



Foreign Service Centennial Talking Points

Celebrating 100 Years of Service

BIG PICTURE

The United States Foreign Service celebrates its centennial on May 24, 2024. This date marks 100 years since the passage of the Foreign Service Act of 1924 (the Rogers Act), which combined and professionalized the consular and diplomatic services that had represented the U.S. since the country's founding.

The U.S. Foreign Service has played a vital role in safeguarding America's national interests worldwide. Throughout this 100-year history, diplomats have worked tirelessly to promote peace, security, and prosperity for the United States and its citizens.

TALKING POINTS

The Foreign Service is a small-but-mighty group of non-partisan career public servants dedicated to the profession of diplomacy. Approximately 16,000 Foreign Service members come from every state in the union and represent the full diversity of America. Most work for the Department of State, but many serve in one of the other foreign affairs agencies: U.S. Agency for International Development, the Foreign Commercial Service of the Department of Commerce, the Foreign Agricultural Service and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of the Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Agency for Global Media.

Posted in nearly every country around the world (279 posts in 191 countries), Foreign Service members are America's eyes and ears on the ground and are charged with protecting and advancing national interests abroad.

The contributions of the Foreign Service to America's national security are invaluable – and come at a bargain. Our diplomatic presence in almost every country has enabled the U.S. to maintain the global leadership role for many decades. Relative to the entire federal budget, including mandatory programs and interest payments, spending on international affairs is less than 1 percent of total spending and about 4 percent of discretionary spending.

The Foreign Service is a career of duty and sacrifice. Members join the Foreign Service not for the money or the public glory; they join because of a sense of duty to their country and a desire to contribute to America's continued security and prosperity.

Diplomats spend two-thirds of their careers overseas, usually far from their hometowns and families, missing key events and holidays with loved ones. Many Foreign Service members serve in hardship locations, some carrying out their duty at times at great risk to their safety. As of March 2024, 321 names are inscribed on the AFSA Memorial Plaques at the Department of State, reflecting those diplomats and foreign affairs professionals who died in the line of duty.

CALL TO ACTION

More resources are needed to adequately equip and support the Foreign Service as they face evolving and complex global challenges in service to America. The U.S. is no longer the world's leading diplomatic presence. To maintain American global leadership, we must invest in diplomacy and development, support the professional development of diplomats, and enhance diplomatic tools.

The work of diplomats is usually unseen and frequently unsung. Support is needed for adequate resources for our Foreign Service to ensure the U.S. can continue to be a global leader in addressing any and all quickly evolving and increasingly complex global challenges.

Find out how you can support the Foreign Service by visiting the American Foreign Service Association's website at afsa.org/centennial.