



Testimony of Susan Rockwell Johnson
President, American Foreign Service Association

House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
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Madam Chairwoman, Representative Lowey, and distinguished members of the subcommittee:

On behalf of The American Foreign Service Association (AFSA), I welcome the opportunity to speak before this subcommittee on the subject of FY 2012 Foreign Operations appropriations.

AFSA recognizes that we all, and particularly you as our elected representatives, need to make difficult decisions about our nation's priorities, including in our international affairs budget. We support thoughtful and effective reductions in spending as well as redirection of where we do make investments. We are ready to serve as a constructive source of active duty insight and perspective.

AFSA appreciates the bi-partisan support that the sub-committee has shown in the past for investment in a strong, professional diplomatic service as a first line of defense in an increasingly complex, unpredictable and dangerous world. We believe that the return on such an investment will be considerable and is very much in our interest as a nation and to the benefit of our tax payers. Enhancing the capacity and capability of our diplomatic and development services, and

the Foreign Service component of each, contributes directly to our national security readiness and competitiveness. We are deeply concerned that, faced with a challenging budget crisis, critical bi-partisan consensus on this issue seems to be eroding.

We appreciate the urgency of the budgetary crisis. We understand and respect the intent of congress as it struggles to deal with the task of setting priorities with diminishing resources. As you go about this difficult task, we urge that reductions in international affairs spending be carefully considered so as not to degrade the readiness and capacity of our diplomatic and development services to protect and advance US security interests. In short, we ask that we consider what we cannot afford to lose as we decide what we cannot afford to spend.

In recent years a growing recognition that stronger diplomatic and development services could lead to substantial savings in defense spending led to bi-partisan agreement on re-investing in these services. Reduction in the Foreign Service personnel at these agencies by not hiring to attrition and cutting the pay of Foreign Service personnel assigned overseas would in AFSA's view be damaging to U.S. national security. We are concerned that rather than generating savings, this approach will instead carry hidden and higher costs resulting from a degraded Foreign Service. We need to rebuild our Foreign Service and provide for a training reserve, or "float," as our military have done. We need professional education and better training for our next generation of diplomats and development professionals to ensure that America's global leadership role remains vigorous and effective.

Current developments in North Africa and the Middle East demonstrate that proactive diplomacy is the cost-effective alternative to military intervention. But those events also show that to achieve those savings, we need to have well trained assets, in the form of diplomats with area expertise, cultural awareness and good language skills *in place before conflict erupts* as well as to manage political responses that protect U.S. interests where needed. While diplomacy always benefits from being backed up by military power, military interventions are more costly and complicated and must remain the option of last resort.

AFSA strongly endorses Secretary Clinton's letter to Congress accompanying the FY 12 budget justification, in which she explains the need for additional staffing to build civilian power.

As the Secretary says, "This budget request contains the funding we need...to accomplish our mission and advance American security interests. The funding supports diplomats and development experts who are working every day to protect our national security, promote our economic growth, and project our values in virtually every country on Earth...As our partners at the Department of Defense often point out, these investments save money and lives by preventing conflicts and helping end them more quickly. Deploying our diplomats and development experts is less expensive than deploying our troops."

That said, I want to emphasize that as the AFSA elected representative of the Foreign Service, we urge that where cuts are necessary, that they be made in programs rather than in people as we set spending priorities for the Foreign Affairs budget. Programs can be shifted or delayed, whereas cutting people will require many years and budget cycles to recoup, at greater cost, and cutting pay at a moment when the demands and risks of service abroad are high undermines

morale. Further, we need the best trained and equipped personnel to ensure that programs achieve the desired impact. Our people are serving today around the world in conditions of danger and hardship, including in war zones alongside our military brethren. They deserve the same support we rightly give to our soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen. Lack of a uniform does not mean lack of patriotism, love of country, dedication, or willingness to sacrifice. Foreign Service members are rightly proud of what we do to serve our country. We are ready to stand up and to tell our stories to our fellow Americans and to our elected representatives.

Before I conclude, I would therefore like to read into the record an extract of a letter from a mid-level Foreign Service Officer that illustrates better than any words of mine the level of service and dedication of these fine fellow Americans.

“During violent unrest in Togo, a member of Congress and her staff were abandoned at a downtown hotel by their Government of Togo hosts. I was the only American besides my then-husband, the Regional Security Officer, who could drive an armored vehicle. The Ambassador sent me, and I drove through barricades and crowds to reach the Congresswoman and her staff and transport them safely to the Embassy. My husband couldn't go because he had to respond to a distress call from an American Embassy family whose house was being invaded. A mother and two children hid while a frenzied group of thugs destroyed their home and personal belongings and tried to break into their safe haven. My colleague wept, helpless, as we listened to frantic calls for help over the radio from his wife, the children crying in the background. My husband knew it was his duty to go to their aid, though at great personal danger. Relying on his training as a former marine, he engaged at least two dozen thugs, quickly disarmed one person

and used that weapon to disperse the remaining looters. Had it not been for his intervention, the wife could have been raped or worse, and there is no telling what would have happened to the two children. He received the State Department's Heroism Award for his actions that day.”

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. AFSA values your longstanding support of initiatives to enhance the diplomatic readiness of our civilian Foreign Service agencies. We particularly appreciate the leadership and interest you have shown in convening this hearing, and we look forward to continuing to serve as a resource for you and your colleagues.