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CONTENTS

June 2008 Volume 85, No. 6



Cover and inside illustration by
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PRESIDENT'S VIEWS / 5
The Foreign Service Act of 2010
By John K. Naland

SPEAKING OUT / 12
Where Have All the
Senior-Level Women Gone?
By Susan Crais Hovanec

REFLECTIONS / 100
Trombone Diplomacy
By Fred A. Coffey Jr.

LETTERS / 6

CYBERNOTES / 8

MARKETPLACE / 11

BOOKS / 93

**INDEX TO
ADVERTISERS / 98**

FOCUS ON

The FS Personnel System

WHO IS THE "TOTAL CANDIDATE?" FSO HIRING TODAY / 15

The Foreign Service intake process has been revamped.
Here is a preliminary assessment of the new exam and other changes.
By Shawn Dorman

A CAREER OUT OF BALANCE / 26

Inadequate staffing, expanding commitments, insufficient budgets and
poor management all threaten the Foreign Service's future.
By John K. Naland

GOING IT ALONE: FAMILY LIFE IN THE 'NEW' FOREIGN SERVICE / 30

Most FS employees will serve unaccompanied tours during their careers.
What kind of support can their families expect?
By Kelly Bembry Midura

REWARDING FUNCTIONAL POLICY EXPERTISE / 36

Structural changes to encourage service in functional policy offices
will help the Foreign Service meet the challenges of the 21st century.
By Sally K. Horn

THE MOVEMENT TO EMPOWER LOCALLY ENGAGED STAFF / 43

Empowering Foreign Service National employees in our overseas missions
sounds like a no-brainer. But there are real downsides to the idea.
By Michael Bricker

FEATURES

BUILDING ON THE GOLDWATER-NICHOLS ACT / 47

Interagency cooperation between State and Defense has the potential to
mitigate the staffing shortfalls that continue to hamper both departments.
By Timothy K. Hsia

A LAGOS DIARY: DYING REQUEST FOR A KOSHER BURIAL / 51

In this true story, an FS couple respond to a friend's dying wish
to be buried as a Jew — in Nigeria.
By Lawrence Cohen

CONTENTS

A F S A N E W S

FOREIGN AFFAIRS DAY: AFSA HONORS FALLEN COLLEAGUES / 57

BRIEFS: AGGELER IS BACK / 58

VP STATE: THE NEXT FS GENERATION / 59

AFSA-PAC TREASURER'S REPORT / 60

ISSUE BRIEF: FOREIGN ASSISTANCE REFORM / 61

VP FCS: UNFINISHED BUSINESS / 62

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE / 63

CLASSIFIEDS / 64

S C H O O L S S U P P L E M E N T / 6 7

**FLYING SOLO — GOING TO COLLEGE FROM OVERSEAS:
A GUIDE FOR PARENTS / 68**

The logistics of going to college from overseas can be a challenge for students and parents alike. Here are some things to consider.

By Rebecca Grappo

SCHOOLS AT A GLANCE / 81

Essential data on educational choices.

**SPECIAL-NEEDS KIDS AND THE FOREIGN SERVICE:
DISPELLING THE MYTHS / 89**

Correcting misconceptions can help FS parents of special-needs kids get off to a good start.

By Pamela Ward

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PRESIDENT'S VIEWS

The Foreign Service Act of 2010

BY JOHN K. NALAND

The focus of this month's *Foreign Service Journal* is the future of the Foreign Service. While the details are yet unknown, it is already clear that current trends are not sustainable. The burdens of service have increased while the rewards have stagnated, and operating budgets have fallen behind mission requirements.

Three times before, changes in the operational environment facing America's diplomats have prompted the re-engineering of the Foreign Service. As America stepped onto the diplomatic world stage following World War I, the Foreign Service Act of 1924 created the unified, career Foreign Service and established pay and benefits to broaden staffing beyond the privileged elite. As America took on global responsibilities following World War II, the Foreign Service Act of 1946 instituted the "up-or-out" system and created the first hardship allowances. And as our personnel system fell behind domestic societal changes during the 1970s, the Foreign Service Act of 1980 mandated greater efforts to recruit a diverse work force and guaranteed employees the right to be represented by a union.

Thus, on average, the Foreign Service personnel system has been re-engineered every 28 years — exactly the length of time since 1980. So what changes might a new Foreign Service



Act make to adapt to today's difficult operational environment?

- **Pay and allowances:**

Foreign Service families face financial disincentives that must be fixed. Most crucially, the overseas pay gap must be closed. New programs must be created to help spouses find employment overseas. Foreign Service members should be provided a housing allowance during domestic tours such as the military receives. War-zone pay should be tax-exempt for diplomats, just as it is for the military. And the government should pay for life insurance for diplomats in war zones, just as it does for the military.

- **Staffing and funding:** Diplomats and development professionals are struggling to perform their missions, hampered by inadequate operating budgets and hollowed-out staffing. Some of this void is being filled by the military but, as Defense Secretary Robert Gates has warned, that institution is ill-suited to take on such burdens. Diplomatic and development tasks that have migrated by default to the better-resourced military must return to State and USAID — along with the resources to properly carry them out. Emulating the Goldwater-Nichols military reform, more Foreign Service positions are needed for inter-agency details.

- **Professional development:** Career diplomats no longer have a monopoly on the conduct of diplomacy. Other federal agencies are now undertaking

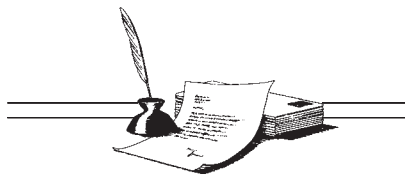
diplomatic tasks, as are nongovernmental organizations and the private sector. To remain relevant, the Foreign Service must strengthen the knowledge, skills and abilities that — taken together as a package — make career diplomats uniquely able to conduct foreign policy. These include: foreign language fluency, advanced area knowledge, leadership and management ability, negotiating skills, public diplomacy know-how and job-specific functional expertise.

Just as the Foreign Service Act of 1946 imported the U.S. Navy's "up-or-out" promotion system, the next re-engineering of our personnel system should import the military's enormously successful commitment to training and professional education. In addition to setting career-long training requirements, the law needs to establish a 15-percent training complement so employees can actually *take* training.

- **The spoils system:** As I noted in my last column, the practice of appointing unqualified non-career ambassadors solely for their political loyalty is long overdue for reform. While some have served our nation well, in too many cases low-level political activists have been tapped for critical national security positions for which they are unqualified. The non-career portion of ambassadors should be reduced to a statutory maximum of 10 percent.

Absent such reforms, the Foreign Service's future role may be restricted to serving as housekeepers for the diplomatic platform upon which others conduct foreign engagement. ■

John K. Naland is the president of the American Foreign Service Association.



LETTERS

The Wildest View

I was very disappointed to see Tim Wirth's article "A Call to Action" in your February issue focusing on the diplomacy of global climate change. I realize that the *Journal* correctly encourages divergent views to be expressed in its pages, but I would certainly hope to see a line drawn well before the propagation of the largest hoax of the 20th century and, potentially, the 21st: "manmade global warming."

The debate on that subject is not over, no matter what Al Gore claims. Indeed, it has never really begun. The mainstream news media refuse to carry dissenting views by real scientists.

Meanwhile, American academics, seeking lucrative grants, and many states, for whatever reason, have ruthlessly sanctioned scientists working in the field of climatology, for daring to expose the falsehoods and inconsistencies surrounding this myth.

What is truly monstrous is the attempt to erode American sovereignty by turning over regulatory authority on the matter to an organ of the United Nations.

The willingness of our politicians of both parties to pander to the far left by participating in the needless drain of trillions of dollars from the American public purse goes far beyond the outrageous, as well.

I sincerely trust that readers of Wirth's article have placed it under the

rubric of "even the wildest views occasionally slip into the *FSJ*."

Robert B. Richardson

FSO, retired

Daniel Island, S.C.

NSDD and All That

Ambassador Tibor Nagy has issued a much-needed call for a reality check on the National Security Decision Directive process in his recent letter to the *Journal* (March). But his conclusion that NSDD-38 is the only tool an ambassador needs to deal with other agencies is too rosy.

In the real world there have always been NSDD end-runs. But with counterterrorism and intelligence-gathering occupying center stage in Africa policy, we can expect to see what are really NSDD faits accomplis.

I'll cite a homely example or two. What do you do when a high-level director of international programs at the FBI, in your country to visit his Peace Corps Volunteer son, tells you in a courtesy call that he had a good meeting about training with the minister of the interior, whom he had met and started to do business with in Washington?

Or suppose there is a rumble in the jungle, some missionaries are taken hostage, and you get a cable from the State Department telling you that, by golly, there just happens to be a counterterrorism exercise under way at Fort Bragg, and the participants would like to get some hands-on expe-

rience by working with local forces to help you resolve your crisis. In fact, the aircraft are practically already in the air. (In such an episode from the early 1980s, I was a DCM and Ed Marks, whose excellent letter in the March *FSJ* bears importantly on the NSDD issue, was the State representative on the exercise.)

What ambassador is going to say no? Or, more to the point: What ambassador, blindsided and confronted with a 24-hour fuse at this point in the "process," can?

Another example is that of State's seventh floor visibly scrambling, in the wake of Amb. Joe Wilson's uranium mission to Niger, to find out how the heck he got out there in the first place. Such episodes suggest that the NSDD process is moribund for sensitive missions — and, in fact, risks becoming something of a joke.

New resources and more U.S. personnel are on the horizon under the aegis of the Africa Command. Yet AFRICOM projects will have to be intensely bilateral if they are to deal seriously in intelligence and smart counterinsurgency cooperation in the very different, and differing, environments presented by West Africa and other regions. More personnel, including contractors, will probably be operating at the grassroots — a tall order. This will obviously require effective ambassadorial oversight.

But what one can glean from afar about ensuring that the department is

LETTERS

relying on the NSDD-38 process and a guaranteed seat for the ambassador on the new AFRICOM commander's team bus is not very encouraging.

*John S. Davison
Ambassador, retired
Santec, North Finistere,
France*

Consider a Specialist Career

While it is true that most FSO positions require specific skills not normally found elsewhere, there are many opportunities for experienced candidates on the specialist side. It might not be as glamorous as generalist work, or pay as much as industry; but one's experience is recognized and appreciated accordingly.

*John Savu
Security Engineering Officer
Court House, Va.*

A Real Gem

I would just like to state that the February Speaking Out column, "Taking the King's Shilling," by David T. Jones, is a two-and-a-half-page masterpiece. It is perfectly written and chock-full of truth. Thank you, Mr. Jones!

*Kevin W. Gately
General Services Officer
Washington, D.C.*

U.S. Diplomats in West Africa

It was with pleasure that I spotted the *Journal's* article on Stephen Grant's new book, *Peter Strickland, New London Shipmaster, Boston Merchant, First Consul to Senegal* ("In Their Own Write," November 2007). Having served as management officer in Dakar from 2001 to 2004, I applaud Mr. Grant's research and hope soon to purchase a copy of his book.

I wish, however, to point out a possible mistake in the book review that referred to Peter Strickland as "the first American diplomat to work in West Africa."

Following my assignment to Sene-

gal, I was transferred a few hundred miles away to Cape Verde. It was there, at the U.S. Embassy in Praia, that I learned about Samuel Hodges, who reportedly was the first recognized American consul in Cape Verde. According to Michael K.H. Platzer (*Cape Verdean*, June 1978), Secretary of State John Quincy Adams appointed Hodges a consul in April 1818. His departure to the archipelago was delayed because Napoleon had conquered Portugal, and the Portuguese king had fled to Brazil. But he sailed from Boston and arrived in Cape Verde on Dec. 3, 1818. During his tenure, he reported often on U.S. ship visits, merchant activities (including slave smuggling), piracy and local celebrations.

The *Rhode-Island American and General Advertiser* of April 9, 1818, also reported: "Samuel Hodges Jun. Esquire, consul general of the United States, for the Cape de Verde Islands (sic), has taken up his residence at the Isle of May, where he will continue for the present." This occurred the year before the U.S. Africa Squadron was dispatched to suppress the slave trade along the West African coast, from Cape Verde to Gabon (described by Samuel Eliot Morison in *Portugal and Brazil in Transition*). The squadron remained there until the Civil War. And the famous U.S. Navy Commodore Matthew C. Perry would visit Cape Verde in 1820, during Hodges' diplomatic service on the islands.

Again, I welcome Stephen Grant's rich addition to our historic collections. Perhaps there were other U.S. diplomats in the area even before 1818. This information may be buried in dusty notebooks in Lisbon, London or Paris waiting to be discovered!

*Paul P. Pometto II
FSO
Naval War College
Newport, R.I. ■*

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CYBERNOTES

An Eleventh-Hour Push for “Smart Power”

In a Feb. 14 briefing Ambassador John E. Herbst, coordinator for State’s Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization, unveiled the Civilian Stabilization Initiative, the Bush administration’s latest move to establish the capacity to respond to overseas crises involving failed states (www.state.gov/s/crs/rls/rm/100913.htm).

The CSI would create three separate pools of trained and equipped civilians — economists, engineers, public administrators, public health officials, agronomists, city planners, etc. — who could be deployed within two months of a crisis. The Fiscal Year 2009 budget request asks for \$248.6 million to set up the capability.

The administration appears to be making a serious, if last-minute, effort to promote this initiative. In a speech on Feb. 12 at Georgetown University, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice emphasized State-Defense collabora-

tion, highlighting the CSI and the need for Congress to fund it (www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2008/02/100703.htm).

“Not only would a Civilian Response Corps take the burden of post-conflict reconstruction off the backs of our fighting men and women, where it was never supposed to be in the first place,” Rice said. “This civilian organization could be deployed in times of peace to strengthen weak states and prevent their collapse in the future.”

Herbst testified about the CSI before a subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee on Feb. 26. On April 15, Sec. Rice appeared with Defense Secretary Robert Gates at a hearing of the full committee on “Building Partnership Capacity and Development of the Interagency Process” to push for the CSI and additional diplomatic manpower.

On March 5, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 1084, the Reconstruction and Stabilization Civ-

ilian Manpower Act of 2007, by voice vote. The measure will now be taken up in the Senate, where similar legislation was passed in 2006.

Sen. Lugar, who wrote the bill that created S/CRS in 2004, has continued to speak out. During April he advocated funding of the CSI in opening statements to two sets of Senate Foreign Relations committee hearings on “implementing smart power” (<http://foreign.senate.gov/hearing.html>).

Funding the CSI would put S/CRS firmly on the map. Operating on a shoestring budget since its inception, the office has deployed fewer than 90 people in small teams to Afghanistan, Chad, Haiti, Iraq, Kosovo, Lebanon, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Sudan.

The proposal calls for an Active Response Corps of about 250 people drawn primarily from State (40 percent) and USAID (40 percent), with the remainder from Justice, Treasury, Agriculture, Commerce, etc. Most would be deployed continuously with the military in a kind of “first responder” capacity.

The Standby Response Corps will consist of 2,000 people who have other, full-time jobs but will be trained regularly so that they can be deployed within 45 to 60 days.

The third component, the Civilian Reserve Corps would encompass 2,000 civilians from the private sector or state and local governments. They would sign up for a period of four years, with a commitment to deploy for up to one year during that time.

News and information on this initiative whose time may have come can

Site of the Month: *PC Magazine's Picks*

Every year *PC Magazine* selects the best Web sites in a host of categories. The Best Web Sites 2007 at www.pcmag.com/category2/0,2806,7488,00.asp offers a guided tour of sites that are, in *PC Magazine's* words, “established and generally best-of-breed in their respective categories.”

By definition, many of the top 100 classical sites will already be familiar. But with 13 different categories from information and reference to lifestyle, politics and government and Web applications, there’s a very good chance you will find much of interest that is new.

It’s the top 100 undiscovered sites that promise surprises. Here, in 12 categories ranging from gaming to health and food and reading, you will encounter an array of sites that were either new or under the radar during the past year.



be found at www.crs.state.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.display&shortcut=4QC5.

Tackling the Food Crisis

On April 29, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon announced formation of a task force to tackle the global food crisis that has caused hunger and precipitated riots and hoarding around the world.

In a related development, Japanese Prime Minister Fukuda added the hunger crisis to the agenda for the Group of Eight's July summit in Tokyo. This followed a grassroots campaign in the U.S. and public warnings from Ban Ki-Moon, World Bank President Robert Zoellick and others that the global food shortages could prove a decisive setback to the battle against extreme poverty.

According to the United Nations World Food Programme, rising food prices over the past six months are producing the greatest challenge the 45-year-old organization has ever faced: an estimated 100 million people on every continent are being pushed into the "urgent hunger" category (www.wfp.org).

During the first months of 2008, food riots were reported in Egypt, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Madagascar, the Philippines and Haiti, according to the Food and Agricultural Organization (www.fao.org). In Pakistan and Thailand, army troops have been deployed to prevent the pilfering of food from fields and warehouses.

FAO estimates that the sharp rise in cereal prices has left 37 poor countries in an emergency situation. Further, Argentina, Brazil, Vietnam, India and Egypt have all imposed limitations on the export of certain produce to ensure food security for their own populations.

Secretary-General Ban announced

I always tell Secretary Albright that it has been an honor to follow her in service here at the State Department. Our tenures, along with that of Secretary Colin Powell, show just how far the United States of America has come since the founding fathers conceived of a young country along the eastern seaboard in which all men would be created equal. If I serve my full term, it will have been 12 years since the United States had a white male Secretary of State. That a Czech immigrant and a daughter of an Alabama sharecropper, granddaughter of an Alabama sharecropper could one day occupy the same office truly illustrates the greatness of this country.

— Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Remarks at the Unveiling of Portrait of Madeleine K. Albright, April 14, www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2008/04/103554.htm

formation of the task force following a meeting in Switzerland with World Bank President Zoellick, IMF Managing Director Dominique Strauss-Kahn and the heads of some 30 U.N. aid agencies.

Chaired by Mr. Ban, the task force's first priority will be to feed the hungry by closing the WFP's budget gap of \$775 million. The task force will also offer \$200 million in financial support to farmers in the worst affected countries and set up a \$1.7 billion program to help countries with a food deficit to buy seeds. For its part, the World Bank vowed to double lending for agriculture in Africa over the next year and consider improving financing for poor countries.

Longer-term solutions are also needed, Mr. Ban acknowledged, suggesting that trade-distorting subsidies in the developed sector and the challenges caused by climate change be looked into. Experts also cite drought in Australia, higher fuel costs and speculation on global commodity markets as factors in the destabilizing food price hikes.

The energy-food tradeoff will no doubt receive further scrutiny. A study by the International Food Policy Research Institute (www.ifpri.org), a Washington think-tank, found that between a quarter and a third of the

recent hike in commodity prices is attributable to biofuels.

To follow this issue, go to the Reuters page devoted to "Agflation" at <http://www.reuters.com/news/globalcoverage/agflation>. IFPRI also maintains a page devoted to news and analysis of food prices at www.fpri.org/themes/foodprices/foodprices.asp.

House Armed Services Committee Focuses on Civilians in War Zones

The *Foreign Service Journal* and AFSA both figure prominently as resources in a report by the House Armed Forces Committee's Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations on compensation and medical care for federal civilians assigned to work in war zones.

The report, "Deploying Federal Civilians to the Battlefield: Incentives, Benefits and Medical Care," was released on April 30 (<http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/Reports/CiviliansonBattlefieldReport.pdf>). It found that there are both real and perceived differences in compensation and other incentives between federal employees deploying to war zones from different agencies and with different job classifications.

Medical care — including mental

Calling All FS Authors!



The November 2008 *Foreign Service Journal* will include a list of recently published books by Foreign Service-affiliated authors.

FS authors who have had a book published in 2007 or 2008 that has not previously been featured in the roundup, are invited to send a copy of the book, along with a press release or backgrounder on the book and author, to:

Susan Maitra
Foreign Service Journal
1800 N. Kent St., Ste. 1250
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Deadline:
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CYBERNOTES



50 Years Ago...

Although personal contact between the desk officer and the Secretary of State has seriously diminished, for obvious reasons, it is an untruth to say no policy guidance is given by department leaders to desk officers. Equally untrue is the myth that leaders are unaware of what desk officers are thinking (even though their thoughts may occasionally be ignored).



— From “Country Desk Officer: Low Man on the Totem Pole,” Part II, by Robert E. Elder, *FSJ*, June 1958.

health issues — was a subject of particular concern to the subcommittee, which cited the *FSJ*’s groundbreaking coverage of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among FS employees serving in war zones (*FSJ*, December 2006 and January 2008). All agencies should be required to establish policies for pre- and post-deployment medical assessment, with a mechanism to oversee implementation, the subcommittee recommends. (The Government Accountability Office would assess their effectiveness.)

The subcommittee also recommends that the Office of Personnel Management issue guidance to all departments for developing robust screening, diagnosing and treatment of deployable civilians’ mental health and, in particular, traumatic brain injuries. Further, it recommends that the agencies be required to ensure that diagnosis or admission of a mental health condition does not limit or end an individual’s career.

Other recommendations focused on the need to adopt an adequate incentive and benefits package that would apply to all civilians deployed to war zones. The committee will continue to study these issues during the year.

“The Search for Mr. X” — An Innovative Survey

As anticipation builds for Washington’s 2009 regime change, the search for a compelling national security doctrine to replace postwar con-

tainment becomes more urgent.

A provocative contribution to this endeavor appeared in January in the form of a research report from the Council for Emerging National Security Affairs, “The Search for Mr. X: A CENSA Member’s Survey on National Security Doctrine after Containment” (www.censa.net).

The Council is a nonpartisan, non-profit research organization that was established in 1999 by a group of 40 rising professionals (now 165) to contribute to the ongoing policy dialogue through formal discussion series, graduate-level teaching programs and collaborative research projects. CENSA’s activities draw on the talents of its midcareer membership, a diverse, international group of public sector foreign policy specialists, military officers, private sector professionals and accomplished academics.

Survey Director Keith Mines, an FSO, sets the context for the survey in his introduction. “Six years after the 9/11 attacks we are in the middle of two wars, have gone through a major military transformation, are in the midst of a halting conversion of our diplomatic tools and foreign assistance, and are challenging core constitutional principles as we attempt to keep our society safe. And yet we still have no compelling doctrine to provide that overarching, synthesizing concept [that containment gave the postwar era],” states Mines.

“This failure may be remembered



as one of history's great intellectual lapses, a time, like 1914, when an age cried out for direction and new ideas, and all it got was more blood, more treasure," he adds.

Mines and his collaborators identified 21 contemporary "X" candidates last fall and sent their views, with a series of questions on how to manage the post-9/11 strategic environment, to CENSA members and friends.

Asked to select the contemporary thinker who most closely approximates George Kennan, participants chose Francis Fukuyama, with Parag Khanna as runner up — but they received only 16 and 9 percent of the vote, respectively.

When the candidates were grouped thematically, however, those advocating a new global architecture and a focus on nationbuilding garnered 65 percent. Interestingly, the "Bush Doctrines I & II" received a mere 1.5 percent, and "American Primacy/Focus" 12 percent.

The survey surfaced a number of issues that merit further analysis, and Mines has listed them as a series of questions along with the summary results. His presentation of the detailed results offers much food for thought, and the appendix listing the 21 candidates and their main works is a valuable resource for anyone interested in joining the search.

Japan's Animated Diplomacy: A Sign of the Future?

While American diplomacy goes expeditionary, Japanese diplomacy is going pop. In March, Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura appointed Doraemon, the animated cat, "anime ambassador" to the world (www.ap.com). And last November, the Japanese Foreign Ministry named another cartoon icon, Astro Boy, as envoy for overseas safety.

The pop diplomacy initiative was launched last year by former Foreign

Minister Taro Aso, a comic enthusiast, who was responsible for the establishment of an International Manga Award, which he likened to a "Nobel Prize" for an artist working abroad. Manga is the word for Japanese-style comic books, which combine complex stories and drawing styles featuring cute characters.

At the inauguration ceremony for Doraemon, Foreign Minister Komura handed a human-sized blue-and-white cat an official certificate and a plate full of dorayaki, or red bean pancakes, his favorite dessert. Komura asked the cat to promote Japanese animated cartoons, or anime, widely.

"Doraemon, I hope you will travel around the world as an anime ambassador to deepen people's understanding of Japan so they will become friends with Japan," Komura told the cat.

Showings of a Doraemon film have been set in Singapore, China, Spain, France and other diplomatic missions. "Through my cartoons, I hope to convey to people abroad what ordinary Japanese people think, our lifestyles and what kind of future we want to build," says Doraemon, voiced by actress Wasabi Mizuta.

Created by cartoonist Fujiko F. Fujio, the robotic cat travels back in time from the 22nd century and uses gadgets such as a time machine and an "anywhere door" that come out of a fourth-dimensional pocket on his stomach. Doraemon is already popular in much of Asia.

Perhaps these developments have been noted by State Department management. Cartoon characters are very dynamic, and don't need pensions or health insurance. Could this be an answer to America's dire shortage of diplomats — or a new rival? ■

This edition of Cybernautes was compiled by Susan Brady Maitra, Senior Editor.

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SPEAKING OUT

Where Have All the Senior-Level Women Gone?

BY SUSAN CRAIS HOVANEK

In 1971, the year Foreign Service officer Alison Palmer won her sex discrimination case against the Department of State, just 1.6 percent of the FS corps was female. Thanks in large part to that settlement and other lawsuits filed during the decade, women began to enter the Service in record numbers in the late 1970s, a trend that has continued.

Given that progress, one would expect to see large numbers of female officers at the top. The promotion statistics have greatly improved since December 1985, when just 3 percent of senior officers were female, but half of all women still leave the Foreign Service before they reach the senior ranks. Here are the State Department's own data on the percentage of females at each grade in the Foreign Service generalist work force, as of Jan. 31, 2008:

Career Minister	26.7
Minister Counselor	27.4
Officer Counselor	28.1
FS-1	36.7
FS-2	33.6
FS-3	40.9
FS-4	42.9
FS-5	50.3
FS-6	42.9
TOTAL	38.0

What accounts for this disturbing loss of our best and brightest, and what can we do about it?

*Women are entering
the Foreign Service in
large numbers, but
few make it to the top.*

A Dark and Dismal Track Record

Our institutional history is full of ghosts. As late as 1922, two years before the Rogers Act created the modern Foreign Service, the State Department considered not allowing any women to join as officers (even though few were seeking entry). From the start, women who got in were discouraged from aspiring to the senior ranks. It also bears repeating, because so many new officers find it incomprehensible, that until 1972, female Foreign Service officers were forced to resign if they married.

Then there was the sexual harassment, which continued to run rampant in the Foreign Service at least through the 1980s, and remains a problem. Management mostly pretended not to see it, but I witnessed behavior so despicable it can hardly be described in print. I still recall what happened when a high-ranking Washington-based officer visited Tokyo, where

he had recently held a senior job. On the day he arrived, every female Foreign Service National employee stayed home to protest his misconduct with female employees during his tour.

Equally troubling is the fact that, with few exceptions, women have remained quiet about mistreatment. One can understand how individuals might be afraid to speak out, but where are their advocates? The Association of Women Foreign Service Officers and the Women's Action Organization, so active in the 1970s, both disbanded or disappeared quietly long ago. (See Barbara Good's article in the January 1981 *Foreign Service Journal* for a history of WAO's achievements and the reluctance of women to speak out to achieve parity.) This collective silence, too often misinterpreted as "loyalty," still lingers, to our detriment and that of our chosen profession.

The historical record is not entirely gloomy, to be sure. Ann Wright's rich article, "Breaking Through Diplomacy's Glass Ceiling" (October 2005 *FSJ*), documents many breakthroughs for female diplomats. Even so, in most gatherings of Senior Foreign Service officers today, men still outnumber women three to one.

So I repeat: Where are all the senior women?



Some Contributing Factors

I recently interviewed 10 successful female officers, including ambassadors and office directors, to help me wrestle with this question. Here are some factors that might explain the decline at the top.

The Goldilocks Dilemma. Many women don't speak up because they will either be ignored or criticized for doing so. And the resulting silence makes it even harder for anyone — individuals or organizations like AFSA — to challenge management. How to raise these issues is a related problem. There is a widespread perception that assertive women are strident or incompetent; yet they aren't taken seriously if they remain soft-spoken and diplomatic. In other words, women are perceived as too soft, or too hard, but never "just right."

Two former ambassadors commented that the higher the rank, the less tolerance of "independence" or dissent. This attitude affects men, too, but hits women harder because they undergo more scrutiny.

Lingering Stereotypes. Too many men still view women as better at caregiving than being take-charge leaders. A recent study of professional-level women in management positions by Catalyst, an organizational development company, revealed that subordinates are more likely to follow the lead of supervisors they like. At the same time, men are harsher judges of women than are women — a 360-degree whammy. Until the evaluation standards for what is considered good leadership are rewritten, women will pay the price in terms of lost promotions or marginal assignments.

Family-Unfriendliness

I am convinced that the need for spouses of Foreign Service personnel to have careers and incomes of their own, including retirement benefits, is

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a major factor contributing to the higher resignation rates and early retirements of female officers. While this tension affects all Foreign Service families, male spouses seem less willing to tolerate the career distortions it can cause. (This can also be true of spouses who are former FSOs, if they don't like trailing their more successful wives around the world, and male members of tandem couples, of course.)

As one female FSO told me: "I think women with spouses still have a harder time finding overseas assignments that work out for the spouses, partly because of societal attitudes toward male accompanying spouses. There are also very different and difficult problems for mothers involving maternity leave (we don't have it), flexibility for child care, and the specter of unaccompanied tours."

All the women I interviewed also cited the physical and emotional strains a Foreign Service career places on sustaining a marriage, raising children and taking care of an extended family, particularly while living overseas for prolonged periods.

They also pointed out that a hide-bound Department of State still has not caught up with the realities that today's work force requires dual

incomes, dual careers and a flexible personnel system. Instead, accompanying spouses are still being mostly assigned to low-level jobs overseas, despite their qualifications — when they can get work at all. Nor do the department's personnel policies take into account the phenomenon of later marriage and delayed childbearing.

One officer I interviewed wondered why spouses couldn't automatically be considered staff and be paid (as in some other countries). Another suggested a reserve corps be formed to help professionally capable spouses manage their careers.

Then there is the growing number of unaccompanied or adult-only posts. Several officers told me that they would resign rather than leave their families for a year. The "compact" between department management and individual employees has been broken, another senior officer said. "We are not the military."

Deficits in Resources and Leadership

A third issue that all of my peers noted is the lack of State Department resources and leadership committed to the Foreign Service as an institution and to its people. Long-running budget shortfalls are taking a real toll on morale and effectiveness, both at the macro and micro levels. Then there is the perennial mismatch between the number of senior officers and senior positions.

There also seems to be little focus on helping individual officers do their jobs, with profound effects on the collective ability to accomplish our mission. Retired Ambassador Prudence Bushnell, a beneficiary of the Palmer lawsuit and a high achiever, noted that many women feel that the Foreign Service is not delivering on its promises, even as it demands more and more personal sacrifices.



The assignment process is failing to live up to its claims to be “family-friendly.” The reduced number of consecutive years officers are allowed to serve in Washington, the jump in the number of unaccompanied positions, and the “fair share” system (a true misnomer) all reduce individual bidders’ flexibility.

“There’s got to be a better way to staff these posts or to allow eligible family members to join their spouses or to allow spouses and members of household to find work at these posts,” Bushnell says. She adds, “I would wager that the near-certainty of having to serve at an unaccompanied post is putting a lot of women off of the Foreign Service. Not because we aren’t brave or ambitious, but because the burden of caring for children and aging parents still falls mostly on our shoulders. It’s not fair, but it’s how our society functions at the moment.”

Another FSO echoed the concerns of many peers: “At the end of the day, between the danger to my family, the shrinking resources and the policies we were pushing, I decided to retire and focus on an area where I could have a bigger impact: my family.”

My conclusion is that the Foreign Service is out of touch with the times and is losing valuable talent as a result. After all, it no longer holds a monopoly on overseas careers. Fortunately, management can take some steps to reverse the trend.

More Flexibility Needed

Perhaps the time has come for a new personnel system, under which the Foreign Service offers the same benefits as the Civil Service. For example, those employees routinely go on overseas “excursions” (including Iraq) and can then either convert to the Foreign Service or return to their domestic jobs.

But instead, State forces out good

***With few exceptions,
FS women have
remained quiet
about mistreatment.***

Foreign Service officers — men *and* women — because of time-in-class, time-in-service or age, even when they would like to convert to the Civil Service. What a loss of talent and knowledge! Let’s have one combined Service, giving us a larger pool to draw on for overseas postings, instead of forcing out FSOs and then hiring them back on short-term contracts.

This is not a totally new concept. Collapsing the Senior Foreign Service into the Senior Executive Service was considered during discussions about the 1980 reforms. A study of a very successful bureau, such as Population, Refugees and Migration, might be a start. PRM has about 100 women and 22 men (mostly Civil Service), with some 22 refugee coordinators overseas drawn from both services. Women hold the majority of leadership positions and morale is very high. Could this be a model?

The constant changing of rules to limit time in Washington, and the narrow way that fair-share requirements are interpreted, both force women (and men) to consider leaving the Service. Maybe officers can do their first 10 years out and the last 10 years in Washington when they have older kids, or the reverse.

I hate to suggest yet another study, but when is the last time the State Department (or anyone else) systematically reviewed the issue of family-friendliness and the status of female

officers? I am also disappointed that the Bureau of Human Resources is not following these issues, nor publishing statistics.

Leadership training courses should include a discussion of the pervasive nature of stereotyping by gender and its effect on performance evaluations. Studies have been conducted to explore how the performance evaluation process can be structured to minimize gender bias and enable organizations to tap the best leadership talent from all employees.

These studies also document the prevailing view among many successful women that they have to work harder than men to be treated the same.

Nearly all the Foreign Service women I interviewed for this article credited their success to good luck and timing, disavowing any aspiration to rise to the senior levels. Some might find such modesty commendable. But it seems to me that the sustained dedication to the Foreign Service and to promoting America’s interests that these officers — and so many of their peers — embody deserves to be rewarded with promotions. If the system is not willing to give such women their due as leaders, then we will all be the poorer for it. ■

Susan Crais Hovanec is a retired Senior Foreign Service officer with more than 30 years of experience as a public affairs professional. Among many awards and distinctions, she conceived and helped make “Afghanistan Unveiled,” an oral history and documentary film nominated for a 2005 Emmy. She also received the Secretary of State’s 2005 Award for Public Outreach for raising the profile of the Office of International Women’s Issues and deepening public understanding of U.S. foreign policy, both at home and abroad.

WHO IS THE “TOTAL CANDIDATE”? FSO HIRING TODAY



Terry Tidwell/Miracle Studios

THE FOREIGN SERVICE INTAKE PROCESS HAS BEEN REVAMPED. HERE IS A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THE NEW EXAM AND OTHER CHANGES.

BY SHAWN DORMAN

A career as a diplomat for the State Department's Foreign Service does not provide riches or, in most cases, fame. Yet it has a reputation as an elite and prestigious profession, in service to America. This cachet has endured through the generations in part because of the mystique surrounding the difficult exams candidates must pass in order to join the diplomatic corps. Only 2 to 3 percent of those who apply are offered a position.

There is a strong attachment inside the Foreign Service to the gateway to the diplomatic career, and passing the

exams is seen as a badge of honor for those few who make it through. So when former Director General of the Foreign Service George Staples ordered a review and improvement of the entry process in 2006, those tasked with the work knew they must proceed with great caution. Their assignment was to make the hiring process faster and more candidate-friendly in order to attract and hire the best applicants. The DG also sought to increase minority hiring.

By government standards, the changes to the Foreign Service generalist entry process have been made at warp speed. State started the review during the summer of 2006, and the first new Foreign Service Officer Test — formerly called the Foreign Service Written Exam — was given in the fall of 2007. The basic structure of the test remains intact. Candidates still have to pass the FSOT — what we'll call “the written exam” — to be invited to take the Oral Assessment. But the written exam is now being offered online, more often and more widely than before.

The most significant changes are the adoption of a substantially more demanding registration procedure and the introduction of a Qualifications Evaluation Panel. Following the written exam, the panel reviews the complete file of each applicant who passes, taking the measure of what is now called the “Total Candidate” — including education, work and overseas experience, and foreign languages spoken. Both new elements are the subject of some controversy, especially the QEP, which many candidates believe lacks transparency.

To gain a comprehensive picture of the changes being implemented, the *Journal* spoke with officials in the Bureau of Human Resources, the Office of Recruitment, Examination and Employment, and the Board of Examiners. We also followed online discussions among the two exam Yahoo Groups, corresponding directly with more than a dozen FSO candidates — nine of whom have taken both the old and the new tests.

Shawn Dorman is a former political officer who went through the Foreign Service exam process in 1992. She served in Bishkek, Jakarta and the State Department Operations Center. The Journal's associate editor, she is the editor of Inside a U.S. Embassy, AFSA's best-selling book about the Foreign Service career.

***This created a level
playing field for
candidates, but maybe
it was too level.***

HR officials responsible for the hiring process offered invaluable assistance and extensive information to the *Journal*, and welcomed all feedback. They are the first to acknowledge that the new system is still a work in progress.

While You Were Waiting

For many years, State management has been concerned about the extremely long time it takes to hire a Foreign Service officer. In recent years, the average wait between the written exam and the job offer has been 14 months; and that was an improvement over the two-year wait many candidates had experienced. The written exam was usually given only once a year, in April. This meant that the perfect diplomat might have to wait up to 11 months just to take the first step. After the written exam, candidates waited three months for their results. Those who passed would be invited to take the Oral Assessment at some future date.

Then, once that perfect future diplomat passed the orals, another potentially long wait was in store while the required medical and security clearances were processed. Only after those clearances were complete would a candidate be placed on the register. But even that achievement was (and still is) no guarantee of a job. It's just a promise that if the needs of the Service reach as far as that candidate's number on the register before 18 months elapse, an offer will be made to join an A-100 training class for new diplomats. (Note: Foreign Service specialists have different entry procedures, all outlined on the careers.state.gov Web site.)

Over the past decade, State flirted with the possibility of overhauling the exam process and made marginal changes. Wanting to compete more effectively in the so-called “War for Talent,” the department participated in a study by the management consulting firm McKinsey & Company in 1997 that looked at recruiting and retaining the best employees. At that time, the dot.com boom had federal managers worried. More recently, it has been higher salaries and quicker intake for jobs in the private sector that have created a reasonable concern among State recruiters. During his tenure, Secretary of State Colin Powell did succeed in reducing the amount of time it took to process security clearances, but the total hiring process still averaged more than a year.

Finally, in 2006, Director General George Staples undertook an extensive review, with strong support from Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. In December of that year, he described the goal of the review in a message to all employees: “I was determined that we continue our tradition of seeking the best of the best. But I also wanted to see whether we could find ways to improve our selection process. I had three specific goals in mind: that we improve our ability to find the best; that we compete more effectively with the private sector to attract the best; and that we make our process faster in hiring the best.”

State enlisted McKinsey to look at the hiring process and make recommendations. The consulting firm found the Foreign Service selection process to be excellent, according to HR Senior Adviser Dick Christenson, but said State could do even better by incorporating best practices from the private sector. “We were tinkering with the system whereby the Foreign Service selects its future generations,” Christenson recalls. “It was a daunting task,” and the first requirement was to “Do no harm.”

Improving the “Gold Standard”

Certain best practices were already in place, McKinsey concluded; namely, the Foreign Service Written Exam, a proven cognitive test, and the Oral Assessment — both of which McKinsey considered the “gold standard.” The one significant missing element, routine in the private sector, was a long, close look at experience and background early in the hiring process.

McKinsey recommended a “Total Candidate” approach. As the DG explained in his December 2006 message, this approach was “aimed at discerning a full range of qualities that may make a candidate particularly well suited for FS work” — not simply exam scores.

For many years, the entry process has been mostly “blind,” in the sense that examination of the candidate’s background was one of the last steps. Exactly when examiners were allowed to know who the applicant was has varied. Legend has it that back in the days when prestigious school ties were in fashion, examiners for the Oral Assessments would keep neutral ties on hand, and anyone wearing a school tie or other identifying accessories would be asked to change.

From the mid-1980s until about 2001, the blind nature of the testing was strict. Examiners did not see the file until a candidate succeeded in reaching what was

essentially an exit interview, having passed through the daylong Oral Assessment. Only then could candidates wow the examiners with fluent Arabic, a Ph.D. in international relations, Peace Corps experience or years working for a nonprofit in Latin America. If they happened to have useful experience, great. But they had to get over most of the hurdles before anyone could consider that background. This created a level playing field for candidates, but maybe it was *too* level. Perhaps that experience mattered and should be counted much earlier.

“The Total Candidate approach makes sense, in principle,” AFSA State Vice President Steve Kashkett tells the *Journal*. “It has always seemed silly to many of our members that the initial — and most important — step in weeding out candidates for the Foreign Service was based solely on doing well on a general knowledge written examination, much of which had nothing to do with foreign affairs. Instead, I think it is reasonable to look at things like proven overseas experience, as well.”

Following the McKinsey review, some consideration was also given to the establishment of a mid-level entry program. AFSA strongly objected, however, and at this point, such a program is not in development.

Looking for Someone Else? Minorities, Warriors, Cowboys

“We want the Foreign Service to look like America” is a common refrain from Sec. Rice and HR officials. Increasing diversity at State is a priority and, as Recruiting Outreach Director Ann Syrett points out, this refers not only to race and ethnicity, but to geography and other elements. But, says HR, this must be accomplished through outreach work to raise awareness of the FS career option.

The goal is to cast a wider net to attract the best minority applicants. In recent years, the recruiting division has developed programs to reach more historically black colleges and universities. In addition, the Diplomats in Residence (senior officers assigned to universities around the U.S. by the recruiting division) focus on reaching out to talented minority students.

Once an applicant finds the Foreign Service, however, there is no special preference; all compete on merit and now, to a greater extent than before, on experience. “There is nothing in the new selection process that would either advantage or disadvantage a minority applicant,” says Christenson. State’s Office of the Legal Adviser has

kept a close eye on the process to ensure it meets all legal criteria. Candidates are asked to voluntarily fill in a form on race and national origin, but that information, according to Donna Visocan of the Board of Examiners, is kept out of the applicant file and is collected for statistical analysis only. "The data is used by our recruitment section to determine which groups they may need to target to get more diverse applicants," says Visocan.

In part because the new hiring process is being initiated during a time when the demand for people to serve in Iraq is putting a strain on the whole personnel system, some FSOs have assumed that the changes were being made to fill Iraq jobs. But there does not appear to be a direct connection: all incoming FS personnel agree to worldwide availability, which is nothing new. That said, staffing demands for Iraq, and to some extent Afghanistan, do dictate that many officers joining today will need to serve there.

More generally, the number of unaccompanied postings has risen dramatically, from about 200 a few years ago to over 900 positions today (generalist and specialist positions combined). Incoming FSOs should probably expect to serve in an unaccompanied post at some point in their careers, and directed assignments to war zone posts are not out of the question. State may now need many more so-called "expeditionary" diplomats, but HR tells the *Journal* that the examiners do not select on that basis.

Another concern expressed by FSOs is that high standards might be compromised and the process "dumbed down." HR officials say they are aware of that concern but see it as unfounded. The written test is shorter, they acknowledge, but it is not easier. However, the passing score for the written exam can be lowered to bring more candidates to the QEP; and the passing QEP score can also be lowered to bring more candidates to the orals.

While standards remain high, State is admittedly looking for a slightly different diplomat today, someone who might be described as the "perfect diplomat plus." It used to be acceptable to "just be brilliant," Christenson explains. Now, "brilliant is good, but we want people who know how to be practical and solve problems, how to work well with people."

***There has been a decline
in the percentage of
female applicants for the
first three rounds of the
new written exam.***

The search today is for candidates who not only have intellectual abilities, but real-world skills. The traditional reporting function is giving way to more action-oriented pursuits. This is tied, in part, to Sec. Rice's Transformational Diplomacy initiative. As she explained in her February speech on the subject at Georgetown University: "America must recruit and train a new generation of Foreign Service professionals

with new expectations of what life as a diplomat will be. ... We see it in the jungles of Colombia where our diplomats are helping old guerrilla fighters become new democratic citizens. We see it in Zimbabwe, where our diplomats are taking up the just and peaceful cause of a tyrannized people."

**So You Want to Be a Diplomat?
The First Hurdle**

As part of the effort to streamline and speed up the testing process, State tossed out the old blue books and pencils, opting instead for an entirely online Foreign Service Officer Test. Testing windows are open for eight days, several times a year, so that no one has to wait more than a few months. And the test now takes about three hours, as opposed to the previous five.

Registering for the exams, however, now requires a greater up-front effort by the candidate than ever before, and can be considered the first substantial hurdle in the entry process. For many years, signing up for the written exam was about as simple as sending in your name. There was, and still is, no fee. Known as the ultimate "smarty-pants" test, many people have taken the test without serious plans to pursue an FS career, just to see if they could pass.

Today, applicants must be pretty sure they are serious when they log on to register. Registration is fully online; there is no paper application. (Note to exam-takers: Save or print your forms, because you cannot access them again once you hit "submit.") The State career Web site — www.careers.state.gov — says it should take about three hours to register, but many applicants tell the *Journal* it takes far longer.

Included in registration is a new requirement to write six 200-word "mini-essays" in response to ques-

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tions designed to evaluate six core competencies sought in successful candidates. The applicant must present evidence of competency in: leadership skills, managerial skills, interpersonal skills, communication and foreign language skills, intellectual skills and substantive knowledge. Each essay must include a reference with contact information, a verification element added to catch fraudulent claims as well as deter them.

Registration now also includes filling out the so-called “structured resumé,” a comprehensive form similar to the one used by the Diplomatic Security Bureau for the security checks later in the process. The applicant must provide all the standard biographic details, including job history, education, overseas experience and plenty of other background information.

In addition, when they register, candidates must select their desired career track (formerly called “cones”): Consular, Political, Economic, Management or Public Diplomacy. Though the political career track is still the most sought-after, State has been hiring a

roughly equal number of officers for each track in recent years. Hiring is based on the needs of the Service for officers in each category at any given time, and successful applicants will be put on the register for their selected career track only — so choosing can be a tricky exercise.

Candidates also provide a self-assessment of language abilities when they register. Any candidate who claims a “Super Critical Needs Language” — Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Farsi, Dari, Hindi and Urdu — is instructed to take an FSI telephone test immediately after they pass the written exam. That language test is given on a pass/fail basis, with a Level 2 speaking score required to pass. Other languages are considered later in the process.

Today’s Written Exam

After completing the registration, candidates reserve a “seat” during any future testing window. For 2007 and 2008, HR set a maximum of 20,000 test-takers per year,

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with a maximum of 5,000 taking the written exam during any giving test period.

The first online test was given Sept. 8-15, 2007, at over 200 U.S. locations: 2,254 people took the test, and 447 were invited to the Oral Assessment. The test was given again Dec. 1-8 at U.S. testing centers and at 86 diplomatic posts worldwide; 2,417 people took it, and 575 were invited to the orals. The March 1-8, 2008, testing window drew about 3,210 applicants. There will be two more testing periods of eight days each this year: July 12-19 and Nov. 1-8.

On their chosen day, candidates report to the designated testing center and log on to a computer terminal to take the online test. It includes the following sections: Job Knowledge, English Expression, Biographic Information and the Written Essay. Though it no longer contains separate career track sections, career-specific questions remain. HR says that 90 percent of candidates rate the online test experience favorably.

The allotted time to write the essay has been cut from 50 minutes to 30. Composing the essay on the computer rather than in longhand clearly saves time for most, and exchanges with applicants generally reflect great relief for being able to take the test on a computer. However, several candidates told the *Journal* that the time allocated for the essay is too short. "The reduction of the essay time is certainly a bone of contention with many people," says Tom Duval, who has experience with both the new and the old test. "I don't believe that having to write by hand (on the old test) was equal to the 20 minutes taken away."

HR has a different view. The time for thoughtful, well-crafted writing is during registration, in the mini-essays and in the Statement of Interest (a personal statement that is presented during the orals), HR's Christenson explains. The educational psychologists who evaluate the test tell HR that giving more time for the essay would not have an impact on results.

In fact, Foreign Service work often requires rapid drafting under deadline — the VIP's plane is departing in one hour and the report on her meeting with the president must be signed off on before she leaves, or the ambassador has a meeting with the foreign minister and needs talking points in 20 minutes — so it may be useful to see how a candidate writes under severe time pressure.

As always, there is a cutoff passing score. Results for the September and December 2007 tests were sent out from testing contractor ACT, Inc., after about three

months. March 2008 test results were sent out after eight weeks, and HR is working to further reduce the time it takes to send out results. Candidates can request a breakdown of their scores by contacting the company directly, and many do.

The Mysterious QEP

Before the new system was implemented in 2007, every candidate who passed the written test was invited to the Oral Assessment. No longer. There is a new gate through which each candidate must successfully pass to be invited to the orals: the Qualifications Evaluation Panel.

The Yahoo e-mail groups devoted to the written exam and the orals swirl with commentary and concern about the QEP. (Each group has about 3,800 members who carry on daily discussions related to getting into the Foreign Service.) More than a dozen candidates who offered input to the *Journal* highlighted concerns about the panel. These concerns focus not so much on whether the QEP is a valid screening process (no one seems sure yet), but on what candidates see as a lack of transparency. Many candidates call the process a "mystery."

The problem is that those who get turned down by the QEP are not told why. This is in contrast to the availability of score breakdowns for the written test, which some candidates try to use to determine what areas to strengthen. Candidates can keep taking the Foreign Service exams over and over again (although only once a year) until they pass, and many do keep trying.

"Many [September test-takers] scored amazingly high on the exam but failed the QEP," says candidate Chrysta Stotts. "What's more frustrating is that no explanation was given as to why they were not invited on to orals. Had this been under the old paradigm, they would have been invited without question." Worse, for some candidates who did not pass the QEP, references had already been contacted, leading them to assume they would be going on to the next phase of the process.

HR officials contend that there is no great mystery to the QEP, explaining that the panels operate under strict guidelines and procedures based on specific criteria, and go through extensive training. Sometimes called the Screening Panel, the QEP is composed of three Foreign Service officers serving on the Board of Examiners. These are the same people who conduct the Oral Assessments. Candidate files are divided up by career tracks, and each panel reviews candidates from a particular track.

FOCUS

The QEP lens, says Board of Examiners Staff Director Steve Blake, is primarily focused on the six core competencies (mentioned above) that help identify people who will make successful FSOs. Blake points out that these are the same criteria used to evaluate (and promote) officers throughout their careers, and are proven measures of success. Each part of the candidate's application is examined: the structured résumé application form, especially educational and work background; the responses to the personal narrative mini-essay questions from registration; test and essay scores; and relevant Super Critical Needs Language scores. Candidates are ranked using a point system. Then management — not the examiners — sets the cutoff numbers according to hiring needs at that time; those above the cutoff line are invited to the Oral Assessment.

Concerns have been raised, both by candidates and by FSOs, that there might be opportunities for bias or politicization of the QEP part of the process. But officers who serve on the Board of Examiners are well trained, says HR

Adviser Christenson, who adds that the QEP is a “closed loop, an insular process” with no room for political influence or outside interference. Candidates are not asked for their political affiliation, and never have been. No inquiries are accepted from outside, and a new level of security has been added: examiners are prohibited from entertaining any inquiries about a particular applicant, *and* they must report any such contacts to the director of the Board of Examiners.

As another type of protection against any possible bias, “the sections of the application form that capture information about age, gender, race, ethnicity or other personal traits that are not relevant to this review are electronically purged before a candidate's file reaches the QEP panelists,” says Marianne Myles, director of the Office of Recruitment, Examination and Employment.

AFSA officials have been briefed regularly as the new test process has been developed and so far are satisfied that adequate precautions against bias and politicization have been taken.



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In order to deter misrepresentation by applicants on the extensive application forms and essays, HR instituted a verification process for applications reviewed by the QEP after the candidate passes the written exam. Each mini-essay must include a contact person who can verify the events described, and references are contacted. Because of the volume of this kind of work, HR has contracted with Foreign Service retirees to help.

However, verification so early in the process may be turning some applicants off. Several candidates told the *Journal* they were uncomfortable having references, especially a current supervisor, contacted before the Oral Assessment and before it would be clear if a Foreign Service job offer would ever come out of the process.

Candidate Mark Palermo explains: "My chief concern about the vignettes was the verification process. I am the chief operating officer of a fairly large company. My boss

is the CEO, and the manner in which he was asked to verify a certain story came across as unsophisticated and perplexing, particularly given the level of my job and the fact that I've already been through a background check [from passing the orals before]."

HR tells the *Journal* that although it is noted on the State Web site, many candidates may not realize that they have the option not to list a current supervisor as one of the contacts, and will not be penalized for such an omission.

The Oral Assessment

Once candidates pass the QEP, they receive an invitation to the Oral Assessment. The delay between the written exam and the invitation to the orals, which can be several months and includes the QEP process, is a source of stress for some applicants. However, the wait is getting shorter than it was under the old system.

The format and content of the traditional Oral

Weeding Out the Dummies

The following is excerpted from a "test" that has circulated for years. The author is unknown.

The State Department has decided to administer a new entrance exam to measure the suitability of prospective Foreign Service officers and to weed out the dummies. We have managed to obtain a copy of the test. Here are some sample questions.

INSTRUCTIONS: Read each question carefully. Answer all questions. Time limit: four hours, begin immediately.

HISTORY: Describe the history of the papacy from its origins to the present day, concentrating especially, but not exclusively, on its social, political, economic and philosophical impact on Europe, Asia, America and Africa. Be brief and specific.

MEDICINE: You have been provided with a razor blade, a piece of gauze and a bottle of Scotch. Remove your appendix. Do not suture until your work has been inspected. You have 15 minutes.

BIOLOGY: Create life. Estimate the difference in subsequent human culture if this form had developed 500 million years earlier, with special attention to its probable effects on the English parliamentary system. Prove your thesis.

MUSIC: Write a piano concerto. Orchestrate and perform it with flute and drum. You will find a piano under your seat.

PHILOSOPHY: Sketch the development of human thought, then estimate its significance. Compare with the development of any other kind of thought.

PSYCHOLOGY: Based on your knowledge of their works,

evaluate the emotional stability, degree of adjustment and repressed frustrations of each of the following: Rameses II, Gregory of Nicea, William of Occam, Hammurabi. Support your evaluations with quotes from each man's work, making approximate references. It is not necessary to translate.

SOCIOLOGY: Estimate the sociological problems which might accompany the end of the world. Construct an experiment to test your theory.

ENGINEERING: The disassembled parts of a high-powered rifle have been placed on your desk. You will also find an instruction manual printed in Swahili. In 10 minutes a hungry Bengal tiger will enter the room. Take whatever action you feel to be appropriate. Be prepared to justify your decision.

ECONOMICS: Develop a realistic plan for refinancing the national debt. Trace the possible effects of your plan in the following areas: Cubism, the wave theory of light, the Sonatist controversy. Criticize this method from all possible viewpoints. Point out the deficiencies in your point of view, as demonstrated in the answer to the last question.

POLITICAL SCIENCE: Start World War III. Report its sociopolitical effects, if any.

EPISTEMOLOGY: Take a position for or against truth. Prove the validity of your stand.

PHYSICS: Explain the nature of matter. Include in your answer an evaluation of the impact of the development of mathematics on science.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: Describe in detail. Be objective and specific.

FOCUS

Assessment are essentially unchanged. HR expects to invite approximately 1,800 candidates to the orals each year, about half the number invited in the past. “By evaluating more information about the candidates based on the identified core competencies ... we are finding that we invite a much more competitive group to the Oral Assessment,” says Myles. “In fact, the pass rate for candidates has markedly increased!”

The orals still focus on testing for what are known as the “13 Dimensions,” which Blake describes as components of the six competencies. These are: written communication, oral communication, information integration and analysis, planning and organization, judgment, resourcefulness, initiative and leadership, experience and motivation, working with others, composure, quantitative analysis, objectivity and integrity, and cultural adaptability. The six competencies and the 13 dimensions all help assess the candidate’s “KSAs” — knowledge, skills and abilities.

The group exercise portion of the Oral Assessment is

still blind — the examiners do not know who the candidates are. Back on this level playing field, the candidates interact, negotiate with each other and solve problems while the examiners observe. During the structured interview part of the orals, examiners do have the candidate’s file, and at this time can discuss experience, background and the Statement of Interest with the candidate.

After candidates pass the orals, they are given the opportunity to take telephone tests for the non-supercritical languages that they claimed on their registration forms. Passing language scores add points and can boost a candidate’s placement on the register. Not all languages are created equal, so the “hard” languages bring a bigger boost than others.

Once candidates clear the medical and security clearance process, they are placed on the register to wait for the invitation to join an upcoming A-100 class. When that invitation comes (if ever) depends both on where each candidate’s name is on the priority-ranked list, and on which career track register the candidate competes.

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HR is working to speed up the time between placement on the register and the job offer; indeed, some candidates are getting “the call” soon after being placed on the list. The entry process is complete when the candidate joins an A-100 class and is officially employed by the Department of State. That is where the Foreign Service generalist career begins, as it always has.

Preliminary Results

It is too early to fully evaluate the new process, but Human Resources officials say that the quality of the applicants is, as it has always been, extremely high. The new written exam has been given just three times, and many of those who have taken the new test are still cycling through the application process.

According to HR, the percentage of minority test-takers has not changed significantly, holding steady at about 30 percent. However, there has been a decline in the percentage of female applicants for the first three rounds of the new written exam. The percentage of women taking the FSWE in 2004 was 38; it was 39 in 2005 and 2006. The percentage of female candidates taking the FSOT was 29 for the September 2007 test, 30 for the December 2007 test and 34 for the March test.

HR officials do not have an explanation for the decline, but they are concerned and are exploring ways to reverse it. The State Department has come a long way from the

predominantly male Service of the past. In recent years, most A-100 classes have been about half female. A gender discrimination class-action suit, known as the Palmer case, that wound its way through the legal system for over a decade was resolved in 1989. The decision led to cancellation of that year’s FS written exam because it had been found to be biased against women and minorities. At that point, the written exam was changed. HR officials tell the *Journal* that women do well on the exams, passing at high rates.

It is entirely possible that the decline in the percentage of women applying does not represent a trend. And even if it does prove to be a pattern, it may have little or nothing to do with the new hiring process. If one were to make an educated guess at why fewer women might step up at this time to apply to the Foreign Service, one might cite the increasing number of unaccompanied and war zone postings required in today’s Service. No matter how equal-opportunity an unaccompanied war zone may be, the reality for many women is that they bear more of the responsibility for child care than do men.

Another key parameter, processing time from test to job offer, appears to be improving, and should improve further as kinks in the new system are worked out. Anecdotal evidence supports this. “I am aware of at least one person who took the written exam in September 2007, passed the oral assessment in December, received his clearances by February, and will start A-100 in May,” says candidate Tom Duval. “There’s your poster child for the improvement in the test-to-offer time.”

Candidate Mark Palermo comments positively on the speed of the new process, noting that he “registered in August, took the new written test in September and had my Oral Assessment in December. Because I already had security and medical clearances [from a prior try], I was on the register about a week after I passed.” HR officials note that two candidates who tested last September were in the April A-100 course, cutting hiring time in half from the previous average.

The “Front-Loading” Issue

Compared to the high-water mark for the number of people taking the FSWE — over 31,000 for the two test offerings in 2002 — today’s numbers do look low. Fewer than 5,000 people took the FSOT in 2007, during testing windows in September and December, though these were the first offerings of the new test and the numbers

**Foreign Service Written Exam Test-Takers,
1980-2008**

Year	Number	Year	Number
1980	12,910	1998	9,618
1981	13,618	1999	9,380
1982	16,829	2000	8,047
1983	15,074	2001	12,912
1984	17,631	2002 (2x)	31,442
1985	15,850	2003	20,342
1986	16,222	2004	19,101
1987	13,903	2005	18,699
1988	14,405	2006	17,000
1989	No test		
1990	10,759		
1991	10,605	New FSOT	
1992	10,949	2007 Sept. (U.S. only)	2,254
1993	12,206	2007 Dec. (U.S. and overseas)	2,417
1994	11,345	2008 Mar. (U.S. and overseas)	3,200
1995	No test		
1996	9,595		
1997	No test		

have increased with each of the first three tests. The September test was only offered in the U.S., while by December overseas testing became available at 86 embassies (including Baghdad). Available testing centers overseas should continue to increase.

But HR is not particularly worried about these numbers. The total number of candidates taking the written exam may not reach the high numbers of the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative years, but HR's Dick Christenson says that might be just fine. "It's not a popularity contest. The bottom line is, are we getting the right people?"

Because registration can no longer be done casually, HR believes that it is getting a more serious pool of applicants. Already, the no-show rate for those who sign up for the written exam dropped significantly with the first offering of the new exam — it was less than 10 percent, down from a high of 50 percent in previous years.

Still, HR officials are walking a fine line with the new front-loaded registration requirements. They want serious applicants and may not need 20,000 to sign up to find the best several hundred to hire. But they also do not want to deter capable candidates by making the registration too cumbersome. And, in fact, many applicants who begin the registration process do not complete it. In addition, it can be an advantage to be popular; high applicant numbers feed the image of a highly competitive and desirable employer.

The search today is for candidates who not only have intellectual abilities, but real-world skills.

A number of candidates told the *Journal* that the time and information needed to register were too significant a burden. "Frankly, the time it now takes to complete the entire application just to take the new written test is too much," explains former candidate Phil Goss, who passed the orals once. "The new procedures, in my opinion, weed out the best and the brightest, because, though intended to identify these people, the procedures end up

putting the highest-caliber individuals off. ... I suggest a more aggressive recruiting approach rather than a weeding-out approach. I, among many others, simply can't be bothered to jump through the hoops nowadays."

Others thought that the deterrent was probably a good idea. "I do think that including essays in the application process probably dissuaded many potential candidates from applying," says candidate Steve Gratzner. "However, I believe that this is probably a good thing, as anyone who is considering such an important career choice should be able to commit to that minimal amount of extra work. If they can't complete six short essays, they probably would not handle other inconveniences well."

A Work In Progress

HR officials take feedback seriously and say they will continue to improve the process. Concerns among candidates about the notification system have already resulted in one change. Written exam results were being sent along with QEP results, so those who passed the written exam did not know that until after the evaluation phase and, in many cases, only after references were contacted. To improve transparency and to decrease wait times, HR has implemented a new dual notification system. Written exam results are now to be sent out within eight weeks, before the QEP has concluded its work; and QEP results will be sent out within eight weeks of that review. More efforts to help keep candidates informed about the process are being discussed within HR.

While still a work in progress, there is no doubt that HR is trying to maintain the integrity of the hiring process. Meanwhile, the first Total Candidates began joining training classes this spring, and it remains to be seen how, and even whether, they differ significantly from their predecessors. ■

Learn More ...

State Department Careers Web site:

<http://careers.state.gov/officer/selection.html>

The Study Guide (a guide to the FSOT)

<http://www.act.org/FSOT>

Guide to the Foreign Service Officer Selection Process

www.careers.state.gov/docs/3.0_FSO_RegGuide.pdf

Foreign Service Officer Test YahooGroup:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fswe>

Foreign Service Oral Assessment YahooGroup:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fsosa>

Inside a U.S. Embassy: www.afsa.org/inside

Foreign Service Journal: www.fsjournal.org

A CAREER OUT OF BALANCE

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INADEQUATE STAFFING, EXPANDING COMMITMENTS,
INSUFFICIENT BUDGETS AND POOR MANAGEMENT
ALL THREATEN THE FOREIGN SERVICE'S FUTURE.

BY JOHN K. NALAND

he environment in which the Foreign Service operates has darkened dramatically in recent years, making it more challenging to represent America abroad. Some observers date the change from the August 1998 East Africa embassy bombings or the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States, blaming foreign actors. Others cite the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, assigning partial responsibility to the Bush administration's response to foreign challenges. Whatever the case, it has clearly become more difficult and more dangerous to represent America abroad.

Events such as the worldwide publication of photos of the abuse of prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq have undermined America's standing in world opinion and have made it more difficult for U.S. diplomats to win the "hearts and minds" of foreign governments and publics. At the same time, the work of diplomacy has become increasingly dangerous, as evidenced by attacks

and threats against diplomatic missions. At some posts, our diplomats are venturing out less frequently beyond the fortress embassy walls.

The deterioration can be seen in statistics on the number of posts that are too dangerous to permit employees to bring their families along. After 2001, the number of unaccompanied and limited-accompanied Foreign Service positions doubled, and then doubled again. It has now surged to 900 positions at two dozen posts. That is a dramatic change for an institution that had fewer than 200 such slots to fill at the start of this decade, and had perhaps just 50 such slots to fill 20 years ago. Moreover, many of the new unaccompanied positions are at extreme danger posts that would not have been staffed at all under traditional State Department security policies.

This surge has placed unprecedented strains on Foreign Service members and their families. Because most unaccompanied posts are, understandably, filled by assignments lasting one year, they have to be completely restaffed every 12 months. As a result, more than 20 percent of Foreign Service members have served in an unaccompanied position within the past five years. Indeed, more than 11 percent of the Foreign Service has served in war-zone Iraq.

John K. Naland, a Foreign Service officer since 1986, is the president of AFSA. His overseas tours include service as principal officer in Matamoros and seven years at hardship posts, including a danger-pay assignment. A 2006 graduate of the U.S. Army War College, he was an Army cavalry officer in the early 1980s.

Including positions at accompanied hardship posts, some 70 percent of overseas Foreign Service positions are now in hardship posts — half of which are at or above the 15-percent differential level. As a result, over half of the Foreign Service has served at a hardship post within the past five years.

**Demanding Too Much
From Too Few**

In order to staff the ever-growing number of unaccompanied and other hardship positions, the State Department, with AFSA concurrence, has made dramatic changes to the Foreign Service assignments system over the past few years. They include:

2005: Implementation of the Career Development Program for generalist officers. The requirement to serve at a greater hardship (15 percent or higher) post between tenure and promotion to the Senior Foreign Service makes it more difficult to avoid a tour at one or more unaccompanied posts. Similar programs for 18 Foreign Service specialist groups were implemented in 2006. This “ticket-punching” program represents an historic hardening of the conditions of service for career diplomats. It was a dramatic departure from the previous rules that allowed employees to rise to the Senior Foreign Service without ever serving at a hardship post after tenure.

2006: Revisions to the Open Assignments system. These changes prohibit tour extensions except at greater hardship posts (to force those employees into the available pool to staff hardship posts); require “fair share” bidders without recent service at a hardship post to bid on three greater hardship (15-percent or more) posts and to accept one if selected; and establish a new assignment “pre-season” during which all open unaccompanied positions are to be filled before any other assignments are made. These revisions served to further steer employees toward greater hardship assignments.

2007: More revisions to the assignments system. These redefine qualifying past “fair share” service so that only service at a 15-percent or greater hardship post counts, and lower the “6/8” domestic service rule that had been in effect since 1997, allowing six-year domestic post-

*While significant
incentives are available
to encourage war-zone
service, FS employees
elsewhere continue to
suffer from ever-growing
financial disincentives.*

ings (with an additional two years in exceptional circumstances), to a “5/8” rule that effectively limits Foreign Service members to two consecutive domestic tours.

In addition, State conducted a “prime candidate” exercise that involuntarily placed several hundred Foreign Service generalists on lists for possible (but ultimately unneeded) forced assignment to Iraq. It is using the same approach this year. These revisions put even more employees in the mix to staff hardship posts and put the entire

Foreign Service on notice to expect to serve at greater hardship posts repeatedly during their careers.

Unfortunately, these efforts to steer employees toward service at the most difficult posts have been seriously undercut by the lack of “bench strength” with which to fill the positions. After funding most, but not all, of Secretary of State Colin Powell’s Diplomatic Readiness Initiative between 2002 and 2004, Congress turned down all subsequent requests for new positions, except those earmarked for consular affairs and diplomatic security. Between Sec. Powell’s departure in 2005 and Sec. Rice’s Fiscal Year 2008 budget request, Congress turned down requests to add a total of 709 new positions (almost all for Foreign Service personnel). These refusals came despite sharply increasing Foreign Service staffing demands in Iraq, Afghanistan, hard-language training and other emerging priority areas.

As a result, literally hundreds of Foreign Service positions are now vacant. In a March media interview, State Department human resources officials said that 12 percent of all overseas Foreign Service positions (excluding Iraq and Afghanistan) were vacant and that 19 percent of all Foreign Service positions (domestic plus overseas) were vacant. Furthermore, 19 percent of the filled slots were held by employees “stretched” into a position designated for a more experienced person. This leaves posts around the world struggling to accomplish their missions with hollowed-out Foreign Service staffing. To add insult to injury, overseas posts also limp along with insufficient funding due to inadequate appropriations for State Department operations and the squeeze from the weakening dollar.

Burdens Outweigh Rewards

Inadequate staffing, expanding commitments, insufficient budgets and poor management have left the Foreign Service a career out of balance. Anyone probing behind the headlines of the fall 2007 media flap over Iraq staffing would have seen a Foreign Service that is increasingly concerned that their loyalty is not being sufficiently reciprocated by their employer. In a survey AFSA conducted last fall of State Department Foreign Service members worldwide, the overwhelming majority of the 4,311 respondents faulted their employer for not supporting them with adequate resources and benefits.

While significant financial and other incentives have been implemented to encourage war-zone service, employees elsewhere continue to suffer from ever-growing financial disincentives. Due to congressional inaction on correcting the pay disparity caused by the exclusion of overseas Foreign Service members from receiving the “locality pay” salary adjustment given to other federal employees, U.S. diplomats now take a 20.89-percent cut in base pay when transferring abroad. In effect, Foreign Service members take a pay cut to serve at all 20-percent and below hardship differential posts — 183 of 268 overseas posts (68 percent). At this rate, within three years, another 42 posts — those at the 25-percent hardship level without an additional danger-pay supplement — will fall into that category, unless the overseas pay disparity is corrected.

Losing the equivalent of one year’s salary for every five served abroad has serious long-term consequences for savings for retirement and children’s college funds — especially for Foreign Service families already suffering the loss of income from a spouse who cannot find employment overseas. It also contributes to a growing feeling that, rhetoric to the contrary, the Foreign Service is becoming significantly less family-friendly.

There will inevitably come a point when this imbalance between burdens and rewards starts to hurt recruitment and increase attrition. That point may be approaching. Some 44 percent of the respondents to AFSA’s fall 2007 survey said that recent developments have made it less likely that they will remain in the Foreign Service for a full career.

***Over 20 percent of
Foreign Service members
have served in an
unaccompanied position
within the past five years.***

Attrition data recently made available to AFSA by State’s Bureau of Human Resources show that the mid-level generalist attrition rate was slightly higher during FY 07 (4.5 percent) than at any time since the last year of the Clinton administration (the last era when budget cuts and staffing gaps sapped employee morale).

Entry-level officer attrition from FY 06 to FY 07 averaged 2.4 percent, compared with 1.7 percent from FY 03 to FY 05. Foreign Service specialist attrition rates have generally remained stable. While these modest upticks in generalist attrition rates are not unprecedented and may ultimately turn out to be temporary blips, they could also be harbingers of things to come. Only time will tell.

Recruiting trends may also be in flux. The number of people taking the Foreign Service Written Exam is down substantially since just a few years ago. As Shawn Dorman details in her article in this issue (see p. 15), that drop may mostly reflect the redesigned exam’s discouragement of “frivolous” test-takers with little change in the number of serious applicants.

However, one negative change is undeniable: there has been a sharp drop in female test-takers — from 39 percent of test-takers in 2006 to 30 percent in 2007 — even though females now constitute 58 percent of new college graduates. Something about the out-of-balance nature of today’s Foreign Service career appears to be disproportionately dissuading women from even starting the application process.

An Institution at the Tipping Point?

The rising burdens and stagnating rewards of service have left many Foreign Service personnel weighing whether they should vote with their feet. Yet the response of State Department officials thus far has essentially been to tell the Foreign Service to “suck it up.” And the Service has done so, as evidenced by each year’s success in staffing Iraq, Afghanistan and other greater hardship posts entirely with volunteers. But at some point this one-way loyalty will become unsustainable if resources are not increased, burdens are not ameliorated, and sacrifices are not appreciated.

Pending now before Congress is the president’s

FY 09 budget request addressing the most urgent staffing and operational funding needs confronting the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development. Also pending are several bills to eliminate the overseas pay disparity. If Capitol Hill misses this opportunity to address these two unmet needs, then it could be 2010 or later before the next president and next Congress get themselves organized to act.

By then, many current Foreign Service members may have given up on waiting for our national leadership to show that they care about them and their mission. Already, State's Bureau of Human Resources is projecting a 46-percent jump in Senior Foreign Service attrition rates over the next five years (the annual rate ranging from 9.56 to 14 percent) due to the baby

***Let us hope better days
are coming that will
bring increased
resources and a
brightening of the global
operating environment.***

boomer retirement wave. That represents a lot of experience, knowledge and foreign-language ability walking out the door. If that demographically-driven exodus were to be accompanied by a simultaneous morale-driven departure of unprecedented numbers of entry-level and mid-level employees, then U.S. diplomatic engagement with the world would certainly suffer.

If some semblance of balance is not restored soon between the burdens and rewards of service, the future of the Foreign Service as we have known it will be in jeopardy. Hopefully, however, better days are coming that will bring increased resources and a brightening of the global operating environment. If so, the Foreign Service will remain an unbeatable career choice. ■

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GOING IT ALONE: FAMILY LIFE IN THE ‘NEW’ FOREIGN SERVICE

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MOST FS EMPLOYEES WILL SERVE UNACCOMPANIED TOURS DURING THEIR CAREERS. WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT CAN THEIR FAMILIES EXPECT?

BY KELLY BEMBRY MIDURA

he Foreign Service has undergone profound changes in the last several years, but the most dramatic is a rapid increase in the number of assignments to unaccompanied posts. These fall into three categories: fully unaccompanied; limited-accompanied (adults only); and Iraq or Afghanistan (colloquially known as “Afraq”), for which there are special benefits.

Immediately prior to 9/11, there were approximately 200 unaccompanied and limited-accompanied (adults only) State Department positions worldwide. As of this writing, there are more than 900 such slots at 16 overseas posts. The trend is clear: Most current Foreign Service employees can expect to serve at a post without their families at some point in their careers.

While the majority of the positions designated unaccompanied (350) are in Iraq, employees also serve without their families in countries ranging from Algeria to Yugoslavia (see sidebar, p. 32). My own husband is serving in an adults-only post, Pristina. Because I’m staying in Washington with our children, he is unaccompanied.

Kelly Bembry Midura is a Web site designer, writer and temporarily single mom living in Reston, Va. She has accompanied her FSO husband, Chris Midura, to La Paz, Guatemala City, Lusaka, San Salvador and Prague.

A family with an employee doing an unaccompanied assignment may be eligible for either an Involuntary or a Voluntary Separate Maintenance Allowance — or even embassy housing and overseas school tuition, if the employee accepts a tour in Iraq while serving at an overseas post. And the employee may be eligible for home leave, Rest & Recreation travel, Family Visitation Travel, or some combination thereof.

According to State’s Bureau of Human Resources, as of February there were about 220 families contending with the difficulties of an unaccompanied tour. Yet State has lagged in developing a support network for us. Currently, there is just one position in the Family Liaison Office dedicated to unaccompanied tour support. (A slot for an assistant, funded by the Iraq supplemental appropriation to the department’s budget, is in the works.) And to date, no funds have been added to the FLO general budget for unaccompanied tour support. All existing UT-related programs have been funded out of the general FLO budget, with grants from the Una Chapman Cox Foundation, or by the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide.

Information, Please

First and foremost, unaccompanied spouses and partners need information about the support available to

them and how to obtain it. State's policies are a mish-mash of provisions and exceptions, so answers to even simple questions can be difficult to come by — especially if, like most family members, you lack easy access to the department intranet.

The information deficit is compounded by the fact that in many cases procedures have not been established, so the employee (or spouse) may have to be quite proactive in pursuing benefits. My husband, for example, was initially told that he would not qualify for family visitation travel from Pristina. He took his case to the Bureau of Human Resources, making the point that if his children are not allowed at post, he is, in fact, unaccompanied. FVT was then funded to visit his children (visiting me was apparently an optional extra) and, because the travel was not R&R, he received hardship differential for the duration of the visit worth several hundred dollars.

Benefits for Iraq are clearer because they have been codified, to some degree, in an "Iraq Service Recognition Package." A similar package exists for Afghanistan. Two cables sent last year, 07 State 98727 and 07 State 115815, spell out these programs' provisions, but here is a summary of benefits that service in "Afraq" triggers:

- Involuntary Separate Maintenance Allowance;
- Two R&Rs over a 12-month tour, plus home leave at the end of the tour;
- Removal from "fair share" bidding status after six months at post; and
- Classification as a full overseas tour for purposes of the 5/8 rule regarding continuous domestic service.

In addition, if an employee leaves his or her current overseas post to serve a year in Iraq mid-tour, the family may remain in embassy housing, with embassy-paid school tuition for children. This is only possible because of extra funding through the Iraq supplemental appropriation, and does not apply to any other post in the Foreign Service, including Afghanistan.

Keeping in Touch

Along with information, spouses cite a need for communication, both with the State Department and each other. Because most unaccompanied families do not reside in Washington, D.C., this presents a challenge. Nan Leininger, the Family Liaison Office's unaccompanied tour specialist, estimates that only about 25 percent of UT families live in the Washington area, while 10 percent live overseas, either at the employee's post or inde-

pendently. The remaining 65 percent live at various locations throughout the U.S.

State does offer some UT resources (see sidebar, p. 34), such as a voluntary registry of unaccompanied family members. By registering, family members can sign up to receive newsletters and notifications of events and services for unaccompanied families. (Register by e-mailing FLOAskUT@state.gov.) Events include monthly brown-bag lunches at FSI, online "webinars" and the occasional picnic or coffee.

Spouses may also join HomeFrontUS, a listserv sponsored by FLO for current and previously unaccompanied family members. The group provides a forum to ask questions and share experiences. It also features FLO announcements for UT family members. This is a moderated Yahoo! Group with restricted membership. To join, visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HomefrontUS/>, click "Join this Group," and include your name and where your family will be (or has been) serving.

Communication on a logistical level is important, but spouses also cite a deeper need for emotional support that can often extend to professional counseling, particularly when an employee has been posted to a very dangerous country. In general, spouses do not seem to depend on the State Department for this type of support, relying instead on friends, family and their own health-care network for the mental health needs of their families. Capie Polk, whose husband is currently serving in Iraq, typifies this perspective:

"I have not availed myself of any State services specifically designed for UT spouses or otherwise, although I appreciate Nan Leininger's e-mail updates and offers. She has made a real effort to keep me in the loop, and I do find some comfort in knowing that she and her office are there should I need help. In general, however, I do not feel part of any special State Department 'family' this year and probably would not turn to State first should I need assistance."

This feeling of isolation from the Foreign Service community is experienced at every level. Diana Negroponte, wife of Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte and an active advocate for support services for unaccompanied families, recounts her family's experience in 2004-2005, when her husband was serving as ambassador to Iraq, and her children were exposed to daily media reports of the dangers of life in Baghdad.

"For some of our four children, the consequence was

trouble with the police; and for all of them, tumbling grades in school and college. They were scared, and no one knew how to help them. The only support that I received was the much-appreciated occasional telephone call and lunch meeting with Ambassador Pat Kennedy, who traveled to and from Baghdad, and a wonderful visit from Sheila Casey, General George Casey's wife," says Mrs. Negroponte. "Otherwise, from the State Department perspective, I might not have existed. I was alone in New York, our previous post, with no support. ... The stiff upper lip worked more or less for me. It did not work for our children."

It should be noted that although a formal structure for regular counseling of unaccompanied family members has yet to develop, FLO personnel are available for informal counseling. In addition, State Department unaccompanied spouses were recently made eligible for a limited number of free telephone or face-to-face counseling sessions through MHN, a health-care network contracted by the Department of State and funded by a grant from the Cox Foundation. For more information on this service, contact FLO.

Unaccompanied Posts as of March 2008

Unaccompanied

AFGHANISTAN: Kabul

IRAQ: Baghdad

PAKISTAN: Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar

SAUDI ARABIA: Riyadh, Jeddah, Dhahran

Limited-Accompanied

ALGERIA: Algiers

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: Banja Luka

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: Bangui

CHAD: N'Djamena

KENYA: Kisumu

KOSOVO: Pristina

LEBANON: Beirut

LIBERIA: Monrovia

REPUBLIC OF CONGO: Brazzaville

SUDAN: Khartoum

YEMEN: Sanaa

The Family Liaison Office has just one unaccompanied tour support position — and no funds dedicated to that purpose.

For foreign-born spouses of Foreign Service employees, the problem of isolation may be compounded. About a third of all FS spouses are foreign-born, and they represent a comparable percentage of unaccompanied spouses. In addition to the other difficulties described here, they may be unfamiliar with life in the U.S., and also more isolated from their own families. As such, some choose to live in their home countries for the duration of the tour, despite the potential additional expense.

Silvia Froats, an Austrian-born spouse whose husband served for a year in Banja Luka, chose this route. "As a foreign-born spouse, I did not have a good support system of family and friends in the U.S., and I therefore chose to take the kids to my home country for the duration of the tour. From talking to other foreign-born spouses, I think this would be the natural choice for most of them," she says.

Spouses who choose to live in their home countries are still a part of the U.S. Foreign Service community, however, and would like to stay connected. Froats suggests that "if foreign-born spouses elect to spend an unaccompanied tour in their home country, there should be a way to include them in the mission's community, so they can get some support from the Community Liaison Office and the Local Employment Adviser."

The Transition Center offers a course called "Transition to Washington for Foreign-Born Spouses."

Coping Mechanisms

Unaccompanied spouses, particularly those with children, all speak of a need for more hours in the day. Capie Polk describes the life of a busy unaccompanied spouse:

"In addition to caring for my child, myself and our pets, I service two cars, maintain our house, manage all the finances, plan vacations, and communicate with my family and husband's family. By that I mean I buy and send all holiday, birthday gifts, cards, etc., plus call them all to relay whatever my husband has communicated to me. And I manage health care for myself, my son and my husband, making appointments for when he is here on leave. You get the picture. The only thing I find I do less of this year is laundry, and I make up for that when my

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husband is here on leave and his family all come to visit!”

While State can't solve this problem, it would certainly help to significantly increase the Involuntary Separate Maintenance Allowance, as AFSA has repeatedly advocated. Spouses are not on the bread line, but they are pulled in many directions, and ISMA disappears quickly, especially in the Washington, D.C., area. While the recent increase in the allowance (approximately 14 percent for a family of four; see State 27884 for details) is welcome, the total amount still falls short of what is truly needed to maintain a separate household.

According to the Foreign Affairs Manual (3 FAM 3230), the purpose of SMA is “to meet the additional expenses of maintaining, elsewhere than at the post, the employee's spouse or dependents, or both.” Clearly, this is open to interpretation, but it is a fact that my husband spends roughly the amount we receive in ISMA at post on everything from 220-volt household items to separate cable TV and telephone bills. This does not leave much for me to hire the Jeeves Handyman Service, as suggest-

ed in FLO's booklet, “Learning to Manage a Temporary Separation.”

We were posted to Washington, D.C., when my husband's current tour began, and because we were already paying a mortgage and other household bills, we did not have to deal with a move on top of my husband's departure. But for a family posted overseas immediately prior to the employee's unaccompanied tour, a prolonged separation can be a much greater jolt, financially and otherwise.

Melodie Gage, whose husband is currently posted to Kabul, points out that “For some of us, ISMA means two involuntary separations: the first from our spouse, and the second from housing at our previous post. We don't have the option to stay in government housing. ... I'd recommend that the option be opened up for families to stay at post in U.S. government housing when spouses are assigned to any unaccompanied post. This not only would ease the personal financial cost of a separation, but would help minimize the huge stresses that come from

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uprooting a family for just one year.”

Deborah Sisbarro, whose tandem husband will be staying in the U.S. on unpaid leave with their son while she is posted to Kabul, suggests another way to address this discrepancy. “If SMA is intended to offset additional expenses, it is sufficient if you are in overseas housing, but insufficient in the States. The department might want to consider two rates: one for those who are in embassy housing, and one for those who aren’t, along the lines of SMA + Living Quarters Allowance based upon Washington, D.C., housing.”

Capital Expenses

I am lucky: my children are old enough so that child care is not an issue. But for many spouses, child care — especially in the Washington, D.C., area, where babysitting starts at \$10 per hour — can be a major logistical and financial problem during an unaccompanied year. Lack of it can even interfere with attendance at UT functions. Virpi Salin, whose husband is currently in Afghanistan while she stays in Washington with their three children,

Most families of unaccompanied employees do not reside in Washington, D.C.

describes her situation:

“I do feel that the State Department is seeking and trying different kinds of support for spouses and families that are left behind. In my experience, however, it does not reach the goal. There are unaccompanied tour family meetings, which we have

attended and have enjoyed a lot; but as far as I know there are perhaps two a year, which is not enough. There are UT spouse luncheons at the State Department, but for me they are in a difficult place and children are not welcome. ... There are meetings at Main State and classes offered at FSI, which I would love to take. But what do I do with my children?”

Washington, D.C., is the logical choice of residence for many UT families, particularly if they were posted here immediately prior to the unaccompanied tour. But while employees posted in the D.C. area receive a nearly 21-percent “locality pay” adjustment as part of their base pay, overseas employees do not. Thus, an employee transferring from Washington to an unaccompanied post loses that 21-percent locality pay adjustment, even if the rest of the family will be living

UT Resources Online

www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c14521.htm

Unaccompanied Tours Support page from the Family Liaison Office. Under “Resources to Get You Through,” the most important documents are probably Chapter 25 of the Foreign Service Assignment Notebook, “Unaccompanied Tours,” and “Long-Distance Relationships and Separated Tours: When Couples Live Apart.”

www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c24529.htm

The Comprehensive Continuum of Support summarizes support options for unaccompanied officers and family members.

www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c23131.htm

This page includes quick links to FAQs about the Separate Maintenance Allowance.

www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/1846.htm

FSI courses include “Maintaining Long-Distance Relationships,” a well-reviewed half-day seminar for employees and family members.

<http://members.mhn.com>

FLO has contracted with MHN, a health-care company,

to offer a limited number of telephone and face-to-face mental health consultations to UT family members. To obtain a login, e-mail FLOASKUT@state.gov. (M/MED’s Employee Consultation Services also offers support, but contact information is not available on the Internet.)

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HomefrontUS/>

FLO sponsors this listserv for unaccompanied family members. Click “Join this Group” and in your message to the moderator, state your name and your family member’s current post.

http://aafsw.org/una/una_main.htm

The Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW) offers “Going It Alone,” a collection of useful links and articles for unaccompanied family members.

www.aafsw.org/aafsw/fbspouses.htm

AAFSW’s Foreign-Born Spouses Group welcomes all foreign-born spouses. While group activities are based in the Washington area, the e-mail list is open to foreign-born spouses of Foreign Service employees worldwide.

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in D.C. with its high housing prices and other costs. According to "Frequently Asked Questions" about ISMA on the State Department Web site (www.state.gov), SMA is calculated as follows:

"The rates for Involuntary SMA are based on data provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for the average cost of maintaining a household in the continental United States. The costs include average rent, utilities, miscellaneous furnishings and supplies. Because individual circumstances vary and most people do not live in the 'average' area in CONUS [the continental United States], the rates may not fully cover each family's costs."

It is clearly inconsistent for the many UT families staying behind in D.C. to have their ISMA allowance based on a cost-of-living calculation that includes small-town and rural America. Adjusting SMA upward for UT families living in Washington is yet another way to bring it into line with the real costs of maintaining two households.

An Institutional Response Is Needed

Unaccompanied spouses are unanimous in their appreciation for the efforts made by many individuals in the department to support their families. However, one cannot ignore the lack of institutional recognition of the challenges posed by this "new" Foreign Service:

- Infrastructure to support unaccompanied tours, and especially unaccompanied tour families, is minimal and underfunded.
- The Separate Maintenance Allowance falls well short of covering the costs of maintaining two households.
- The State Department should not rely on outside organizations to provide support that is integral to a Foreign Service in which families must expect to be separated at least once in the course of a career.

Decisive action to address these issues would be a great boost to morale. It would also encourage Foreign Service members to volunteer for the many unaccompanied positions that the department is already having trouble filling. ■



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STRUCTURAL CHANGES TO ENCOURAGE SERVICE IN
FUNCTIONAL POLICY OFFICES WILL HELP THE FOREIGN
SERVICE MEET THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY.

BY SALLY K. HORN

To ensure that the Foreign Service is capable of conducting America's increasingly complex and multidimensional diplomatic relations and helping to solve the key national security and foreign policy challenges confronting the country, the Department of State must move beyond its traditional way of managing careers by implementing structural changes to encourage and reward functional policy expertise. Throughout this article, I use that term to refer to the types of issues handled by bureaus and offices without a conal or geographic affiliation, such as the Office of the Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security (T), the Office of the Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs (G), the Bureau of

International Organization Affairs (IO) and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR). (See p. 40 for a more complete list of State functional policy bureaus and offices that lack a conal or geographic affiliation.)

I advocate this shift in perspective not as an FSO, but as a former member of the Senior Executive Service in the Office of the Secretary of Defense who has spent more than 37 years in federal service, most of it handling arms control, nonproliferation and verification issues. I am also a former participant in the State Department's Senior Seminar.

Although I have never been a Foreign Service officer, over the course of my career I have known and worked with many excellent FSOs. The vast majority were regional experts, and I learned a great deal from them about the politics and cultures of capitals as diverse as Moscow, Kuala Lumpur, Brasilia and Pretoria.

However, during the Cold War, with a few notable exceptions, I rarely saw a career member of the Foreign Service in a leadership role on the delegations that negotiated the nuclear arms control and risk-reduction treaties with the Soviet Union. Indeed, our teams mainly consisted of civil servants from State, Defense and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, as well as intelligence analysts and military officers.

This disparity persisted after the fall of the Soviet

Sally K. Horn, a retired member of the Senior Executive Service, is now a senior adviser to the assistant secretary of the Bureau of Verification, Compliance and Implementation. She wishes to thank the following T Family FSO Steering Group members for their advice and assistance in preparing this article: Eric Andersen, Bessy Bray, Thomas Cynkin, Timothy Sears, Barry Sternberger and Yvette Wong. However, the views expressed in this article are those of the author only, and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of State or the U.S. government.

Union, as well, during the burgeoning of negotiations relating to commercial trade, cooperative threat reduction, law enforcement and other activities with the states of the former Soviet Union. The lead negotiators and interlocutors within our government for these issues typically came from DOD, Commerce, the FBI or other non-State agencies, or from State's Civil Service personnel, with FSOs relegated to the role of facilitators (if that).

Carrots and Sticks

When I was an office director in functional policy offices at the Pentagon, I regularly sought out FSOs to complement my mixed civilian and military staff. While there was (and is) no shortage of outstanding officers in the Foreign Service, it was a real challenge to find anyone willing to accept such assignments, even though they offered a chance to make real progress on cutting-edge arms control, verification or nonproliferation issues. Generally speaking, the officers who accepted my invitation to work with us were either approaching the end of their careers or had already decided to sacrifice their chances for promotion to do something they saw as meaningful. (I would note that finding top-notch military officers also was a challenge before the Goldwater-Nichols Act, which requires "joint" experience for promotion, became law in 1986.)

Indeed, the latest guidance to Foreign Service members acknowledges that out-of-cone assignments — which, *de facto*, include assignments to most, if not all, of the functional policy bureaus and offices at State, as well as assignments to other agencies — are career busters. To quote the tips from the 2007 Foreign Service Selection Boards contained in State 30199: "Proven and ongoing competence in a primary cone is a requirement for both classwide and conal promotion. Particularly at the FS-2 level and above, extensive out-of-cone service could place employees at a disadvantage for promotion. ... The longer employees work out-of-cone, the more difficult it is for them to compete successfully and demonstrate potential to advance in their primary skill code."

It is no wonder, then, that many of the best and brightest members of the Foreign Service choose not to work in functional policy bureaus or outside agencies — even though most of the top items on our national security agenda are functional issues, not bilateral or even regional ones. These include preventing the development, use

and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; convincing other nations that it is in their own interest to do so, and then helping them build the capacity to stop WMD terrorism; working with other nations on practical solutions to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons that are helping to fuel regional and ethnic conflicts; identifying, negotiating and implementing effective verification measures to halt and roll back missile, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs in rogue states; coping with global climate change; and promoting democracy and human rights.

I would argue that all FSOs need more functional policy experience and exposure to do their jobs well. A diplomat in Africa responsible for delivering demarches to local officials of a member of the U.N. Security Council to solicit support for a resolution on the Iranian nuclear program should have enough understanding of nonproliferation matters to be able to answer basic questions that foreign interlocutors may pose in response — without having to come back to Washington for guidance. Similarly, an FSO on a U.S. team negotiating a nonproliferation agreement with a very recalcitrant government should have a sufficient appreciation of the history of arms control, and the advantages and drawbacks of alternative approaches, to know when to push back because the other side's proposals are deficient from a verification perspective. And an officer serving overseas with a Provincial Reconstruction Team should already have sufficient functional and interagency competencies to hit the ground running.

But how can the personnel system be reformed to encourage Foreign Service generalists to build up such expertise? The T Bureau has come up with a set of proposals and initiatives that warrant serious consideration by the department.

The T Family Initiative

About two years ago, then-Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Robert Joseph decided to find out why FSOs were not more fully represented in the three bureaus that, along with the under secretary's office, comprise the T family: International Security and Negotiations (ISN), Political-Military Affairs (PM) and Verification, Compliance and Implementation (VCI). He also sought advice on how to make assignments in those bureaus more attractive to FSOs.

To accomplish these goals, Under Secretary Joseph established a T Family Foreign Service Officer Working Group, open to all FSOs in those three bureaus. Its activities are managed by a steering group that includes a Foreign Service representative from each bureau, the senior FSO in the T front office, the T family's FSO HR management officer and me, a non-FSO facilitator.

In the summer of 2006, after conducting several meetings with FSOs in the three T bureaus, meeting with FSOs elsewhere in the department, and analyzing responses to a questionnaire sent to all T family FSOs, including those serving in T positions outside of the Harry S. Truman Building, the working group reached the following conclusions:

- **Service in the T family is not perceived by the Foreign Service community as career-enhancing, with good reason.** FSOs serving in our three bureaus face important impediments to advancement: The promotion system's subject-matter requirements focus on regional expertise and do not require functional expertise; and promotion boards and assignment panels are largely, if not exclusively, made up of officers who lack functional policy experience. Further, under the current system, regional bureaus bring candidates to panel for jobs in their embassies, and ambassadorial and DCM-level positions are vetted by committees that have no T representation.

- **The T bureaus' issues, mission and organization are not well understood within the Foreign Service.** One key misperception is that FSOs must already possess extensive technical expertise to work in T. In fact, while some positions do require such knowledge, most do not. And in many slots, a regional background can make the difference between successfully conveying our message and not being heard.

- **Cultural differences between the Foreign Service and the Civil Service (and the desire not to be in the minority) diminish the desirability of assignments in functional bureaus for FSOs.** There is a heavy preponderance of Civil Service employees in ISN, PM and VCI, so the working culture in those bureaus largely reflects their values and concerns: sub-

*All Foreign Service
generalists need
functional policy
experience and exposure
to do their jobs well.*

ject-matter expertise, limited career opportunities within State outside of the functional bureaus, and an advancement and reward system in which formal evaluations are not as central to one's career as they are in the Foreign Service.

Expanding, Encouraging and Rewarding Functional Policy Expertise

The group made a number of specific recommendations to address these issues, subsequently endorsed by the under secretary, that are aimed at leveling the playing field for promotion and onward assignment in the Foreign Service and expanding Foreign Service understanding of T issues. Here are some of the short-term steps that T has taken or is pursuing:

Training sessions for all supervisors and Foreign Service officers on how to write employee evaluation reports that will support promotion in the Foreign Service. At T's request, the Bureau of Human Resources organized three workshops focusing on this skill during 2007, all of which were well attended. In 2008, the FSO Working Group held two sessions for FSOs. Additionally, HR conducted a separate session for our raters and reviewers, who are largely political appointees or in the Civil Service. The latter session focused on what our raters and reviewers need to know to write Foreign Service evaluations that will get our stars recognized as such.

Participation in Foreign Service promotion boards. While not specifically recommended by the FSO Working Group, consistent with its spirit, the three T bureaus have encouraged eligible FSOs to volunteer to serve on promotion boards, leading to a greater number of T volunteers for such boards.

Active support and assistance to T FSOs and T FSO alumni during the bidding season. Last year, our under secretary, assistant secretaries and deputy assistant secretaries sent e-mails to bureau FSOs offering them active assistance and support. They followed up by advocating proactively with their regional counterparts and with assignment panels, upon request.

Formal, high-level recognition of outstanding performance. The new Under Secretary's Award for Excellence in International Security Affairs, announced

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in April, will honor the most significant contributions each year by an FSO and Civil Service employee, respectively, to the development or implementation of strategies and programs to advance the nation's and department's political-military, arms control, nonproliferation and verification and/or compliance agenda. These are the first-ever State Department awards conferred by an under secretary-level office, and will include a financial component comparable to that for department awards. All FSOs and civil servants at State, including those serving overseas, are eligible to compete. Runners-up also will be recognized.

Expansion of relevant opportunities, including at overseas posts, along with positions to support them. The department's Fiscal Year 2009 budget request includes proposals to fill 50 more political adviser slots, and to create mid-level POLAD-type positions to

The T Bureau's approach to attracting generalists warrants serious consideration.

provide advice to subordinate military units and commanders. Both proposals are important components of Sec. Rice's transformational diplomacy initiative, but will also be helpful in expanding understanding of, and appreciation for, security issues within the Foreign Service. As such, they should evolve over time into attractive assignment options for FSOs to develop or hone their functional policy skills.

While some contraction of FSO billets within T was required to meet departmental needs overseas, all three bureaus have taken steps to strengthen the remaining positions so that they provide even more of the types of responsibilities and opportunities relevant to promotion in the Foreign Service. And, consistent with the recommendations of the working group, the range of opportunities has been increased in some bureaus, and prior T-related experience is now a factor in selection for some of

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Promoting understanding of T Bureau functions within the Foreign Service. In July 2007, T Family representatives presented a three-hour orientation session open to all FSOs. This forum provided an opportunity for officers to learn about the responsibilities of each of the T bureaus, ask questions regarding issues that they expected to be asked to address in the next six months, develop contact lists, and schedule more in-depth consultations. To accommodate those who were unable to attend the orientation, the session and the supporting materials (including annotated directories of personnel

The T bureaus have also been taking some steps individually to strengthen collaboration with regional bureaus and overseas missions.

and issues) were placed on the intranet (on the T and bureau pages). A similar session is planned for this July; the video and written materials for it will also be posted online.

The T bureaus have also been taking some steps individually to strengthen collaboration with regional bureaus and overseas missions, including scheduling, when feasible, meetings by traveling assistant secretaries with embassy staffs, encouraging FSOs in T to network with their regional colleagues, and expanding training opportunities, both in-house and outside (including DOD).

Looking ahead, the T family of bureaus plan to hold an open house during the bidding cycle, broaden the bureaus' participation in annual POLAD and regional bureau-sponsored conferences, and lobby for expanding functional-policy training opportunities through the Foreign Service Institute.

FUNCTIONAL POLICY BUREAUS AND OFFICES

Functional policy bureaus and offices that do not have a conal or geographic affiliation include the following:

Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security (T)

- Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation (ISN)
- Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM)
- Bureau of Verification, Compliance and Implementation (VCI)

Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs (G)

- Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL)
- Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM)
- Bureau of Oceans, Environment and Science (OES)
- Office of International Women's Issues (G/IWI)
- Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (G/TIP)

- Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR)
- Bureau of International Organization Affairs (IO)
- Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL)
- Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism (S/CT)
- Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS)
- Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator (S/GAC)
- Office of War Crimes Issues (S/WCI)
- Policy Planning Staff (S/P)

Changing the Foreign Service Incentive Structure

While commendable, the Working Group and T recognized that the above efforts would provide only a partial remedy to the underlying problem. They therefore also recommended a number of structural changes to the way that the Foreign Service and State Department manage the Foreign Service.

From my perspective, implementing steps along the lines of their proposals also would go far in addressing my fundamental concern: ensuring that America has a Foreign Service capable of playing a meaningful role in solving the national security and foreign policy challenges of the 21st century.

Here are their recommendations:

Change the basis for promotion into the Senior Foreign Service. Eight of the department's 12 strategic goals for Fiscal Years 2007-2012 relate directly to functional policy issues. In the order listed in the precepts, these objectives center on: regional stability, counterterrorism, homeland security, weapons of mass destruction, international crime and drugs, American citizens, democracy and human rights, economic prosperity and security, social and environmental issues, humanitarian responses,

FOCUS

public diplomacy and public affairs, and management and organizational excellence.

Given the central role these issues play in our foreign policy agenda, assignment to a functional policy position should be a requirement for promotion to the Senior Foreign Service. Under the current precepts, however, there is no such requirement: regional experience in more than one region is sufficient. Of course, that change will take time to implement, to ensure that officers on the cusp of consideration for promotion are not unfairly disadvantaged. But it should be done, sooner rather than later.

Expand the group of informal and formal decisionmakers on overseas assignments and promotions to include officials from T. Including such representatives to serve on the informal assignment panels and formal assignment committees for mid- and lower-level overseas positions that deal prominently with T issues, and for chiefs of mission and deputy chiefs of mission, would ensure that these selection processes give

due weight to familiarity with arms control and security issues essential for effective performance in such positions. It would also strengthen regional-functional bureau collaboration.

Representation on the department's awards committee — which currently does not include any representative from the functional policy bureaus — would also signal recognition of the importance of those issues to State's overall mission. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of the other functional policy under secretaries in these processes, as well.

Establish overseas positions for advisers to embassies and missions on nonproliferation, counterproliferation, WMD/terrorism, political-military, and verification and compliance issues. State should consider increasing our overseas Foreign Service personnel assets to assist selected foreign countries or regional groups (e.g., the African Union, the Organization of American States or the ASEAN Regional Forum) in building their capacity in these areas.

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Addressing the Cultural Component

Other functional policy bureaus and offices could adopt at least some of the implemented recommendations outlined above — e.g., EER training sessions, bureau orientation and training sessions. As an additional incentive, I would note that implementation of these recommendations already has increased understanding within T of the differences in perspective between FSOs and Civil Service personnel.

While this trend is highly commendable, we need to go further. Mindful of this fact, the working group recommended that consideration be given to increasing the number of FSOs serving in T. The rationale is that changing the mix of personnel necessarily would change the institutional culture, thereby enhancing the attractiveness of T assignments and Foreign Service engagement in the bureaus' missions.

The FSOs on the working group appreciated that increasing their representation could affect Civil Service opportunities, particularly for management positions.

They therefore recommended that the issue be addressed with sensitivity, taking into account broader factors, such as the departmentwide mix of Foreign and Civil Service positions and career development options for both groups. (In that spirit, regional bureaus should also provide more opportunities for State's Civil Service cohort.)

Narrowing the cultural divide between Foreign and Civil Service employees — and between regional and functional bureau personnel — at State and the other foreign affairs agencies must be a priority. As a bonus, progress will make State more effective, increasing its bureaucratic clout.

Ultimately, however, implementing structural changes to encourage and promote functional policy expertise as much as regional and country expertise is even more important. Only through such changes will the department be successful in drawing more FSOs into functional policy assignments, encouraging them to develop the functional policy expertise that the Foreign Service requires to meet the challenges of the 21st century. ■

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THE MOVEMENT TO EMPOWER LOCALLY ENGAGED STAFF

W

EMPOWERING FOREIGN SERVICE NATIONAL EMPLOYEES
IN OUR OVERSEAS MISSIONS SOUNDS LIKE A NO-BRAINER.
BUT THERE ARE REAL DOWNSIDES TO THE IDEA.

BY MICHAEL BRICKER

hen I first joined the Foreign Service 18 years ago, I was a bit surprised by how wary other agencies were of the Department of State, especially in security matters. But over the years, I have gained a better understanding of the reasons behind that unfortunate attitude.

Consider the Collaborative Management Initiative (originally known as the Copenhagen Management Initiatives, and later as the Corporate Management Initiatives). This concept was developed and is being shepherded along by the Regional Initiatives Council, set up to identify ways that State Department offices can improve service while reducing costs. The council is comprised of the executive directors from the six regional bureaus as well as directors from the Management Bureau's Office of Policy Review and Interagency Liaison.

A key mechanism for achieving those twin goals is called Locally Engaged Staff Empowerment. The LES

Michael Bricker, an FS-1 information management officer in London, joined the Foreign Service in 1990. He has previously served in Warsaw, Monrovia, Seoul (twice) and New York, and recently received a master's degree in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College. The views expressed here are those of the author only.

category encompasses two groups of employees working at our overseas diplomatic missions: Foreign Service National employees from each host country and American citizens resident there (i.e., not family members of Foreign Service personnel).

Specifically, LES Empowerment calls for local staff members at overseas posts to completely take over responsibilities for functions such as financial management, general services and human resources from Foreign Service officers. State acknowledges that making this shift carries significant startup costs, but maintains that the net financial savings will still be substantial because the department will no longer have to cover the considerably higher pay and benefits that direct-hire Americans (i.e., members of the Foreign Service) in those positions receive.

At first glance, the idea does indeed provide a cozy feeling that fits with our egalitarian tradition. But on closer examination, that warm glow should trigger some alarms. In fact, if we move ahead with LES Empowerment, we need to have plenty of fire trucks standing by.

Post (In)Security

Instead, three distinct flaws should lead State to abandon this proposal before it does real harm to our organization and country: security, costs and accountability.

First, how in the world does it make sense to allow locally engaged staff members to run vital offices like GSO, FMO and HRO without daily oversight by U.S. personnel? Unless every post only hires expatriate American citizens for these positions, they will have to give Foreign Service Nationals unprecedented access. And let's be honest, please: given widespread staff shortages and crushing workloads, meaningful supervision of LES-run sections would not occur.

At a minimum, the potential for breaches of privacy is staggering. Even without access to classified information, determined employees could assemble enough bits of financial data to draw fairly accurate conclusions. And at worst, such access would open up to the host government sensitive personal information regarding mission personnel. What wonderful fodder for intelligence services!

Let me cite a parallel from my own experience. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, I was employed by Citibank. I very much enjoyed the work and even considered pursuing an overseas position with the company.

Let's say I was working for Citibank overseas and a U.S. intelligence organization asked me to pass along any interesting information I acquired about my host country. Would I? Sure, in a New York minute. Above all, I'm a loyal American. The following question then arises: Why do we expect anything but the same national loyalty from the host-country citizens we employ?

Then there is the issue of physical security. Anyone who has been in the Foreign Service long enough learns the difference between being protected by local contractors and by Marine security guards. I personally have never seen an embassy controlled by local contractors that cannot be easily penetrated. Couple this reality with the fact that a facsimile of our building pass can be found through various photos of people wearing them in previous editions of *State* magazine, readily available on the Internet, and you have a train wreck waiting to happen.

Last but certainly not least, we should be concerned about the impact of this initiative on the security of computer networks. Back in 2004, I completed the Manager Information Assurance Training run by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security. It was a good course, providing lots of detail about information technology security and the breaches that can occur. At one point, the instructors

***LES empowerment
has three major
flaws: security, costs
and accountability.***

demonstrated the step-by-step process through which Information Resource Management Bureau administrators can access e-mail accounts to ensure that the user community is abiding by all of the security regulations.

Such checks are supposed to be done randomly, but I soon realized that several FSN personnel in the class were

learning how to read the e-mails of other people. I became so concerned that I stayed after class one day and questioned the two instructors about this (they happened to be outsourced contractors). They responded that DS had approved the training and the target audience, so there was no need for corrective action.

Also, don't forget the recent revelations that consular contractors repeatedly read the passport files of the three leading presidential candidates and other prominent Americans. Supposedly, they did so only out of idle curiosity. But imagine what damage they could have done if malice had been their motivation.

Particularly in friendly, English-speaking countries, we can easily forget that LES personnel belong to a different society, which may have a significantly distinct political agenda. Letting down our guard further by removing even the vestige of close American oversight is misguided.

Maybe other agencies' concerns about our organization have a foundation after all!

Follow the Money

The second downside of this program is financial. Yes, implementing this program would generate some short-term savings. After all, if Dell or FedEx instantaneously terminated all its floor managers and foremen on the assumption that any intelligent employee could perform their work without oversight, I am sure that profits would tick up — at least for the first month or two.

However, these companies are in business for the long haul and know that such a short-sighted move would seriously backfire. There is no substitute for the "value added" that experienced professionals bring to the workplace. This is particularly true of Foreign Service employees, who draw on the expertise they've gained at many previous posts.

Even if that weren't the case, the initial savings would still be negated by the cost of the fraud investigations that would surely follow. Putting local staff in charge of finan-

cial functions without direct American supervision is simply not fair to them. It's the same reason that banks clear ATMs of all money before servicing them — not because the service personnel are corrupt, but to protect them in case of a discrepancy.

Finally, the new system lacks accountability. Unlike American Foreign Service members, FSNs at our diplomatic missions cannot be prosecuted by the United States government. Washington can only use the host government's legal system — whether it is honest or corrupt, efficient or chaotic — to pursue a non-American member who violates the public trust.

Let's Empower Americans

So are we doomed never to cut costs if we scrap the LES Empowerment proposal? No, but invoking measures that will improve efficiency, save resources and not impair overall security will take work and considerable planning, including working with Congress. Perhaps a plan could be implemented called “American Empower-

ment” to give U.S. government personnel the necessary resources and authority to carry out their functions at overseas missions.

Over the course of the years, the authority of individual decisionmakers within the Foreign Service structure to act has been gradually usurped by safe, non-confrontational committees and bureaucratic processes. Instead of creating a whole new set of problems, how about allowing management officers to operate like their counterparts in the corporate world? That approach works because those employees know that unless they make clear-cut, effective decisions, they'll soon be unemployed. This is not a bad incentive to ensure good leadership and is probably more effective than mandatory training.

But let's not stop there. The infrastructure that has been created just to ensure that a Foreign Service employee is not being reimbursed \$10 too much on a hotel bill is a ludicrous waste of funds. American personnel are trusted not to walk out of the mission or the department with classified documents, yet they have to

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If all travel were approached using the flat per diem model, obviating the need to keep receipts in almost all cases, the number of positions — possibly entire offices — that could be eliminated would be substantial. To reassure those worried about fraud, regulations could be adopted to ensure that any cheating would result in an immediate termination of employment.

Alas, such a sensible approach would require a total revision of the Foreign Affairs Manual, which, in turn, would require congressional approval. This may be why it has not been advocated or attempted. Apparently, it is much easier to create a system that only requires some tweaking here and there, all of which can be done under the radar. Even better, the originators of the program can collect awards for the short-term savings and be long gone by the time an investigation by the Office of the Inspector General, Government Accountability Office or media organizations turns up the many weaknesses of the

approach.

To put it another way, perhaps we need to replace “rightsizing” with “right reasoning.” We should begin from scratch by taking an objective look at the reasons for our presence in each country and determine how best to allocate scarce resources to carry out the mission. We should also remember that an American embassy is just that: its primary goal is to support and represent *American* interests, which at times are vastly different from those of our host government.

In closing, let me be clear: Locally engaged staff are the backbone of the Foreign Service. The vast majority of them are outstanding, dependable, conscientious, reliable, responsible and honorable. Many of them have risked (and lost) their lives trying to protect our embassies, both the people and property. But we should repay their exceptional service by protecting them from being placed in the awkward position in which LES Empowerment will put them. We owe them, at the very least, that much. ■



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BUILDING ON THE GOLDWATER-NICHOLS ACT

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION BETWEEN STATE AND DEFENSE HAS THE POTENTIAL TO MITIGATE THE STAFFING SHORTFALLS THAT CONTINUE TO HAMPER BOTH DEPARTMENTS.

BY TIMOTHY K. HSIA

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continue to place severe strains not only on the military but also the State Department and other foreign affairs agencies. Some commentators have cast this problem as a rivalry (usually reflecting less well on the civilian component, unfairly slammed for supposedly not pulling its own weight), but that focus is misplaced.

In fact, as the success of numerous Provincial Reconstruction Teams in both war zones demonstrates, interagency cooperation between State and Defense has the potential to mitigate the staffing shortfalls that continue to hamper both agencies. For example, the military should be providing security escorts for State Department officials, rather than private contractors like Blackwater. After all, who better to provide security than the military, and who better to assist with reconciliation efforts and infrastructure development than Foreign Service officers?

Instead, there is little direct coordination between State and DOD at the ground level, where it is most needed. As a result, the military finds itself in a quagmire in which it is required to conduct a full range of operations ill-suited to its current force structure. Foreign Service officers find themselves excluded from the decisionmaking process because of the danger they face whenever they request permission to venture beyond the Green Zone in Baghdad or into the field elsewhere. And both organizations find themselves increas-

ingly dependent on private contractors to function in the field.

The NSC: Missing in Action

Ideally, the National Security Council would ensure that joint planning produces operations that achieve results consistent with overarching political goals. Interagency coordination does occur at the highest levels within the NSC and at joint headquarters. Unfortunately, however, for some time now successive national security advisers have proven utterly incapable of coordinating efforts by competing bureaucracies.

In an attempt to paper over this deficiency, the Bush administration created the position of assistant to the president for Iraq, with Lt. General Douglas E. Lute serving in that capacity. As the so-called war czar, Gen. Lute is responsible for synchronizing efforts by all governmental agencies concerning Iraq and Afghanistan.

Paradoxically, however, that appointment merely highlights the weaknesses inherent in the current system. Lute must work with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, as well as with the Central Command combatant commander and the Multinational Corps-Iraq commander. This abundance of senior officers within the decisionmaking process raises the question: Is there any unity of command within Iraq or Afghanistan?

Needed: A New Goldwater-Nichols Act

The antidote to the current epidemic of rogue personal security contractors and lack of intergovernmental agency coordination is to enact legislation that would synchronize the operations of the military, State Department and other

Timothy K. Hsia is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, where he received a degree in military history. A U.S. Army captain, he is currently deployed on his second tour to Iraq.

governmental agencies within the national security apparatus. Fortunately, an effective model exists.

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 was the most profound, forward-looking national security legislation of the last quarter-century, perhaps best known for creating the office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Since then, the military services have made vast strides in fusing their organizations and operations. In Iraq, for instance, U.S. Army units like mine work in conjunction with their sister services down to the platoon level.

The military has become a one-stop shop for the nation's overseas requirements, from defeating opposing militaries to nationbuilding and humanitarian assistance, thanks to Goldwater-Nichols. But this has been a mixed blessing. As the strongest and most visible portion of the national security apparatus, the Department of Defense has gradually become the agency which the United States relies upon for the majority of contingencies. Both in Iraq and Afghanistan, the military finds itself conducting nationbuilding efforts and pursuing the reconciliation of sectarian grievances, even as it continues to battle insurgents.

By passing an interagency Goldwater-Nichols Act that encompasses the State Department and the other foreign affairs agencies, as well as the armed forces, Congress could ensure unity of command, effort and resources. This rationalization would maximize each entity's strengths while minimizing redundancies and weaknesses. That formalized chain of command would be held responsible for ensuring that our nation's goals and foreign policy efforts are realized.

In particular, just as the original legislation created a chairman for the JCS, the new version should establish a Foreign Policy Director — who should be a civilian — in order to orchestrate all the instruments of national policy.

***Even with its abundant
resources and best
efforts, America can
never singlehandedly
rebuild a country or
eliminate insurgents.***

Only an individual who is unaligned with either executive agency can be unbiased and possess the authority to focus on the nation's foreign policy goals, as opposed to protecting traditional spheres of influence.

It would be unpardonable if the current Army secretary were to criticize an Air Force chief because his airmen only serve six-month tours, as opposed to the Army's 15-month tours. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs would not allow it. Similar infighting between the State Department and military would not be tolerated under a Foreign Policy Director's leadership.

The Right Tools for the Job

The 2002 book *Eating Soup with a Knife* by Lt. Colonel John Nagl has gained favor among many officers within the U.S. Army for its recommendations on improving counterinsurgency operations. Nagl's basic premise is that the military should embrace wholeheartedly the conundrums posed by nationbuilding and counterinsurgency. His work is incomplete, however, because it focuses predominantly on what the military can do to defeat insurgents. He does not adequately factor in the potential of civilian agencies like the State

Department to assist in that effort.

In fact, the assumption that the military should always take the lead in counterinsurgency is unwarranted. The underlying problem is that the military — a knife, in Nagl's analogy — is ill suited to fight insurgencies because of its very structure and form. Accordingly, the United States needs to employ the State Department and other civilian agencies as the spoon in its counterinsurgency strategy.

In a March 2007 article published in the *Foreign Service Journal*, Dr. Barbara Stephenson, the deputy senior adviser to the Secretary of State and deputy coordinator for Iraq, stated that "diplomats have longer time horizons than the military" and that counterinsurgency work is "20 percent military and 80 percent everything else. The Foreign Service brings the strategic vision to the picture." If this percentage of work is translated to manpower, then our force structure in Iraq and Afghanistan is the opposite of what is ideal.

Critics often insist that security must be in place before diplomacy and infrastructure improvements can commence in a war zone. But this conviction ignores the fact that there are no phased timelines in counterinsurgency, and the reality that security, proper governance and infrastructure development should happen concurrently. Otherwise, it is impossible to sustain change for the better.

We must also realize that we will never be fully successful in nationbuilding and counterinsurgency efforts. Even with its abundant resources and best efforts, America can never singlehandedly rebuild a country or eliminate insurgents — particularly when the local leaders are corrupt, inept or less than fully committed to the effort.

But that does not mean progress is unattainable. In fact, the kind of joint coordination between the military and State Department that will make

it possible is already happening in the field.

Preserve the PRT Model

Provincial Reconstruction Teams were developed in Afghanistan and, later, Iraq, in response to an awareness at the ground level that coordination between the military and other civilian agencies was critical — not because of interagency coordination back in Washington. For that very reason, and despite their proven effectiveness, PRT operations are still being hindered by the lack of coordination concerning resources, staffing, structure, organization and a host of other factors that could be resolved if military and civilian agencies were better meshed under a Foreign Policy Director.

Indeed, many of the current dilemmas we face could have been avoided if an FPD already existed.

For example, many experts have stated that PRTs should have been organized prior to the invasion of Iraq in order to aid with stability and support operations immediately after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. The delay in establishing those teams highlights the current weaknesses in interagency coordination to meet foreign policy objectives.

The current plan to embed Provincial Reconstruction Teams down to the brigade combat-team level is a commendable goal because it will harness the skills inherent in both military and civilian agencies. However, this is not enough: the process should be pushed all the way down to the battalion level. This would exponentially increase the array of options when those commanders are confronted with issues beyond the realm of security and kinetic operations.

In particular, these leaders would

greatly benefit from the expertise and guidance that Foreign Service officers bring to issues relating to stability and support operations. The success PRTs have enjoyed thus far is due to skillful improvisation by those personnel who are most directly experiencing the pain caused by the lack of proper coordination. Those are lessons a Foreign Policy Director should learn from to avoid repeating the painful lessons of recent years.

PRTs are not only well suited to counterinsurgency conflicts. They are also ideal for humanitarian aid missions and in the expansion of military and diplomatic ties between the U.S. and other countries at the mid-level, both within the military and civilian cohorts. For all those reasons, we would lose a great deal of experience and expertise if the PRT program were eliminated at the end of the current conflicts in Afghanistan



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*Service in cross-agency
positions should also
be stressed.*

and Iraq — as happened when its predecessor, the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support program, was terminated immediately after the Vietnam War.

Service in cross-agency positions should also be stressed. Currently, the military rewards soldiers who have served in such positions with promotions. The office of the Foreign Policy Director should create similar incentives for aspiring State Department officials.

As part of that effort, advanced training should be given to a diverse student body that includes both Foreign Service and military officers. Promoting interagency cooperation in the academic environment will create a climate of information sharing and understanding that will pay dividends when these individuals work together in the field.

The Defense Department has already envisioned a plan to greatly increase the size of the armed forces. The Foreign Policy Director should similarly stress expansion of the State Department and other civilian agencies to meet the demand of future operations. Defense Secretary Robert Gates has repeatedly backed this goal in public addresses.

Hopefully, in the near future we will see the military and the State Department working even more closely at lower echelons, where policy meets reality. But that will only happen if the current bureaucratic infighting in Washington ceases. ■

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A LAGOS DIARY: DYING REQUEST FOR A KOSHER BURIAL

IN THIS TRUE STORY, AN FS COUPLE RESPOND TO A FRIEND'S DYING
WISH TO BE BURIED AS A JEW — IN NIGERIA.

BY LAWRENCE COHEN

The Lagos Women's Book Club met every Thursday afternoon in the home of one of its members. This usually necessitated a mad dash for my wife, Marla. Unlike most of the club members, she worked full time. Both of us served at the U.S. consulate general.

With a membership that was fairly balanced between expatriates and Nigerians, the club was quite popular. Indeed, more expatriate women sought membership than there were available slots. Selections were made judiciously, generally by invitation through someone already well-established within the group. Marla knew she was fortunate to be a member and welcomed the intellectual and social stimulation the group offered.

Nina Mba was a longtime regular in the club. Australian by birth, Nina was married to an Ibo. They had met while both were students at an Australian university. With her new husband, Nina moved to eastern Nigeria — Biafra — in the mid-1960s, just in time for Nigeria's civil war. A historian, author and editorialist, she was a Lagos legend. Her remarks at the club, Marla noted, reflected a quick and curious intellect.

I met Nina on only one occasion, a day I arrived early to

Lawrence Cohen, a recently retired FSO, served overseas in Mexico, Honduras, India, Hungary, Brazil, Afghanistan and Nigeria, where the events recounted here occurred in 2002. Now a consultant, he is assisting U.S. investors in Afghanistan and also teaches tradecraft at FSI.

pick up Marla. She was a somewhat tall, heavy-set woman, in her mid-50s, who wore large glasses and was dressed in a colorful Nigerian wrap. We exchanged pleasantries.



We were already in bed when the telephone call came. Marla reacted with stunned silence before replacing the phone in its cradle. Nina had died a day earlier, the victim of a botched hysterectomy at the Lagos Military Hospital. Our initial reaction was anger. Why undergo such an operation in Lagos? The family could easily have afforded treatment in Europe or the U.S. Indeed, as we would soon learn, three of Nina's children were doctors. The eldest lived in Chicago!

Later, we received a second telephone call. It was from Nina's husband, Ben. He was kind, his grief palpable but controlled. I offered condolences. The voice at the other end of the line paused. Through a close friend of the family and active book group member, Ben had learned that we were Jewish. That is true, I said. "Then perhaps you can help me," Ben said. "Nina's dying wish was to be buried as a Jew."

A Jewish burial? In Nigeria?! I told Ben we would do what we could.



With a population of 12 million or more, Lagos is sub-Saharan Africa's largest city. We knew with certainty, however, that Lagos possessed no Jewish community. There were Jews, of course. A few Israeli businessmen with families in Tel Aviv pursued Nigeria's unique business opportunities. Each Yom Kippur, services were held at the home of one of them. But the tiny Israeli embassy had relocated to the

Nigerian capital, Abuja, and Lagos possessed no synagogue, no community center and no Chevra Kedusah burial society. The few Jews resident in Lagos led very secular lives. The Israeli who led Yom Kippur services each year had recently departed Lagos.

We began with four couples: Marla and me; David Rosenbloom, the consulate's agriculture counselor — who, of course, was on extended travel out of the country — and his wife Vikki; Michelle and her non-Jewish husband Stephan, who worked at the Canadian embassy; and Sharon Polishek, second secretary at the Israeli embassy, and his Australian-born wife Shannon. To prepare for a proper Jewish funeral, we were not much of a brain trust. We needed guidance, time and, most importantly, a minyan (quorum) of 10 Jewish men in order to conduct a service.

I consulted my limited Jewish library, beginning with all three editions of the *Jewish Book of Why*. What was the Jewish philosophy regarding death, the most critical rituals for preparing the body, the graveside prayers not contained in my prayer book? How should I speak with the family? I put in a plea for help to the rabbi of our congregation in Arlington, Va. She sent me advice and faxed pages of helpful instructions and liturgy. This was the easy part, as I soon found out.



Located in Lekki Estates on the outskirts of the city, the Mba residence was an upper-end, two-story detached home. Sandy, rubble-strewn fields separated it from neighboring houses. Rutted dirt lanes without names linked it to the main road.

Marla and I arrived after dark, but the house was well-lit. The gate opened into a small patio and driveway. On a table by the front door a condolence book lay open. A friend of the family welcomed us. We were

***We knew with certainty,
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community.***

ushered past a score of visitors to a second room.

Ben was awaiting our arrival. His appearance was striking: In his late 50s, he possessed the smooth face of a man decades younger, and his hair, a very distinguished salt-and-pepper, was straight out of Hollywood casting. Even in his evident sorrow, his charm and charisma were mesmerizing. Three grown children entered the room. They were even more beautiful and radiant than he, testimony to their unique combination of Ibo and Australian (Jewish) blood. Despite their sadness, all displayed an intense curiosity about their mother's Judaism.

In Ben's living room, we discussed the Jewish philosophy of death. The concepts made sense to Ben and his children. For perhaps the first time, they said, they could appreciate Nina's special cultural identity. The Jewish process of death, I explained, sought to heal the living. Unlike Christian doctrine, Judaism did not focus on an afterlife. Nina's deeds on earth, in this life, we agreed, were indeed those of a righteous person. That thought provided comfort for her family and made her memory a blessing.

We spoke of the rituals of death. On one issue, Jewish tradition would, unavoidably, be violated: Nina's funeral and burial would not be prompt. In fact, in deference to Ibo tradition and the arrival of close family members, the period between her death and her interment would be weeks. I

explained the various mourning periods, beginning with the seven-day shiva, and described other customs within the house of mourners such as covering up mirrors and the family's use of stools or the floor instead of comfortable chairs. With an English transliteration, we practiced reading the Kaddish, the mourners' prayer. We discussed the proper preparations, including dressing the body in a white linen shroud. Even the placement of Nina's grave site in Ben's home community of Onitsha had to be done in proper fashion. Ben agreed to all.

Yet in the back of my mind, one concern overrode all others: getting a minyan.



Nina's remains rested in a public morgue on Ikoyi Island, not far from our residence. Jewish law dictated that only women and non-family members touch the body, and Marla, Michelle and Vikki were the only Jewish women available.

To enter the portals of a Lagos morgue took courage, especially when the latex gloves had been forgotten. Death in Nigeria comes in many forms. Diseases unheard of in our own country are endemic. Sanitation is a foreign concept. Refrigeration? We were skeptical. Electricity in Lagos is sporadic at best. After more than a week, in what condition would Nina's body be? The three women proceeded with trepidation.

The mortuary was freezing! The lightly dressed women were not prepared for the chill, which got colder. An attendant came over and offered to assist. He smiled at the three white faces and held out his hand. "Call me Hitler," he said. Amazingly, the orderly's nametag confirmed that his name *was* Hitler. Three hearts almost ceased beating to match the fourth on the slab. It was another cosmic Nigerian surprise.

After recovering their composure, the women approached the remains.

Nina's body was preserved but very bloated. A registered nurse, Vikki took the lead. She clipped a fingernail and cut a lock of hair for the family. A thorough ritual washing of the entire body was out of the question. Instead, the women performed a brief swipe of the head to symbolize the washing procedure. The first stage in meeting Nina's deathbed wish had been accomplished. Outside the morgue, two of Nina's children received the fingernail and hair.



Nigeria's capital, Abuja, is located in the middle of the country, a symbol of the new Nigeria. A stay at the Nikon Hilton, the city's "premier" hotel, meant endless hassles, bickering with registration, long waits for elevators and inevitable heartburn — good reasons to have a beer at the lobby bar. Cradling my Heineken, I struck up a

***He smiled at the three
white faces and held out
his hand. "Call me
Hitler," he said.***

conversation with a businessman. As it turned out, he was Israeli, one of the Lagos crowd. On this trip to Abuja, my stars were aligned.

I told him of Nina's deathbed wish and the progress we had made so far in meeting it. He understood immediately. "No problem," he said. "We'll get the men together. Just let me know when and where." His confi-

dence filled me with relief. Getting a minyan had always been my principal concern. But in my mind, an alarm was set off by the Israeli-accented "no problem" and the knowledge that whatever can go wrong in Nigeria will.

Ben set a date and time for the ceremony. The minyan would gather at his home on Friday at 12:30 p.m., I informed the Israeli businessman. We agreed to meet at noon in front of Megaplaza, Victoria Island's high-end shopping outlet — developed by an Israeli, of course. From there, we would caravan to Ben's home. As the dirt lanes at Lekki Estates had no names, giving directions was almost pointless. Sharon, the Israeli diplomat, would fly in from Abuja that morning and meet us at Megaplaza. If everyone showed, we would have 10 men, our minyan. The women would meet us at Ben's house.

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Lagos is notorious for its chronic “go slows.” Fridays are the worst, as Victoria Island becomes completely gridlocked. I left my office with half an hour to spare and still arrived at Megaplaza five minutes after 12. For another five minutes, I stood alone. Then my businessman contact appeared. Two more Israelis followed, one on a motorcycle. Ten minutes later, Sharon arrived. He had come straight from the airport. Time was slipping away and we were only halfway to the minyan.

I feared we would fail to get the requisite quorum, and began pacing. Cell phones were still a novelty in Nigeria, and I did not yet have one. But count on the Israelis not to be so technologically challenged! They pulled their cell phones off their belts like six-shooters and began calling the others. “Yitzhak, where the hell are you? We need you!” one shouted in rapid-fire Hebrew. “No excuses, this is a mitzvah!” By 12:40, the rest had appeared. On the Megaplaza curb stood exactly 10 men — 10 Jewish men. We set out into the traffic maelstrom and reached Ben’s home at 1:15 p.m.

Following the odyssey of getting there, the brief service was rather anticlimactic. As soon as we finished the prayers, the Israelis offered their condolences to the family and quickly departed.



Jewish interments cannot occur on Saturday, the Sabbath. So Nina’s would be on Sunday in Onitsha, Ben’s hometown, halfway across southern Nigeria on the east bank of the Niger River. By car, the drive is seven hours on a good day. Unfortunately, Nigeria rarely has good days. The highway between Lagos and Onitsha is notoriously potholed and dangerous. Parts of the road are completely washed out.

Most of the immediate family traveled to Onitsha Friday afternoon after

***With Nina’s friends,
we stood along the side
of the road to await the
next miracle.***

the service. Ben arranged for a bus to take friends, including the Jewish contingent — Marla, Michelle, Sharon and me — on Saturday.

For three hours, all went well. Traffic was light. The bus reached the main road and made good time. Sitting in one of the front rows, however, I noticed that the engine seemed to be struggling. Heavy condensation emerged from the overhead air conditioning system. The gearbox beside the driver emitted too much heat. The engine began to run rough. Then the bus died, drifting to the side of the road. No amount of coaxing or cajoling by our driver could resuscitate it. We were marooned in the middle of Nigeria, beyond the service range of cellular phones, along a stretch of road well known for highway banditry.

With Nina’s friends, we stood along the side of the road to await the next miracle.

Soon it came, in the form of an SUV. Our Good Samaritan was Pamela Watson, book group member, adventurer and author, who was also on her way to Nina’s burial. Our stranded Nigerian companions insisted we squeeze in and travel with Pamela. We did, promising to send help as soon as we reached the next town. The group agreed to reunite at a roadside motel in Benin City, about two hours away.

Despite the overcrowded vehicle, time passed rapidly as Pamela regaled us with vignettes of her solo journey

across Africa by bicycle. Forty minutes later, we stopped at a petrol station, where Pam hired two minivans to return to the broken bus. In the meantime, our fellow bus passengers had succeeded in flagging down other vehicles to carry them to Benin City. By the time they arrived, we were already enjoying frosty Cokes in the motel’s darkened lounge. Free of the bus from hell, we planned our next move. Our destination was Asaba, just across the Niger River from Onitsha. Ben had arranged for us to spend Saturday night at the Grand Hotel.



On Sunday morning, a driver picked us up and took us across the Niger River to the family home. Ben had followed my instructions meticulously. A water bowl was placed by the gate leading to Nina’s grave for washing hands after leaving the cemetery and before re-entering the home. To shade well-wishers from the hot sun, a tent had been set up.

The chairs soon filled with Nina’s family and friends, including many of Lagos’ esteemed literati. Some were living encyclopedias of Nigerian history and culture. All had made the trek to Onitsha to bid goodbye to their close friend. In comparison to what these people could say, I feared my own words of comfort would be shallow.

Yet once the service started, words seemed to come out of my mouth effortlessly. I had learned much during the last couple of weeks about this special woman whom I met only once. Others spoke of Nina from close personal experience. After the eulogies, the casket was placed in the grave. We recited the Kaddish and tossed dirt onto the casket, helping the deceased return to the earth, as she must. The mourners filed past and we adjourned into the house, having closed the book on Nina’s last wish to be buried as a Jew.

Inside, Nina’s sister Margaret in-

roduced herself. She had traveled to Nigeria from Australia, arriving only the day before. She told us the story of her family. They had never been devout in their Judaism. In fact, their mother was not even Jewish. Yet she understood completely her sister's last wish. Their father, now deceased, was a Holocaust survivor who had reached Australia soon after the war. Nina was the oldest child and very close to her father.

Even though Nina had lived in Nigeria for 35 years, this was Margaret's first visit to the country. A tinge of regret entered her voice, possibly for not coming sooner. Her eyes moistened. But she soon brightened up.

"This place is interesting," she said. "Perhaps I can spend some time here and travel around."

Nina would have liked that. ■

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AFSA NEWS

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS DAY 2008

Memorial Plaque Ceremony Honors Fallen Colleagues

BY SHAWN DORMAN

On Foreign Affairs Day, May 2, two names were added to the AFSA Memorial Plaques during a moving ceremony in the State Department diplomatic entrance. The ceremony honors those Foreign Service personnel who lost their lives while serving their country overseas. With the addition of the two names

— Steven Thomas Stefani IV and John Michael Granville — the total number of names on the plaques has reached 227.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the creation of the AFSA Memorial Plaques. The first plaque was unveiled on March 3, 1933, by Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson at the entrance to what is now

the Eisenhower Executive Office Building next to the White House to honor Foreign Service colleagues who lost their lives overseas.

When first created, the AFSA Plaque was inscribed with 65 names representing over 150 years of history. Since then, in just 75 years, an additional 162 names have been inscribed on the two plaques, memorializing deaths in 70 different countries.

AFSA President John Naland gave the opening remarks at the ceremony and presided over the presentation of the colors by the U.S. Armed Forces Color Guard. He then introduced Deputy Secretary John Negroponte, who presided over the ceremony and read a message from President Bush. Attending the ceremony were family members, friends and colleagues of the men being honored as well as Foreign Agricultural Service Administrator Michael Yost, U.S. Forest Service Associate Chief Sally Collins, USAID Assistant Administra-



AFSA President John Naland, with Deputy Secretary John Negroponte, Diana Negroponte and Director General Harry Thomas, opening the Plaque Ceremony.



Deputy Secretary Negroponte greets families at the Plaque Ceremony.



In This Issue:

Briefs: Aggeler Is Back.....	58
VP State: The Next FS Generation ..	59
AFSA-PAC Treasurer's Report	60
Issue Brief: Foreign Assistance Reform.....	61
VP FCS: Unfinished Business.....	62
Legislative Update.....	63
Classifieds	64

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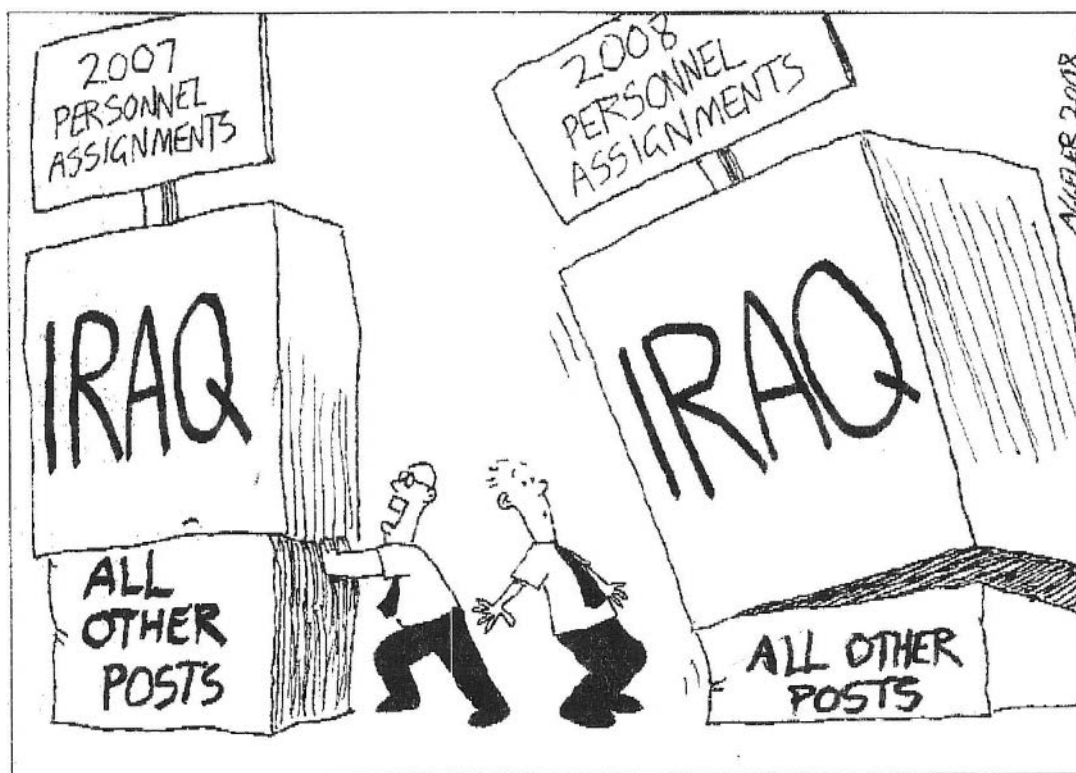
Continued on page 60

AFSA NEWS BRIEFS



Life in the Foreign Service

■ BY BRIAN AGGELER



“Gosh, what a relief to have that behind us!”

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The Next Generation of the Foreign Service

The future of the Foreign Service will one day be in the hands of those now doing their first and second tours overseas in the entry-level ranks. One of the best things about serving as AFSA State VP is having the opportunity to get to know quite a few of these new colleagues. Not only does the AFSA leadership meet with each and every entering generalist and specialist class, but I've had the good fortune over the past two years to participate in five regional conferences that have brought together FS entry-level professionals — no, we don't call them JOs any more — from posts all over the world. I write this column fresh from the experience of attending the Near Eastern Affairs and South and Central Asian Affairs Bureaus' entry-level conferences in Cairo and Chennai, respectively, both of which took place this spring.

These gatherings give us the opportunity to rub elbows with our more junior members and talk to them candidly about the battles that AFSA is fighting on their behalf on the home front. But more importantly, we get a chance to hear what is on their minds as they embark on their careers and are beginning to discover for themselves the challenges confronting the Foreign Service today. Not surprisingly, they have a lot to say — and a lot of questions and concerns. I have found these exchanges to be extremely revealing.

First of all, our ELPs today are a remarkably impressive group. They are bright, competitive and knowledgeable about a wide range of foreign affairs issues. Most seem extraordinarily enthusiastic and ready to take on the daunting tasks associated with “transformational” diplomacy in unstable, conflict-ridden areas. Many of them have brought extensive real-world experience into the Service with them, ranging from obscure foreign languages to unique substantive job skills to practical know-how in managing people and running organizations efficiently. Quite a few have come to the Foreign Service from previous careers in the private sector.

As a result, they have high expectations for fairness in promotions and assignments, bureaucratic efficiency, job satisfaction and equitable compensation for their work. They have begun to live in our system and, frankly, many of them are not impressed with what they see — compared to what they have observed and experienced outside of government.

They are frustrated by what they perceive as petty and arbitrary regulations that unnecessarily complicate life for FS members. They are shocked by the chronic underfunding and understaffing of the Foreign Service, arguably worse today than ever. They are appalled by the ever-widening pay disparity for FS members who serve overseas. They are struggling with what they are coming to believe is a lack of family-friendliness in our careers,

with an increasing number of separated families, spouses unable to pursue meaningful work overseas, and domestic partners with no official status.

I fear that a continued failure to address these problems in a serious way may eventually drive many of these talented ELPs away from our profession. One of the most disturbing statistics that emerged from AFSA's worldwide membership survey last fall was that nearly half of ELPs — more than 1,000 of whom responded — stated that recent developments have made it less likely they would remain in the Foreign Service for a full career. Perhaps more so than in previous generations, our ELPs feel they have other options that will give them fulfilling international careers with less rigid bureaucracy and with better pay.

I have heard a similar refrain over and over again in private discussions with ELPs. It is invariably some version of the following: “The Foreign Service was always my dream career, and I'm happy to serve in difficult and dangerous posts, so I'll try this out for a few years. But I'm not going to stay if I have to fight with management for every single benefit and allowance we're supposed to be authorized in the Foreign Service, if my spouse/partner is miserable, if I constantly have to ignore the needs of my family, if I will soon have to take a 30- or 40-percent base-pay cut to serve overseas, and if the senior leadership of the State Department doesn't aggressively stand up for us.”

It is significant that this message has most recently come through loud and clear from the ELPs serving in the two geographic bureaus most closely associated with the war on terrorism, transformational diplomacy and post-conflict stabilization — NEA and SCA — where a majority of these junior colleagues are now serving at some of the most difficult and dangerous posts we have.

All of us who are no longer in the entry-level ranks have a vested interest in heeding this wake-up call and doing what we can to fix the problems affecting morale in the entry-level ranks — before they lead to an exodus of the kinds of people we desperately need to keep. □



ELPs have high expectations for fairness in promotions and assignments, bureaucratic efficiency, job satisfaction and equitable compensation for their work.

2007 AFSA-PAC TREASURER'S REPORT

Dear Colleagues:

Our effort to win legislative approval of overseas comparability pay is beginning to resemble 1914-1918 trench warfare. We pour huge resources into the struggle to gain small advances. This does highlight, however, the reality that in congressional matters, patience and perseverance are critical to achieving long-term goals.

2007 was a year of "patience and perseverance." 2008 and 2009 will be a time of new beginnings. This fall we will elect a new president, House and Senate. In that context, AFSA-PAC will be supporting the AFSA leadership in another "big push" for comparability pay and additional resources for the 150 account.

The metrics for 2007 generally paralleled those of 2006. The number of donors was slightly smaller (471 vs. 511), but the average domestic contribution was higher (\$60

vs. \$58). Distribution was virtually identical: retired colleagues represented 75 percent of donors and domestic contributions remained at 83 percent of the total. We have not found a way to change either trend, and welcome your suggestions on how to stimulate greater active-duty and overseas participation.

2007 was a non-election year, and we reduced contributions somewhat in anticipation of 2008, a major election year. Financial donations totaled \$18,000 and were divided equally between the two parties. We continued to focus on the chairs (Democrats) and ranking members (Republicans) on the State authorizing and appropriating committees in the House and Senate.

A very positive reform in 2007 brought oversight of State Department operations and foreign assistance activities together under the exclusive jurisdiction of a single

appropriations committee in each chamber. Not having to compete for attention and funds with the Commerce and Justice Departments will enhance our situation and focus the attention of our appropriators.

The 2008 elections and the 150 account budgets for 2009 and 2010 will be pivotal for the Foreign Service as regards comparability pay and the fundamental issues of our missions, staffing and resources for the future. My AFSA-PAC Advisory Council colleagues Nick Rey, Terry Hearly, Vern Penner, Irv Rubenstein and Gene Schmiel join me in reminding you of the need for consistent support for U.S. diplomacy. AFSA-PAC's impact is cumulative over time, and we have made real progress in the last five years.

Respectfully submitted,
Tom Boyatt
Treasurer, AFSA-PAC

FAD • Continued from page 57

tor for Africa Kate Almqvist, Director General of the Foreign Service Harry K. Thomas Jr., Representative John Doolittle, R-Calif., and Jonathan Westen, representing Representative Brian Higgins, D-N.Y.

"The individuals honored at the ceremony were separated by many miles and the circumstances of their deaths were different," AFSA President John Naland said in his remarks. "However, both volunteered to serve their country, just as their colleagues do today in dangerous postings around the globe." The two plaques on either side of the lobby are a testament to the commitment and dedication of the men and women who choose to serve America abroad. But they also serve as a reminder of the profound sacrifice made by the individuals and their families while pursuing these goals.

• **STEVEN THOMAS STEFANI IV:** Tom Stefani was a USDA Forest Service employee on voluntary assignment with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Foreign Agriculture Service in Afghanistan. He was serving on a Provincial Reconstruction Team as an agricultural adviser when he was



Mikkela Thompson

killed in an explosion on Oct. 4, 2007, in Ghazni Province. He was 28 years old, and is survived by his parents and two younger brothers who live in the Auburn, Calif., area. A number of his colleagues from the PRTs in Afghanistan attended the ceremony. He was also honored with the Thomas Jefferson Star for Foreign Service in a separate ceremony.

• **JOHN MICHAEL GRANVILLE:** John Granville was a USAID democracy and governance Foreign Service officer serving in Sudan. He was killed in Khartoum on Jan. 1, 2008, along with his driver, Abdelrahman Abbas Rahama, when their vehicle was fired upon as they were returning from an official reception.

Granville was a former Peace Corps Volunteer in Cameroon who later returned there as a Fulbright Scholar. He served in Kenya with USAID prior to his assignment in Sudan. He was 33, and leaves behind his mother and sister, who reside in the Buffalo, N.Y., area.

In 2000, AFSA established, in cooperation with the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide, a new type of plaque that honors Foreign Service family members who have died abroad. Every year, during the AFSA Memorial Plaque Ceremony, a wreath is also placed at the site of that plaque, located on the other side of the State Department lobby, to recognize the sacrifices made by those who accompanied their spouse or parent overseas and they are also acknowledged during the ceremony.

Later in the day, AFSA welcomed retirees and other Foreign Affairs Day guests to a reception at the State Plaza Hotel (AFSA headquarters is still closed for renovation). Amb. Ed Dillery, chairman of the AFSA Scholarship Committee, presented merit scholarship awards to the four winners who were present. □

AFSA Issue Brief

Foreign Assistance Reform

A FSA draws readers' attention to the following important policy statement on the future of foreign assistance made by Representative Howard Berman, D-Calif., who recently assumed the chairmanship of the powerful House Foreign Affairs Committee. In it, Chairman Berman sets forth his intention to rewrite the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, the legislative framework for our nation's official development assistance. The following excerpt is from his opening remarks at the April 23 committee hearing, "Foreign Assistance Reform in the New Administration: Challenges and Solutions."

It is painfully obvious to Congress, the administration, foreign aid experts and NGOs alike, that our foreign assistance program is fragmented and broken and in critical need of overhaul. I strongly believe that America's foreign assistance program is not in need of some minor changes but, rather, it needs to be reinvented and retooled in order to respond to the significant challenges our country and the world face in the 21st century.

This year, our committee will review our foreign assistance program to look at what actions are needed to achieve coherency and effectiveness in the U.S. foreign assistance framework. We will hold a series of hearings on various aspects of foreign assistance reform such as rebuilding U.S. civilian diplomatic and development agencies, the role of the military in delivering and shaping foreign assistance, and improving America's image around the world.

These efforts will help inform this committee on the direction that Congress and the next administration should take in reforming U.S. foreign assistance. Many

experts are calling for a partnership between Congress and the next administration to come together and work on improving our foreign assistance programs. I'm committed to this partnership and will do everything I can to ensure that it yields results.

Next year, our committee intends to reform and rewrite the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. That bill has not been reauthorized



Chairman Howard Berman,
House Foreign Affairs Committee

**Astonishingly, the proportion
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has increased from 7 percent
of bilateral official develop-
ment assistance in 2001
to an estimated
20 percent in 2006.**

since 1985. This antiquated and desperately overburdened legislation — over 500 pages long — doesn't adequately provide the flexibility and necessary authorities for our civilian agencies to tackle global extremism, poverty, corruption and other threats to our long-term national security goals.

As Congress and the next administration come together on rewriting this legislation, we must give greater attention to core development programs, particularly basic education, child survival, maternal health, cultural exchanges and agricultural development programs.

Recently, there have been a few stark examples of poorly performing programs which have resulted in waste, fraud and abuse, such as the U.S. reconstruction programs in Iraq and Afghanistan. Our foreign assistance programs have also been crippled by a lack of resources and coordination, and a lack of critical capacity and authorities necessary to support such programs.

As a result, there has been an ad hoc effort to reform our foreign assistance pro-

grams through new programs, such as the Millennium Challenge Account, new mandates and more congressional and administration directives. I welcome the effort to better coordinate our foreign assistance programs and to make those programs more accountable by providing merit-based assistance to well-performing countries through the

Millennium Challenge Account. However, I am concerned that these efforts merely provide a stopgap to the problems which require broad-reaching and long-term solutions. With over 10 Cabinet departments and over 15 sub-Cabinet positions and independent agencies involved in implementing foreign assistance, our system has become plagued with poor oversight and accountability, and a lack of meaningful coordination and coherency.

I'm also concerned by the Department of Defense's rapid encroachment into foreign assistance. Astonishingly, the proportion of DOD foreign assistance has increased from 7 percent of bilateral official development assistance in 2001 to an estimated 20 percent in 2006. DOD activities have expanded to include the provision of humanitarian assistance and training in disaster response, counternarcotics activities and capacity-building of foreign militaries.

These activities should be carried out by the Department of State and USAID. The military is overburdened and overstretched and they must focus on the security threats facing our nation. While the civilian agencies should coordinate their activities with the military to ensure coherency of effort, we should no longer rely on the military to be the diplomatic and development face of America around the world. □

V.P. VOICE: FCS ■ BY DON BUSINGER

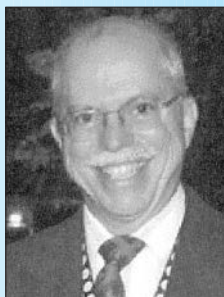
Unfinished Business

Even casual readers of this column will already know that the AFSA-Commerce relationship during the last three years of my tenure as VP has been “less than fully successful.” If it takes two to tango, FCS management has pretty consistently stayed in its corner and been unavailable for most dances, slow or fast.

As I move on to a foreign posting next month and AFSA Representative Steve Anderson does likewise in August, this is our last message from these pages. There is a lot of unfinished business, though not for lack of trying. Here are the details, at least from a midterm proposal perspective.

Since the fall of 2005, AFSA has submitted 12 midterm proposals to management and signed two memorandums of understanding. (The latter took 21 months from

time of submission to time of signing—a very slow dance!) See www.afsa.org/FCS/FCSUpdate062207.cfm for details. For the other 10 proposals, AFSA received very limited fixes and/or responses from FCS management. While a letter was drafted in July 2007 and suggestions were made by AFSA for progress or at least dialogue, to date no response has been received. Meanwhile, management grew less responsive, even dysfunctional, requiring us to file grievances.



There is a lot of unfinished business, though not for lack of trying. We encountered a lot of resistance to working with AFSA on behalf of our membership.

Our spring 2006 proposals concerning Senior Foreign Service pay policies, improvements in employee performance and work plans, and a joint Standing Committee for Annual Review of the Precepts led to limited tinkering with some improvements on the first two items but no MOUs. We encountered a lot of resistance to working with AFSA on behalf of our membership.

Our fall 2006 proposals revisited the SFS issues, the Residential Transaction Allowance and compliance with the Foreign Affairs Manual, and the Personnel Audit Report. Management did address two of the three SFS issues at least informally; but on the RTA provisions of the FAM, it simply withdrew its adherence without even consulting with AFSA. It ignored the third issue entirely.

Our single spring 2007 proposal concerned domestic assignments to U.S. Export Assistance Centers and the seven-year rule mandating them. This seems to have paralyzed our dance partner. No formal response, required by the collective bargaining agreement, was ever received and AFSA was eventually forced to file an institutional grievance, which is currently before the Foreign Service Grievance Board.

Our fall 2007 proposals concerned better forms of management for appraisals and consultations to ensure regional, gender and racial diversity in the four selection and promotion boards. Again, there has been no response from management.

As we move toward a transition in AFSA, in management and in administrations, one can only hope for a better future relationship, in which management organizes itself to identify the right partner for AFSA (to ensure it receives responses in a timely fashion, with true dialogue and progress) and to “get the job done” for our senior, mid-level and junior commercial officers who pay their dues and expect better from management. □

AFSA NEWS BRIEFS

AFSA FCS VP Position Open

The AFSA Foreign Commercial Service vice president position was not placed on the FCS bid list, and thus all likely candidates have been assigned to other positions. VP Donald Businger will resign this summer in order to begin his next overseas assignment, so the AFSA Governing Board can appoint a successor.

Basic qualifications are that the officer: be located within 50 miles of Washington, D.C., to be available for board meetings; not hold an FCS management position; and be able to spend at least 50 percent of his or her time on AFSA duties. Please contact AFSA as soon as possible if you are interested in the position.

On May 7, the Governing Board appointed Rebecca Balogh as the new FCS representative beginning July 15.

ISO DG Reporting Award Cables

Retired FSO Raymond F. Smith is writing a book, *The Craft of Political Analysis in Modern Diplomacy*. He would like to include, as case studies, examples of outstanding Foreign Service reporting (declassified). He tells the *Journal* that when he asked the Bureau of Human Resources for cable numbers of reports from winners and runners-up of the director general's annual reporting awards, so he could request that they be reviewed for declassification, HR said it had the information, but that he would have to file a Freedom of Information request to get it. He did, and then was told that HR had destroyed the records shortly after telling him to file the FOIA request.

Mr. Smith requests that anyone interested in helping with this effort provide him with cable numbers of winning messages so that he can file declassification requests. His e-mail address is ray.smith531@gmail.com.

AFSA ON THE HILL

Legislative Update

BY IAN HOUSTON, AFSA LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS DIRECTOR

On Feb. 13, AFSA met with Representative Frank Wolf, R-Va., a longtime supporter of the Foreign Service (seen here, center). The conversation was focused on the need to increase Foreign Service staffing and to secure a solution to the pay equity problem, both of which Mr. Wolf agrees must be done.



Rep. Wolf serves as the most senior Republican on the powerful House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs. This committee is the principal entity tasked with approving resources for State and USAID operating accounts.



From left: Former AFSA Board Member Gil Sheinbaum, Chairman Henry A. Waxman, AFSA President John Naland and AFSA Legislative Affairs Director Ian Houston.

On March 13, AFSA had an excellent conversation with Representative Henry Waxman, D-Calif., who chairs the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, which has wide-ranging jurisdiction over labor and federal work-force matters across the government. AFSA discussed the State Department budget with Chairman Waxman and strongly advocated action on the pay equity problem. Both his committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee have a role to play in solving this.

Sick Leave Compensation

Employees under the Federal Employees Retirement System currently receive no compensation for unused sick leave when they retire. On March 10, Rep. Jim Moran, D-Va., offered a bill, H.R. 5573, designed to compensate retiring federal employees for a portion of that time. Rep. Moran's bill would provide employees retiring under FERS up to \$10,000 in compensation. Employees would be paid 10 percent of the hourly average of their "high three" years of salary for all but the first 500 hours of their unused sick leave.

The bill is meant to discourage employees from drawing down their sick leave ben-

efits as they near the end of their careers. The legislation will also affect employees in the Foreign Service Pension System, because the Foreign Service Act provides for conformity between FERS and FSPS.

Citizenship Requirements for U.S. President

Senator Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., recently introduced legislation, S. 2678, stating that any child born abroad to citizens serving in the U.S. military would meet the constitutional requirement that the United States president must be a natural-born citizen. AFSA moved quickly on this bill in an effort to broaden its scope to include

the children of U.S. citizens serving overseas in the U.S. Foreign Service. We made calls to Sen. McCaskill and to senior staff of the Senate Judiciary Committee, which has jurisdiction on the matter. Prospects for the bill's passage are unclear.

Budget Update

The administration's now-pending Fiscal Year 2009 budget request seeks to add 1,076 new positions at State and 300 at USAID (almost all for Foreign Service personnel). This request represents a commendable push to better staff and fund the diplomatic platform upon which foreign policy and development assistance are implemented. Testifying on April 9 before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice reinforced the need for additional positions.

AFSA is supporting this push for resources with all of the tools at our disposal. We have solicited bipartisan support for the administration budget request in face-to-face meetings with key lawmakers, in testimony at a formal congressional hearing and in numerous letters to the Hill.

On the media front, we have highlighted the budget and staffing needs in interviews broadcast on CNN, the "Lehrer Newshour" and three different NPR shows. AFSA comments and information on budget and staffing gaps have also been incorporated in articles by major media including the *Washington Post*, *Washington Times*, *Federal Times*, *Government Executive*, NPR, Bloomberg News, and major wire services.

We have placed op-eds, editorials, or letters-to-the-editor addressing these issues in the *Washington Post*, *Washington Times*, *Federal Times* and the *Houston Chronicle*. At AFSA's urging, numerous members have published their own views in support of budget and staffing needs in local papers around the country. AFSA also provided background information on this issue to participants in our national speakers program, reaching audiences in 44 states and Washington, D.C. □

AFSA NEWS BRIEFS

In Memory of Clyde Nora

Friends and colleagues have established a memorial foundation to honor Clyde G. Nora, who died May 16, 2007, while employed by the State Department Bureau of Diplomatic Security. Mr. Nora retired in 1997 after 30 years in the Foreign Service. The mission of the foundation is to carry on the important work he was doing by providing counseling, mentoring, coaching and encouragement to young people in their efforts to enter careers in public service.

The foundation has created the Clyde G. Nora Memorial Award, to be presented annually to an outstanding high school senior or college student who has excelled academically, demonstrated leadership skills in school and community, and been an active participant in volunteer services. The student selected for the award will receive a plaque and a financial aid award. The foundation contact person is William M. Butler, who can be reached at (571) 345-3711 or butlerb@state.gov.

New Listserv for EFM/MOH Mission Employees

"Have you ever taken a job in the mission and found yourself at your desk on the first day with no training, no transfer notes and no information whatsoever on how to do your job?" asks FS family member Julie Barnes. "Do you ever wonder how your job is done at other posts? Is your mind spinning with references to the FAM, the FAH and SOPs?"

Well, now there's help. Ms. Barnes launched a new listserv in late April as a service to Eligible Family Members and Members of Household working in U.S. missions around the world. It is only available on the OpenNet (the intranet), but if you have a job in the embassy, you should have access to that. The list aims to provide a link for the Foreign Service community, a place to ask questions and share ideas and experiences about jobs inside the mission. You can subscribe and post to this list at <http://lmlist.state.gov/archives/efm.html>.

AFSA/TLG Summer Intern

David Law, a junior attending Morehouse College, has been selected as the 2008 "AFSA/Thursday Luncheon Group" Intern. David will work in the Bureau of South Central Asia Affairs and receive mentoring and financial support from AFSA and TLG. This program supports a minority college or graduate student exploring an international relations career in a high-profile, substantive and supportive work environment. This AFSA/TLG intern-sponsoring partnership was formed in 1995 and is run by African-American employees in the State Department to further minority advancement in foreign affairs.

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FLYING SOLO — GOING TO COLLEGE FROM OVERSEAS: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

THE LOGISTICS OF GOING TO COLLEGE FROM OVERSEAS CAN BE A CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS ALIKE. HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER.

BY REBECCA GRAPPO

Loading up the family car with loot from the local department store and squeezing into it for the long (or short) drive to the college campus is an eagerly anticipated rite of passage for many American students. But for the Foreign Service kid who lives overseas, it is often a completely different scenario. Instead, the reality is probably packing a couple of suitcases — and weighing them carefully — to get ready for the airplane trip back to the States or to another foreign locale. The college-bound Foreign Service student traveling from overseas must first tackle the logistics of getting there.

Getting There

Will the student travel on educational travel orders, the DSSR-280? This benefit allows one round trip per year between post and school with a U.S. government-purchased ticket on a parent's orders. Flying on such a ticket adds some complications. Families must pay close attention to dates of travel (anniversary dates) because each student is allowed only one paid ticket per year. But in return, they enjoy the flexibility to more easily change dates of travel.

Students preparing to go to college on their own may not pay too much attention to the ticket itself. However, they

Rebecca (Becky) Grappo, an educational consultant and FS spouse, raised three children and sent them all to college while in the Foreign Service. She specializes in boarding schools and college planning and is a Certified Educational Planner and a member of both the Independent Educational Consultants Association and the National Association of College Admissions Counselors. A former education and youth officer in the Family Liaison Office at the Department of State, she is currently posted with her husband in Muscat. You can visit her Web site at www.rebeccagrappo.com.

need to be aware of whether they are traveling on a paper or an electronic ticket. Though most of the world now uses e-tickets (electronic ticketing), it is wise to check this. I know of one student who showed up at the airport thinking he had an e-ticket, only to find out the hard way he was traveling on a paper ticket: when he couldn't produce it, he was denied boarding. Fortunately, the ticket was U.S. government-issued, and could be rebooked in time for the holidays.

Another consideration is frequent-flyer programs. If this is an available option, and the child is not already enrolled in such a program, the wise family will do so now and start banking a mileage balance that can be traded in for future travel and benefits. The same goes for credit cards that offer miles for dollars spent.

Travel documents are another important consideration, especially diplomatic passports. Check that the name on the passport is the same as the name on the ticket, or the student won't fly. Make sure passports stay in a safe place. A color photocopy of it, stored in another carry-on bag for safekeeping, would not be a bad idea. I know of one Foreign Service student who lost her passport upon landing in Dulles! Whether it fell out of an unzipped bag or was pickpocketed as she left the plane doesn't matter — the passport vanished. And need I mention that the passport should *never* be packed in the checked luggage?

A related issue concerns the difference between traveling on a diplomatic and a tourist passport. Some countries will only allow a tourist passport to be used for non-resident diplomats. Most young people assume their diplomatic passports will allow them to go anywhere. Not true — they should always check if they are going to be doing any side travel.

The idea of a long solo flight may sound like a great adventure to the student, but for the parents who watch their child walk down the ramp alone to jet off into the strato-

Continued on page 72

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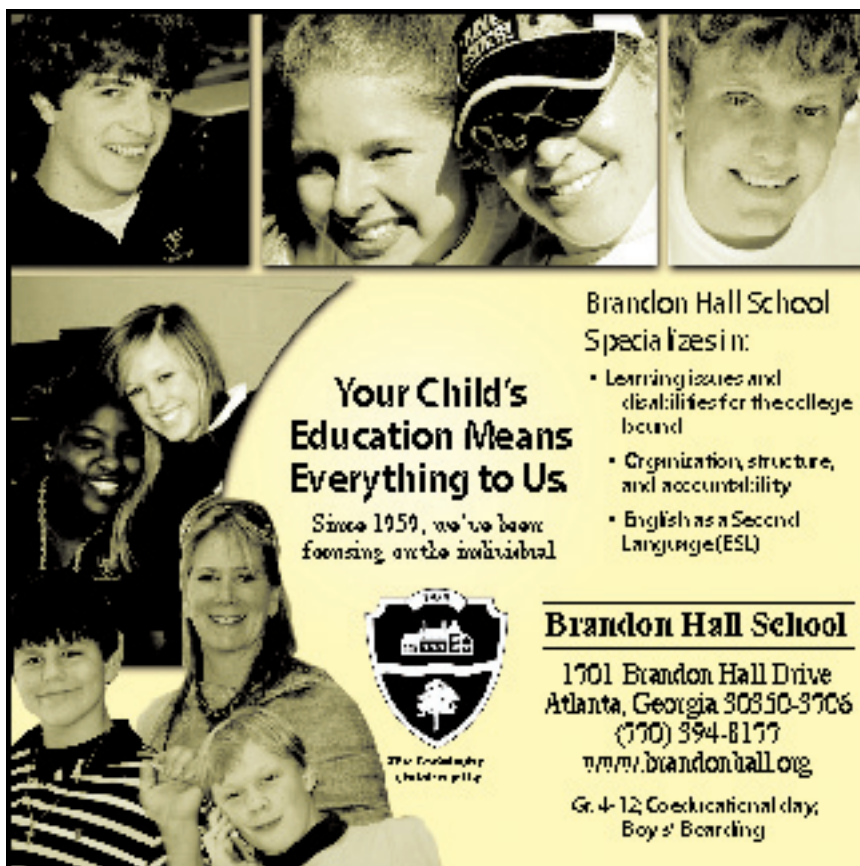
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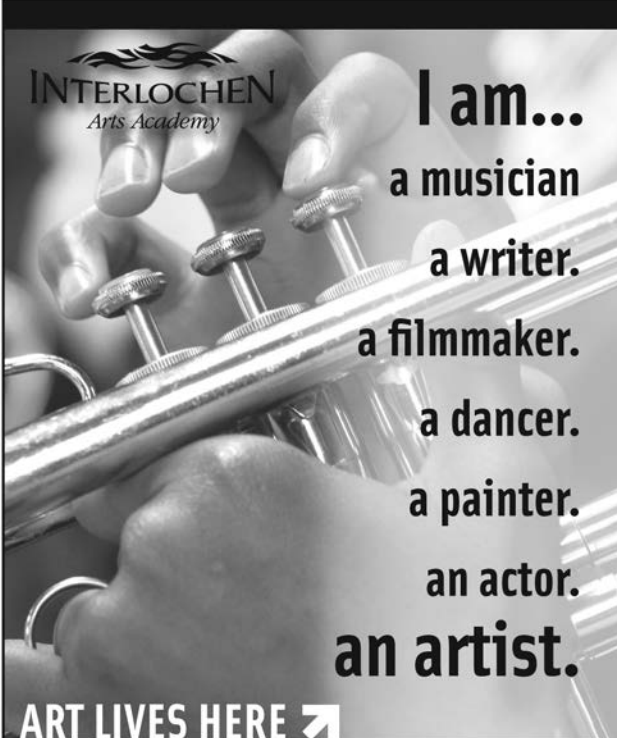
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The ABCs of Education Allowances

By Pamela Ward

Employees of government agencies assigned overseas are granted allowances to help defray the cost of an education for their children in kindergarten through 12th grade, one that is equivalent to that provided by public school systems in the United States.

In most cases, posts abroad are served by one or more English-language schools with an American curriculum. The majority of these are nongovernmental, nonprofit, nondenominational, independent schools, usually with a board of directors establishing policy and a superintendent, headmaster or principal as the senior administrator. Even though these schools may be called American, they are not entities of the U.S. government. Some receive government grants for specific purposes, but these grants represent a small percentage of the overall budget. Children of many nationalities attend these schools, including, in most schools, a significant per-

centage of host-country students.

The allowances for a specific post are determined by the fees charged by a school identified as providing a basic U.S.-type education. Parents may use this allowance to send their children to a different school of their choice, say a parochial or foreign-language institution, as long as the cost does not exceed that of the "base" school. If the alternative school is more expensive than the "base" model, the difference would be an out-of-pocket expense for the parent.

An allowance covers only expenses for those services usually available without cost in American public schools, including tuition, transportation and textbooks. Fees for lunches, trips, computers and school uniforms are not covered, even if required by the school.

Parents may also elect to homeschool their children while at post, using a home study program. They

Continued on page 72

The allowances for a specific post are determined by the fees charged by a school identified as providing a basic U.S.-type education.

Continued from page 68

sphere halfway around the world, it is worrisome! We all know that missed flights, cancellations, delays and bad weather can happen en route. Talk over “what if” scenarios before your children leave so they will know who to talk to and what to do. Arming them with a credit card that has international authorization for purchases and ATM withdrawals is an important protection for emergencies — as long as they realize that a great sale in duty-free does not constitute an emergency!

It is also important to provide kids with a way of staying in touch and reaching out if they do need help during their trip. Nearly all kids have cell phones, and many parents have already made sure that these phones have global calling capability. Alternatively, a calling card with an account code that works internationally is handy in an emergency. If the student

***Talk over “what if”
scenarios before your
children leave so they
will know who to talk to
and what to do.***

is carrying a laptop, Internet access is also comforting for parents anxiously awaiting word that their child made that critical connection in Paris and all is well. Some students may have wireless cards or Internet service through companies like Vonage; others can purchase time at various airport locations using a credit card.

Before we leave the subject of get-

ting there, it is important to mention getting home again. Many parts of the world are difficult to reach over the holidays, so it is important to book travel over the winter break as early as possible for the best options.

Staying in Touch with Home

Many parents remember their own college days, when the phone call home was often a collect call made on Sunday night. Today’s families are used to more instantaneous and continuous communication, no matter where in the world they are. It is a given that a student will have a cell phone, but here are a few things to think about.

Does the family already have a plan with a U.S. service provider? If so, then it may be easy to add another line for as little as \$10 a month. But you want to ensure that the child has enough minutes to talk for a whole

ABCs • Continued from page 71

will receive an allowance to purchase materials and services while posted abroad, but this allowance will not be continued if they are reassigned to the U.S.

If a foreign post does not have a secular, English-language school with an American curriculum, or has such a school that goes only through certain grades, an away-from-post or “boarding school” allowance is provided. A lump sum, varying from post to post, is allotted to cover the estimated cost of tuition, room, board and travel to post during school vacations. Parents are free to choose the boarding school they prefer. There is no special funding for parents or students to visit schools in advance of application or for an interview, even if one is required.

The U.S. government does not provide an allowance for college or other post-secondary education. However, one round trip per year to post is provided for students studying at universities in the U.S. Recent legislation has also provided this allowance for students studying at universities abroad. The Office of Allowances will issue official notification when this becomes effective. Also allowed is the shipment of 250 pounds of unaccompanied air baggage or the equivalent cost in storage for each college or boarding school student.

All funding for education is processed by the financial management officer at the post where the employee is assigned. At

some posts the embassy or consulate works very closely with the school or schools, and the billing is handled directly. In other instances, the employee will pay a school fee, or pay for an airline ticket or storage, and then submit bills to the FMO for reimbursement. Although a student may start school at the beginning of a semester if a parent has been officially assigned to a post, the parent may not be reimbursed for any school expenses until he or she arrives at post.

There are several offices in the Department of State prepared to help you understand how the educational allowances work, and what choices you have for your children. These include the Office of Overseas Schools (www.state.gov/m/a/os), the Office of Allowances (www.state.gov/m/a/als) and the Family Liaison Office (www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1958.htm).

We hope that you will get in touch with us if you have any questions about your situation. Although these offices are part of the Department of State, the same allowances apply to most civilian federal employees under chief-of-mission authority overseas. For information or assistance e-mail FLOAskEducation@state.gov or call (202) 647-1076.

Pamela Ward was the Education and Youth Officer in the State Department’s Family Liaison Office.

month without running into surcharges for going over the limit. The same thing is true for text messaging. Kids can and will text their friends for everything. If you give them the capability to send text messages internationally, you may find that you, too, will hear from them more often!

If you are signing up for a new service, you might want to investigate whether there is a carrier with a discount for students. Another important factor is the coverage offered by the various providers. In some rural areas, where many colleges and universities are located, the shortage of repeater towers means frustratingly weak signals. For those with access to an IVG line, calls to (703), (202) and (301) area codes are free, so one might want to consider a cell phone with one of those numbers.

But what *kind* of cell phone should it be? Some kids travel with two



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phones — the international phone from home that accepts a SIM card and a U.S. cell phone. Others have a single instrument with global calling capability, such as the tri-band and unlocked phones (see the thread on *Livelines*, at www.aafsw.org, for more detailed information). Some kids find that simple is good; others opt for Blackberries or iPhones, which have the added advantage of helping them stay organized.

Students should also know what to do in case their cell phone is lost or stolen. The student needs to be named on the account as someone authorized to speak to the service provider so that if the phone is lost or stolen, it can be reported immediately to avoid liability for charges racked up by the finder or thief.

A final note on cell phones: be sure to list an "In Case of Emergency" contact in the address book. Emergency

rescue workers routinely look in the cell phone for an ICE listing. That could be entered in speed dial as ICE, with a name and number that would be easy to dial.

Other ways that kids and parents can stay in touch include Voice Over Internet Protocol through such services as Skype and Vonage (again, see *Livelines* — at www.aafsw.org — for a discussion thread on this topic). Many countries do not allow the software to be downloaded, so it needs to be downloaded on computers in the U.S. or other accommodating countries. These services offer low-cost or free international calls.

Many parents have learned from their kids how popular instant messaging or gchats (gmail's version of IM) are. It is a great way to have a conversation, and often students open up more when talking online than they might otherwise. If you want to see

your child's face as you talk, you can add a webcam.

A word about social networking sites such as *Facebook* and *MySpace*. People all over the world are signing up for these sites as a way of staying in touch with friends and family in far-flung places. Young people today are especially dedicated to keeping the pages updated, and they network with friends and other people of like interests. Students can meet classmates before ever getting to school this way. Colleges themselves often sponsor pages for this purpose, and are actively looking for ways to use the sites for recruiting.

One cautionary note: students should not put any sensitive or private information on their pages. They need to keep personal security issues in mind and be aware that future employers can and do look at these sites.



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Personal finance management is one of the big challenges for many college students. Suddenly, they need to learn to be responsible for the funds parents send as well as the money they earn, and they will need to keep the bank account balanced and the bills paid. Both you and your child need to have a clear understanding of how much the student will get, how they will budget it, and what to do if they overdraw their account. Here are a few points that will help you navigate this conversation.

First of all, does your teen understand the difference between checking an online balance and reconciling a checkbook? Anyone can make a simple addition/subtraction error that seems like nothing — until the fees for insufficient funds start to snowball after the first mistake. A student I once worked with made a simple \$2 math error that cost more than \$100 in “bounced check” fees. Make sure your student understands the concept of a hold on a check before the funds are available; the meaning of pending transactions; the hidden fees for ATM withdrawals at machines in other banking networks; and how overdraft protection really works (i.e., the student gets a deposit, but the parent gets a bill that accrues interest daily and has a penalty fee attached, and then the student gets a grumpy phone call from home).

To avoid transaction fees on cash withdrawal, many students open up an account with the bank on campus. Alternately, students can get “cash back” at local supermarkets and pharmacies — but this works only if they write down the transaction and keep track of the new balance.

One way to facilitate the cash flow from faraway parents with slow mail to students with urgent needs is to link a bank account between parent and student within the same bank. This can be a backup for immediate money transfers. Designating the student as a “payee” in your online bill-paying ser-

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— A Foreign Service parent

vice is another way to get funds to a student within a few days.

Many campuses have a "good as cash" card that often takes on the name of the school mascot. These cards are pre-loaded with cash and can be used both on and off campus. When kids swipe them, the sum is deducted from the balance. Some universities require these cards for bookstore purchases. (Other universities only accept credit cards; be sure to find out ahead of time.) The cards are financed by parental deposits and can be loaded online using a credit card.

If electronic money is so easy to get, students may tend to forget about the budget. But it's important for them to understand that the money supply is limited, so they will have to apportion out their funds to make them last for books, bills and fun. Talk to them about the need to open their mail, and either pay or send

important bills home as quickly as possible. Parents have told me horror stories of kids getting bills in the mail, only to toss them in the corner unopened. Months later, a letter from a collection agency finally gets the kid's attention.

Students should also be prepared to be inundated with credit card offers from banks, as parental signatures are not required for a card with several thousand dollars of credit. Speak to them about the dangers of these offers, and the consequences of consumer debt that cannot be repaid. They should also be aware of credit-card scams and should know to never, ever give out their account numbers or information to anyone. Recently a student I know received a call that she had won \$25,000 and all she had to do was give her account numbers — scary but true. Fortunately, she knew better.

Continued on page 78

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Continued from page 76

Moving In

"Move in" day at the university is always a challenge. Bulging family cars are lined up bumper-to-bumper, ready to unload Junior and all his earthly belongings on the dorm sidewalk! There are several ways this could play out for the Foreign Service student. If at all possible, at least one parent should help the student move in for the first time.

In that case, a car with a large cargo space, a good credit card, a few hours in a linen or other discount store and some dedicated shoppers are all that's needed. A parent who can stick around another day or two to make more runs to the store for food supplies, pharmacy necessities and office supplies is much appreciated. It also feels good to know that your son or daughter has everything in order by the time you leave and will survive in the new surroundings.

Does your teen understand the difference between checking an online balance and reconciling a checkbook?

Hopefully, the student has had a chance to visit campus during the application process, and this is not the first time he or she has been there. In any case, the parent orientation is a valuable investment of time. It will provide an overview of how things

operate at the school and troubleshoot tips.

Not every family can be there for move-in day, however. In that case, perhaps the shopping can be done at post and sent ahead on a United Air Bill for airfreight under DSSR-280, or ordered online and delivered to an on-campus address. Check with the residence life office or the international student office to see if they have arrangements for holding packages that arrive over the summer. Even then, a student will need help getting large, heavy boxes across campus alone. Residence life may have the names of smaller moving companies or services that can help students. Self-storage facilities or the local rental van and truck company are other possibilities.

Making the dorm room a comfortable home-away-from-home is impor-

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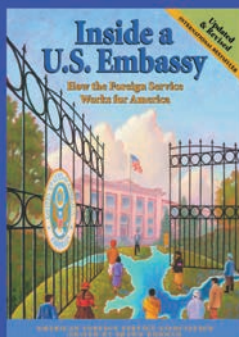
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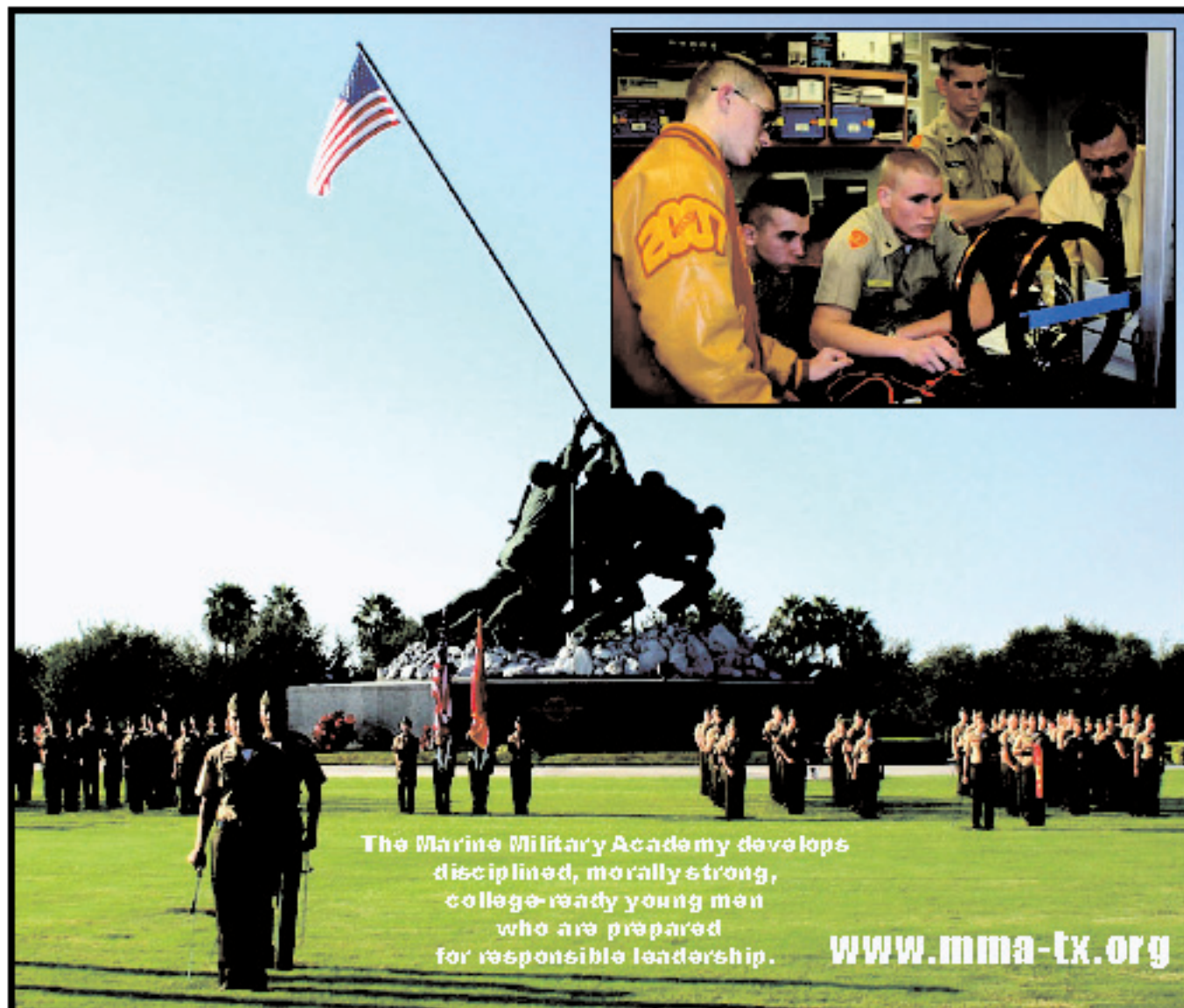
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ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Browne Academy	67	288	49/51	NA	1	PK-8	N	N	5	NA	NA	NA	12,210-20,240
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ELEMENTARY/JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Congressional Schools of Virginia, The	67	365	53/47	0	20	PK-8	N	N	22	N	N	N	15,200-19,450
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ELEMENTARY/JUNIOR/SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Barrie School, The	87	400	50/50	NA	NA	PK-12	NA	Limited	31	NA	NA	NA	11,300-23,150
Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart	91	740	All girls	NA	5	PK-12	N	N	15	N	NA	NA	10,000-19,275
Washington International School	73	885	48/52	NA	70	PK-12	N	Limited	8	Y	N	N	25,030

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

North Country School	74	92	49/43	88	23	4-9	Y	Y	125	N	Y/N	N	46,900
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JUNIOR/SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Brandon Hall School	69	120	84/16	46	20	4-12, PG	Y	Y	32	Y	Y	N	25,500-49,000
British School of Washington	70	300	50/50	NA	50	PK-12	N	N	10	Y	NA	NA	19,465
Oldfields School	76	180	All girls	75	15	8-12, PG	Y	Limited	35	N	Y	Y	40,075

SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Blue Ridge School	85	195	All boys	100	20	9-12	Y	Y	90	Y	Y	Y	33,800
Conserve School	71	130	50/50	100	33	9-12	N	N	250	Y	Y	N	30,000
Darlington School	79	473	53/47	33	16	9-12, PG	Y	Limited	75	Y	Y	Y	35,700
Foxcroft School	88	178	All girls	72	14	9-12	Y	Limited	30	N	Y	Y	40,950
Idylwild Arts Academy	88	270	45/55	85	32	9-12, PG	Y	N	120	Y	Y	N	42,500
Interlochen Arts Academy	70	475	40/60	89	18	9-12, PG	N	N	16	Y	Y	N	35,850-37,450
King George School	74	72	60/40	100	5	9-12	Y	Y	60	N	N/N	Y	5,800/mon
Lawrence Academy	73	398	50/50	50	15	9-12	Y	Limited	40	Y	Y	Y	44,200
Northfield Mount Hermon School	90	860	51/49	80	25	9-12, PG	N	Limited	70	Y	Y	N	33,000
St Mark's School	75	335	51/49	80	24	9-12	Y	Y	30	N	Y	Y	41,300
Wasatch Academy	83	205	70/30	95	40	9-12	Y	Limited	90	Y	Y	Y	37,500
West Nottingham Academy	77	123	40/60	67	18	9-12, PG	Y	Y	50	Y	Y	N	34,900
White Mountain School	75	100	50/50	80	14	9-12, PG	Y	Y	110	N	Y	N	41,100

CONTINUED ON PAGE 82

Notes: NA - Not Applicable ADD - Attention Deficit Disorder LD - Learning Disability PK - Pre-Kindergarten PG - Postgraduate

SCHOOLS AT A GLANCE

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 81

MILITARY SCHOOLS

Marine Military Academy	80	340	All boys	100	18	8-12, PG	N	Limited	1	Y	Y	N	24,750
Massanutten Military Academy	85	200	75/25	96	7	7-12, PG	N	N	60	N	Y	N	24,664

SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS

Landmark School, The	88	447	60/40	50	10	2-12	N	Y	25	N	Y	N	Call
Glenholme School, The	77	100	80/20	98	2	7-12, PG	N	Y	30	N	Y	Y	Call
Gow School, The	86	148	All boys	100	22	7-12, PG	N	Y	20	Y	Y	N	46,250
Lab School of Washington, The	87	330	75/25	NA	1	K-12	N	Y	8	N	NA	NA	30,060+
Vanguard School	91	131	70/30	98	30	5-12, PG	Y	Y	50	Y	Y	N	41,500

DISTANCE LEARNING

University of Missouri Center for Distance & Independent Study	69	Independent study: Grade 3 through university. Bachelor's degree completion. For more information, go to cdis.missouri.edu/go/pFSJ8.asp											
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OVERSEAS SCHOOLS

Berlin Brandenburg International School	78	580	49/51	5	55	PK-12	N	Y	25	Y	Y	N	12,700-45,900
Escuela Campo Alegre	79	606	50/50	NA	80	N-12	NA	Limited	20	Yes	NA	N	19,895
Leysin American School in Switzerland	70	360	52/48	100	65	9-12, PG	Y	Limited	75	Y	Y	N	38,000
St. Stephen's School	77	218	40/60	17	58	9-12, PG	N	N	12	NA	Y	N	46,200
TASIS, The American School in England	86	659	51/49	25	35	PK - 12	Y	Limited	8	Y	Y	N	33,000

POST SECONDARY

Rutgers University	76	50,516	48/52	60	1.8	Bachelors, Masters, Ph.D.	N	Y	10-25	Y	Y	Y	29,265
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OTHER

Foreign Service Youth Foundation	67	Assists Foreign Service Youth by coordinating development programs. Go to www.fsyf.org											
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A Different Kind of College Ranking

Washington Monthly continues to offer prospective college students and their parents a refreshing alternative to *U.S. News & World Report* "best" college rankings. The magazine's "Third Annual College Guide," issued last September, again sorts schools according to what they give to society.

Not surprisingly, elite schools don't perform as well in the *Washington Monthly* survey. Among last year's U.S. News top ten, only Stanford shows up in WM's top ten. And among the Ivies, only Cornell figures in its top 25, thanks to the large number of graduates who earn a Ph.D. or join the Peace Corps. Their "abysmal" record of taking on and graduating poorer students is one of the reasons they don't do well, reports WM.

Three years ago, *Washington Monthly* concluded that the public would be better served with more and different types of school rankings. Their annual guide ranks schools by how well they perform as engines of social mobility, as producers of the scientific minds and research that develops new knowledge and drives economic growth, and in promoting an ethic of service.

This year, Texas A&M University is number one in WM's top 30 national universities, due to a significant level of ROTC enrollment and a generous amount of federal work-study funds devoted to community service. Presbyterian College, a women's school, is in first place in the top 30 liberal arts colleges list. And the guide also surveys the country's best community colleges.

You can find the *Washington Monthly* Third Annual College Guide online at www2.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2007/0709.collegeguide.html.

— Susan Maitra, Senior Editor

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Continued from page 78

tant, especially for the student who is far away from home! Most students equip their dorm rooms with mini-fridges, microwaves, televisions, rugs, printers, etc., often dividing up the “must have” list with a roommate. Keep in mind that too much stuff can be a burden: whatever is acquired during the year must be dealt with at the end of the year.

One final note about dorm rooms: every Foreign Service student needs to pay special attention to safeguarding valuables like passports, tickets, credit cards and money throughout the year. It’s important for students not to be too trusting of others, and to ensure that there is a secure place for these items.

Settling In

College can be “the best four years” of a person’s life, and often is. But the adjustment is usually not as easy as the hype would have one believe. For Global Nomads who have grown up around the world, being in the U.S. for the first time without family can be a lonely and alienating experience. Coping with reverse culture shock without family and friends who understand international living makes the adjustment even tougher.

Recognizing the symptoms of cul-

ture shock can be very important in dealing with it. Some students report feelings of:

- Homesickness
- Alienation from the home culture
- Not fitting in
- Fear they’ve made the wrong college choice
- Confusion
- Missing old friends
- Loneliness
- Boredom
- A sense of loss

For most, these feelings pass with time as they settle into campus life. They eventually find new friends, clubs, sports and activities, or create the kind of on-campus organization to which they would like to belong. Many find a bond with other international students, who understand automatically that the question “Where are you from?” has both a short and a long answer! The most important thing is for students to draw on the same coping and adjustment skills they have used to adapt to international life.

That means looking for the good in people and situations, and acknowledging and celebrating people for their individual and cultural differences. Seemingly “boring” American students have a culture, too, and it

pays to try to understand where they are coming from, as well. Most students have some challenges adjusting to life at college, but many of them have never moved before and therefore have no experience in coping with change. The Foreign Service student’s strength is the resilience they have developed over years of moving around the world.

One of the things I hear a lot about from Foreign Service kids is how hard it is to be so far from home — any home. They long for a sofa to flop on, downtime to relax, a home-cooked meal and some tender loving care. If they can find a relative, family friend or even a professor who will take them home from time to time, it can really help them get through the rough patches.

Some students have an especially difficult time. If things do not go well for an extended period of time, and your child seems to be slipping into apathy, despondency or depression (or you don’t hear from them for an extended period), urge them to check in with teachers, advisers, deans or mental health professionals on campus. The worst scenario is for a student to fall into a slump without reaching out for help.

Resources:

Love this for students: *Been There, Should’ve Done That II: More Tips for Making the Most of College*, Suzette Tyler, Front Porch Press, 2001.

Excellent resources for parents:

The Launching Years: Strategies for Parenting from Senior Year to College Life, Laura S. Kastner, PhD., Jennifer Wyatt, Ph.D., Three Rivers Press, 2002.

Don’t Tell Me What to Do, Just Send Money: The Essential Parenting Guide to the College Years, Helen E. Johnson and Christine Schelhas-Miller, St. Martin’s Griffin, 2000.

A Web site on the transition to college for parents:

www.mnsu.edu/fye/parents/familyguidebook/collegetransition.html

Evergreen books, really good for understanding your young adult:

Ready or Not, Here Life Comes, Dr. Mel Levine, Simon and Shuster, 1995.

Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens Through the Twenties, Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, Oxford University Press, 2006.

To keep our kids safe:

Security on Campus, Inc.: www.securityoncampus.org/

Campus Safety Tips and Evaluation Brochure: www.securityoncampus.org/students/tips.html

To understand who our kids are and what they might be going through:

Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing Up Among Worlds, David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2001.

— Rebecca Grappo

Health and Wellness Concerns

Students also need to be aware that they are in charge of their own physical well-being. Often, young people think they are invincible. But seemingly minor medical issues can quickly become major if they are not taken care of. What seems like “just” a cold, flu or cough can develop into a dangerous secondary infection or even pneumonia. Sore throats and fevers can easily turn into mononucleosis in a dorm setting.

The university health center is a student’s first line of defense, and health care personnel can refer a student to local doctors when needed. Students who depend on medication need to remember to refill the prescription before it runs out; also, con-

Continued on page 87

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Continued from page 84

tact lenses need to be reordered in a timely fashion.

All students are required to have health insurance on campus, so they need to know how to use their cards, apply for benefits and either pay or forward the bills home.

The best medicine, of course, is prevention. Students need to understand their own responsibilities regarding diet, exercise, and sleep, as well as the dangers of substances such as alcohol, tobacco and drugs, in order to maintain their own health. Parents should also talk to their kids about matters related to sexual health.

Moving Out

Moving out of the dorm at the end of the year is another major undertaking, especially if Mom or Dad is not there to help. The DSSR-280 allowance now allows for the storage of a student's personal effects instead of

***The more we can help
prepare them for what
lies ahead, the smoother
the ride will be.***

shipping them back to post, as long as the cost does not exceed that of air-freight (see the regulation for details).


In the late spring, signs start to appear on many campuses for college moving companies that drop off boxes and packing materials, pick up sealed boxes for storage, and then deliver them again in the fall. But these services need to be booked in advance.

Another option is to look at short-

term storage facilities; many of these businesses know "mom and pop" moving companies that can help out. Some college campuses allow summer storage on campus for international students — call residence life to ask.

The student needs to allow plenty of time for pack-out, as it always takes more time than one expects. And remind them to check *every* drawer for items like passports, eyeglasses and other valuables before leaving for the summer.

College is an exciting time. It means accepting responsibility for one's self — one's well-being as well as personal and intellectual growth. We want our children to have this opportunity, but we want them to travel wisely and stay safe and healthy. As parents, we know there will be bumps in the road, but the more we can help prepare them for what lies ahead, the smoother the ride will be. ■



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SPECIAL-NEEDS KIDS AND THE FOREIGN SERVICE: DISPELLING THE MYTHS

CORRECTING MISCONCEPTIONS CAN HELP FS PARENTS OF
SPECIAL-NEEDS KIDS GET OFF TO A GOOD START.

BY PAMELA WARD

Having a child with special learning, physical or psychological needs is a challenging and frustrating, but potentially rewarding, experience for any family. All of these emotions are multiplied exponentially when a family is internationally mobile. It is not only necessary for the employee parent to find an appropriate position every few years, but also to identify locations where the educational and medical needs of all family members can be addressed.

Until recently, it was not possible to consider a career in the Foreign Service if the family included a special-needs child. That has changed, but there remain concerns about the complexity of choosing assignments that provide needed educational and medical resources, especially when the time to identify appropriate bids is limited. Within the Department of State, a number of offices and a myriad of professionals stand ready to assist and support families from civilian foreign affairs agencies headed overseas.

Often, however, just the question of where to start can seem overwhelming. And, unfortunately, there is a lot of misinformation that can lead families in the wrong direction. To help give families with special-needs children a head start, let me dispel some of the common misconceptions held by internationally mobile parents.

Misconception 1: The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requirements apply to all American or international

Dr. Pamela Ward has been a Foreign Service officer and parent, a university professor training special educators and an administrator in schools — public and private, in the U.S. and abroad. Formerly education and youth officer in the Family Liaison Office, she is now the regional education officer for Africa in the Office of Overseas Schools.

schools, no matter where they are.

Until the late 1950s, children and young people with physical or mental disabilities were simply allowed to fall by the wayside in regular schools. Or, if the disability was severe, they were placed in schools or institutions where care was custodial at best. The activist spirit of the 1960s and the efforts of disabled veterans returning from Vietnam turned all this around. Federal laws were enacted requiring that in the U.S. those with challenges have physical access to buildings, jobs and transportation, and that an appropriate and free public education in the least restrictive environment be available to all children of school age.

But this legislation has never applied to private schools anywhere, and definitely not to public or private educational authorities outside of the United States. Most of the schools our children attend overseas are independent institutions with boards of directors that set policy. Even though many of these schools get grants, albeit relatively small ones, through the Office of Overseas Schools and other divisions in the Department of State, they are not obligated to adhere to IDEA or any of the other U.S. federal mandates on special needs.

That said, there are numerous programs and initiatives designed to encourage the schools that serve our families to provide services. These programs include special grants for the salaries of specialists; summer workshops for faculty and administrators; consultants for in-service training; the development of targeted training materials, such as the publications *Transitioning Overseas with a Special-Needs Child*, *Making the Difference: Differentiation in International Schools*; and more. The Office of Overseas Schools puts out a list, updated yearly, of several hundred schools around the world that provide special services.

Misconception 2: None of the various offices in Washington involved with identifying special needs and evaluating services at Foreign Service posts talk to

each other.

There are several offices in the Department of State staffed by professionals with a mandate to assist families with special-needs children, and they all have each other on speed dial. Families who know or suspect that their child has special needs must first contact the Employee Consultation Service, which is part of the Medical Division. Families abroad should contact their Regional Medical Officer. A highly experienced social worker will be assigned to continuing coordination of the case including assessment, educational planning and clearances.

If the child has been in special education programs in the U.S. and has a current Individual Education Plan (describing the specific program to be offered), the next move is identifying posts where the specified accommodations are available. If the child needs to be evaluated, ECS will organize the assessment to produce the IEP for the

***Within the Department
of State, a number of
offices and a myriad of
professionals stand
ready to assist.***

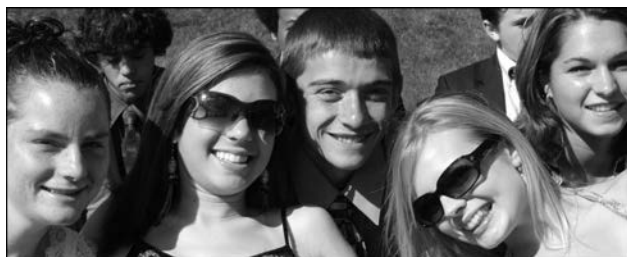
child here or abroad. ECS then works with the Office of Allowances to authorize the funding of the accommodations specified in the IEP.

Keep in mind that the governing regulation for the special-needs education allowance states clearly that only those educational services identified as actually "required" for the child in the IEP or equivalent document are reimbursable.

If the employee parent is due to be assigned overseas, the search for appropriate educational and medical services should begin early. The employee should work with his or her Career Development Officer to generate a short list of assignment possibilities. Parents can then follow up with ECS and the Office of Overseas Schools to determine which posts have schools that can provide the specified accommodations.

The Overseas Briefing Center at the Foreign Service Institute and the FS Special Needs Listserv are also good sources of information. If boarding school is a possibility, the Education and Youth Officer in the Family Liaison Office is an excellent referral resource. All of these offices have user-friendly Web sites and can also be contacted by phone, e-mail or in person.

Once the research is complete, the final step for the parents is to contact



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If interested in other volunteer opportunities with FS youth, please contact the Executive Director.

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the school directly to make sure it has space available and still offers the services required. In many cases, the school may want detailed test reports to be e-mailed or faxed to assure a good fit.

Misconception 3: All the information available in Washington is outdated.

All of the offices mentioned above have good sources of information on schools and services and are working continually to improve the quantity and accessibility of that information. The Office of Overseas Schools is staffed with five experienced international educators, who serve as Regional Education Officers and spend much of the year traveling abroad and visiting schools. In addition to the OS-assisted schools, they visit other schools used by U.S. families and any facility that might provide a quality special-needs program.

The office also collects information from schools directly through questionnaires and through Community Liaison Office coordinators. At times, OS sends consultants to a certain country or region to evaluate the special needs resources.

The information gathered is available at any time from the office or from the REO responsible for that area. REOs can be contacted by e-mail, even when they are on the road. ECS also has extensive information on resources at various posts. And the Overseas Briefing Center, part of the Transition Center at the Foreign Service Institute, has a range of materials, including some with comments from individuals serving at posts in *Personal Post Insights*.




All that said, sometimes things change quickly. A therapist may move away or a school may eliminate a program. That is the reason for the requirement that a family make real-time contact with the school before an assignment is confirmed.

Misconception 4: If a school abroad can meet a child's educational needs, it will also be able to provide other services such as

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speech therapy or occupational therapy.

Parents accustomed to the one-stop-shopping of U.S. public school systems are often dismayed to find that international schools — even large schools with special education programs — do not provide services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy or psychological testing and counseling. Sometimes it is because these services are not typically found in an educational setting in the host country or because the number of students requiring these specialized services is too small to make it cost-effective. Parents may need to work with the Regional Medical Officer, the Community Liaison Officer or other embassy personnel to identify local service providers.

Misconception 5: All students with the same diagnosis should be able to be served at the same school or post.

Most parents with special-needs children are aware that there is a wide degree of variation within the same diagnostic category. The autism spectrum, for example, ranges from girls with Rett Syndrome, who are non-ver-

bal and often must use wheelchairs, to highly gifted young people with Asperger's Syndrome, and everything in between. A learning disability may be auditory or visual, mild or severe. Determining a good fit requires an IEP for that particular child, with the required accommodations spelled out very clearly and in detail. Word-of-mouth that a certain community worked for a child with the same diagnosis as your son or daughter is not good enough.

Misconception 6: Gifted services are handled just like any other special-needs case.

Young people with intellectual gifts and talents are not covered in the U.S. by the same federal legislation as students who are challenged. But many American school systems do provide services for students identified as intellectually gifted. If a pupil has been identified as gifted by his or her school or a special program in the U.S. and is subsequently enrolled in an overseas school without such a program, a Supplementary Instruction amount for enrichment activities is available to augment the at-post education allowance.

If an international school or parent believes that a student may be gifted and in need of services, an assessment by a major university can be arranged through the Office of Overseas Schools. The Regional Education Officer will assist families with arrangements.

Misconception 7: Boarding options are limited for special-needs students.

There are many excellent boarding schools that provide every level of academic and psychological support available in the United States and abroad. The Education and Youth Officer in the Family Liaison Office is the primary resource for boarding school information for all students, including those with special needs.

Some college preparatory schools have structured study-skills options that may provide enough support for a student with a mild learning disability

or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. Other schools and therapeutic programs are specifically dedicated to the education and treatment of young people with more severe challenges, such as Pervasive Developmental Delay or serious psychiatric conditions.

If a student needs a highly specialized placement or one on short notice, the Education and Youth Officer may refer the family to one of several specialized consultants in the Washington area or around the world. Organizations such as the National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs or The Association of Boarding Schools have excellent Web sites and may be helpful, as well.

A Support Network of Professionals

The Transition Center at the Foreign Service Institute held a full-day workshop for parents on May 29 that included representatives of all the offices charged with supporting families with special needs children. The Family Liaison Office continues to advocate for assignment and allowance policies that give families maximum flexibility. The Office of Allowances works closely with FLO, Overseas Schools and the Office of the Legal Adviser in revisiting the legislative and regulatory guidelines and assisting families and posts with the technical and financial aspects of special education accommodations.

The Office of Overseas Schools sponsors several summer workshops for teachers and administrators specifically focused on serving special-needs students and continually develops materials, consults with schools and researches options around the world. The Employee Consultation Service reviews every case yearly to be sure that each child is moving toward maximizing his or her potential.

This network of professionals and the informal information-sharing among parents in our community will continue to make the path smoother for special-needs families. ■

Resources

Department of State Internet

Office of Overseas Schools —
www.state.gov/m/a/os/

Family Liaison Office —
www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/

Overseas Briefing Center —
www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c6954.htm

Department of State Intranet

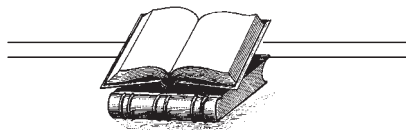
Employee Consultation Service —
<http://medical.state.gov>

Office of Allowances —
<http://aoprals.a.state.gov/>

Other

National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs (NATSAP) —
www.natsap.org

The Association of Boarding Schools (TABS) — www.schools.com/



BOOKS

One Hale of a Book

Nine Lives:

A Foreign Service Odyssey

Allen Hansen, New Academia Publishing, 2007, \$28.00, paperback, 452 pages.

REVIEWED BY JACK GALLAGHER

Nathan Hale, the American revolutionary who regretted having only one life to give for his country, would have considered Allen Hansen, the author of *Nine Lives: A Foreign Service Odyssey*, the luckiest man on earth. Multiply Hale's patriotic sacrifice by nine, and the product of that mathematical calculation will equal the "nine lives" given to his country more than two centuries later by a dedicated diplomat, Allen Hansen.

The title for this book — the latest entry in the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training's *Memoirs and Occasional Papers Series* — refers to the author's career in the nine countries where he served as a Foreign Service officer with the United States Information Agency during the Cold War: Venezuela, Mexico, Guyana, Spain, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay, Bolivia, Peru and Pakistan. Hansen also served in Washington, D.C.

He and his fellow "public diplomats" manned our ideological battle stations during that historic competition for the minds of this planet's inhabitants. Hansen's autobiographi-

*Whether he is
discussing serious policy
matters or sharing
personal moments,
Hansen's honesty shines
through the writing.*



cal account provides an insider's view of how our operatives combated Soviet propaganda by telling America's story to the world — a strategy that contributed mightily to ripping down the infamous Iron Curtain not long after Hansen's 1987 retirement from the Foreign Service.

Hansen's account of his role in that crucial era reveals the dedication required of our diplomats, who — then as now — often served in the most inhospitable environments. And, yes, sometimes in great danger. On occasion, Mother Nature made the going even tougher; for instance, a monstrous earthquake in Mexico threatened Hansen and his wife Charmaine. Fortunately, they survived that calamity.

In contrast to that and other dire events, Hansen adds some happy balance by writing about meeting and courting his wife, with whom he fell in love during his first overseas tour, in Caracas. He highlights the account of those blissful but frequently hectic days with understated humor about

the ubiquitous bureaucratic roadblocks that he and his bride-to-be encountered as they sought to wed. The couple had to jump through so many hoops that it would not have surprised the wedding guests if, instead of a diamond, the bureaucratically battered groom had slipped a loop of red tape onto Charmaine's ring finger.

Whether he is discussing serious policy matters or sharing personal moments, the author's honesty shines through the writing. Hansen makes no effort to conceal or downplay any mistakes he may have made while serving abroad. Yet he also demonstrates in his comments about individuals and societies a characteristic which a few of his colleagues, sorry to say, may be lacking: tact.

Nine Lives truly has something for everyone. Retired FSOs will be able to identify with Hansen's true-to-life reporting on the Cold War, while new entrants to the Foreign Service can benefit by learning from the horse's mouth the qualities necessary for success in such an adventurous life.

Now that I have read this fascinating memoir, it wouldn't surprise me if a reincarnated Nathan Hale with nine lives chose to spend one of them following in Hansen's footsteps.

Jack Gallagher was a Foreign Service officer with USIA from 1954 to 1986, serving mostly in Latin America. He is now a freelance writer, among other retirement pursuits.



Spy Tales Revisited

**Deceiving the Deceivers:
Kim Philby, Donald Maclean
and Guy Burgess**

*S.J. Hamrick, Yale University Press,
2004, 320 pages.*

REVIEWED BY TED WILKINSON

The late S.J. Hamrick was not the first practitioner of diplomacy to spin tales of international intrigue after decades of hands-on experience. One thinks of John Buchan and Lawrence Durrell, both Brits, or Americans Burke Wilkinson and Lydia Kirk, widow of Admiral (and Ambassador) Alan Kirk. But Hamrick, who died earlier this year (see the May *Foreign Service Journal* for his obituary) was particularly prolific, producing seven such novels during the 1980s and 1990s.

Hamrick's last work, *Deceiving the Deceivers: Kim Philby, Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess*, is a different, perhaps unique form of literature. Neither a novel nor history, it depicts what might have happened in the shadowy world of espionage and counterespionage at the outset of the Cold War (though we may never know for sure).

Sadly, the book is out of print, but is available from online distributors in hardcover and paperback editions.

The inspiration for the work came from the release of the Venona files, some 2,900 decrypted Soviet-era cables from the 1940s that the National Security Agency made public between 1995 and 1997. Based on several 1944 cables, Donald Maclean, one of the spies in the infamous "Cambridge Five," had been identified as "Homer," a Soviet agent who was serving in the British Embassy in Washington at that time. Going over texts already partially

*Hamrick's last book
explores the shadowy
world of espionage
at the outset of the
Cold War.*

broken by American cryptanalysts, the U.K.'s General Communications Headquarters identified Maclean as "Homer" as early as 1947, certainly no later than 1949.

Maclean's fellow moles in His Majesty's Government, Guy Burgess and "Kim" Philby (nicknamed for Kipling's famous subcontinental spy), must also have fallen under immediate suspicion because of their known close interconnections. Maclean and Burgess both had histories of heavy drinking and disorderly behavior, and both had been recalled from foreign posts.

Philby was aware that the ice was cracking beneath their feet, and even sent a warning from his senior MI6 liaison post in Washington to Maclean in London through Burgess in early May 1951. Yet no constraints were placed on their movements, and Maclean and Burgess were able to flee together to the USSR on May 25, 1951. (Philby defected to Moscow much later, from Beirut, in 1963.)

How could the British government have been so lax and inept at its highest levels? Were the spies being protected because of old-boy loyalties? Not likely, maintains Hamrick. To the contrary, once they were iden-

tified, it is likely that MI5 and MI6 chiefs manipulated them into feeding disinformation back to Moscow. One likely reason was to disguise the inadequacy of Washington's nuclear arsenal and London's delivery capability during the late 1940's, to preserve the façade of meaningful deterrence against the USSR's ambitions in Europe.

Building on their World War II experience with deception, U.K. intelligence chiefs would have fed the spies — particularly Philby — proposed war plans that greatly exaggerated Allied capabilities. Of course, the British would have kept this double-dealing from the Washington intelligence chiefs for fear that the U.S., already leery of sharing nuclear secrets with them, would have closed down the information pipeline completely on learning of new high-level moles in HMG.

Hamrick's research is impressive, and he cites an important backer of his theory: General Edwin Sibert, a former assistant director of the CIA, is quoted as having learned later from unspecified sources that Philby was being used as a conduit for disinformation.

Moreover, London's vehement and steadfast opposition to the NSA's release of the Venona files, and its refusal to release any of its own work on the same cables (which undoubtedly contain additional deciphered information from the same period) both suggest that there is indeed more to the story than has been revealed to date. But how and whether it will ever be revealed, and whether it will support Hamrick's intriguing theory, is a story yet to be told. ■

Ted Wilkinson, a Foreign Service officer from 1961 to 1996, is the chairman of the FSJ Editorial Board.

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Diplomatic Automobile / 56
Martens Volvo / 50

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MCG Financial Planning / 45
Shaw & Bransford / 39
State Department Federal
Credit Union / 21

HOUSING

Accommodations 4 U / 49
AKA / Inside Front Cover
Arlington Residence Court / 21
Attache Property
Management LLC / 29
Capitol Hill Stay / 35
CAS/Corporate Apartment
Specialists, Inc. / 29
Executive Lodging Alternatives / 45
Extended-Stay Housing Online / 42
Farrington Village / 42
Georgetown Suites / 23
Marriott Execustay / 39
Pied à Terre Properties, Ltd. / 35
Remington Hotel, The / 19
State Plaza / 33
Suite America / 41

Virginian Suites, The / 50

INSURANCE

AFSPA / 55
Clements International / 1
Hirshorn Company, The /
Outside Back Cover

MISCELLANEOUS

COLEAD / 41
Cort Furniture / 2
Inside a U.S. Embassy / 79
Middle East Journal / 46
Strategic Studies Quarterly / 53
University of Kentucky - Patterson
School of Diplomacy / 55
Useful Link / 69

REAL ESTATE & PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Executive Housing
Consultants / 96
Hagner, Ridgway & Jackson / 99
McEneaney Associates / 97
McGrath / 97
Meyerson Group Inc., The / 96
Peake Management, Inc. / 99
ProMax Management Inc. / 96
Property Specialists, Inc. / 97

Prudential Carruthers / 95
RE/MAX / JoAnn Piekney / 95
Stuart & Maury Inc. / 95
Taylor Properties, Ltd. / 98
Washington Management
Services / 98
WJD Management / 99

SCHOOLS SUPPLEMENT

Barrie School, The / 87
Berlin Brandenburg
International School / 78
Blue Ridge School / 85
Brandon Hall School / 69
British School of Washington / 70
Browne Academy / 67
Congressional Schools of Virginia,
The / 67
Conserve School / 71
Darlington School / 79
Escuela Campo Alegre / 79
Foxcroft School / 88
Glenholme School, The / 77
Gow School, The / 86
Idyllwild Arts Academy / 88
Interlochen Arts Academy / 70
King George School / 74
Lab School of Washington,
The / 87
Landmark School, The / 88

Lawrence Academy / 73
Leysin American School in
Switzerland / 70
Marine Military Academy / 80
Massanutten Military
Academy / 85
New Kind of College Guide / 83
North Country School / 74
Northfield Mount Hermon / 90
Oldfields School / 76
Rutgers University / 76
St. Mark's School / 75
St. Stephen's School / 77
Stone Ridge School of the Sacred
Heart / 91
TASIS, The American School
in England / 86
University of Missouri / 69
Vanguard School / 91
Wasatch Academy / 83
Washington International
School / 73
West Nottingham Academy / 77
White Mountain School / 75

ANNOUNCEMENTS

AFSA Legacy / Inside Back Cover
FSYF / 67, 73, 90
Marketplace / 11

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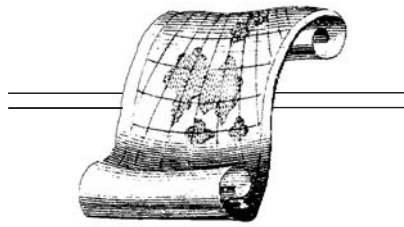
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REFLECTIONS

Trombone Diplomacy

BY FRED A. COFFEY JR.

Though cultural diplomacy in the form of student exchanges is alive and well, the kind of music outreach that was such an important part of U.S. policy throughout the Cold War era is less in evidence. The New York Philharmonic's February concert in North Korea was perhaps the only major example in recent years — and even that, though approved by the State Department, was privately sponsored.

More than one hundred musicians traveled to Pyongyang to give the first concert by an American symphony orchestra under communist rule. Though President Kim Jong Il did not attend, other top officials joined the audience of more than 1,000 North Koreans. The performance was broadcast live on domestic television and radio, and may contribute to further openings.

I was a witness to the unique power of music in an earlier era. During the summer of 1959, Washington's National Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Howard Mitchell, played to enthusiastic audiences in Latin America. The State Department and United States Information Agency (known overseas as the United States Information Service) had convinced the NSO that the time was right to display our musical achievement to our southern neighbors.

But in Managua, the NSO's performance became an instrument of diplomacy as well as culture. The country was ruled by Luis and Tachito

*Whether in Pyongyang
or Managua, music
continues to play
a diplomatic role.*



Somoza, sons of dictator Anastasio "Tacho" Somoza, who had been assassinated in 1956. People protesting their despotic rule were thrown in jail or otherwise disposed of.

Yet America's Good Neighbor Policy, established under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, continued to extend to the Somozas' Nicaragua, even though democracy was a mirage there. On the very day that 100 musicians led by Maestro Mitchell landed in Managua, Somoza's Guardia Nacional crushed a protest at the Nicaragua National Autonomous University in the colonial city of Leon. Three students were killed and others wounded.

Our embassy was torn: Should we cancel the sold-out concert the next evening in sympathy with the dead students, or carry on? I was the action officer for the event in our cultural and press office of USIS. Calls from the student leaders informed me they were going to shut down the concert because a performance would indicate U.S. approval of Somoza's actions. Chillingly, they added that the performance would have to be canceled if Mitchell was "secuestrado," or kidnapped.

I urged them to rethink that path,

but they insisted the move was already under way. We warned Mitchell and provided security for him. He courageously wanted to proceed with the concert, but acknowledged that he was in great sympathy with the students. So I told my Nicaraguan student interlocutor that we would show a significant measure of sympathy at the performance, but wasn't sure how. He replied that students had already kidnapped Mr. Mitchell.

Whoa! I quickly reached Mitchell in his hotel room — he was unharmed. But then orchestra members reported that the second trombone player was missing. Si, Señor, the students had grabbed the wrong man. You can imagine his surprise!

Mitchell and U.S. Ambassador Tom Whelan agreed that there would be three minutes of silence at the opening of the concert to show sympathy for the deceased and wounded students. Student leaders accepted this show of support.

As the orchestra was warming up in the theater, in walked in a flustered but relieved trombonist. The performance that followed was superb. The Somoza government was displeased with our gesture, but it resonated with the important student movement.

Indeed, whether in Pyongyang or Managua, music continues to play a diplomatic role. ■

Fred A. Coffey Jr. is a retired Foreign Service officer who served with USIA in Latin America and Southeast Asia.

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