



AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION TALKING POINTS FOR MILITARY AUDIENCES

- Polls show that 9 out of 10 Americans favor strong U.S. global leadership. If we retreat, *we create a void for unfriendly actors to step in and promote interests hostile to ours.*¹ Maintaining this kind of leadership is unthinkable without a strong, career Foreign Service.
- Diplomacy, development, and defense are the “3Ds” or three pillars of the U.S. government’s strategy for international engagement and national security. *[The United States] Armed Forces will always be a cornerstone of our security, but... our security also depends on diplomats who can act in every corner of the world—from grand capitals to dangerous outposts—and development experts who can strengthen governance and support human dignity.*²
- The United States Foreign Service consists of about 8,000 career diplomats and development experts, and another 6,000 specialists, all of whom promote and protect the interests of the United States and its citizens abroad at more than 270 posts throughout the world. For example, they *coordinate counterterrorism and narcotics programs and negotiate landing and basing arrangements for American troops overseas.* Our colleagues at the U.S. Agency for International Development *manage development and humanitarian aid to distressed countries.* Foreign agricultural officers develop markets for U.S. agricultural products and ensure the security of our food supply. Foreign commercial officers promote American businesses and exports abroad and *help American companies overcome unfair barriers to trade and investment.*³
- Like the military, the Foreign Service has a rigorous up-or-out system, ensuring that only the best and the brightest are promoted to senior ranks. Seasoned diplomats are shaped by years of training and experience.

¹ Rep. Ed Royce, (R-Calif.), Chair of House Committee on Foreign Affairs, meeting on 9/26/2017.

² President Barack Obama, quoted in *Sidebar on the 3Ds*, 11/15/2010; www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/perfrpt/2010/html/153715.htm.

³ Italics indicate excerpts from Nicholas Burns & Ryan Crocker, “Dismantling the Foreign Service,” op-ed published in *The New York Times*, November 27, 2017.

- Like the military, the Foreign Service deploys worldwide to protect and defend America's interests. The U.S. is the only country that sends its Foreign Service to all but three nations in the world. We do our work by engaging with the local people, whether government officials or average citizens. We are thus trained and positioned to gain an understanding of the countries where we serve, and we share that knowledge with other agencies and pass it to policymakers in Washington.
- In other words, we are the first line of defense of our homeland, quashing many threats before they ever reach our doorstep. *Without a robust, sustainable diplomatic corps deployed around the world, our country will be blind to events, blind to the forces at work in other societies, and blind to the implications—good or bad—for our own national interests.*⁴ A perfect example of that is what happened after we closed our consulate in northern Nigeria in the mid-1990s: *Without Foreign Service eyes and ears on the ground, Boko Haram sprang up seemingly out of nowhere as money poured in, madrassas opened, and boys wearing bin Laden t-shirts walked out of doors. We have to be present to see these kinds of things coming and to head them off. An ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure.*⁵
- People often think of diplomacy as either a rival of military power or as a stop on a continuum that leads to military force. Let's get away from this either-or mentality. Defense and diplomacy are inextricable elements of power. The Foreign Service and U.S. armed forces work together closely on all matters of policy; neither one is effective without the other.
- Diplomacy is not only a tool of power, but also a strategy for choosing which instruments of influence to use in a given situation, in a given country, to reach America's goals. The work of our American diplomats to stabilize countries and defuse conflicts translates into untold savings of money and American lives otherwise lost to war. As Secretary Mattis famously said when he was Commander of CENTCOM, "If you don't fund the State Department fully, then you need to buy me more ammunition." I believe Sec. Mattis would agree: The Foreign Service is the most cost-effective tool in our country's national security toolbox.
- Our work not only helps to prevent war, but allows us to confront our adversaries and collaborate with our allies with smarter, better-informed strategies. American global leadership means having the respect to bring stakeholders to the table to tackle complex global problems such as nuclear proliferation, terrorism, pandemic diseases, regulation of cyberspace, global warming, and mass migration.

⁴ Letter to Members of Congress from The American College of National Security Leaders, November 9, 2017.

⁵ Barbara Stephenson, "Serving in Hardship Posts," column published in *The Foreign Service Journal*, November 2017.

- Military power is essential to strength, and yet it is a blunt and expensive instrument that should never be used without weighing the lives that will be lost. When we can get what we need with a light touch, we spend less, achieve more, and build strong and enduring alliances. Diplomatic solutions take time, focus, and deep knowledge of the players, but they cost a lot less than the bombs dropped if and when diplomacy fails. Peace is significantly cheaper than war.
- We are proud to serve our country, including putting ourselves in harm's way when necessary: Most Foreign Service members have served in a war zone or a hardship posting, and many positions are unaccompanied. Like our military colleagues, we have lost too many U.S. diplomats in service to our country.
- The men and women of the U.S. Foreign Service are dedicated, patriotic professionals. When we return from difficult or dangerous places where we have served our country, we do not expect any fanfare. But we do want our fellow Americans to know about the work that we do. With your help and that of leaders across this great country, we can help Americans remember that the Foreign Service is *their* service, working every day to keep America safe, strong, prosperous, and free.
- I would like to close by quoting retired general and former Secretary of State Colin Powell. *America is great when we're the country that the world admires, a beacon of hope and a principled people who are generous, fair, and caring. That's the American way. If we're still that nation, then we must continue to devote this small but strategic 1% of our federal budget to this mission. Throughout my career, I learned plenty about war on the battlefield, but I learned even more about the importance of finding peace. And that is what the State Department and USAID do: prevent the wars that we can avoid, so that we fight only the ones we must. For our service members and citizens, it's an investment we must make.*⁶

⁶ Colin Powell, "American Leadership – We Can't Do It for Free," op-ed published in *The New York Times*, May 24, 2017.