payment and, in some instances, were required to make repayments that robbed them of financial security in retirement. AFSA and sympathetic members of Congress and their staffs tried to help.

Stung by this fiasco, and by criticism from AFSA and its allies on the Hill, the Retirement Office made major improvements, primarily in instituting informational systems — such as the Workload Management System and the Web-based "RNet" — under former director David Dlouhy. However, the office is still struggling. Most recently, in October 2006, a group in the Job Search Seminar signed a petition complaining about the Retirement Office's inadequate briefing and slow issuance of annuity calculations. This is the very issue that was the bedrock of the overpayment outrage!



In recent discussions under the rubric of improving HR/RET, the idea was floated among State, OMB and Treasury offices to use the Foreign Service pension fund to pay the expenses of HR/RET. AFSA, among others, expressed concern. At the moment, such an idea is no longer under active consideration, but such ideas will resurface eventually. Mindful of that, AFSA is your eyes and ears. Say you're far from Washington, happily retired in Arizona, Texas or North Carolina. Without being a member of AFSA and signed up for its printed and electronic products, you wouldn't even know the annuity overpayment or other issues are bubbling to the surface. And even if you did know, it's you alone against the interests of State, Treasury and OMB. What do you think your chances of success will be when you write them a letter to protect your pension?

On the other hand, if you are an AFSA member, you are not alone. AFSA may not always be successful with State or Congress, but the squeaky wheel of collective action is far preferable to the lone individual, and AFSA is the major squeaky wheel in State's feedback loop on retiree issues. That's why AFSA membership is a good insurance policy for retirees — the benefits to retiree members are significant. First, no matter where you are, if you are signed up for AFSA mailed and electronic products, you will receive a wealth of information on trends within the department and Congress that have a direct impact on you. As an AFSA member, your dues pay for a public affairs program that explains the professionalism of the Foreign Service community to the American public. Finally, your membership also funds a successful program of building and maintaining alliances with members of Congress and their staffs. AFSA membership is your insurance policy, but insurance only works if you buy it *before* you need it. AFSA is your voice, your advocate.

Retirees, do you think the department terminated your membership in AFSA? If you want to carry your payroll deduction membership into retirement, you have to negotiate a hurdle. The payroll deduction for AFSA membership doesn't automatically transfer. State has two payroll offices, one for active-duty personnel and one for retirees. You have to separately file a new form for automatic deduction from your annuity. For forms, go to [www.afsa.org](http://www.afsa.org), and hit the Retirees tab, or call Retiree Coordinator Bonnie Brown or Membership Director Janet Hedrick, toll-free at 1 (800) 704-2372. □

Awards • Continued from page 57

- The William Rivkin Award for Mid-Career Officers (FS 3-1)
- The Christian Herter Award for Senior Officers (FE OC-CA)

Detailed information about nomination procedures and criteria, and how to submit a nomination, may be found on the AFSA Web site at [www.afsa.org/awards.cfm](http://www.afsa.org/awards.cfm), and in the December 2006 *AFSA News* at [www.afsa.org/news](http://www.afsa.org/news). Guidelines for both the constructive dissent as well as the exemplary performance awards are listed.

The three exemplary performance awards are:

- **The Delavan Award** for an Office Management Specialist who has significantly contributed to post or office effectiveness and morale.

- **The M. Juanita Guess Award** for a Community Liaison Officer who has demonstrated outstanding leadership, dedication, initiative and imagination in assisting the families of Foreign Service employees serving abroad.

- **The Avis Bohlen Award** for a family member of a Foreign Service employee whose volunteer activities with the American and foreign communities at post have done the most to advance the interests of the U.S.

Any questions should be directed to Barbara Berger, Coordinator for Professional Issues, by e-mail: [berger@afsa.org](mailto:berger@afsa.org), or by phone: (202) 338-4045, ext. 521. The deadline for submitting all nominations is **Feb. 25, 2007**.

DO IT TODAY! □

## AFSANEWSBRIEFS

### AFSA Can Help with College Expenses

AFSA scholarship applications for merit awards and need-based aid ranging from \$1,500 to \$3,000 for Foreign Service children are now available. The application deadline is Feb 6, 2007. For eligibility details go to [www.afsa.org/scholar/index.cfm](http://www.afsa.org/scholar/index.cfm), call Scholarship Director Lori Dec toll-free at 1 (800) 704-2372, ext. 504, or e-mail [dec@afsa.org](mailto:dec@afsa.org).

V.P. VOICE: FCS ■ BY WILL CENTER, FCS REPRESENTATIVE

## Funding Commercial Diplomacy



One of the few constants in any survey of U.S. government export promotion programs is our clients' high regard for our physical presence in overseas markets. In other words, the shifting priorities of trade promotion, advocacy, market-access issues and commercial diplomacy never completely overshadow the basic value of having a smoothly functioning and motivated workforce. Our colleagues perform an inherently governmental function that the private sector cannot. In the end, what our clients expect and truly appreciate is a good attitude and willingness to try. But these services don't come cheaply.

How is it that the State Department's trade promotion budget has been growing at twice the rate of the Commercial Service's for the past five years, and is now 80 percent of the total Commercial Service budget? Hello? I would posit that we are not adequately funded. To correct this inequity, AFSA is playing a constructive role in coordination with management to help build the case with Congress and the Office of Management and Budget. The Hill, in fact, has already reached out to AFSA asking us to make the case, and we have dutifully complied with correspondence and testimony.

To be fair, management is making progress in terms of looking at IT platforms, supporting professional development programs and introducing the balanced scorecard (although we have some questions on the latter). But in a revenue-neutral environment these initiatives obscure more fundamental concerns about the nature of a career in the Commercial Service. Who is willing to stand up and make the case that helping our companies successfully engage in international markets is a fundamental component of transformational diplomacy, contributes to our national security and deserves increased funding?

Instead of throwing money into the maw of our China and India programs, why not prioritize resources on the efficient administration of the human resources system? The morale of career officers certainly suggests that we need help in this area. Fifty-seven percent of AFSA/FCS members who were surveyed recently feel that conditions are deteriorating. As for our retirees, heaven help you if you expect to see your lump sum payment for unused annual leave in a timely fashion. After four months of system failure and even after the intervention of senior management, we still don't know if the most recent case was sorted out. There are plenty of symptoms of a distressed personnel function and we will discover very quickly, if we don't already know, how expensive it is to replace trained officers.

Increased funding is not a panacea, but it's probably the low-hanging fruit in terms of solutions to the needs of the career Service. Management can decide whether it is organizational structure, inefficiencies or funding that is missing in the picture, just so long as they don't leave out the funding piece. I really don't ascribe malicious intent to our human resources colleagues, and believe that if their world was better organized then perhaps it wouldn't take years to negotiate AFSA midterm bargaining points; our employees wouldn't lose months of pay increases due to fifth-floor neglect; we would actually get to meet with the director general more than once a year; we would be invited to the technical briefings of the selection boards; and we would find a role for retirees to help us in situations where we have gapped positions.

All this is nothing that \$30 million couldn't cure. A 0.1-percent shift in the international affairs budget ought to cover it. Can our leadership achieve this? I'm sure they can. But will they? □

**Survey • Continued from page 57**

attracted 100 million respondents.

Beyond the magnitude of the overall response, it is worth taking note of some of the categories of respondents. Nearly 100 FS members currently assigned to Iraq took the survey, along with another 35 or so posted in Afghanistan. In fact, the respondents included people at virtually every U.S. embassy and consulate worldwide, including more than 40 respondents each in London, Tel Aviv, Cairo, Paris, Moscow, Mexico City and Beijing. Among those assigned to domestic positions, the survey attracted some 116 DS members, 94 employees of the HR Bureau, 83 in EUR, 60 in WHA, 42 in EB, 41 in EAP, 38 in AF, 35 in NEA and 33 in IRM. It included dozens of seventh-floor staffers and over 100 people in training at FSI.

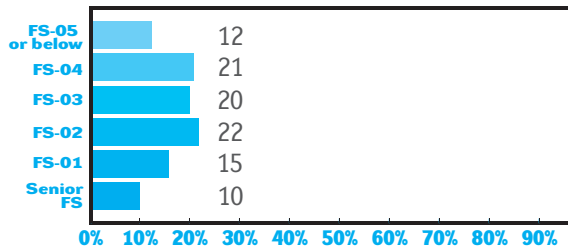
This opinion poll drew a wide range of Foreign Service generalists (2,170/63 percent) as well as specialists (1,233/37 percent) from all grades. Three out of four were currently serving overseas. Some 550 entry-level generalists took the survey, as did 325 members of the Senior Foreign Service. The remainder were fairly evenly dis-

persed among mid-level employees, who constitute the bulk of our service.

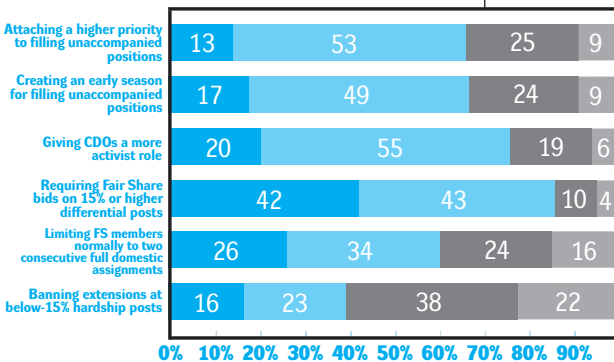
The main statistical results of the survey are shown in the charts and graphs on the following pages, but we can also learn quite a bit about the thinking of our members from the extensive comments submitted by more than 1,500 respondents. Some of the most significant conclusions:

- Securing overseas comparability pay remains a top goal for the vast majority (83 percent).
- State Foreign Service members have largely accepted the necessity of most of the changes that the director general implemented in this year's assignment system to address the problem of unaccompanied postings, but most (80 percent) are still "very concerned or somewhat concerned" about unfairness in assignments — and a significant majority (60 percent) firmly oppose the ban on extensions at posts with differentials below 15 percent.
- By a wide margin (66 percent), members of the Foreign Service would oppose directed assignments to Iraq or Afghanistan. Some 38 percent said they would be "strongly" opposed. These numbers

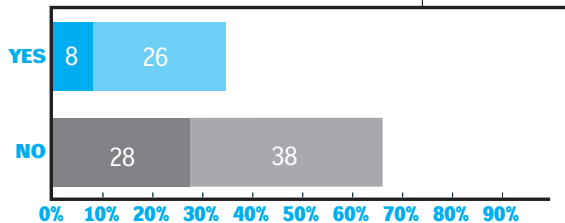
What is your current grade?



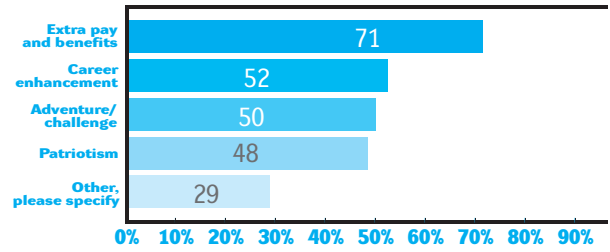
AFSA plays a role in the assignment process by approving or refusing to concur on proposed changes in rules/procedures. Which aspects of director general's new and proposed changes do you agree or disagree with?



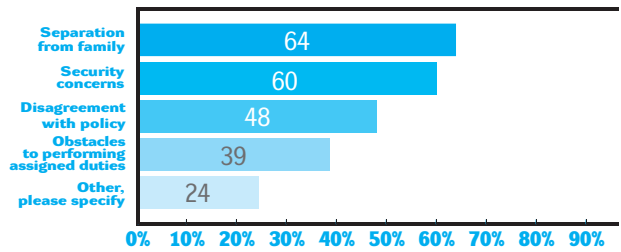
If the department fails to get volunteers for all the positions at our posts in Iraq and Afghanistan, how would you react to a decision to begin identifying employees for "directed" assignments?



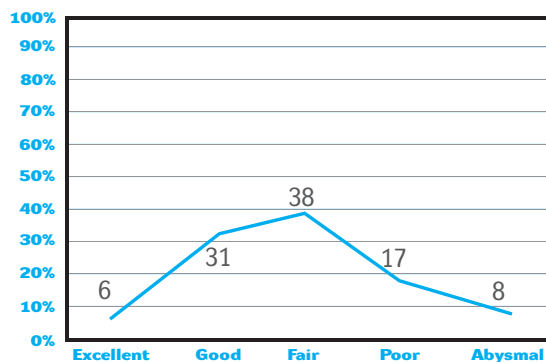
If you have served in Iraq or would be willing to volunteer to serve there, what factors would motivate you to do so? (Check all that apply)



If you would NOT consider volunteering for an assignment in Iraq, what factors would prevent you from doing so? (Check all that apply)



How would you rate the department's efforts to facilitate employment opportunities for Eligible Family Members overseas?





are higher for entry-level officers, 70 percent of whom said they would be opposed or strongly opposed.

• Among the factors that motivate employees to volunteer for Iraq service, extra pay/benefits is the most common, followed by career enhancement. This is slightly different for senior officers, who said they would be mainly motivated by patriotism. Among all employees, the most compelling reason for refusing to volunteer for Iraq is separation from family.

• Although many members overseas have had negative experiences in securing employment for family members, a majority rated the department's performance in this area as "fair" (38 percent) or "good" (31 percent).

• By more than a 2-1 margin, employees believe the State Department should do more to accommodate unmarried partners (Members of Household) overseas. This margin is significantly high-

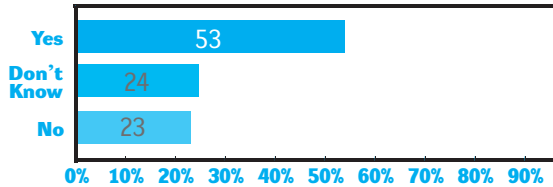
er (4-to-1) for entry-level officers.

• Respondents indicated a deep level of concern over many issues that AFSA has sought to address with department management. Aggregating those who said they were "very concerned" or "somewhat concerned" about the following issues, we can rank them accordingly:

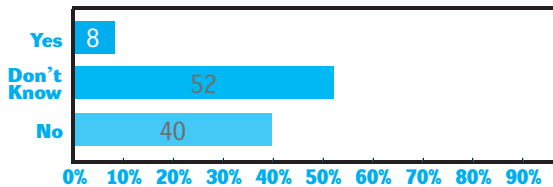
1. Poor quality of managers: 80 percent
2. Fairness in assignment system: 80 percent
3. Unqualified political appointees: 79 percent
4. Effectiveness of EER form: 71 percent
5. Low promotion numbers: 71 percent
6. Family-friendliness within the FS: 67 percent
7. Voice of FS career members in foreign policymaking: 67 percent
8. Freedom to express dissent at State: 56 percent

Continued on page 64

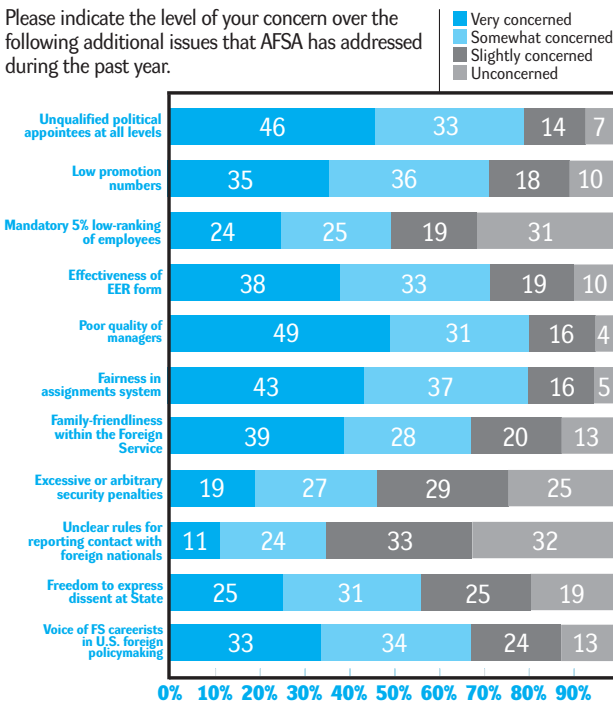
Should the department do more to accommodate unmarried partners (Members of Household) of Foreign Service employees serving overseas?



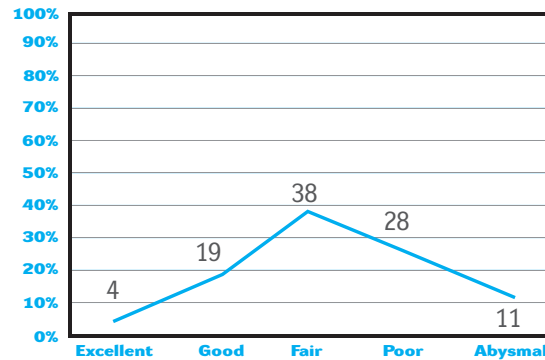
Do you feel that the Separate Maintenance Allowance for people serving at unaccompanied posts is adequate?



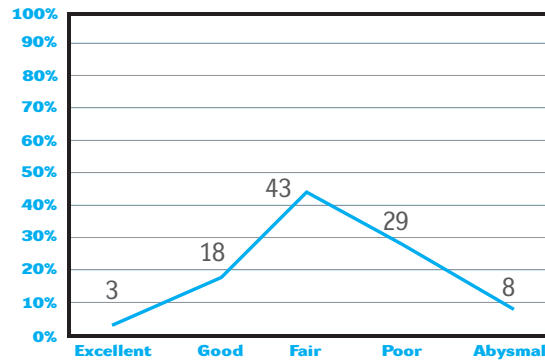
Please indicate the level of your concern over the following additional issues that AFSA has addressed during the past year.



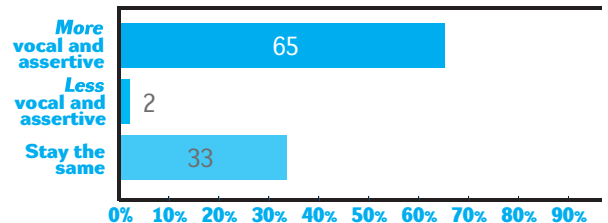
How would you rate the job that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is doing in defending the professional Foreign Service?



How would you rate the job that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is doing in securing resources for the Department and its people?



Based on what you know of AFSA's efforts on behalf of Foreign Service members until now, do you believe that AFSA should be *more* vocal and assertive — or *less* vocal and assertive — in its future dealings with State management and the administration?



## Certain Former Employees Can Claim Compensation

BY BONNIE BROWN, RETIREE ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR

The Court of Federal Claims recently approved a class-action settlement. It provides that employees who retired, died or were separated from one of 17 federal agencies between 1993 and 1999, and who received a lump-sum payment for their unused annual leave, may be entitled to additional compensation for this leave.

Former employees may be entitled to additional compensation because the lump-sum payments did not reflect salary increases, or include compensation for Sunday premium pay or foreign post housing allowances received immediately before retiring or separating abroad. The list of federal agencies involved includes the Departments of State, Commerce and Agriculture. USAID, USIA and IBB were not included.

When federal employees retire, they receive a lump-sum payment for unused annual leave equal to what they would have received if they had remained in the Service until the expiration of their unused annual leave. Leave that would have been used during the year of retirement or separation is paid at the salary level of that year. Leave that would have been used in the next year is paid at the salary level for that year and reflects any salary increase. The settlement is designed to ensure that yearly pay raises were taken into account during the six-year period between April 7, 1993, and Sept. 7, 1999.

The Settlement Administrator has mailed claim forms to potentially eligible retirees. The claim form supplies information about the effective date of retirement or separation, pay plan and agency of each person to whom the form was sent. The former employee is asked to complete the form by supplying a good-faith estimate of his or her unused leave hours. The claim form must be postmarked no later than April 4, 2007.

Here are some of the questions asked most frequently by our retirees.

### **How do I find out how much annual leave I had at the time of retirement?**

Pull out your last earnings and leave statement, which will show the balance for your annual leave. Class members are not required to submit supporting documentation but are asked to submit a good-faith estimate, subject to penalty of perjury. The former employees most likely to benefit from this settlement are those who were in the Senior Foreign Service and accumulated a large number of hours of unused leave and retired in the latter part of the year. Please be advised that the Settlement Administrator does not have information about your unused annual leave.

### **I have not received a claim form, but believe I'm eligible for compensation. What should I do?**

You can request a claim form from the Settlement Administrator online at [www.mylumpsumpayment.com/requestClaim](http://www.mylumpsumpayment.com/requestClaim).

aspx or by phone at 1 (866) 833-7924. Or you may request a claim by writing to: Archuleta Settlement Administrator, P.O. Box 4540, Portland OR 97208-4540.

There are four different claim forms that address four different factual situations, so be careful to select the correct form. Claim forms were mailed only to potential class members who retired; those who quit or were separated must request claim forms. Survivors of deceased potential class members who have not received instructions about submitting a claim should send a letter to the Settlement Administrator, supplying name, address and Social Security number and ask for instructions, or call the administrator at the number listed above.

### **I retired from an agency that was not included in the settlement. How do I prosecute a claim?**

The Settlement Administrator advises former employees from agencies that were not included in the present settlement who believe they are eligible for additional compensation to file a claim and notify the attorney for the plaintiffs at [iralechner@yahoo.com](mailto:iralechner@yahoo.com).

If the claim is rejected in this settlement, it will be turned over to the attorney for the plaintiffs and be on record for possible separate settlement or litigation.

Find more information at [mylumpsumpayment.com](http://mylumpsumpayment.com) and on the AFSA retiree Web page at [www.afsa.org/retiree.cfm](http://www.afsa.org/retiree.cfm). □

### **Survey • Continued from page 63**

- 9. Mandatory 5-percent low-ranking of employees: 49 percent
- 10. Excessive or arbitrary security penalties: 46 percent
- 11. Unclear rules for reporting foreign contacts: 35 percent

• Secretary Rice gets only a mediocre evaluation for the job she is doing in defending the professional Foreign Service and securing resources for the department and its people. On both tasks, an overwhelming majority rated her performance as either fair, poor or abysmal. Senior officers gave lower marks to the Secretary than did the general membership.

- AFSA continues to draw praise from members, four-fifths of

whom said they were satisfied with AFSA's efforts on their behalf. Nearly two-thirds believe that AFSA should be even more "vocal and assertive" in dealing with department management.

As was the case in last year's survey, this poll revealed a broad diversity of views within the Foreign Service. A careful reading of hundreds of individual comments paints a picture of a highly motivated, loyal and professional work force that understands and does not shy away from hardship service, but at the same time believes there are dozens of problems unique to the Foreign Service that are not being addressed. □

2006 AAFSW/SOSA WINNERS CHOSEN

## Celebrating FS Volunteerism

**A**FSFA congratulates the winners of the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide/Secretary of State's Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad. Each year, one outstanding volunteer is selected by each geographic bureau. The winners of the 2006 awards were honored at a Dec. 5 ceremony at the State Department. Director General George M. Staples presented the awards.

The awards recognize U.S. government employees and family members at embassies and consulates who have given exceptional voluntary service to their communities or rendered outstanding service in emergencies.

The 2006 winners: **Steven Carroll, Kabul** (NEA); **Kathy Hansen, Seoul** (EAP); **Marian McGowan, Santo Domingo** (WHA); **Nelda Villines, Mbabane** (AF); and **Thomas Yazdgerdi, Athens** (EUR).

Jean Vance received the newly-established Ele Dodson Tragen Award, and the Lesley Dorman Award was presented to Dianne Bodeen.

Please visit the AAFSW Web site to read about the extraordinary activities of this year's volunteer winners: [www.aafsw/awards/2006awards.htm](http://www.aafsw/awards/2006awards.htm). □

## AFSA NEWS BRIEFS

### AFSA Urges State Not to Move Transportation Office

AFSA, AAFSW and many Foreign Service employees are urging State Department management to review a recent decision to move the Transportation Office (A/LM/OPS/TTM) out of the corridor housing all the other travel and transfer services to make room for staff from the office of the director of foreign assistance, now called "F."

On Nov. 1, AFSA sent a letter to management requesting a review of the decision. AAFSW has also sent a letter with the same request. The director general expressed support for AFSA's position and sent it on to Under Secretary for Management Henrietta Fore.

Just about every Foreign Service employee would be directly affected in some way by this move. Some 4,000 employees and their families visit the Transportation Office annually as they transfer from one post to another, move overseas from Washington or return from overseas to Washington. With the growing number of one-year unaccompanied postings, the number of visitors to these offices will only continue to rise. The east end of Corridor 2 has for decades been the established one-stop shopping area for a variety of services that employees need while in transit: the Employee Services Center, Carlson Wagonlit Travel, the Voucher Office, the Family Liaison Office and indeed AFSA. Moving this important piece of the jigsaw to another location (ultimately one outside the State Department building) makes little sense.

There is real value in having the transportation branch co-located with a variety of other transfer-related services; thus, moving the branch elsewhere will complicate, rather than simplify, the process of moving Foreign Service members around the world. This principle was affirmed in 1995 in one of the recommendations of the Strategic Management Initiative. In a Department Notice dated April 11, 1995, Recommendation 12b reads: "Cluster all aspects of foreign transfers and other employee services in a single 'mall' location." Indeed, seven or eight years ago, a plan to move the Travel and Transportation Offices was discarded as undesirable for the very same reasons which apply now.

AFSA will continue to urge a reversal of this decision. □

## 2007 AFSA Dues Rates

**I**n accordance with the AFSA bylaws, AFSA membership dues have been raised for 2007 by 3.3 percent across all membership categories.

This increase reflects the third-quarter Consumer Price Index published on Sept. 30, 2006, by the Department of Labor, used by the Social Security Administration to calculate the 2007 Cost of Living Adjustment increases.

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The box to the right indicates the new dues rates for 2007.

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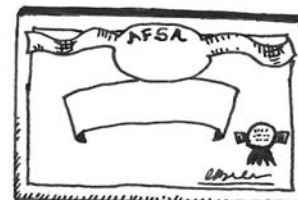
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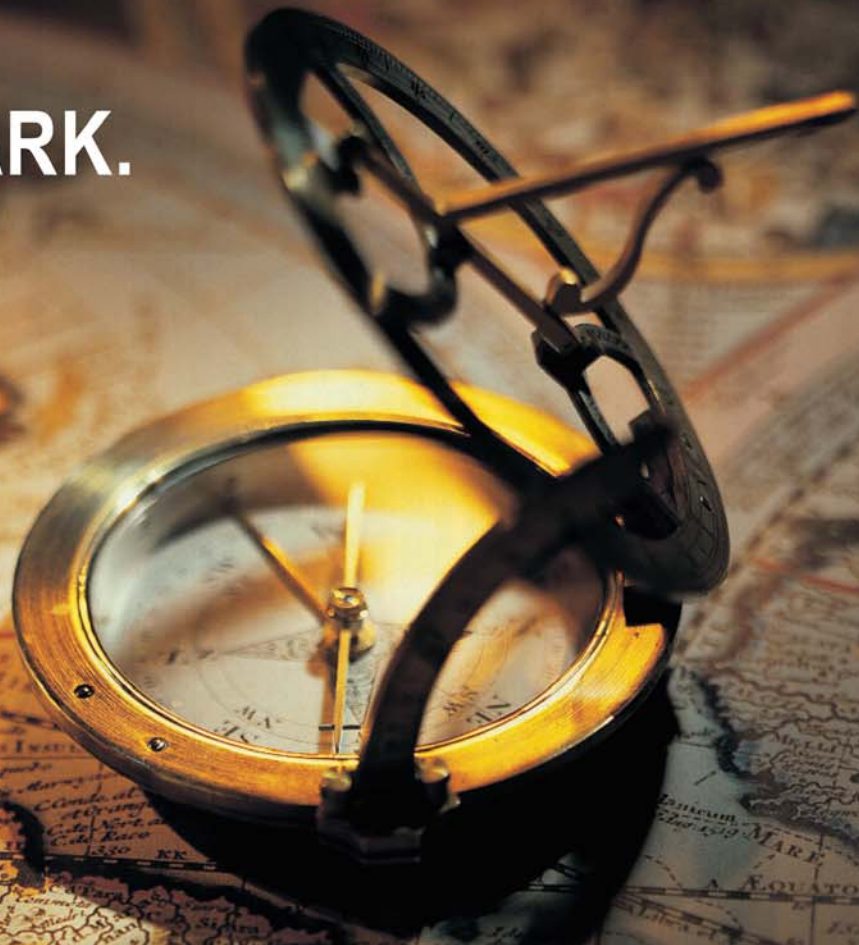
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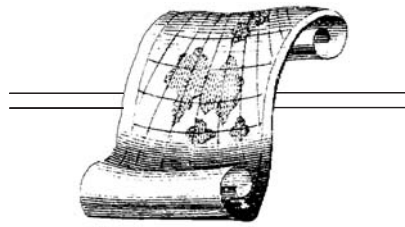


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# REFLECTIONS

## *Soccer from Ulaanbaatar to Gothenberg*

By JONATHAN ADDLETON

Amid the constantly changing landscape of a Foreign Service child's mobile upbringing, there are some connecting threads that prove more lasting. For our oldest son Iain, now 16, it is the game of soccer — a sport he has already played in six countries on three continents, more often on dirt, sand, ice and snow than nicely manicured green grass.

He started off in Jordan, playing with the Amman Little League. On holidays he played for the Islay Boys Football Club, based on an island off the west coast of Scotland. More recently, he joined the Bayon Wanderers, an expatriate adult team based in Phnom Penh.

But nothing so far compares to the adventure of playing for the Ulaanbaatar United Football Club, a youth soccer initiative that, improbably, took more than a dozen Mongolian youth from the icy steppes of Central Asia to the green playing fields of Gothenberg, Sweden.

It all started soon after we arrived in Mongolia in August 2001, a few months before Iain turned 11. It was clear that if he were to continue his interest in soccer, we would have to create the opportunity for him. So by September we had made an arrange-

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*Jonathan Addleton is director of the USAID mission in Pakistan. He has also served in Cambodia, Mongolia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, South Africa and Yemen. His oldest son Iain is living in Macon, Ga., this year, where he is a junior in high school and plays soccer for the Mount de Sales Cavaliers.*

*It was the only venue where street children regularly met embassy kids.*

ment with a local gym to host "Monday Night Football," where some 20 kids from several countries joined in informal pick-up games each week.

Several weeks later, we happened to meet Jardel d'Silva, a young Brazilian volunteer and soccer player sent by his church to work among street kids in Ulaanbaatar. Already a skilled player with coaching qualifications, he, too, had recently arrived.

We promptly agreed to join together to establish UB United as a youth soccer club focused on Mongolians but also providing sports opportunities for expatriate children. Almost certainly, it was the only venue where street children regularly met embassy kids.

I brought soccer balls and nets from the U.S. and the local Dom Bosco technical training school provided portable goals. A few months later, our proposal to the Kirby Simon Trust was approved, and the club received \$1,200 to buy additional equipment and uniforms, and run a citywide tournament.

By the time we left Ulaanbaatar more than two years later, UB United was flourishing. Over 100 kids in three age groups met twice each week for practices and games.

After many months an e-mail arrived from Jardel d'Silva: He was try-

ing to obtain funding for UB United to participate in the Gothia Cup, the "world cup" of youth soccer held each year in Gothenberg. If he succeeded, would Iain like to participate?

Knowing the cost involved, I was skeptical. But within several weeks, another e-mail arrived: A Swedish radio station had raised \$25,000 so that UB United could attend. Again, would Iain like to participate?


Of course he would! So, in July 2006, Iain joined Jardel in Gothenberg, along with three Mongolian coaches and 14 players under the age of 18. It was the first Mongolian youth club team to compete outside the country. They were among more than 30,000 other players, representing 1,500 teams from some 68 countries — including several dozen youth teams from suburbs across the U.S.

In an Olympic-style opening ceremony, each country team marched into Gothenberg Stadium, cheered by the crowd of 50,000. The Mongolian team got special recognition, as a country competing for the first time, when they entered under a Mongolian flag, wearing the Mongolian hat and colorful national dress.

"You read about the ground shaking in a full soccer stadium," Iain told us later. "It is true. You could feel the ground vibrating beneath your feet."

Soccer is arguably the most popular international sport of all. Some call it the "beautiful game;" others claim it "explains the world." But on that day, for Iain and his Mongolian teammates, it was simply the experience of a lifetime. ■





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