



## AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION DEFENDING DIPLOMACY & THE FOREIGN SERVICE

AFSA tell the story of the career Foreign Service proudly—to the media, on Capitol Hill, and with audiences across the country. The Foreign Service is fortunate to have congressional champions from both sides of the aisle, as well as military and business leaders who are vocal in their support of our institution.

We owe it to ourselves to take our role as stewards of the Foreign Service seriously. We have a duty to help our fellow Americans understand what diplomats do, and how our work makes the American people safer, more secure, and more prosperous. We also have a duty to educate members of Congress about our work—especially those who have a responsibility to oversee the Foreign Service, such as the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Members of Congress depend on what they hear from active duty members of the Foreign Service during CODEL visits and from retired FSOs who are constituents. It is in our interest to embrace this oversight role by telling our story and making the case for a well-resourced, professional Foreign Service.

AFSA is providing these questions and answers to our members to assist you with telling the Foreign Service story to CODELs, to foreign interlocutors, and to the American public at home. We use this information as well in our ongoing congressional outreach in Washington. As always, thank you for your service—past or present—which is vital to maintaining America’s global leadership role.

### **Why do we need diplomacy/the Foreign Service?**

- According to recent polling, 9 in 10 Americans favor a strong global leadership role for the United States. Such leadership is unthinkable without a well-resourced, professional Foreign Service deployed around the world protecting and defending America’s people, interests and values. If we retreat, we leave a leadership vacuum that will be filled by our adversaries.
- Members of the Foreign Service are deployed in all but four countries in the world. They are our eyes and ears on the ground. We are the nation’s first line of defense, and that is why military officers speak so strongly in support of us. They know that diplomats prevent conflicts and build productive relationships with partners and allies. That cooperation results in untold savings in blood and treasure.
- The work of the Foreign Service affects the lives of each and every American. Whether working to contain a deadly pandemic such as Ebola, negotiating favorable trade agreements and international treaties, promoting U.S. exports, or helping to maintain our national security by

stabilizing countries and influencing foreign opinion, our work promotes and protects the safety, security, and prosperity of our fellow Americans.

### **Shouldn't we reduce the size of government?**

- We are definitely in favor of streamlining processes and returning to core diplomatic priorities. Nothing frustrates us more than cumbersome bureaucratic processes that take us away from our core mission.
- But we must also be effective. Random cuts, made seemingly without reference to our country's foreign policy goals, weaken the United States. We need better IT and less red tape, but don't cut our ability to protect and defend our country. We must not cede the field to our adversaries.

### **Isn't the State Department too big?**

- First of all, let's look at some other parts of the U.S. Government. The State Department, which runs 270 embassies and consulates around the world, has about 75,000 employees, including about 50,000 locally hired staff. We could fit about 30 State Departments into the Department of Defense—and that's not fully counting the reserves!
- The Foreign Service is actually a small part of the State Department. There are approximately 8,000 Foreign Service officers and 6,000 Foreign Service specialists. USAID has only 1,800 FSOs, FCS only 250, and FAS just 175.
- Foreign Service officers outnumber the individuals in military bands, but not by much.
- The American Foreign Service is small considering the size of our great country and our global leadership role. While our Foreign Service is less than twice as big as the UK's diplomatic corps—the UK being our closest ally, with an economy and population 1/5 the size of ours—our military is almost 10 times larger than theirs.
- Like the military, the Foreign Service has an up-or-out system, which recruits officers at entry level and grows them into seasoned leaders over decades. Employees who don't advance to the next level must leave. This system depends on continued hiring and flow-through. Hiring freezes and drastically reduced promotion numbers damage the corps for years—if not decades—to come.
- Even though America's Foreign Service is small, we have an outsize influence on world events. Taking us off the field invites others to win the game.

### **Isn't diplomacy expensive?**

- Diplomacy is the most cost-effective tool in the national security toolkit. We spend about 1% of the federal budget on foreign affairs as a whole, and less than 1/10th of 1% on "core diplomatic capability"—under \$4 billion a year.
- Preventing or stopping conflict—such as the Dayton Accords in the Balkans, the Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland, or the truce with the FARC in Colombia—is much cheaper than placing our soldiers at risk.