

THE **FOREIGN SERVICE** JOURNAL

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APRIL 2022



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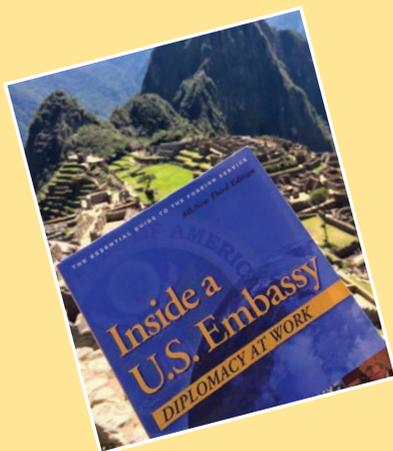
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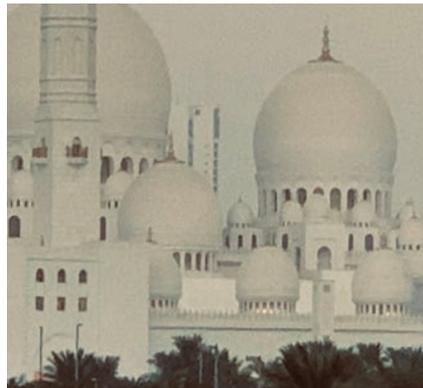
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On the Cover—Design by Caryn Suko-Smith of Driven by Design LLC. Photos from left: Dutch tulips, courtesy of Karen Sliter; a “hobby” sheep farm threatened by foot-and-mouth disease during the 2001 outbreak in the United Kingdom, courtesy of APHIS Vienna; female medfly pumps eggs into a ripe coffee berry, courtesy of Scott Bauer/USDA.

The Big Impact of a Small Agency

BY ERIC RUBIN

This month's cover story highlights the impressive work of our Foreign Service colleagues in the U.S. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The people of APHIS are unsung heroes who keep our agricultural and natural resource industries safe from invasive pests and diseases, safeguard the transport of livestock and pets and help expand markets for U.S. plant and animal products.

We're highlighting APHIS, the second-smallest agency with a Foreign Service component, on the occasion of its 50th anniversary. The APHIS Foreign Service illustrates how a small group of highly skilled, highly qualified public servants can make a huge impact on our country's security and prosperity.

Here's a great example: APHIS kept the New World screwworm from reinfesting American cattle herds after it was eradicated in the U.S. in 1966. Working closely with the governments of Mexico and Central America, APHIS succeeded in eliminating this costly pest all the way to the Panama-Colombia border by 2006.

Those efforts saved thousands of cattle and billions of dollars in agricultural resources. It's not surprising that most

Americans don't know what APHIS does for them. It is surprising, however, that many of us in the Foreign Service don't know either.



Ambassador Eric Rubin is the president of the American Foreign Service Association.

AFSA takes seriously its mission to represent and serve all members of the U.S. Foreign Service in the six federal agencies and departments that host Foreign Service components: State, USAID, Commerce/FCS, USDA/FAS, USDA/APHIS and USAGM/VOA. We are proud that all six bargaining units have elected AFSA as their sole legal union representative under federal labor laws. And we are determined to avoid being seen as "State-centric" or, even worse, acting as such.

With more than 80 percent of the Foreign Service belonging to State, it is not surprising that many journalists, foreign diplomats and everyday citizens think of the Foreign Service and the State Department as synonymous. Those of us who have served overseas with FS colleagues from agencies other than our own, however, quickly learn that the phrase "one team" is more than just a slogan.

Both the Foreign Service Act of 1946 and 1980 stipulated the establishment of an advisory board of the Foreign Service, in part to coordinate among branches of the Foreign Service. That board has never really functioned.

The creation of the Office of Foreign Assistance ("F") at State in 2006 has led to significantly improved coordination and information sharing between State and USAID bureaus and offices. It also has its detractors, who complain that it added layers of bureaucracy and review to already complicated decision-making processes.

As AFSA refines its priority goals for

Foreign Service reform and modernization, we want to ensure that changes treat the Foreign Service as one institution whenever possible. Our members have shared their ideas for change and their frustrations with the way things work (or all too often, fail to work) in their agencies. We will coordinate closely with members and with staff in both houses of Congress to bring about legislative changes needed to make our work more effective and our careers more manageable and rewarding.

Most importantly, we urge the Biden administration to act on the president's January 2021 Executive Order on Protecting the Federal Workforce and April 2021 Executive Order Establishing the White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment, which is chaired by Vice President Harris.

The executive orders call for federal agencies and departments to work collaboratively with federal employee unions to address problems and to negotiate substantive changes before they are decided and announced. To date, we have not seen any significant implementation of either order in any of the Foreign Service agencies.

There is strength in unity, and as one Foreign Service we can better achieve our nation's foreign affairs, national security and foreign assistance objectives. AFSA welcomes your ideas on how we can work to achieve the vision of one Foreign Service, in service to our country. As always, please let us know your thoughts at member@afsa.org. ■

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Happy Anniversary, APHIS!

BY SHAWN DORMAN

In early March, winding my way through the snaking security line at the airport on St. Thomas, USVI, on my way back to Washington, I was practically jumping up and down at the sight of one big poster after another aiming to keep U.S. pigs safe and prevent the spread of African swine fever across borders.

The posters were from the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the small federal agency we celebrate this month as it turns 50. No one here in line knows what APHIS is, I thought, and they should!

I had to resist showing off the April proof pages about APHIS on my iPad as I put the device on the belt. No sense in causing a ruckus with the Department of Homeland Security, and we went on through, pork-free and clear.

It is my great pleasure now to be able to introduce our cover story on the “Small but Mighty” APHIS Foreign Service—protecting the health of U.S. agriculture and promoting trade opportunities for American producers—by veteran (and veterinarian) APHIS FSO Karen Sliter and APHIS FSO Russell Duncan.

This month’s focus is on the State Department’s new core precepts—the

criteria by which State Foreign Service employees are evaluated for promotion—which were renegotiated recently



Shawn Dorman is the editor of The Foreign Service Journal.

for the first time in more than five years. We present two complementary vantage points on the changes, including the addition of a dedicated diversity and inclusion precept.

The first inside look is from a human resources perspective, by Director of the Bureau of Global Talent Management’s Office of Performance Evaluation Lisa Vickers, who describes how the new precepts came to be and what the changes mean.

The second, by FSO Kim McClure, a senior policy adviser in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, describes why a diversity precept is a “game changer,” giving every employee a direct role in advancing DEIA.

And while “core precepts” may sound like internal bureaucracy, other agencies and even private sector entities should take note, as this move may (or may not) prove to be an effective step toward real cultural and institutional change.

The April feature from Donna Scaramastra Gorman, “The Little Book That Could: *Inside a U.S. Embassy*, Telling the Foreign Service Story for More Than a Quarter Century,” is another anniversary celebration (albeit a few months late). It’s been 25 years since the publication of the first edition of AFSA’s popular book and 10 years since the publication of the third edition—and the book keeps on selling, introducing the people and the work of the U.S. Foreign Service.

In FS Heritage, Larissa Moseley tells the story of an FSO who blazed a trail in

the 1940s and ’50s: “Jeannette Lafrance: A Pioneering Foreign Service Woman.”

The FS Know-How from Robin Quinville gives tips on “How To Be a Zooming Success” in the new virtual and hybrid working world. In Reflections, Vincent Chiarello remembers “Touching the Ceiling” of the Sistine Chapel. And in the Speaking Out, Kristin Loken takes us back to Russia in 1992, when “No One Was Listening.”

This month’s reviews merit special mention: Eric Rubin on the new memoir by Marie Yovanovitch, *Lessons from the Edge*, and Laura Kennedy on Togh-zhan Kassenova’s *Atomic Steppe: How Kazakhstan Gave Up the Bomb*. And in a special film review, Jane Carpenter-Rock and Maryum Saifee reflect on the mid-February PBS release, “The American Diplomat.”

As we go to print with this rather positive, dare I say uplifting, edition, Russian forces push deeper into Ukraine. The impossible is becoming very real, the devastation palpable. As of mid-March, it is difficult to see a diplomatic path out of what Russian President Vladimir Putin seems to be marching into.

As a monthly, we cannot cover breaking news, but we will continue to keep a diplomacy lens on what is happening. To our readers with experience in the region, especially recently, we invite you to please share your perspective on Russia’s war on Ukraine. Write to journal@afsa.org. ■

Retirees, Rejoin AFSA!

Last year, I began planning in earnest for retirement after 30 years of service as a Foreign Service officer. I'd always placed the highest value on my long-standing membership in AFSA, so I researched the benefits accorded to retiree members.

Looking at its easy-to-use website (afsa.org), I discovered that retiree members receive many perks, including a subscription to the invaluable *Foreign Service Journal* and numerous discounts from retailers. Moreover, retiree members can sign up to receive the Daily Media Digest and the AFSA Retiree Newsletter. AFSA also includes retiree members in focused events and discussions.

These are just some of the tangible aspects of membership. The intangible facets are as important given that AFSA retiree membership is a bridge to continued engagement in international affairs. A retiree can live anywhere in America or the world and still play a vital part in the AFSA collective. Through membership, a retiree is also directly supporting the premier platform devoted to representing and serving the foreign affairs community.

I should also note that membership dues are low. Rates are pegged to the approximate level of a retiree's annuity and can be deducted automatically.

With these facts in hand, I'm proud to say that my first act after retirement was to rejoin AFSA! I strongly recommend that foreign affairs professionals entering the retirement portal consider joining, as well.

Joseph L. Novak

FSO, retired

Washington, D.C.

GWOT Truth-Telling

Larry Butler's "The Global War on Terror and Diplomatic Practice" (September 2021) is thoughtful, a "whole-of-career" reflection on GWOT and diplomatic malpractice. And it is unsparing. Good of the *FSJ* to run it, not run from it.



Butler employs to great effect his historical and institutional matrix, looking at distinct periods (Cold War, interwar, GWOT, now great power competition) and considering policy frameworks (multilateral, bilateral and unilateral).

That's insightful for those of us who lived through these periods and worked within these frameworks. It should be used in A-100 training.

And Balkan hands will appreciate his reference to their struggles in the 1990s, seen by many of their colleagues at the time as a curious obsession, quixotic.

Striking for me: Twice he cites a Diplomatic Security assistant secretary (by name no less), but not a single Secretary of State; he also recognizes the importance of U.S. military regional commands, but doesn't mention State's regional bureaus—all of which, especially the omissions, illustrate his points. Unsparing.

Butler argues that not only is State sidelined in Washington, but the Foreign Service is marginalized out in the field as the culture has become "inward-looking, preoccupied with security, suspicious of locals and unwilling to take risks." Very regrettable. His most acerbic critique.

Hard to imagine the Balkan hands back in the day trying to operate under such constraints. And, sadly, the new

generation of diplomats may not experience constant personal interaction with foreigners, a hallmark of the profession for centuries—not to mention missing out on "sauntering among the local people."

After finishing the piece, I felt a little depressed by its truth-telling but, as in the familiar paradox, buoyed by its truth.

Fletcher M. Burton

FSO, retired

Nashville, Tennessee

Moscow Signal Concerns

Jim Schumaker's "Before Havana Syndrome, There Was Moscow Signal" (January-February 2022) stirred concerns and questions in us. Here's our story.

I was assigned to Embassy Paris in 1969 for my first tour as what is now referred to as an office management specialist. I met my husband, Leo Cyr (U.S. Air Force), in January 1970 while he was assigned to the Defense Intelligence Agency's security office at the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam. We married in Paris in April 1972, soon after the proscription against FS women marrying was abolished.

We returned to Washington in 1973: Ann to State; Leo to the Pentagon. Leo retired from the USAF in 1974 and a few months later joined the State Department as a "communicator." We arrived in Beirut, our first tandem assignment, in March 1975—a week later, the civil war began. I was evacuated to Athens in April 1976; Leo was evacuated in June.

There's actually a rather long story involved; but to fulfill our 18 months abroad before home leave and transfer to Hong Kong, we were sent to Moscow on temporary duty from August to October 1976.

This was supposedly at the end of the microwaving. The majority of my time was spent in the science and com-

mercial sections. The other OMS in the science section was quite often ill for a variety of reasons. This appeared to happen with several family member employees throughout the embassy.

Leo and I were shuffled from one apartment in the embassy building to another whenever a family in the communications section went on vacation—all apartments faced the main ring road.

We regularly had to have blood tests taken, and the explanation was: “There’s nothing wrong. This is just a precautionary course of action.” Special screens were installed on the windows facing the ring road. Again, management said: “There’s nothing wrong; this is just precautionary.”

Approximately a week before we were scheduled to leave, I developed medical problems, was prescribed medication and had to have bed rest to keep my legs raised because the doctor was afraid of blood clots occurring. Luckily, nothing further happened along these lines. We participated in the Johns Hopkins study on the microwaving but never heard a thing from anyone.

Can we attribute the fact that our eyesight declined to our tour in Moscow? I had cataracts removed in Kuala Lumpur in 1999 and Washington, D.C., in 2001. In the intervening years after our 1976 Moscow service, Leo also had a detached retina and cataracts, and has been undergoing injections for macular degeneration since 2010.

*Ann I. Cyr and Leo J. Cyr
FSOs, retired
Delray Beach, Florida*

Telltale Trees?

Your January-February article on the Moscow Signal (Jim Schumaker, “Before Havana Syndrome, There Was Moscow Signal”) sure brought back a lot of memories!

In a pre-Foreign Service existence, I spent four years working as a contractor at our embassy in Moscow (my office was the second oval window from the left on the second floor).

I was there from 1993 to 1997, a little bit after most of the events in the article, but we were still aware of high-level observation efforts. The “new” embassy building, the one full of Soviet bugs, stood testament to those efforts.

I have wondered about the long-term effects of sitting by a window in that embassy for four years. Thankfully, to this point, I seem not to have been affected. However, I did see potential evidence of harmful effects.

There used to be a long row of trees along the Garden Ring Road in Moscow. For miles along this major Moscow boulevard a tree had been

planted roughly every 20 feet. The trees immediately in front of the old embassy building, however, were dead. Yet the others along the ring road seemed to flourish.

That served, at least to me, as stark evidence that something different was going on in the area of the embassy. I am by no means an arborist, but it seems to me that the trees may have been susceptible to microwave beams aimed at that building.

Thanks again for your excellent coverage of the Foreign Service community. I read every issue with great interest.

*Dave Citron
FSO, retired
Westminster, Maryland*

An Unnatural Death in Russia, 1873

Jim Schumaker’s recent article on the “Moscow Signal” (January-February) reminds of the special challenges associated with postings in Russia—whether in the Russian Federation, the Soviet Union or Imperial Russia. Among those recognized on the C Street lobby AFSA Memorial Plaques is Madden Summers, who died from “Exhaustion” in Moscow in 1918.

Not currently included on the memorial is the chief of mission in 1873, James Lawrence Orr, who died in St. Petersburg on May 5, 1873, at age 50 of pneumonia, two months after presenting his credentials at the court of the tsar.

The vast majority of our 19th-century diplomat predecessors who died in service overseas fell to infectious diseases, not violence or natural disaster. St. Petersburg, built by Peter the Great on former marshlands to be

his “Window to Europe,” was Imperial Russia’s capital for two centuries (1712-1918). In addition to a showcase of stunning architecture, it was a notorious cesspool of disease. In 1889 St. Petersburg gifted the world the pandemic known as the Russian flu. Medical care there was notoriously substandard.

Orr lived a full life before dying prematurely as chief of mission in St. Petersburg. However, the back story of Orr, appointed by President Ulysses S. Grant to be minister to Russia in part as an act of post-Civil War reconciliation, is complex, as I learned recently after discovering we are distantly related.

He finished the University of Virginia with a degree in law at age 19. As a member of the South Carolina State



House from 1844 to 1848, Orr was a slave-owning supporter of states' rights who opposed John C. Calhoun's "Nullifier" pre-secessionist efforts.

Elected to the U.S. House of Representatives for five terms starting at age 28, Orr was the 22nd Speaker of the House (1857-1859) by age 37.

Following President Abraham Lincoln's November 1860 election, Orr attended South Carolina's December convention that voted unanimously to leave the Union. After outgoing President James Buchanan refused to turn over control of federal forts along South Carolina's coast to the state, Orr was one of three commissioners sent to Washington after Lincoln's inauguration to negotiate a handover of the forts to avert armed conflict.

Lincoln refused and instead attempted to resupply Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, triggering the bombardment of Fort Sumter that began the Civil War. Orr immediately organized the South Carolina First Regiment, known as Orr's Rifles, assigned to Stonewall Jackson's Second Corps as part of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.

Orr returned to politics full time in 1862, serving in the Confederate Senate from 1862 to 1865, including as chair of the Confederate Foreign Relations Committee. "Orr's Rifles" were present at Appomattox for Lee's April 1865 surrender to Ulysses S. Grant.

After the war, Orr switched tack, seeking to secure South Carolina's full restoration of rights within the Union. He served as South Carolina governor, including as the state's first elected executive, from 1865 to 1868, as Reconstruction began.

Reform and reconciliation drove Orr's postwar positioning, which some political rivals derided as opportunism. He advocated limited voting rights

for Black people (a majority of South Carolina residents between the Revolutionary and Civil Wars), but not passage of the 14th Amendment.

Orr joined the Republican Party in 1870 and endorsed President Grant's anti-Ku Klux Klan initiatives at the 1872 Republican convention. In a reciprocal gesture of North-South reconciliation, Grant, in turn, nominated Orr as minister to Russia, a diplomatic posting cut prematurely short by his 1873 death along the banks of the Neva.

Orr made the news on Juneteenth 2020 when Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi ordered the removal of official portraits of four former Speakers who had actively participated in the Confederate military and political efforts to secede.

*George Kent
Senior Foreign Service officer
Washington, D.C.*

Rethink the Approach to Separatist Groups

The Dec. 6, 2021, centennial of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, in which the British agreed to withdraw from all but the six northern provinces of Ireland, reminded me that a discussion of how best to deal with nationalist and resistance movements typically dismissed as unrepentant terrorist organizations is long overdue.

It is time to make an objective appraisal of our past dealings (or lack thereof) with subnational insurgencies with territorial aspirations such as the Irish Republic Army, the African National Congress, the Palestine Liberation Organization, Hezbollah, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, the Basque Homeland and Liberty (ETA) group and the Oromo Liberation Front.

Merely designating them as terrorist groups and refusing to acknowledge their grievances has accomplished little. Our

designations certainly didn't stop them from using terror as a weapon. Neither was it helpful nor accurate to lump these subnational separatist groups in with radical leftist and extremist sectarian entities like the Red Brigades, Red Army Faction, Shining Path, Hamas, the Lord's Resistance Army and Islamic Jihad.

This goes beyond the notion that one person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter. The Stern Gang's Yitzhak Shamir and Irgun's Menachem Begin are prime examples of how avowed terrorists can be later politically rehabilitated and hailed as leaders.

(Shamir even gave himself the nickname "Michael" because of his admiration for IRA leader Michael Collins, who—after directing numerous "The Squad" assassinations of British officials and their Irish informers—signed the Anglo-Irish Treaty.)

Pegging Gerry Adams as a terrorist until 2006 and Nelson Mandela as one until 2008, moreover, made us look out of touch with historic developments well underway in Northern Ireland and South Africa.

During my 1996-1998 assignment to Ethiopia, Oromo representatives told me repeatedly that although the OLF sought independence for Oromia, it would be amenable to greater power-sharing with the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front in Addis Ababa, led at the time by former Tigray People's Liberation Front fighters.

The Oromo representatives rejected OLF's designation as a terrorist organization, contending that its leaders would negotiate if given the chance. Not surprisingly, they pointed out parallels with the PLO.

Once Yasser Arafat and the PLO were accorded official recognition and opportunities to parlay with Israeli authorities,

Fatah-instigated violence decreased markedly; and, even more amazingly, security cooperation with our encouragement and support was initiated.

This past January marked 50 years since Bloody Sunday in Derry, Northern Ireland—arguably the most appalling incident of The Troubles. It unleashed a tit-for-tat period of wanton violence that took the lives of numerous innocents throughout Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

That tragedy was commemorated by the Irish band The Cranberries in an anguished and haunting lament, “Zombie.” I believe our entry-level officers should have a session listening to that song, along with “Peace Train” by Cat Stevens (Yusuf Islam) before having a heavy-duty discussion on whether there are tools other than wanton violence to achieve nationhood or address irredentist claims.

Hopefully, a future *FSJ* edition will debate the merits of negotiating with sub-national separatist organizations or having nothing to do with them.

George W. Aldridge
FSO, retired
Arlington, Texas

Seeking Monrovia School Alums

On Jan. 7, 2022, Liberia kicked off a year of events to mark the bicentennial of the arrival of free Black settlers from the United States. These settlers, many of whom were born into slavery, would join indigenous Liberians and other Black immigrants to found Africa’s first independent republic.

Liberia: The Land of Return, as the initiative is called, hopes to commemorate Liberia’s shared history with the United States and attract visits and investment by the diaspora and others, with a special focus on African Americans.

The American International School of Monrovia became a part of that shared history when it opened in 1960 as the American Cooperative School. Liberia’s brutal civil wars, and later Ebola, forced the school to close several times over the decades.

Today, despite setbacks from COVID-19, AISM is reenergized and focused on the future. This year, AISM accepted its first high school students, with plans in place to expand to a fully accredited high school within just a couple of years.

As part of the bicentennial initiative, AISM will also launch a scholarship program beginning with the 2022-2023 school year.

At this historic moment, AISM seeks to reconnect with alumni, especially those who attended the American Cooperative School. If you or your family member attended ACS or AISM, we’d love to hear from you!

Please contact administration@aismonrovia.org with the subject line “Alumni”.

Sunshine Ison
FSO
Monrovia, Liberia ■

CORRECTION

In the March book review on *Vision or Mirage*, the name of the national security adviser dispatched to Riyadh should be Jake Sullivan. We regret the error.

Share your thoughts about this month’s issue.

**Submit letters to the editor:
journal@afsa.org**



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RESPONSE TO JANUARY-FEBRUARY APPRECIATION, “COLIN POWELL (1937–2021): LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP”

My Role Model, Guiding Light and North Star for 30 Years

BY STACY D. WILLIAMS

On Oct. 18, I learned sadly that the man I admired and sought to emulate over 30 years had died. Colin L. Powell was a driving force for much of my adult life. I was fortunate over three decades to have my own Master Class through the words, deeds and experiences of General Powell, as he preferred to be called, the man who created “Powell’s 13 Rules” and is widely quoted as saying: “It is not where you start, but where you finish.”

The beginning for me was in Shreveport, Louisiana. At the ripe old age of 18, I was scanning television channels one day and came across an African American standing tall in a military uniform, briefing the press on a war that was underway in the Middle East. He was poised and controlled the room.

Through my mother’s subscriptions to *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines, I subsequently learned that was General Colin L. Powell.



In graduate school at Southern University in 1996, I watched to see if the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff would run for president.

A year later, when I joined the State Department

as a presidential management intern, a mentor gave me Colin Powell’s *My American Journey* (Random House, 1995) so I would become a voracious reader and get a better understanding of how leaders became leaders. She succeeded on both counts.

I read it from cover to cover within weeks, along with other books on Powell. I was impressed to find that many of the life lessons and values I was taught in my household and community, Powell had received during his upbringing. “Never forget where you came from.” “Don’t shame this family.” “Don’t take shortcuts in life.” “There is no substitute for hard work.”



Stacy D. Williams, deputy director in the Office of Haitian Affairs, is chair of the Diversity Council in the State Department’s Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. He joined the State Department as a presidential management intern in 1997 and has held Civil Service assignments in the Office of the Inspector General, the Under Secretary for Management’s Office, the Office of the Director General, the Bureau of Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, the U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States and the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. He has also served as president of the Thursday Luncheon Group. The views expressed in this article are those of the author, and not necessarily those of the Department of State or the U.S. government.



Secretary of State Colin Powell walks with Indonesian President Susilo Yudhoyono (on Powell’s immediate left) in Banda Aceh, Sumatra, on Jan. 5, 2005, days after the deadly tsunami struck.

The Nation’s Top Diplomat

Then in 2000, President-elect George W. Bush named Colin Powell Secretary of State, the first African American to serve as the nation’s top diplomat. Talk about exhilaration and instant jubilation! My career path quickly became almost spiritual. It felt like someone up above was charting a path specifically for me that would now include the one person I revered most.

Early on in his tenure as Secretary, Powell met with members of the Thursday Luncheon Group. Imagine my excitement in serving on the planning committee for the event, beaming with

anticipation and a new sense of purpose so early in my career. In subsequent years, he would publish congratulatory letters during TLG's respective 40th and 45th commemoration programs.

In his first week as Secretary, Powell stated: "I am not coming in just to be the foreign policy adviser to the president. I'm coming in as the leader and manager of this department."

To address staffing issues that had plagued the department since the mid-1990s, Powell announced that the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative would hire 1,158 employees above attrition to ensure officers could secure leadership and other longer-term training opportunities between assignments, as is done in the Department of Defense. He took his case to Congress, securing additional resources for the groundbreaking initiative.

Powell then announced that he wanted the makeup of the department to reflect America's diverse demographics. Suddenly I was among those called on to participate in photo and video shoots, to serve as the face of the State Department's new and improved recruitment strategy.

Similarly, Powell's morale-boosting decision to have a desk officer brief President George W. Bush prior to his first trip to Mexico immediately reverberated throughout our domestic offices, U.S. embassies and consulates around the world. Powell noted that the desk officer maintains the expertise and should be the one tapped for such a high-level briefing.

This established newfound confidence that the Secretary would actively call on a broad range of talent to advance our foreign policy imperatives and spoke directly to his "One Team, One Mission" philosophy.



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The 2006-2007 Powell Fellows. Front row, from left: Shelby Smith-Wilson, Catherine Rodriguez, Secretary Powell, Stacy D. Williams, Robert Rhodes. Back row, from left: Susan Raymie, Anna Mansfield, Jeffrey Collins, Aaron Jost, Jessica Davis Ba, Jody Buckneberg, Stuart Denyer, John Galbraith, Daniel Mahanty and Anish Goel.

Present in the Lives of His Team

At State many offices traditionally host holiday parties during the first two weeks of December. It is a welcome way to reconnect and network with colleagues and friends over food and drinks. With no advance notice, Secretary Powell appeared at one of the parties to the surprise and amazement of gathering employees.

The next year, every officer brought a camera to their party; and, indeed, Powell came each year, demonstrating that a leader needs to be present in the lives of his team members, from senior officers to basement parking attendants.

Always mindful of his celebrity, Powell would find a way to inject humor and put his audience at ease. While someone was introducing him, he would make a show of looking at his watch and use his fingers on the other hand to create an endless circular motion. This would inevitably draw a chuckle from the audience and encourage the presenter to speed up the formalities.

During a retirement program one year, after Powell had completed his remarks

and stood to pose for photos with each retiree, an unassuming male walked up for his turn. Thinking that the gentleman's coat needed adjusting, Powell grabbed it, pulled on it tightly and stood shoulder to shoulder for the photo. This hilarious moment broke the monotony of the event, and gave the retiree a remarkable story to share with his family and friends for years to come.

Regardless of his travel schedule, Powell made it a priority to officiate at swearing-in ceremonies for U.S. ambassadors and senior principals. He made a point of thanking the families and children who sacrificed so much so that their fathers or mothers could commit to advancing our foreign affairs relationships and endeavors around the globe. His dynamic presence at these functions created a strong sense of community, especially in light of a changing post-9/11 world.

The Model of a Servant-Leader

After Powell's departure in 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice instituted the Colin L. Powell Fellows Program to identify promising midlevel FS officers

and specialists and Civil Service employees and bring them together three or four times a year for training and networking.

I was fortunate to be selected in the 2006-2007 Powell Fellows cohort and could not wait for our meeting with General Powell at his office in Alexandria, Virginia. Sixteen years after I came to know and admire the name Powell, I, along with my cohort, now had an audience with this intellectual, statesman, war hero and larger-than-life figure.

More than anything else, I felt a strong sense of responsibility because of all the opportunities I had been given. In that moment, I reimagined myself as a servant-leader in the Colin Powell mold. As he once said, and I paraphrase here: Find something larger than yourself, and use all your talents and abilities to advance it. This is the essence of public service.

As a teenager, I would watch Donnie Simpson on Black Entertainment Television close each show with the following: "Reach for the moon; even if you miss it, you will be amongst the stars." I submit today that following my polestar, Colin Powell, I have achieved far more than I could ever have imagined. ■

Russia Invades Ukraine

On Feb. 24, Russia began a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in the largest conventional military attack on a sovereign state in Europe since World War II.

U.S. embassy operations in Ukraine were moved from Kyiv to Lviv on Feb. 14 before relocating to the Polish city of Rzeszow, near the border with Ukraine, a week later. Before departing Kyiv, embassy staff had been instructed to destroy computer workstations and networking equipment and to dismantle the embassy telephone system, the *Wall Street Journal* reported. Many embassy employees have been relocated stateside; several hundred people have been evacuated, including family members.

On Feb. 28, a day after Belarus revoked its non-nuclear status, U.S. Embassy Minsk suspended operations and all American staff departed the country.

In a statement issued the day of the invasion, AFSA President Eric Rubin said the following: “As fervent believers in the primacy of diplomacy as the principal alternative to war and the human suffering it brings, we watched in horror as Russia shattered the post-WWII and post-Cold War settlements: no forcible change of borders, respect for every nation’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, and rejection of historical grievances as a cause for aggression and violence.

“At this wrenching time, AFSA will support our colleagues and their family members who have been evacuated from Embassies Kyiv and Minsk, as well as our remaining colleagues in Moscow who continue to serve under the most severe hardships imaginable. We are also deeply concerned for the welfare and safety of local national employees in Ukraine and urge the Department of State and other USG agencies to do more to help them get to safety and provide the support they

Contemporary Quote

“This situation [in Ukraine] echoes our history. Kenya and almost every African country was birthed by the ending of empire. Our borders were not of our own drawing. They were drawn in the distant colonial metropolises of London, Paris and Lisbon, with no regard for the ancient nations that they cleaved apart.

At independence, had we chosen to pursue states on the basis of ethnic, racial or religious homogeneity, we would still be waging bloody wars these many decades later.

We chose to follow the rules of the Organisation of African Unity and the United Nations charter, not because our borders satisfied us, but because we wanted something greater, forged in peace.

We believe that all states formed from empires that have collapsed or retreated have many peoples in them yearning for integration with peoples in neighboring states. This is normal and understandable. ...

However, Kenya rejects such a yearning from being pursued by force. We must complete our recovery from the embers of dead empires in a way that does not plunge us back into new forms of domination and oppression.

We rejected irredentism and expansionism on any basis, including racial, ethnic, religious or cultural factors. We reject it again today. ”

—Kenyan U.N. Ambassador Martin Kimani, in a Feb. 22 speech at the U.N. Security Council.

need. They should not be abandoned at this terrible time.”

Ambassador Rubin, who served in both Russia and Ukraine earlier in his career, emphasized the plight of FSNs in a Feb. 26 interview with CBS News. Foreign Service nationals in Kyiv were given no guidance as to what they should do in the lead up to the Russian invasion, Rubin told CBS.

“What we’re hearing from both our American colleagues who have left Ukraine and from our more than 600 Ukrainian colleagues ... is there was no information when it was decided that the American employees would leave,” he stated. “They left with very little notice. They shut down the embassy, they welded the doors shut, and our local employees did not have information about what to do and where to go, if anywhere, would they be paid, and how they were going to be protected.”

During an interview with the Federal News Network’s Federal Drive podcast on March 1, Rubin said he’s certain the Russian government can obtain the employee directory of the U.S. embassy in Kyiv, and the Ukrainians who worked there might be singled out for retaliation.

In an effort to support local staff who served at U.S. Embassy Kyiv and their families, former FSO Nathan Schmidt set up a fundraiser on GoFundMe through his nonprofit organization, Mountain Seed Foundation. Funds will cover the cost of lodging in western Ukraine and neighboring countries, as well as food and other essential needs.

By mid-March, the United Nations estimated that more than 2 million people had fled Ukraine, crossing into neighboring countries to the west such as Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and Moldova. U.N. High Commissioner Filippo Grandi

called it “the fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II” as Russian attacks intensified.

In response, the U.S. imposed unprecedented and extensive sanctions against Russia, including an executive order announced by President Joe Biden on March 9 banning Russian energy imports.

“We will not be part of subsidizing Putin’s war,” he said in a press conference.

During a visit to Moldova in early March, Secretary of State Antony Blinken pledged America’s support to the small former Soviet republic and spoke to U.S. Embassy Chisinau staff on March 6.

“What Russia is doing, what Vladimir Putin is doing, is not only terrible violence to men, women, and children,” he said. “He’s doing terrible violence to the very principles that lie beneath [the international] order and are working to keep peace and security around the world. We can’t let either of those things go forward with impunity, because if we do, it opens a Pandora’s box that we will deeply, deeply regret not just in Europe but potentially around the world.”

The private sector has also made moves to cut ties with Russia. Netflix, TikTok, Google, Apple and Microsoft, among others, suspended services within the country in early March, and on March 8, *The New York Times* reported that McDonald’s, Starbucks and Coca-Cola had announced suspension of operations.

ISIS Leader Killed in Syria

The leader of the Islamic State terrorist group, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi, set off a blast killing himself and members of his family on Feb. 3 as U.S. forces raided his northern Syria hideout.

President Joe Biden disclosed the overnight raid by American special operations forces later that day, saying Qurayshi’s

death “removed a major terrorist threat to the world.”

A senior ISIS deputy was also killed in the raid, although U.S. officials did not name him. There were no U.S. casualties.

A notorious militant known as the Destroyer, Qurayshi became the ISIS leader in 2019, following the death of his predecessor Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (who, likewise, killed himself and three of his children by detonating his suicide vest as he fled U.S. military forces in northern Syria).

It is difficult to gauge how his death will affect the group. ISIS no longer controls large swathes of Iraq and Syria as it did at the height of its power. The group has been struggling for resurgence with deadly attacks in Afghanistan and the region.

New U.S. Embassy in the Pacific

Foreign Service members dreaming of an assignment to the tropics, take heart: Secretary of State Antony Blinken confirmed in February that the State Department will open an embassy in the Solomon Islands, the largest Pacific Island nation without a U.S. mission.

President Biden’s new strategy for the Indo-Pacific, released on Feb. 11, emphasizes deepening partnerships with allies in the region “to meet urgent challenges, from competition with China to climate change to the pandemic.”

The State Department said Solomon Islanders value their history of alliance with Americans on the battlefields of World War II, but that the U.S. is in danger of losing its preferential ties as China “aggressively seeks to engage” politicians and businesspeople there.



Secretary Blinken announced plans to open the new embassy during a virtual meeting held on Fiji with Pacific Island leaders.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The move comes after rioting rocked the nation of 700,000 in November 2021. The unrest stemmed from long-simmering regional rivalries, economic problems and concerns about the country’s increasing links with China after it switched allegiance from Taipei to Beijing three years ago.

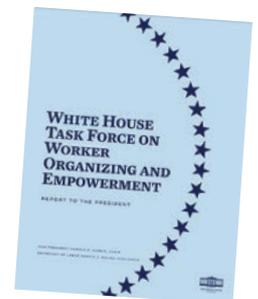
The U.S. had operated an embassy in the Solomons for five years before closing it in 1993. Since then, U.S. diplomats in nearby Papua New Guinea have been accredited to the Solomons, which has a U.S. consular agency.

The State Department said it didn’t expect to build a new embassy immediately but would initially lease space at a setup cost of \$12.4 million. The embassy would be located in the capital, Honiara, and would start small, with just two U.S. employees and about five local staff.

The Peace Corps announced in 2019 its plan to reopen an office in the Solomon Islands and have its volunteers serve there, and several U.S. agencies are establishing government positions with portfolios in the Solomons.

Executive Branch Support for Unions

In a recent report, the White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment says federal agencies



should be at the forefront of fostering positive relations with federal employee unions and improving communications with labor groups.

The task force, established by executive order last year and chaired by Vice President Kamala Harris and Labor Secretary Marty Walsh, is made up of more than 20 federal agency heads. Its first report to the president in early February contains nearly 70 recommendations.

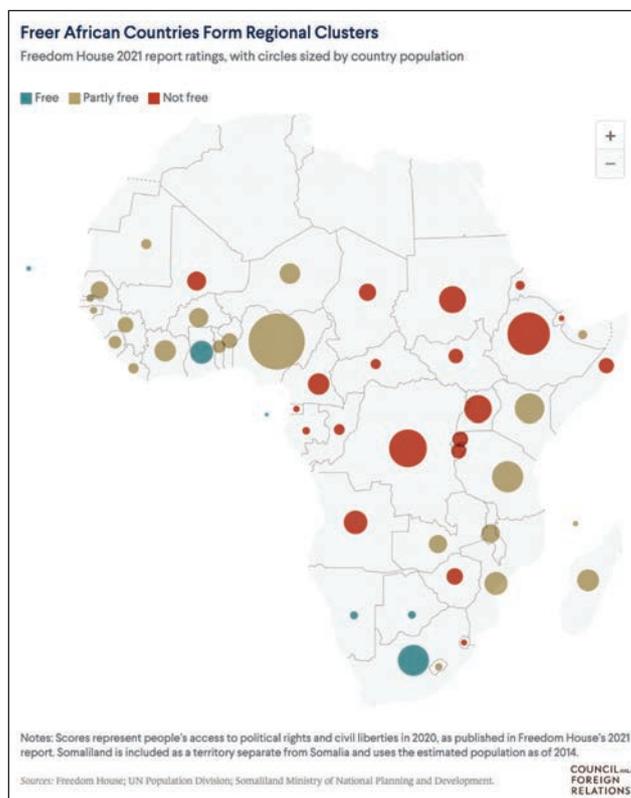
“The Biden-Harris administration will be the first to take a comprehensive approach to [empowering workers and strengthening their rights] with the existing authority of the executive branch,” the task force wrote.

“Our goal is ... to model practices that can be followed by state and local governments, private sector employers, and others.

“Workers face increasing barriers to organizing and bargaining collectively with their employers, and in 2021, only 10.3 percent of the workforce was represented by a union, down from more than 30 percent in the 1950s.”

The report’s recommendations center on two points. First, federal agencies should set an example for other employers by engaging labor groups through labor-management forums before policy decisions are finalized, and removing barriers from unions trying to increase membership or organize new bargaining units.

Second, agencies should be more transparent with unions and employees alike, and coordinate with each other to be more transparent on labor issues.



Spate of Coups in Africa

The past two years have seen seven coups and coup attempts in African nations. In Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali and Sudan, military leaders succeeded in seizing power; in Niger and Guinea-Bissau, they did not.

The current wave of uprisings began in Mali in August 2020 after former President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta was arrested at gunpoint by government forces. Nine months later, in what many deemed a “coup within a coup,” Mali’s military arrested the interim civilian president and prime minister whose appointments the military had overseen.

The most recent attempt took place in Guinea-Bissau in February, when President Umaro Sissoco Embaló said heavily armed men attacked the government palace in an attempt to kill him, the prime

minister and the cabinet. Local media reported deaths among attackers and the government’s security team. Embaló later accused a former navy chief with links to the drug trade of orchestrating the assassination attempt.

While the underlying causes and mechanics of attempted takeovers are different from one nation to another, the trend has renewed unease about corruption and economic and political instability in parts of the African continent.

According to the Council on Foreign Relations, this unrest opens the door for countries such as Russia, China, Turkey and some Persian Gulf States to exploit instability and support regimes that allow them to exercise influence, extract resources and legitimize their own anti-

democratic systems.

Freedom House reported in late 2020 that democracy in dozens of countries across Africa is worse off amid the pandemic.

Afghanistan’s Humanitarian Emergency

On Jan. 30, SIGAR, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, released to Congress its 54th quarterly report, the first since the U.S. exit from the country.

The 189-page document highlights the crisis facing the Afghan population as the result of record drought, rising food prices, internal displacement and the severe economic downturn and collapse of public services following the Taliban’s return to power in August 2021.

The United Nations Development Pro-

25 Years Ago

Strains over NATO Expansion

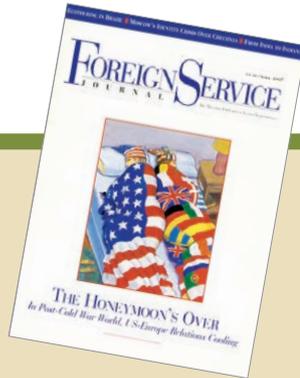
Open policy differences introduce obvious strains into the U.S.-European relations, but even areas of apparent agreement can conceal differing European and American perspectives. One such area is NATO expansion eastward. Here, as Thomas L. Friedman pointed out recently, while the Western Europeans have gone along with the American initiative, they have done so in part because military integration of a state like Poland into NATO may pose fewer immediate problems than economic integration into the EU, something eastern Europeans seek just as ardently. Assuming that Russian hostility can be contained by the United States, and that America will bear the lion's share of the cost of bringing the armed forces of new members up to NATO standards, Western Europeans prefer to expand NATO before expanding the EU.

In the minds of some European leaders who profess support for NATO expansion is also the awareness that there are powerful opponents to expansion in the U.S. Senate, which will have to approve any formal commitment to increase the number of countries covered by American security guarantees. The road to NATO expansion, in other words, has non-European checkpoints that do not exist on the road to EU expansion.

Why has the climate of transatlantic relations changed and how can it be improved? The explanation and the means of improvement must be sought in both Europe and the United States. Liberated from the constraints of the Cold War, especially from the need to hang together in order not to hang separately, Europe and the U.S. are less inclined to subordinate their separate continental interests to the common good or to suppress traditional old world/new world rivalries and prejudices. Each in its own way is preoccupied with internal problems and acts in isolation from the other.

Is American leadership really indispensable? It certainly is until Europeans get their act together and agree on common EU foreign and security policies.

—Monteagle Sterns, retired FSO, from his article, "America & Western Europe," in the *Focus on Strained U.S.-European Relations*, April 1997 FSJ.



gramme reported in September that up to 97 percent of Afghanistan's population was at risk of slipping below the poverty line by mid-2022. The World Health Organization and the U.N. World Food Programme estimated that 3.2 million Afghan children under age 5 will have suffered from acute malnutrition this past winter.

The U.S. and the international community have not ignored Afghanistan's

dire straits. Aid continues to flow into the country—albeit at reduced levels.

"As of January 2022, the United States, the single largest donor, was providing \$782 million in humanitarian aid in Afghanistan and for Afghan refugees in the region," SIGAR states. "Funds will flow from USAID through independent humanitarian organizations."

Meanwhile, the pandemic continues

to ravage the country. The Afghan-Japan Communicable Disease Hospital, Kabul's only dedicated COVID-19 facility, reported a lack of oxygen supplies critical to patient care and shortages in generator fuel, food and basic supplies like examination gloves. Supplies of some 36 essential medications had already run out by mid-December 2021.

Last quarter, the State Department and USAID told SIGAR that they had suspended all contact with the Afghan government and terminated or suspended all on-budget assistance, or funds provided directly to and controlled by Afghan authorities. This quarter, USAID said it has resumed some off-budget, or U.S.-managed, activities in Afghanistan.

Other findings shared in the report relate to governance and social policies. The Taliban announced a ban on forced marriages in the country on Dec. 3, 2021, stating: "A woman is not property, but a noble and free human being; no one can give her to anyone in exchange for peace ... or to end animosity." The declaration came amid numerous reports of Afghan parents selling their daughters to feed the rest of their families as starvation grips the country.

The Taliban have also said they are developing a new education curriculum for 2022. While State told SIGAR it has no evidence that such a curriculum has yet become operational, a December 2020 report from the group's education commission reveals a central theme: the desire to remove "foreign influence" and music from the school curriculum.

The U.S. Congress established SIGAR in 2008 to provide independent, objective oversight of Afghanistan relief and reconstruction projects, for which approximately \$146 billion has been approved since 2002. (Military spending accounted for another \$800 billion.) It has been led since 2012

by John F. Sopko, a former prosecutor and congressional counsel.

Netflix Joins the Foreign Service

Streaming service Netflix announced in January that a new eight-episode political drama series, “The Diplomat,” will be heading to a device screen near you.

The thriller, created by “The West Wing” and “Homeland” producer Debora Cahn, centers on career diplomat Kate Wyler, who will be played by actress Keri Russell, well known for her role as a Russian spy in “The Americans.”

According to the *Hollywood Reporter*, the title character “lands in a high-profile job she’s unsuited for in the midst of an international crisis—resulting in massive implications for her marriage and her political future.” Filming will take place in London.

The real-life Foreign Service community didn’t disappoint in sharing reactions and offering plot suggestions on social media:

“Can’t wait to see Keri Russell fight with the Line over one space after a period. Not be able to get on the Teams meeting because DS won’t let her have a webcam. Sitting on hold with IT because the certificates on her CAC expired. RIVETING.” —Patrick Reilly via Twitter.

“Very excited. Watching Keri Russell clear memos is the definition of must-see TV.” —Noah Zaring via Twitter.

“I look forward to 7.5 episodes of Keri Russell trying to fix her paystub.” —Tim Rann via Twitter.

“I think we already have fodder for more than 8 episodes, but I fear that we’re missing out by not having a simultaneous OIG inspection and short-notice POTUS visit.” —Michelle Zentis via Facebook.

“The real test [of authenticity] will be if her apartment is furnished with Drexel

Heritage.” —Claudia Gutz via Facebook.

“The Christmas Special: No gifts arrive in time, and they are forced to learn the true meaning of Christmas.” —Stacey Macdonald via Facebook.

“Episode 6: Just an entire hour of people in a conference room trying to get a DVC to work.” —Ryan Roberts via Facebook.

Farewell, Domani Spero

On the 14th anniversary of its launch, the anonymously penned DiploPundit blog ceased publication with a final posting on March 11.

The blogger, who wrote under the pseudonym Domani Spero (Italian for “tomorrow, I hope”), never revealed their identity, saying only that the blog was created by “an obsessive-compulsive observer, diplomatic watcher and opin-

ionator who monitors the goings-on at Foggy Bottom and the ‘worldwide available’ universe from Albania to Zimbabwe.”

Self-described as “unapologetically opinionated and occasionally edgy,” the website feasted on State Department foibles and rumors, often making pointed statements that Foreign Service members couldn’t make themselves, criticizing inconsistencies and questioning senior decisions.

According to an email sent to DiploPundit subscribers, blog content will remain online for six to 12 months until the author decides what to do with the archives. DiploPundit’s Twitter handle was also retired in March.

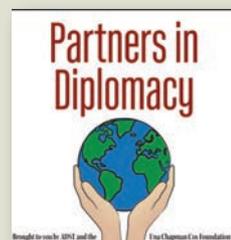
We’ll miss you, DS. ■

This edition of Talking Points was compiled by Julia Wohlers.

Podcast of the Month: *Partners in Diplomacy* (adst.org/partners-in-diplomacy)

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training has long recognized the value of preserving and sharing the experiences of America’s diplomats. With its new podcast series, *Partners in Diplomacy*, ADST’s oral history program is now also capturing first-hand accounts of service, sacrifice and adventure in the lives of Foreign Service family members.

Part of an Una Chapman Cox Foundation project on American Diplomacy and the Foreign Service, this initiative collects, produces and publishes the fascinating oral histories of spouses and partners work-



ing, too often without recognition, in the U.S. foreign affairs community. The podcast, and the project, is designed to raise awareness of the enduring and unsung contributions Foreign

Service family members have made to both the conduct of U.S. diplomacy and to our country.

The Feb. 23 podcast features Mariella Tefft speaking about being in Moscow during the Russian invasion of Crimea, while her husband, John Tefft, was serving as ambassador. Other guests have included Bonnie Miller, Judy Ikels, Clayton Bond and Joanne Huskey.

The appearance of a particular site or podcast is for information only and does not constitute an endorsement.

No One Was Listening: Russia, 1992

BY KRISTIN K. LOKEN

As the crisis over Russia's relationship with Ukraine unfolded in early 2022, I have thought often of my experiences working in Russia in 1992 and 1993. I was a USAID FSO involved in the planning for the U.S. democracy program for Russia in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's dissolution. I submit that the actions we took at the end of the Cold War set the stage for the problems we have today.

That experience pointed to the vital importance—then and today—of certain basic tenets of successful diplomatic practice that were so well explicated by George Krol in his article about the lessons he learned during the collapse of the Soviet Union (“Practical Lessons for Today’s Foreign Service,” December 2021 *FSJ*).

Perhaps it’s best to set the scene first by talking about that day in 1991 when we learned the Soviet Union had collapsed. That day I saw men running through the halls of the State Department gleefully yelling, “We won the Cold War!” and “We’re number one!” That’s where the arrogance really took hold. Then came “shock therapy”: moving Russia from a communist dictatorship to a free-market democracy, overnight.



Kristin K. Loken is a retired FSO who served with USAID in Central America, the Middle East, Asia, Africa and, for a short time, Russia.

She currently resides by the Potomac River in Falling Waters, West Virginia.

As these plans were drawn up in Washington, D.C., I was working a temporary duty assignment on the U.S. democracy program in Moscow. I saw the devastation, the pain, the hunger in the streets of Moscow as people tried to hold on through the transition. Russia was in deep depression and asking for American assistance. The Russian people I met wanted a new relationship with the United States and seemed prepared to welcome us as helpmates, if not yet as friends.

In the planning meetings back in Washington, I raised my hand a few times to encourage a slower pace. It seemed to me we might get better outcomes by pushing for a more gradual move from Russian communism to American-style free-market capitalism, maybe using a middle step of cooperatives. Every time I mentioned this idea, I was shut down immediately.

“Get the pain over quickly,” they said. “Let’s not suggest midterm solutions like cooperatives that have no place in the final outcome.” Humanitarian assistance just to help the Russian people get through the transition without starving to death would only be available as long as Russia complied with “shock therapy.”

Not surprisingly, shock therapy was a colossal failure. Neither free-market capitalism nor democracy took hold. Only corruption and organized crime blossomed. I have always felt we had a real opportunity at this juncture to make a friend of Russia, an opportunity we threw away. We had our boot to their neck when they were down.

There wasn’t much else Russia could have done, but I’ve always felt there was plenty the U.S. could have done—if we had followed Ambassador Krol’s six tips for successful diplomacy.

1) *Use the language.* One of the first projects of our early Russia program was to make five copies of the Uniform Commercial Code of the United States to distribute to five major judicial centers in Russia. Was no one thinking that Russians speak Russian? That a commercial code, no matter how spectacular, would be useless in English in Russia? Was our expectation that the Russians could just copy (after translation) our laws to use in Russia, where all the sociocultural institutions work very differently?

2) *Adapt. Adjust. Be flexible. Be creative.* Ideology is not development. What we did in Russia in the early 1990s was attempt to transplant neo-liberal ideology, an idealized version of American democracy and free-market economy, into Russia. What was required was learning from Russians how to work through the transition creatively—in ways new to both Russia and the United States—that would be effective in Russia. We were blinded by our own ideology.

3) *Go out and discover.* I remember walking all over Moscow, watching a bridal couple at the monument in the park and seeing the red flags waving as small groups of communists paraded through the streets, the slow repainting of the golden onions atop the churches and the artwork in the subway stops.

I have always felt we had a real opportunity at this juncture to make a friend of Russia, an opportunity we threw away.

I remember walking through the falling snow one day to a meeting with the newly formed Russian Human Rights Committee and watching unusual military action at the Russian parliament building. The next day I mentioned the experience to an embassy colleague, who told me not to tell anyone else about it because we were not supposed to be wandering around Moscow at all, and definitely not alone (although for a USAID person that didn't seem to be enforced as effectively).

4) *Know and explain thyself.* In the area I worked, democracy, what I saw happening was we were trying to impose on Russia an idealized image of democracy as we believed it worked in Kansas. First, we needed to understand U.S. democracy as it really is, not an ideological version. Understanding our own system, its benefits and flaws and how it actually works in Kansas is a key step in introducing that system to another country.

Second, what works in the United States may have very little similarity to what would work in Russia because democracy is a sociocultural institution. So not only do you have to understand your own system, but you must also understand the sociocultural conditions and institutions of Russia to transfer new ideas effectively. We had almost none of this information on Russian institutions.

5) *Get out of the office.* In my wanderings around Moscow, I met many people and observed social and com-

mercial and religious and some political behaviors of the people of Moscow; most of my colleagues lived and worked on the embassy compound and only left for meetings.

What I found especially startling was that we were trying to support (and direct) this transition in a vacuum. We had almost none of the information I would have had in any developing country on which to base programming decisions. And the situation was even worse in the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union.

6) *Learn to listen, listen to learn.* My experience during this time was that no one on the U.S. side was listening. We had won the Cold War, so there was no need to listen. Our responsibility was to make sure Russia could never fight a cold war with us again. Along the way, if we could push free-market capitalism and democracy on them, all the better. It certainly didn't work out that way.

We didn't follow these six recommendations in the past and today reap the results. I hope the State Department and USAID will consider them as we face the international challenges of the 21st century. ■

Speaking Out is the *Journal's* opinion forum, a place for lively discussion of issues affecting the U.S. Foreign Service and American diplomacy. The views expressed are those of the author; their publication here does not imply endorsement by the American Foreign Service Association. Responses are welcome; send them to journal@afsa.org.

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Small but Mighty

APHIS Turns 50

APHIS' compact cadre of FSOs are on the front lines keeping American agricultural trade healthy, flowing and growing around the globe.

BY KAREN SLITER AND RUSSELL DUNCAN

This month, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service—an 8,000-strong agency that safeguards U.S. agriculture from foreign pests and diseases—celebrates its 50th anniversary. Playing a critical role in the festivities will be the APHIS Foreign Service, a small but mighty team of some 30 FSOs working in 28 countries with about 300 locally employed staff. This compact cadre might not be a policy kingpin at country team meetings, but it punches far above its weight in helping to keep American agriculture and trade healthy, ensuring our country's economic viability, safeguarding our food security and sustainability, and controlling diseases that can affect plants, animals and humans.



Karen Sliter, DVM, is a veterinarian and diplomat who, with her husband, four daughters and a variable assortment of up to four cats, three horses and two dogs, served in the APHIS Foreign Service for nearly 30 years before retiring as Career Minister in 2021. In her current position at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, Austria, she continues to "translate the science" and work toward creating a world we all want to live in and leave to our children.



Russell Duncan, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service with the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, is currently posted in Tokyo. He served as APHIS Representative to the AFSA Governing Board in 2021.

APHIS FSOs have a unique "dual career" profession. In addition to being skilled professional diplomats, they must also be technical specialists in such areas as veterinary medicine, plant pathology, entomology and biology. Their jobs can cover myriad activities: conducting formal and informal trade negotiations, communicating APHIS biotechnology policies, serving on international scientific committees and strategic groups for organizations such as the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization, and reporting on plant and animal pests and diseases (including zoonotic diseases that pass from animals to humans, such as COVID-19).

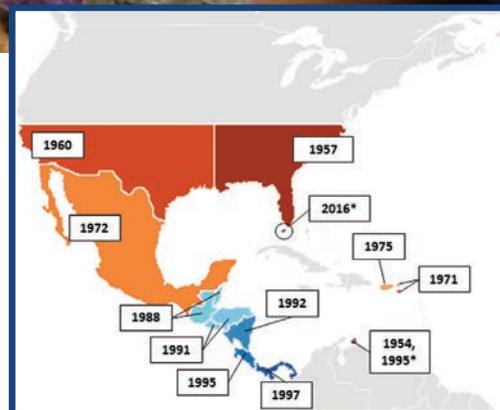
Ultimately, an APHIS FSO's work affects everything from the availability and price of grapes in U.S. supermarkets in January to which foreign markets are open for the approximately \$150 billion of U.S. agricultural exports, and whether the outbreak of a significant plant or animal pest or disease that could cause hundreds of millions of dollars of damage on U.S. soil can be prevented. So, the next time you are seated next to an APHIS colleague at a country team meeting, take another look. Our work has a greater impact on American life and prosperity than you might have known!

The USDA before APHIS

The APHIS Foreign Service embodies USDA's longtime commitment to ensuring that foreign pests and diseases do not harm American agriculture or trade—a goal the department vigorously pursued well before it created APHIS in 1972. A notable example is the fight against foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), a deadly livestock illness that was eradicated from the United States in



APHIS entomologist John Welch, at left, and Panamanian screwworm personnel collecting a myiasis sample from a calf in the Darién Province of Panama in 2015. The USDA has been instrumental in building and maintaining a barrier against the New World screwworm in the Americas and pushing that barrier down through Panama. The map shows the progress of New World screwworm eradication programs by their start dates.



1929. With the advent of a serious FMD outbreak in Mexico in 1947, President Harry Truman signed a bill authorizing the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to offer aid to “protect vital U.S. interests.” USDA veterinarians worked with their Mexican colleagues to achieve eradication in that country by 1954.

During this same period, two other highly significant pests were threatening U.S. agriculture, namely the New World screwworm (NWS) and the Mediterranean fruit fly (or medfly). To bring them under control, starting in the 1950s the U.S. developed a technique for using radiation to sterilize the male fly of the screwworm. APHIS then worked with the International Atomic Energy Agency on its large-scale implementation. Building on that success, the same strategy was later applied to the medfly. Eradication of both pests was achieved by decreasing the overall number of flies with conventional chemical sprays, followed by the release of sterile males to flood the “wild” male population and reduce the number of offspring.

For more than six decades now, the United States has worked with foreign countries, as well as the IAEA, to gradually eradicate screwworm from the southern U.S. through Mexico, Guatemala,

Honduras and El Salvador, then Nicaragua and Costa Rica, and on down to Panama, where an “insect barrier” is maintained by dispersing 4.7 million sterilized screwworms each week into the rainforest area of the Panama-Colombia border. For medfly, a containment barrier has been established in Guatemala, with as many as 1.3 billion sterile medflies being released each week. In both cases, cooperative agreements with Panama, Guatemala, Mexico and other countries ensure the smooth administration of the programs.

Screwworms can infect any living, warm-blooded animal. This includes not only livestock and wildlife; screwworms can and have also infected people. (The screwworm’s scientific name is *C. hominivorax*, or “man eater,” after a horrific outbreak among prisoners on Devil’s Island, an infamous 19th-century French

In its first decade, APHIS' new Foreign Service focused primarily on operational efforts—for instance, building capacity in Haiti and the Dominican Republic to eradicate African swine fever.

penal colony in South America.) The larval stage of the fly bores into wounds and eats living flesh, causing disfigurement and, in some cases, death. Screwworms once killed millions of dollars' worth of cattle every year in the southern United States from Florida to California and infected deer, squirrels, pets and the occasional human, as well. So, in addition to protecting public health, the eradication of NWS generates some \$900 million in benefits to U.S. producers, according to the USDA, and some \$2.8 billion per year in general economic benefits.

The medfly is similarly devastating for fruits and vegetables. It affects the production and trade of more than 300 varieties of fruits and vegetables and is considered one of the most important agricultural pests in the world. The cost-benefit ratio of controlling medfly has been estimated at more than 150 to 1, with tens of billions of U.S. dollars per year in benefits for the United States.

One Department, Two Foreign Services

By the early 1970s, the world was changing rapidly, and nowhere more than in the arena of agricultural commerce. As free trade policies allowed more agricultural goods to be shipped around the world, consumers everywhere demanded more agricultural imports, such as fruit, that could be available year-round.

But with these welcome developments, and a surge in tourist and business travel, came increased risks of introducing serious animal and plant diseases or pests. To consolidate its response to potential agricultural threats, USDA launched APHIS on April 2, 1972.

And just eight years later, the Foreign Service Act of 1980 granted U.S. Foreign Service status to USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service and to "other personnel" in the department deemed "necessary."

When APHIS was also granted Foreign Service authority in 1982 through Executive Order 12363, USDA became the only federal department with two separate Foreign Service agencies, each with a distinct, but complementary, mandate. The Foreign Agricultural Service, with 147 members today, links U.S. agriculture to the world to enhance export opportunities and global



U.S. Ambassador William Kennard, at left, and Mrs. Kennard visit the APHIS bulb preclearance program in the Netherlands in 2009. Inset: Dutch tulips.





COURTESY OF KAREN SLITER

One of the few “all hands” photos of the APHIS Foreign Service and HQ support staff that exist, taken in 2004. For many years, APHIS FSOs numbered between 50-60; today it is 30.

food security through a global network of nearly 100 offices covering approximately 180 countries. A typical background of an FAS FSO is agricultural economics; FAS officers publish production forecasts and other market intelligence, break down barriers to U.S. food and agricultural exports, promote U.S. agricultural products (from pregnant heifers to wine) and implement trade capacity building programs. In contrast, APHIS' Foreign Service veterinarians and plant specialists apply their technical expertise to ensure safe trade, facilitating the negotiation of science-based animal and plant health trade agreements and monitoring and reporting on serious plant and animal pests and diseases to prevent their entry to the United States.

In 1987 APHIS created a new division called International Services to manage its Foreign Service and lead on international issues. APHIS FSOs were called on to spearhead technical trade discussions, address technical trade and regulatory issues in international forums; conduct cooperative pest and disease surveys, as well as control and eradication activities; and oversee inspections and clearance of agricultural products in foreign countries. APHIS FSOs were trained in diplomacy and cross-cultural awareness in addition to receiving technical training in plant and animal pests and diseases and how to prevent their spread.

Even as it created its Foreign Service, however, in contrast to other Foreign Service agencies, APHIS remained primarily a domestic-focused agency (with 8,000 Civil Service employees, compared to, at the time, approximately 90 FSOs). The APHIS mission statement reads: APHIS “protects the health of U.S. agriculture and natural resources against invasive pests and diseases, regulates genetically engineered crops, administers the Animal Welfare Act, and helps people and wildlife coexist. APHIS also certifies the

health of U.S. agricultural exports and resolves phytosanitary and sanitary issues to open, expand and maintain markets for U.S. plant and animal products.”

A New Foreign Service in Action

In its first decade, APHIS' new Foreign Service focused primarily on operational efforts—for instance, building capacity in Haiti and the Dominican Republic to eradicate African swine fever, and advancing screwworm eradication and medfly control. Management and imple-

mentation of overseas agriculture product inspection programs were another APHIS priority during this time. Overseas inspection through a “preclearance program,” paid for by foreign government agricultural producers, reduces the risk that a pest or disease will be brought onto U.S. soil. Two large such programs were the Dutch bulb and Chilean fruit preclearance programs. In Chile, the preclearance program is made possible through close collaboration between the U.S. Department of Agriculture/ APHIS, the Chilean Agriculture and Livestock Services (SAG) and



APHIS VIENNA

To help bring the 2001 U.K. foot-and-mouth disease outbreak under control, and protect U.S. livestock, APHIS veterinarians worked in the U.K. diagnosing infected animals, supervising slaughter and supporting U.K. farmers. Here APHIS vets (Karen Sliter at right) share a rare moment of levity and stress release during what were 18-hour workdays. Personal protective equipment was essential, and the vets had to “scrub in” anew at each farm to prevent disease spread.

APHIS VIENNA



the Chilean Fruit Export Association (ASOEX). Numerous ambassadors, as well as other embassy staff, have visited APHIS overseas preclearance programs.

By the 1990s, the advent of the World Trade Organization’s Sanitary and Phytosanitary (WTO-SPS) agreement and the North American Free Trade Agreement presaged a shift in emphasis to agricultural diplomacy. The WTO-SPS, in particular, changed the global trade landscape. Gone were the days of elaborate bilateral agreements that were often based as much on politics as on technical merits. For the first time, signatory countries formally agreed that import restrictions and trade requirements “must be based on scientific findings and should be applied only to the extent that they are necessary to protect human, animal or plant life or health; they should not unjustifiably discriminate between countries where similar conditions exist.” This did not eliminate the role of politics. It did, however, drive the politics “underground,” making animal and plant health trade negotiations even more nuanced—and the role of the APHIS FSO in sorting out the layers of complexity even more important.

APHIS FSOs became key figures in these new diplomatic arenas, delicately balancing the responsibility of facilitating trade while protecting American agriculture. Using influence and working with like-minded countries, APHIS leadership worked to ensure that the international system governing trade in animals and animal products would be based on the best available



APHIS VIENNA

Every so often, APHIS’ work is front page news. The foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in the United Kingdom in 2001 is one example.

science and valid risk assessment. When the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) became the animal health standard-setting organization for WTO-SPS, APHIS helped secure the election of a charismatic and visionary OIE leader. In addition, APHIS successfully advocated for the principle of regionalization, whereby pest- and disease-free zones and regions (instead of geopolitical borders) are recognized for pest and disease control. This allows trade to continue from those zones and regions even if disease is prevalent in a different part of a country. This expanded trade

opportunities for U.S. producers but also made import decisions more complicated.

As the 21st century dawned, more trade continued to mean more risk that pest and disease outbreaks might spread to the United States. A vivid illustration was the major 2001 foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in the United Kingdom, which devastated farms and livelihoods and cost the public sector more than £3 billion and the private sector more than £5 billion. Working as field veterinarians with their United Kingdom counterparts, APHIS FSOs diagnosed infected herds, supervised humane slaughter of infected animals, and contributed to the effort of directing U.K. farmers to government assistance programs and suicide hotlines—supporting efforts to ensure the disease was eradicated before it spread to the United States.

In 2003, *Progressive Farmer* magazine—a century-old stalwart in the U.S. agricultural community—saluted APHIS employees, including its FSOs, citing “their vigilant efforts and dedication to protecting U.S. crops and livestock from pests, disease and now bioterrorism” and awarding the agency its prestigious “People of the Year.” It was the first time the publication had given the award to an organization for its service to American agriculture.

Animal diseases continued to engage APHIS FSOs. In December 2003, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), known colloquially as “mad cow disease,” was detected in the United States for the first time. Despite the fact that all cases detected in the country were either from imported cattle or were determined to be “atypical BSE cases,” and the United States was never categorized as a BSE-affected country, the “cow that stole Christmas” became a focus of national attention. APHIS FSOs worked day and night encouraging other countries



COURTESY OF KAREN SLITER

Ambassador Bonnie Jenkins, second from right in the front row, at the FAO Crisis Management Centre Steering Committee meeting in 2016. APHIS worked with FAO to establish the center in 2006; it is now the Emergency Management Centre–Animal Health. The Global Health Security Agenda Presidential Initiative highlighted the importance of APHIS’ role in preventing zoonotic diseases and raised the profile of APHIS’ work.

to adhere to OIE standards in an effort to ensure safe trade, and thus maintain export markets. The effect on trade, however, was significant. Nearly all export markets for U.S. beef were shut down as a result of largely unjustified measures taken by many countries; and at the tenth anniversary of the first U.S. BSE case, the U.S. Meat Export Federation estimated the cumulative loss in beef trade to be \$16 billion. APHIS FSOs would work for nearly another decade to remove all BSE-related restrictions on U.S. exports.

In addition to trade concerns, concerns about the growing threat posed by zoonotic diseases (illnesses that can be transmitted from animals to humans) continued to increase. When an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 virus occurred in China, Thailand and Vietnam, APHIS directly addressed the virus at its source—in poultry abroad—to reduce the chances of a U.S. outbreak. For example, APHIS FSOs provided training at the APHIS National Veterinary Services Laboratory for 99 foreign officials from 62 countries to conduct

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The staff of the USA Poultry & Egg Export Council



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Diplomacy has become a central responsibility for APHIS Foreign Service officers under the World Trade Organization's Sanitary and Phytosanitary agreement and other trade agreements. Above, from left, Mary Lisa Madell, Dr. Jere Dick and Dr. Lisa Ferguson at animal health negotiations within the politically charged and ultimately unsuccessful Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) talks in Brussels in 2014. At right, a poster in Brussels.



APHIS BRUSSELS



avian influenza diagnostic testing as part of capacity building efforts, and APHIS personnel also worked extensively with the White House Homeland Security Council, the Department of Homeland Security and other federal departments and agencies to develop and implement guidelines on how to respond to a potential introduction of HPAI H5N1 in the United States.

And, once again, APHIS took leadership in the international arena. The National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza called for the creation of global partnerships to address pandemic threats. In response, from 2006 to 2008, APHIS used \$4.4 million of appropriated funds to support establishment of a global pillar of support to countries that are dealing with an animal disease outbreak—the Crisis Management Centre for Animal Health at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Headquartered in Rome, the CMC-AH, now the Emergency Management Centre for Animal Health, responds to requests from countries to send veterinary teams to provide expert advice. In its first decade, the organization sent 88 technical teams to 45 different countries.

Expanding the FSO Portfolio

To formalize APHIS' overseas capacity building work, in 2007 APHIS established the International Technical and Regulatory Capacity Building Center as a central entry point and "clearing-house" for APHIS' international cooperation / technical assistance activities. APHIS FSOs design training activities, nominate

the most qualified participants, and coordinate trainings with international organizations and other countries.

In 2014-2015, when avian influenza entered the U.S. on wild birds and caused our country's worst animal disease outbreak ever, APHIS FSOs played an instrumental role keeping trading partners informed of our control efforts, promoting confidence in the United States' ability to ensure safe exports and maintaining critical export markets. By using a "regionalization approach," exports from unaffected regions continued during the outbreak. And afterward, as with BSE, APHIS FSOs

worked for years to recover all the lost markets.

Over the years, as U.S. agriculture developed and changed, new scientific areas have been added to the APHIS FSO's technical portfolio. Creation of the Biotechnology Regulatory Services program in 2002, for instance, brought increased attention to APHIS' role in regulating genetically engineered (GE) plants (to ensure they do not pose a pest risk to other plants) and GE products in trade. When a regulated GE plant is found in a shipment of commercial seeds or grain, APHIS FSOs work with foreign counterparts and domestic staff to clarify the risk, if any, and develop mitigations where necessary to keep markets open.

APHIS FSOs can also help their host countries arrange a visit from APHIS' Wildlife Services experts, for example, to share their expertise in preventing potentially catastrophic bird collisions with airplanes. And well before the COVID-19 outbreak, APHIS FSOs played critical roles within the U.S. government and with OIE, FAO, World Health Organization and the Group of 7 (G7) Global Partnership Against Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction in assisting countries to better prepare for both pandemic and bioterrorism threats.

For example, the APHIS Foreign Service was instrumental in the design of WHO's Joint External Evaluation tool and process, a voluntary "One Health" country evaluation that assesses pandemic preparedness. From 2016 to 2019, more than 100 countries volunteered for a JEE. APHIS' Foreign Service has been critical to this success. In the process of co-leading seven of the first 11 JEE evaluations globally, APHIS' Foreign Service documented the process and drafted guidance for both host countries

As U.S. agriculture developed and changed, new scientific areas have been added to the APHIS FSO's technical portfolio.

and evaluators to successfully perform the assessments. USDA has used its own JEE results to justify \$300 million in funding it recently received under the American Rescue Plan, the 2021 COVID-19 stimulus package. APHIS FSO representation at the G7 Global Partnership Against Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction Biosecurity Working Group brought focus to the risk of plant as well as animal disease bioterrorism and was instrumental in the inclusion of OIE and FAO in these international security fora.

As these new areas developed and increased in importance, two key “historic” aspects of APHIS FSO work overseas were transferred out of Foreign Service management around 2010. The historic screwworm and medfly programs moved to a separate division of International Services; and the preclearance programs transferred to an APHIS domestic unit, Plant Protection and Quarantine.

The Future of the APHIS Foreign Service

On APHIS' 50th anniversary, its FSOs and domestic staff members face realities that make their jobs ever more vital to the success of American agricultural trade:

- With the globalization of agriculture—a trend that is here to stay—U.S. farmers and ranchers produce more food than U.S. consumers can consume. They need the export markets that APHIS FSOs are so critical in opening and maintaining. Agriculture is a critical component of America's economic viability.
- More trade equals more risk. Mitigations must be negotiated into trade protocols, and many countries will continue to need APHIS expertise in better controlling pests and diseases.
- Working with other agencies, APHIS will assume an ever more critical role in identifying and controlling zoonotic diseases in animals before they pass to humans.
- Protecting U.S. agriculture has always been a national security issue. APHIS' ability to respond to a pest or disease outbreak,



NAPPO
North American Plant Protection Organization
Organización Norteamericana de Protección a las Plantas
MEXICO - USA - CANADA

Congratulations to the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) for 50 Years of Service

NAPPO congratulates APHIS on its 50th anniversary and acknowledges APHIS's important contributions in protecting agricultural resources and the environment in the United States and the North American region. The strategic partnership between NAPPO and APHIS-Plant Protection and Quarantine has been invaluable in the development and harmonization of effective regional phytosanitary programs through sharing expertise, resources, and information. The NAPPO community thanks APHIS-PPQ for the support they provide to NAPPO and looks forward to a continued partnership.



FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL SERVICE DIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The Foreign Agricultural Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture is pleased to announce its new FAS Diversity Fellowship Program, which seeks to identify and prepare outstanding individuals for careers in the FAS Foreign Service. The program advances the Department's goal of a more diverse, inclusive and equitable Foreign Service. The FDFP will recruit outstanding candidates from across the country and include the following elements:

- *Funding up to \$42,000 per year to attend two-year graduate programs in Agribusiness or Agricultural Economics at U.S. universities.
- *Two summer internships, one domestic and one overseas at a U.S. embassy.
- *Mentoring from a Foreign Service Officer.
- *Professional development activities to prepare individuals for their Foreign Service careers.
- *Pathway to employment in the Foreign Agricultural Service for those who successfully complete the program and FAS requirements, with a five-year service obligation.

Program Eligibility: The program is looking for undergraduate seniors or college graduates who are 1) are U.S. citizens, 2) have a cumulative GPA of 3.2 out of 4.0, and 3) intend to seek admission to a two-year, full-time master's degree program in Agribusiness or Agricultural Economics at a U.S.-based graduate institution to begin in fall 2023.



www.fasdiversityfellowship.org



CINDY HOPKINS/LAMY



APHIS ECUADOR

Through its capacity building efforts, APHIS FSOs help countries control diseases before they spread to the U.S., for example, by attending a live bird market training in Ecuador (right). At a livestock market in Ecuador, indigenous Otavalenos women sell caged chickens in 2012.

The APHIS Foreign Service was instrumental in the design of WHO’s Joint External Evaluation tool and process, a voluntary “One Health” country evaluation that assesses pandemic preparedness.

whether accidental or intentional, is an important component of our nation’s security infrastructure. With both technical and diplomatic expertise, APHIS FSOs must remain engaged in high-level biosecurity/bioterrorism discussions both within the U.S. government and in groups such as the G7.

- International organizations such as the OIE and United Nations organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency are vital partners for achieving APHIS’ goals. Active and successful engagement by APHIS FSOs on the multinational level will be critical for influencing trade standards, plant and animal pest and disease control/eradication efforts, and preventing future pandemics.

With so many tasks at hand, however, APHIS FSOs have found that their ability to work proactively, and their influence in international organizations and the interagency space, has been substantially compromised. The number of APHIS FSOs, which for decades ranged between 50 and 60, at one point dropped to

below 20 as APHIS struggled to define its vision for the future of its Foreign Service. To rectify the situation, APHIS is now aggressively recruiting and hiring FSOs. Between 2016 and 2020, APHIS recruited a diverse cadre of 22 FSO trainees, retaining 16. APHIS is still recruiting and hopes to welcome additional animal and plant specialists who can join the effort to keep American agriculture and agricultural trade healthy and thriving.

Whether they’ve marshalled the screwworm program through Nicaragua in the middle of a civil war, negotiated critical new market openings for U.S. products, weathered battles with trading partners over bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or advocated the importance of addressing zoonotic diseases in animals to prevent their spread to humans, APHIS’ Foreign Service officers and their domestic colleagues have shown time and again that no matter the challenge, they will find a way forward, protecting U.S. agriculture and promoting science-based agricultural trade. ■

The New Core Precepts and What They Mean

After the first significant overhaul since 2015, the State Department core precepts are lean and tuned to the diplomatic requirements of the 21st century.

BY LISA VICKERS

In February, Director General Carol Perez announced new core precepts for State Foreign Service tenure and promotion, which will take effect in the rating cycle *beginning* this month. The new core precepts mark a significant change from the previous ones. Here is an explanation of how they are different, the process for developing them and why the precepts matter. You can find the full text of the new core precepts at <https://usdos.sharepoint.com/sites/Intranet-HR/offices/pe>.

Every employee evaluation report (EER) season for the Foreign Service, employees around the world agonize over their personal narratives and assemble bullet points for their rater and reviewer. The most effective way to organize the narrative is by consulting the core precepts, which are the decision criteria for tenure and promotion. Like many of you, I go through the current table of precepts (which some refer to as a “bingo card”) to make sure that my EER touches on as many of the subcompetencies as possible. I also read my last three EERs to make sure that I didn’t forget to include something and to decide where this year’s narrative journey will take me.

As director of the Office of Performance Evaluation in the Global Talent Management Bureau, I am responsible for renegotiating the core precepts



Lisa A. Vickers is the director of the State Department’s Bureau of Global Talent Management’s Office of Performance Evaluation. A consular officer, she has served in a variety of leadership posts since joining the State Department Foreign Service in 1990, including as consul general in Cairo, deputy principal officer in Frankfurt, deputy chief of mission in Lilongwe and as principal officer in Edinburgh and Mérida.



Director General Carol Perez addresses a large group of employees on modernization steps at the State Department in February 2020.



From the beginning, it was clear that we needed to make greater substantive changes to the precepts than in previous years.

with the American Foreign Service Association every three years. The core precepts are—for me—the most important document I consult when writing EERs. For each one I write, I look at how the employee's accomplishments demonstrate their potential to succeed at the next higher level for each individual precept. The performance conversations I've had with employees through the year already give me a good sense of where the employee is truly shining and where they could use some mentoring, which makes the writing that much easier.

A Careful and Inclusive Process

The core precepts are key to everything I do as a Foreign Service officer, and so it was an honor to work with AFSA on renegotiating the precepts in 2021. They have not undergone a significant overhaul since 2015, when we ushered in the three effectiveness areas: informational, operational and relational. This time, Director General Perez asked our team to really scrub the core precepts and ask, are these appropriate to a 21st-century diplomatic service? What we found was that while there certainly was a lot of good to work with, there was also a lot that we could do to make them more effective.

From the beginning, it was clear that we needed to make greater substantive changes to the precepts than in previous years. We took the steps and the time we needed to get the new precepts right.

The process for arriving at the new core precepts was just as important to us as the precepts themselves. The State Department is a large organization, and change does not come easily. Any change you make, you need to be able to explain the reasoning and benefits to justify how you got there. We first assembled a working group, with representatives from a cross-section of skill codes and grades, which was reflective of the department's diverse workforce. Our process needed to be as inclusive as we wanted our new precepts to be.

We reviewed all existing precept-like elements, including the performance pay precepts used by the senior levels, leadership and management principles that apply departmentwide, the 13 dimensions used in selection to join the Service, etc. We looked at feedback from hundreds of those who have served on selection boards to determine what skills and qualities they viewed as most important—and which ones they thought were important but were missing from the existing precepts. We consulted with stakeholders internally and held multiple discussions with AFSA.

The finished product is reflective of the effort the working group and our partners both in and outside the building put into creating a document that will work for the entire Foreign Service.

The Changes and Their Rationale

Our team quickly zeroed in on several critical components and changes that would have a significant, positive impact.

First, we needed a version of the core precepts that was easier to use. We started with a version that was 15 pages long

and pared it back to six. We got rid of the “bingo card” in favor of a streamlined paragraph format. And we sought to reduce redundancy across the precepts by going from six down to the following five core competencies: Communication; Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility (DEIA); Leadership; Management; and Substantive and Technical Expertise. Nothing substantive from the existing precepts was lost—we simply updated and combined the elements of the existing precepts into a new framework. Each of these new core competencies is important in its own right. Selection boards weigh all competencies equally, and no one precept is more important than another.

We also eliminated the three effectiveness areas. This was in response to feedback from employees that it was confusing trying to write to both the effectiveness areas and to the precepts. To avoid confusion, for employees as well as for the selection boards, we went back to the model of simply relying on the core competencies.

Second, we needed to make the new core precepts more inclusive of Foreign Service specialists. The existing core precepts were more geared toward generalists, who are more likely to gain experience related to foreign policy reporting and outreach to foreign audiences. While those elements are still present in the new version, we have also elevated skills more readily applicable to the work of specialists, and have been clear that the relevant elements and skills should apply on an as-appropriate basis.

Last, we asked what qualities, skills, abilities and actions needed greater emphasis as we continue to build a stronger Foreign Service, and it was clear that we needed a stronger focus on DEIA. We have a responsibility to integrate DEIA principles into the way our institution achieves its mission. In close coordination with Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, and others throughout the department, we developed a dedicated precept to ensure every employee takes responsibility for fostering DEIA and demonstrates that responsibility through action.

In addition to DEIA, we also increased our emphasis on data literacy. The way we do work has changed; today our employees need to make data-driven decisions and policies, so they need to know how to interpret data. While these are skills that entry-level employees may not come into the Service with, we now offer courses on data literacy at the Foreign Service Institute to make sure every officer has the tools needed to succeed.

The other components we elevated were supervisory excellence, strategic risk-taking and learning from failure, institution building, and careerlong learning and development.

The other components we elevated were supervisory excellence, strategic risk-taking and learning from failure.

Without a doubt, the most significant change is the addition of the precept on DEIA, and it is a critical one for our organization as we look to retain and develop our diverse talent and to make State a place where people look forward to coming to work each day. Our concern was that we didn’t want commitment to DEIA to simply be a box-checking exercise. We wanted to send an unequivocal message to the workforce that it is everyone’s responsibility to do their part to make the department an equitable, inclusive and fair place to work.

We believe that the new DEIA precept includes competencies each employee can demonstrate on a daily basis. For example, exhibiting cultural awareness, achieving goals through inclusive teamwork, and showing support for workplace flexibilities are all activities that employees can readily exhibit at every level. Employees can also engage in more robust ways through work with DEIA-related programming and advocating and implementing policies that will make our workplace more equitable and inclusive.

Why the Precepts Matter

On a practical level, selection boards use the core precepts as the basis for their assessment of a candidate’s readiness for tenure and promotion. The feedback we receive from the boards indicates that the better job employees do of describing the impact of their work, of demonstrating the ability to operate successfully at the next level within each precept, the easier it is for selection boards to determine employees’ promotability. Every board season, we give each board member a copy of the core precepts and advise our members to keep referring to the precepts throughout the process.

When I came into the Foreign Service, I was an unconded officer. The core precepts set the tone for what the State Department expected of me as an officer. In essence, the precepts were the basis for the agreement between the department and me to become a Foreign Service officer. Today, the core precepts continue to serve as guideposts. While we are an incredibly diverse workforce, we are united by these common elements that each of us aspires to progressively demonstrate. ■

The Case for a Foreign Service Core Precept on DEIA

Making engagement a requirement will help move support for diversity and equity beyond words.

BY KIM McCLURE

In announcing the appointment of the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Secretary of State Antony Blinken emphasized that advancing diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) must be the work of every single State Department employee, regardless of rank or background.

In fact, Secretary Blinken was rather emphatic about it: “This is not just the work of the CDIO—or any other individual with ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’ in their title. I want to be crystal clear about this: Promoting diversity and inclusion is the job of every single member of this department. It’s mission critical. It demands each and every one of us reflect on our actions and ask: What more could I have done in the past to make this place more inclusive and respectful toward people who are different from me? What more can I do now?”

Many employees heralded this new commitment to supporting the potential of every employee and to ensuring equitable career outcomes for all. For those of us working in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, however, we realized that the only way to ensure the Secretary’s admirable sentiment went beyond words was to hold employees accountable for achieving results by pursuing DEIA through concrete action and in a sustained manner.

To succeed, everyone from entry-level officers to section and division chiefs and office directors, as well as those leading front offices, will need to engage.



Kim McClure is a senior policy adviser in the Secretary of State’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion. She has been in the Foreign Service for 19 years and has served overseas in India, Afghanistan and South Africa, in addition to assignments at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in New York, the State Department Operations Center, the Office of the

Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, and in the bureaus of East Asia and Pacific Affairs and Global Talent Management.

Issues and Concerns: A Q&A with Kim McClure

As you can imagine, there was robust debate around the building, within the wider foreign affairs community and with AFSA on the pros and cons of creating a precept focused on DEIA. It's a bold and unprecedented move, but one the Office of Diversity and Inclusion believes essential to achieving real change in our culture. Colleagues who were initially skeptical about the idea raised some good questions and concerns that we believe are worth addressing.

Q: Won't having a dedicated DEIA precept lead to box-checking on DEIA efforts rather than prompting colleagues to do this work from a place of genuine interest and conviction?

Fulfilling any of the core precepts could be seen as a box-checking exercise, but what sets an employee's EER apart from others is the strength of their examples for any given precept and their ability to demonstrate the impact that said example had on the institution and our policy. This will be no different. Some people may do the minimum, but those who are most competitive for promotion will be the ones who clearly go beyond mere box-checking and show real results in advancing the department's DEIA goals. It's also important to stress that there is no single magic bullet to advancing DEIA. Like other DEIA interventions, this precept is part of a broader, holistic and long-term strategy.

Q: Won't this just compel managers to relegate even more DEIA work to their direct reports and those who are part of underrepresented groups—many of whom are already burned out—so that said managers can then take credit for DEIA work despite not doing the heavy lifting themselves?

With all precepts, most managers talk about their team's collective accomplishments and take credit for their own role in creating the environment that enabled such work. We can't expect that work on the DEIA front will be different. That said, we do think this precept is one in which midlevel managers can also play a distinct role from the rest of their team and take credit for that. This includes ensuring an inclusive and accessible work unit by taking proactive steps to make it so, mentoring employees from a wide array of backgrounds, making their bidding/hiring processes more transparent and equitable, and building diverse teams. Managers who take this two-pronged approach—helping their team, and also

spearheading DEIA work at their own level—will likely be the most competitive for promotion.

Further, we believe part of the reason colleagues who have done DEIA work are burned out is precisely because they've had to do it on the margins and during their personal time. Elevating this work to equal standing with other institutional and policy work will allow managers to create time and space for it during employees' core hours. It also incentivizes more colleagues to help with this work, leaving fewer people to do it alone. Hopefully, that will serve to lessen the overall sense of burnout.

Q: What can I do to meet this precept?

While not exhaustive, here are suggestions for how you can meaningfully participate in advancing the department's DEIA work:

- Join your post or bureau DEIA Council. Even if you are not a member, partner with your DEIA Council to host a discussion on a DEIA-related topic. Host a watch party for one of the State Department's many DEIA-related programs, and then develop a discussion guide or host a follow-up conversation to talk about how the topic relates to your immediate work environment.
- Organize a virtual event with your bureau's senior DEIA adviser to learn how your bureau is connecting its internal focus on DEIA with its external foreign policy goals for the region.
- Collaborate with your human resources officer or executive office to play a role in reforming your post or bureau's recruitment and hiring practices to encourage greater transparency, equity and diversity in its assignment and hiring practices. (Think about how this can be done for local staff recruitment and hiring, as well.)
- After taking FSI's Mitigating Unconscious Bias Course, lead a discussion with section chiefs at your post or office directors in your bureau about the role each of you can play in reducing bias in department practices. (Section chiefs and office directors have a critical role to play in this space with respect to recruiting, hiring and making sure all employees have equitable opportunities to do promotion-enhancing work, and are equitably recognized for outstanding performance with awards.)

Continued on next page

Kim McClure, Continued from previous page

- Lead an assessment of ways that your post or bureau could be more accessible for current or future colleagues and contacts with disabilities.
- Organize a discussion with local staff to ask how DEIA issues manifest themselves in the local culture and/or at work, and how their American supervisors could assist them in addressing these issues.
- Help post identify and use accessibility-enabled technology for events and programs. (Poll your target audiences to ask about their accessibility needs before an event.)
- Set up a dialogue with managers at post discussing best practices for rooting out bullying and toxic management practices.
- Develop and launch anonymous pulse surveys to assess how well your specific post or bureau is doing on DEIA issues and fostering inclusion.
- Help your section chief or post leadership recruit from a more diverse pool of candidates.
- Make sure you are investing the same effort in mentoring colleagues whose backgrounds are different from your own as you are investing in those who might remind you of yourself at an earlier stage in your career, and invest in their long-term success by helping them strategize around future positions and assignment selection.

Speak up when you hear comments indicating bias during meetings about bureau and post hiring decisions. Take bystander intervention training to empower yourself to act in the moment when you see biased comments or actions happening in the workplace.

Q: Can I mention my work within employee affinity groups in my EER to get credit for that work?

According to department guidance, employees may mention what they did within an affinity group, as well as its impact, but cannot disclose the name of the affinity group, as that could be an indication of their potential membership in a protected class. For example, a statement such as this would be appropriate: “I served on the board of one of the department’s affinity groups and co-drafted a policy document that went to the Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Reform outlining our organization’s views on what should be prioritized in the DEIA Strategic Plan.”



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken speaks with Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C., on April 12, 2021, the day of her swearing-in.

And the only way to ensure this is to tie forwarding the DEIA mission to promotions and performance for both the Civil Service and the Foreign Service.

Time for a Dedicated Precept

Frankly, in the Foreign Service what gets people promoted is what gets them going. Even for those who are not motivated primarily by the path to promotion, one cannot deny that what the department emphasizes in its promotion criteria signals what our institution views as its core mission. DEIA efforts, by contrast, have long been relegated to the sidelines of that mission, considered work that is nice but tangential to our focus on foreign policy.

Those who have labored to make our organization more equitable and inclusive have usually done so on the margins, after-hours during their personal time, and without formal recognition or compensation through the department’s promotions and awards processes. Some even operated in outright fear that mentioning this work in an employee evaluation report (EER) would tag them as a member of an underrepresented group, potentially triggering unconscious bias within promotion panels, or suggesting to selection boards that they did not spend enough time focused on “more important” work.

In our discussions, it became clear that the only way to shift this paradigm and the value placed on this work was to create a dedicated core precept (the criteria by which State FS employees are evaluated for promotion) focused on advancing DEIA within the institution. Some advocated simply increasing the DEIA language in the existing precepts, and we considered that approach. When we reviewed the previous precepts, however, we realized they already included quite a lot of language on DEIA. That approach had been tried before but had not yielded the desired effect. And spreading more DEIA language across the other precepts, like communication or leadership skills, left the door open for colleagues who did not want to play a role in advancing DEIA to simply focus on other ways to meet those precepts.

A dedicated core precept on DEIA is a game changer for our institution because it requires every employee to roll up their sleeves and play a direct role in advancing DEIA. It ties the broad emphasis that our top-level leadership has placed on DEIA to concrete action and deliverables at senior-, mid- and entry-level ranks. It ensures DEIA work is no longer peripheral, voluntary or

relegated to those with the least influence in the institution, as this work will now be required for all and will be compensated—both with promotions and awards like Senior Performance Pay (the criteria for which is determined by the precepts). Most importantly, it places DEIA work at the center of our institution, where it belongs.

With time, we believe this move will prove one of our organization’s most pivotal in shifting department culture. How so? As employees strive to meet this precept, they will have to do the required introspection outlined in the Secretary’s words above, re-evaluating what role they play in ensuring everyone has an equal opportunity to advance through the department’s ranks and to contribute meaningfully to its work.

This directly affects the strength of our performance as an institution. After all, it does no good to bring diverse faces into the organization if we then marginalize (rather than capitalize on) their different ways of connecting with foreign audiences and varied thinking about our policy challenges and possible solutions. ■



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THE LITTLE BOOK THAT COULD

Inside a U.S. Embassy, Telling the Foreign Service Story for More Than a Quarter Century

This diplomacy primer introduces the people of the U.S. Foreign Service to a worldwide audience.

BY DONNA SCARAMASTRA GORMAN

“It was serendipity,” explains Kelly Adams-Smith of her involvement in the creation of a second edition of *Inside a U.S. Embassy: How the Foreign Service Works for America* in 2003. The American Foreign Service Association, publisher of the first edition in 1996, had decided it was time to produce a new edition of the same title.

Adams-Smith, now deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Mission to the European Union, was relatively new to the Foreign Service in the early 2000s. She’d just finished a stint at the State Department Operations Center and had some time before moving on to Embassy Tallinn with her FSO husband, Steve.

“I was really interested in Foreign Service stories,” she explains. Concerned that the State Department didn’t have a domestic constituency, she decided to spend her free summer gathering stories about what Foreign Service officers in the field

do, hoping to place these stories in “hometown papers” outside the Beltway. She pitched the idea to Ambassador (ret.) R. Niels Marquardt, then the special coordinator for Secretary Colin Powell’s Diplomatic Readiness Initiative, and he invited her to work with his office to get these stories told.

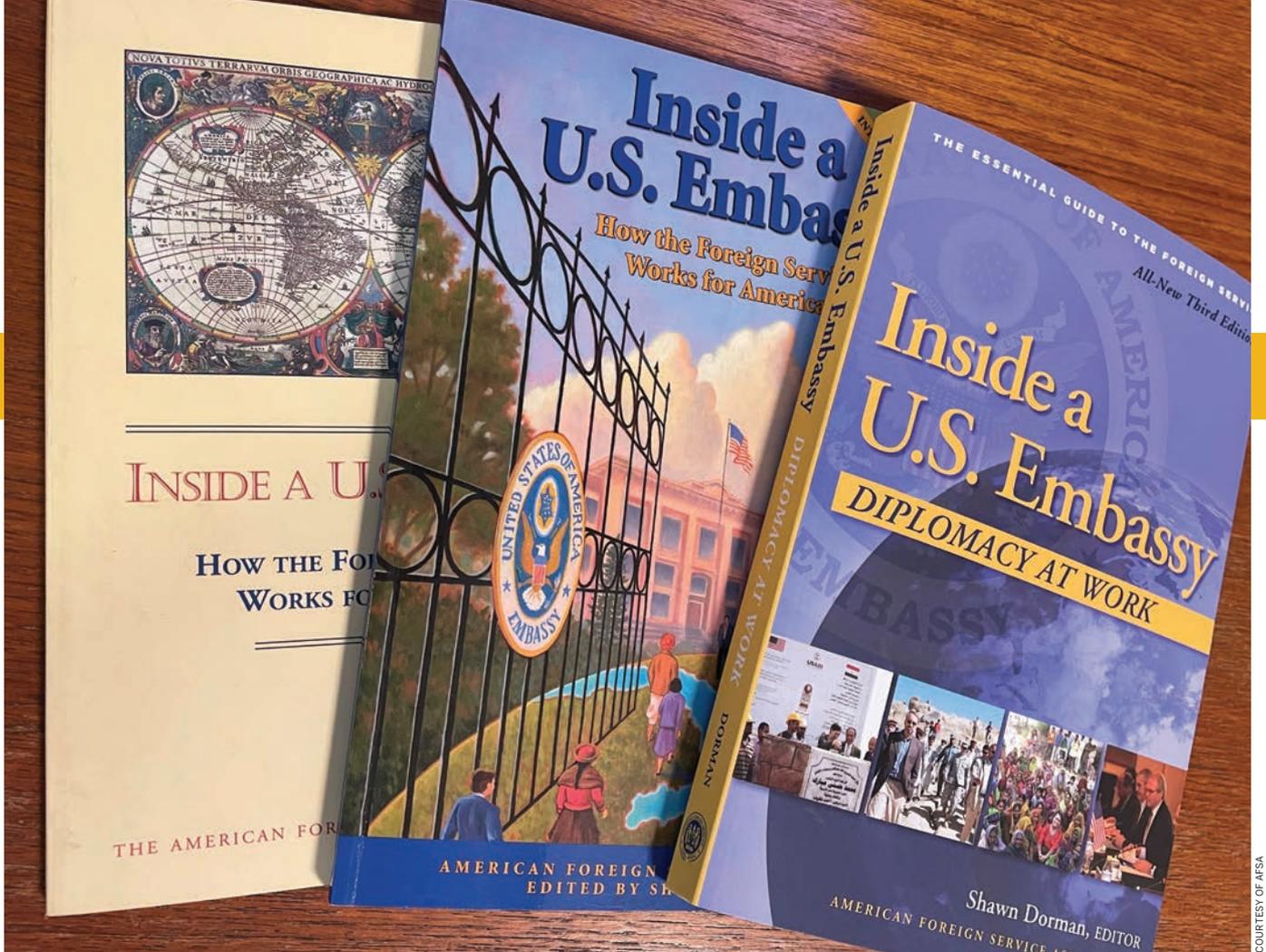
At the same time, *The Foreign Service Journal’s* Shawn Dorman, a former FSO, was beginning to collect stories for a new edition of *Inside a U.S. Embassy*. Niels Marquardt heard about the book, connected the two writers and—serendipity. Adams-Smith and Dorman spent the summer forming an advisory group and seeking out the ideal mix of people to tell the story of the U.S. Foreign Service.

The advisory committee selected people to profile from almost every type of Foreign Service job in every region of the world, aiming to paint a picture of who does what and what goes on inside an embassy. AFSA solicited diplomacy and development “Tales from the Field” as well as day-in-the-life chronicles to help readers understand life and work in the Foreign Service.

The second edition, published by AFSA in 2003 and revised in 2005, features profiles of officers, specialists and locally employed staff across the globe, from entry-level to ambassador and from commercial officer to USAID mission director. Each profile of someone in a particular post aims to bring readers inside the world of diplomacy, to get to know the practitioners.



Donna Scaramastra Gorman’s articles have appeared in Time Magazine, Newsweek, The Washington Post, the Christian Science Monitor and the FSJ. A Foreign Service spouse, she has lived in Amman, Moscow, Yerevan, Almaty, Beijing and Northern Virginia. Formerly an associate editor for the Journal, she recently returned to the D.C. area with her family after her husband, Embassy Moscow Deputy Chief of Mission Bart Gorman, was expelled by the Russian government.



The three editions of *Inside a U.S. Embassy* (1996, 2003/2005, and 2011).

Since the second edition's first printing, AFSA has sold more than 150,000 copies of the book.

Two successive AFSA executive directors—Susan Reardon and Ian Houston—provided the institutional backing for the second and third editions, while *Foreign Service Journal* editors Steve Honley and Susan Maitra contributed in-house editing support. Each of the three editions begins with an introduction by the AFSA president at the time of the project: Tex Harris (1996), John Limbert and John Naland (2003 and 2005), and John Naland and Susan Johnson (2011).

Randy Berry, who was refugee coordinator in Uganda in 2002 and is now U.S. ambassador to Nepal, remembers why he said yes when former A-100 classmate Dorman asked him to participate in the project. “I was flattered,” Ambassador Berry told us when we interviewed him for this article in December. “When I entered the Foreign Service, there was fairly little information out there about the variety of opportunities in the career. I saw this book as a chance to show people what the State Department does. One of the great surprises I had when I joined the Service was just how many different types of jobs there are. I was happy to bring attention to a less traditional role that a diplomat can play.”

The new editions of *Inside a U.S. Embassy* also capture the

process of change at State and within the Foreign Service.

Ambassador Berry, the State Department’s first special envoy for the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons, says the department has made much progress on gender issues since he joined in 1993, before security clearance questions about sexual orientation were changed. “Back then it never would have occurred to me that serving out a career as an openly gay person was possible,” he says. “But I’ve seen opportunities open over the years, primarily because of the brave actions of those who came before me.”

Today, says Berry, he sees the Foreign Service as a welcoming place for the LGBTQI+ community. “I would encourage anybody from this community—or anybody more generally—to come into the Foreign Service. This is a remarkable career, with great opportunities for advancement.”

The second edition became a best seller, both within the foreign affairs agencies and outside. The State Department distributed thousands of copies to would-be Foreign Service officers—if you passed the written exam in the mid-2000s, it’s likely you received a copy in the mail along with a note from the Director General congratulating you on your accomplishment.



Shawn Dorman with a representative of the Independent Publisher Book Awards, the IPPYs, at the 2012 award ceremony in New York City, where *Inside a U.S. Embassy* won a gold award. Inset: Copies of the third edition coming off the press in Baltimore, 2011.



State’s diplomats in residence and political advisers to military institutions used the book as an introduction to the Foreign Service career and an embassy primer. The book also started to get adopted for university diplomacy courses.

AFSA went back to the printer multiple times to reprint as inventory sold out.

Diplomacy at Work

In 2010, Dorman called on Adams-Smith and the FSJ team again to help produce the third all-new edition, this time with the subtitle: *Diplomacy at Work*. Based on the response to the second edition, and its popularity as a career guide, Dorman planned to add a new chapter on joining the Foreign Service, as well as additional chapters on the broader community and the country team.

“Every once in a while, I pick up the book and see the people we interviewed,” says Adams-Smith. “We talked to some excellent people.” As a team, says Adams-Smith, “we asked ourselves, ‘Who do we know who’s fantastic?’ We started reaching out to people to ask if they were interested. And they were. They

wanted to help the institution. That’s what this is all about: love for the institution itself, a desire to explain it. I’m not surprised that people wanted to be a part of telling this story.”

The first edition, a skinny yellow handbook that marked its 25th birthday in 2021, features stories from such relative unknowns as Linda Thomas-Greenfield, then regional refugee coordinator at Embassy Nairobi. Today, of course, we know her as Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. Also profiled in that edition: Ambassador Tom Pickering and future ambassadors Barbara Bodine, Tom Shannon and Michele Sison.

The second edition continued to feature people who would go on to become big names in the Foreign Service. In addition to interviewing Ambassadors Anne Patterson and John Tefft, the team profiled future ambassadors such as Randy Berry, Tulinabo

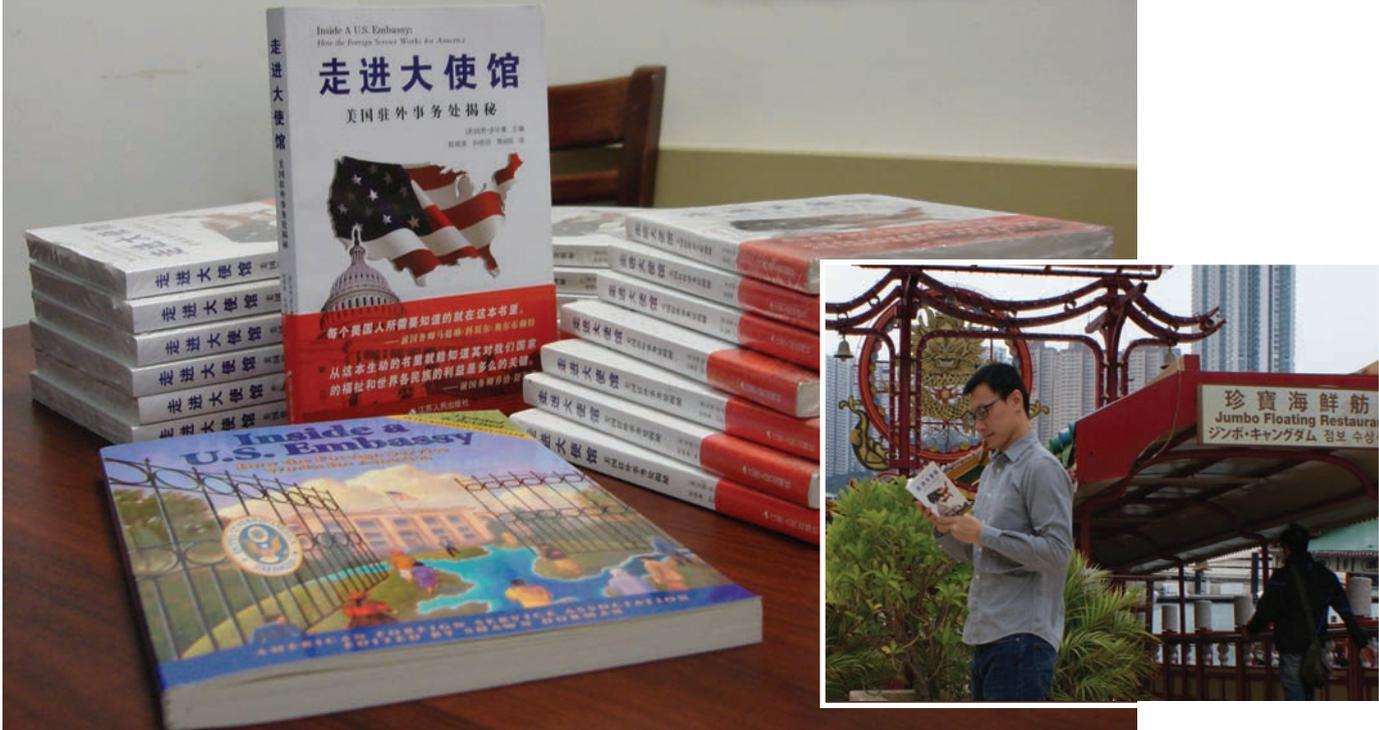
Mushingi, Andrew Young, Carmen Martinez, Ken Merten, Brian McFeeters and Ted Osius.

The third edition, while we’re name-dropping, included such notables as Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch, Dereck Hogan, Andrew Young, David Becker and two future medical directors, Mark Cohen and Larry Padgett.

Special Coordinator for the Arctic Region James P. DeHart earned the distinction of being featured twice, in 2003 for a day in the life of a political officer at NATO and in 2011, as director of the Panjshir PRT.

Marie Yovanovitch believes the State Department has changed since she was interviewed in 2010 as the ambassador profilee for the third edition. Then ambassador to Armenia, she agreed to participate, she said when we spoke with her late last year, because “I’d seen the earlier version of the book and thought it was a great vehicle to help people within the Foreign Service and, more broadly, journalists, students and others, learn—to inform and educate them as to what the Foreign Service is all about.”

In the 2011 profile, Yovanovitch noted that she had a particular interest in the advancement of women. But has the State Department made progress since then? “That’s a complicated question,” she says. “Now we have people like Wendy Sherman, Toria Nuland, Linda Thomas-Greenfield and Uzra Zeya in top



The Chinese edition of the 2003 *Inside a U.S. Embassy*. Inset: FSO Steven Chang reads this edition in Hong Kong, 2013.

jobs. This is a measure of progress. But it's also a measure of lack of progress, that in the year 2021 we still find it *significant* that we have female appointees in these important positions."

Yovanovitch served as ambassador three times, in Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and, finally, Ukraine. Her illustrious Foreign Service career culminated with the first impeachment hearing of President Donald Trump, where she served as a witness and became somewhat more famous than she expected, or preferred. She says she would still recommend the career to young women, and to young people in general. "What we do is vital work. It's fun, and it's rewarding, and it's absolutely indispensable to national security," she says, but "here's the thing: the Foreign Service is not for everybody. Changing your job every couple of years? Hugely stressful. Changing living arrangements, countries—very stressful! It's not something everyone wants to sign up for." But if the pluses outweigh the minuses for you personally, she says, "you can really make a difference." (See the review of her new memoir, page 68.)

AFSA's Best Outreach Tool

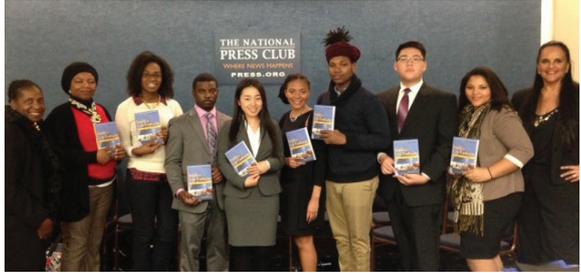
Twenty-six years ago, just 5,000 copies of the first edition of *Inside a U.S. Embassy* were printed. The second edition far surpassed that figure, with "tens of thousands" of books sold, according to the book's editor, Shawn Dorman, who is now editor in chief of *The Foreign Service Journal* and AFSA publications director. "The State Department ordered 10,000 books initially, and every time we reprinted, they bought thousands more," she

says. "They gave a copy to every person who passed the written test—21,000 people used to take the test each year, so that added up." In addition, military entities purchased copies by the hundreds.

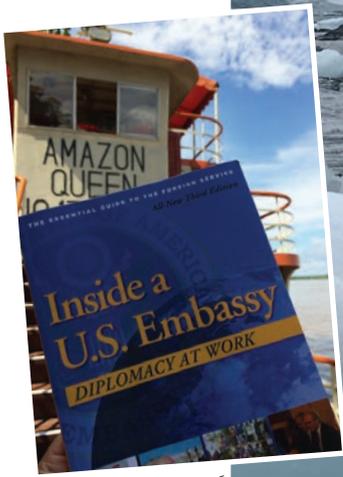
AFSA has published all three editions independently. For the third edition, says Dorman, "I shopped the book around to publishers, and found strong interest." Georgetown University Press, Cornell University Press, McGraw Hill and a couple others offered to publish it in a traditional publishing deal. Dorman did the math and consulted with AFSA leadership, determining that it made more financial sense for AFSA to publish the book independently. Acting as publisher, AFSA retains about 70 percent of sales revenue instead of the 10 to 14 percent that a typical publishing contract would offer. "So we turned them all down and created our own FS imprint, Foreign Service Books."

AFSA was able to manage the editing in house, and contracted out the design and cover work through *Journal* partners and others. They printed with a family-owned business in the region and signed a distribution agreement with Potomac Books, now under University of Nebraska Press, which still manages distribution today.

Says Potomac Books' publisher Samuel Dorrance, who helped structure the deal: "I met Shawn Dorman at Book Expo America during the first Obama administration. Shawn was looking for a new distribution partner for AFSA's flagship publication, *Inside a U.S. Embassy*. By coincidence, I had recently



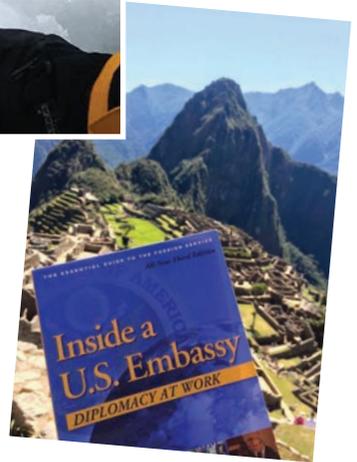
Students with copies of *Inside a U.S. Embassy* at a career event at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., hosted by American Women for International Understanding, March 2015.



COURTESY OF AFSA



Inside a U.S. Embassy is read around the world, from the Amazon to Antarctica to Machu Picchu.



COURTESY OF AFSA

Inside a U.S. Embassy was used in a course at the European Command in Stuttgart, Germany, 2013, and EUCOM brought Shawn Dorman over to present an Embassy 101 talk.

read an article about the surging interest among recent college graduates and graduate students in joining the Foreign Service, no doubt inspired by the opportunity to restore America’s standing in the world through diplomatic service. The timing could not have been better!

“[The third edition of] *Inside a U.S. Embassy* was clearly positioned to be the leading resource for those preparing to take the entrance exam for the Foreign Service.”

Both the second and third editions are available in e-book format. Since the second edition’s first printing, AFSA has sold more than 150,000 copies of the book. Going into its ninth printing, it keeps on selling hundreds of copies each quarter.

Along the way the book has won awards and accolades, and continues to be one of AFSA’s best outreach tools. The 2011 edition received the 2012 Independent Publisher Book Award gold medal

in the category of Current Events–Foreign Affairs/Military as well as the 2012 Axiom Business Book Award bronze medal in the Career category. It has been adopted for more than 70 university courses, and dozens of universities have also purchased it for career centers. It is available in 1,118 libraries around the world.

The book has been used at the Foreign Service Institute for various training courses, including the ambassadorial seminar. The U.S. military, too, uses the book for training courses, including at National Defense University, Marine Corps University, Special Operations Command and more than a dozen other military institutions. Diplomats in residence share it with students who might consider the Foreign Service career and with universities in their regions. Embassies worldwide have used it for outreach. The 2005 edition was translated into Chinese and sold in China, though tracking sales there has been a challenge.

Educating Americans about Diplomacy

Even the current president of the United States may recall a connection with the book. Back in 2003, when he was the ranking minority member on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, now-President Joe Biden provided a blurb for the 2005

The book has been adopted for more than 70 university courses, and dozens of universities have also purchased it for career centers. It is available in 1,118 libraries around the world.

revised edition, calling it “a fascinating look at foreign policy in practice through the eyes of U.S. diplomats.”

During a diplomacy hearing in 2003, then-Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) said this about the book: “I’m fascinated by the contents. And I think that not only members of the committee, but all Americans will be deeply interested in this, because clearly the case that we are trying to make—U.S. officials of our State Department, American diplomacy and senators who have a deep interest in the success of that diplomacy—is enhanced when a very broad number of Americans have some idea what you do, what the department does.”

And in 2004 former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright observed: “The stories recounted here shed light upon a profes-

sion little known to most Americans but deeply important to the safety, freedom and prosperity of us all. These are the stories of the men and women who serve America’s interests—often under difficult and dangerous conditions—from the great cities to the most remote corners of the globe.”

It has been 11 years since the third edition of *Inside a U.S. Embassy* was published, but it continues to give Americans a first-person look at the important work of Foreign Service practitioners. Proceeds from its strong and continuous sales support the Fund for American Diplomacy, AFSA’s nonprofit entity dedicated to educating Americans about diplomacy.

Even 11 years later, says Kelly Adams-Smith, “there’s so much that’s still relevant in the book.” Is it time for a fourth edition? “If we decide to do one,” she says, “I’m in!” ■

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What is the Foreign Service?**

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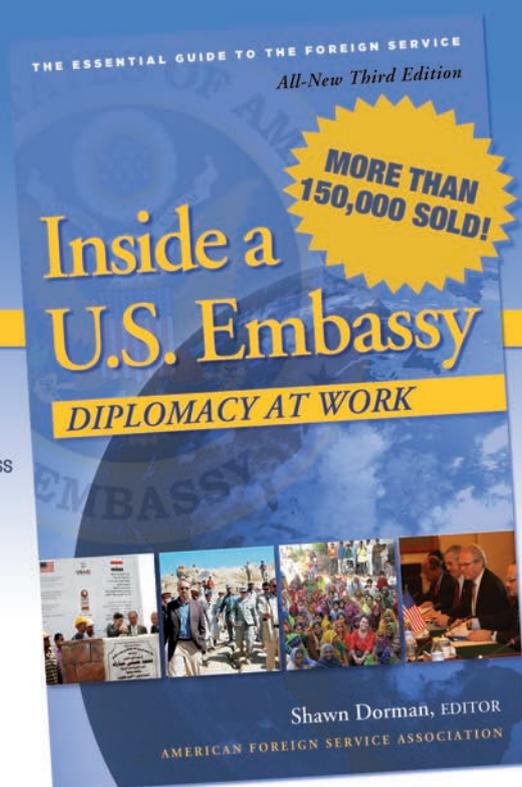
Inside a U.S. Embassy has been adopted for more than 60 university courses, as well as at least a dozen courses for U.S. military personnel. Help AFSA raise awareness about the Foreign Service and the role of diplomacy and development by sharing the book when you teach a course or give a presentation.

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Jeannette Lafrance



A Pioneering Foreign Service Woman

The upheaval of World War II opened opportunities for adventurous women, including in the U.S. Foreign Service.

BY LARISSA MOSELEY



COURTESY OF THE LAFRANCE FAMILY

Jeannette Lafrance joined the U.S. Army WAC in 1943 and served until 1945. She was deployed to Hollandia, New Guinea, as a decoder in the Signal-Intelligence Corps.

Jeannette Lafrance, who joined the U.S. Foreign Service in 1946, was on the cutting edge of women’s history in the United States. As the country was being transformed by the economic, social and political upheaval of the World War II era, Jeannette signed up—again and again—for opportunities newly opened to women. Despite being borne out of the horrors of world war, these opportunities were a breakthrough for women with ambitions for public service, work and adventure beyond America’s borders.

Amid the uncertainty of the period, with the United States finding itself at the forefront of global affairs for the first time and newly at the helm of maintaining peace and security, women like Jeannette stepped into the arena with tenacity and courage that is difficult to appreciate in modern times. The Foreign Service reopened employment opportunities for women following World War II, albeit limited to specific roles and only for unmarried women. For women to travel, let alone work abroad, without a male companion was unusual. This was when the Cold War was



Larissa Moseley is a first-tour consular officer serving in Cairo. She joined the Foreign Service in 2019 out of Baghdad. In more than 13 years of experience, she has worked primarily in conflict environments, for the U.S. Marine Corps, the State Department and the United Nations Development Program, as well as in the private sector.

just beginning, and fears of Soviet nuclear and ideological threats globally and to the United States deepened.

For women like Jeannette, this environment, precarious as it appeared, was an opportunity but not without dangers. She ventured outside the norm of women's roles of the era and served her country abroad, but she died prematurely during her third Foreign Service tour, in Egypt. Hoping to understand more about Jeannette's life and death in Cairo, surviving family members, including her sister, another military veteran, approached the State Department. The consular section in Cairo helped find Jeannette's missing Consular Report of Death Abroad, and her family was finally able to confirm the circumstances of her death.

Recently, Jeannette's name was added to the Virtual AFSA Memorial Plaque (afsa.org/virtual-afsa-memorial-plaque) to honor her service. For U.S. Embassy Cairo, Jeannette's family introduced present-day Foreign Services members to the life of a remarkable trailblazer for women officers.

An Unconventional Path

When President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed legislation on July 1, 1943, that created the Women's Army Corps, Jeannette Lafrance was working at the International Shoe Company in Rhode Island. A month later, she enlisted, joining her two brothers who were also serving in the U.S. armed forces. Thanks to this legislation, she was conferred the same ranks, privileges and benefits as her brothers. She would serve honorably first as a recruiter and then as a traffic analyst—a decoder—in the campaign for New Guinea and South Philippines. The army decorated her with a World War II Victory Medal and the Philippine Liberation Campaign Medal with one bronze service star, among other honors.

After the war, Jeannette returned home to work in the shoe factory once again but had already set her sights on new ways to continue her unconventional path. In her application to the Department of State, she wrote that she wanted to "travel



Jeannette and her brother Paul Lafrance Sr., of the Coast Guard, in the South Pacific.

COURTESY OF THE LAFRANCE FAMILY

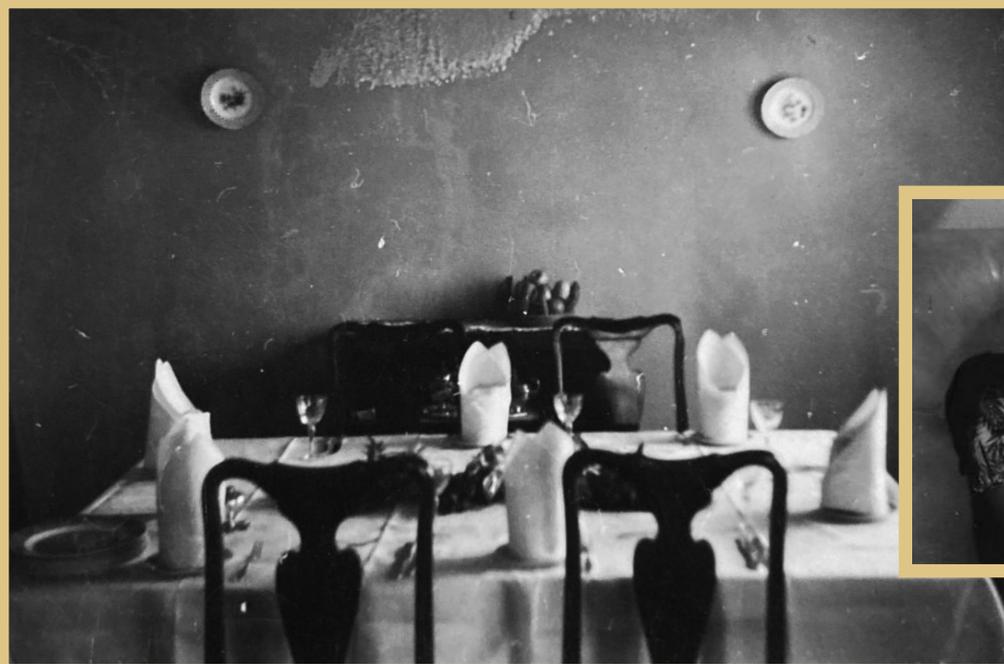
constantly," especially to Europe and China, and was particularly skilled at record keeping and using an "adding machine." Among the first women to apply following World War II, she was ultimately appointed to the Foreign Service in the secretarial ranks on Dec. 12, 1946. She would first serve in Warsaw in 1947, followed by Lima in 1949, and then Cairo in 1952.

In 1946 there were very few women in the Foreign Service. The first, Lucile Atcherson, had been admitted in 1922, and as required by the Department of State until 1971, she was forced to resign when she married just five years later. There had not yet been a woman holding the rank of ambassador when Jeannette joined. Blacks and whites were segregated in State Department dining facilities in Washington, even as Ralph J. Bunche led Arab-Israeli peace negotiations in the Middle East.

These realities did not deter Jeannette. Her sister, Alice, remembers she made her decisions confidently and

with conviction, and throughout her years of service, Jeannette's evaluators noted that she regarded the Foreign Service as a career, even while recalling that she was "philosophic about its ups and downs." Her pursuit of a Foreign Service life meant she could not marry and remain in the diplomatic corps, but she appears to have accepted this. After all, her family recalls, when one of Jeannette's boyfriends threatened to break up with her if she joined the army, off she went and enlisted anyway. Clearly, as a woman on her own in the late 1940s and early 1950s, in male-dominated organizations, seeking an adventurous life, Jeannette knew her own worth despite the restrictions on professional women of the time.

The photos, letters and documents from Jeannette's life will be familiar to the contemporary diplomat as well as eyebrow-raising reminders of how society has changed. Her evaluations reflected the then-common view that a diplomat's success was determined not only by the quality of their professional work. Jeannette's first review in Warsaw determined that she "is neat and well dressed ... has a pleasant personality" and openly discussed her lingering malaria and its impact on her profes-



The dining room furniture in Jeannette's apartment in the Zamalek area of Cairo bears a striking resemblance to tables and chairs still issued today. Inset: Jeannette in Egypt.

Throughout her years of service, Jeannette's evaluators noted that she regarded the Foreign Service as a career, even while recalling that she was "philosophic about its ups and downs."

sional abilities. In Lima, her evaluator noted that she was "a trim-appearing young woman," as well as "poised, pleasant and rather attractive." Thankfully, subjecting employees to evaluations of appearance, disposition and health status are no longer elements of the modern performance review.

Jeannette's evaluations also show a valued employee, with ambition, goals and a deeply held interest in forging a path in the Foreign Service that was her own. While the U.S. ambassadors to Warsaw and Peru noted that she was "conscientious and hardworking," "capable and efficient" and determined to advance professionally, it is clear she wanted to do so through opportunities that interested her. Jeannette aspired to become a "Chief of the File Room" and applied to a training program where she could pursue this interest. She wanted to leverage her native French-speaking abilities and appealed to the department's chief of personnel to work in France or Francophone Africa. She wanted to pursue consular affairs, working toward

this goal by the time she arrived in Cairo, her third post. In the present-day Foreign Service, some mentors would also suggest to junior officers that they take assignments that are true to their personal goals. Jeannette's letters and evaluations suggest she was well ahead of her time in practicing this sound advice.

An Adventurous Spirit

Jeannette's letters capture her adventurous spirit through her observations from three assignments that could not have been more different from one another, and some elements of them will be familiar to diplomats of today.

In Warsaw, she noted to the *Nashua Telegraph*, her local newspaper, that vacations were spent visiting other European countries because "Poland was still very much in ruins." Her photos certainly reflected this. One she sent home captured a scene of her in a car with other women, and a damaged cityscape in the background. Other photos showed scenes of bombed-out buildings and piles of rubble. We know that the close-knit community forged in the aftermath of World War II Poland was important to Jeannette; her boss later reflected that she did not feel the closeness of the embassy community at her next post, in Lima, because "the embassy community in an Iron Curtain country such as Poland is of necessity much more closely woven." Many diplomats who later served in Vietnam, Iran, Lebanon, Rwanda, the Balkans, Haiti, Afghanistan, Iraq or South Sudan would also grapple with the loneliness and loss of connection in assignments that followed wartime or traumatic tours. Many of her letters also dwell on the strange dichotomy of

smiling faces against the backdrop of war-inflicted misery.

Peru, by comparison, offered a completely different experience. Jeannette's photos reveal outings with girlfriends—in pants!—to the mountains of Peru and Bolivia with roadside pit-stop picnics with watermelons and scenes of iconic Catholic churches. She can be found in a crowd of Andean women, double-braids down their backs and clad in traditional hats, ponchos and layered skirts, or floating to shore on a *caballito de totora* (or “little reed horse”), a reed balsa fishing boat in Lake Titicaca. When she flew to Cusco, she writes of “the most thrilling plane ride I’ve ever taken,” where she had to use oxygen bags during the flight because the planes were not adequately pressurized at more than 10,000 feet in those days. Many travelers to Cusco will empathize with her coming down with *soroche*, having “severe pains in stomach, headache and a strong desire to die.”

After acclimatizing, her travels took her to remote villages of Puno, Pisac and San Salvador, witnessing indigenous dance, dress and ways of life that the modern traveler struggles to experience authentically. She writes enthusiastically of being chased after mass by men in “large fur hats” who exploded “some kind of dynamite without being too careful where they threw it,” much to the amusement of the locals. When Jeannette reached Machu Picchu, taking in the terraces and temples, the American professor Hiram Bingham, who had rediscovered and introduced the site to North Americans in 1911, was still alive and giving lectures at Yale. One can only dream of seeing Machu Picchu without today's throngs of tourists scattered over its grounds.

Although she had requested transfer to Spanish- or French-speaking Europe or Africa, the State Department sent Jeannette to Cairo. In 1952 she boarded a ship in New York after her home leave, cruised to Alexandria and continued to Cairo in the same year as Gamal Abdel Nasser's revolution, the dethroning of the Muhammad Ali dynasty and the end of British rule over Egypt. She lived with a colleague in an apartment near the embassy, located in Zamalek, with dining room furniture that on first glance has a striking resemblance to tables and chairs still issued today. Jeannette joined the Gezira Club, a famous sporting club



Jeannette Lafrance on the way to her assignment in Egypt in 1952.

frequented by today's embassy community, and played golf on her weekends. She saw mummies, marveled at Saqqara's pyramids, endured back pain from camel rides and befriended the Marine Security Guards. Her photos show her standing by the Nile, walking alongside men in galabeyas (Egyptian kaftans) in front of massive pharaonic statues in Luxor. They could easily be modern photos altered with popular filters.

Notes from the Field

In typical Foreign Service fashion, Jeannette visited friends from the diplomatic corps posted to interesting places. From Cairo, she traveled to nearby ancient cities of Damascus, Beirut, Jerusalem, Jericho and Bethlehem, places most Americans had only heard about in church or history books. She flew into Beirut from Port Said in 1953, having to fly over the Mediterranean instead of taking the land route through the Sinai because “Arabs and Jews are still feuding,” and the Egyptians would not have let her return. In another “thrilling” plane ride, she feared they “would never find the airstrip among the mountains in Beirut.”

Leaving Lebanon's cedars, she drove via a modern highway to Damascus while passing the “historic ruins of Solomon and the Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans, Arabs, Crusaders and Tartar hordes.” Damascus, to Jeannette, was modern and clean despite being one of the oldest cities in the world. She was struck by the Umayyad Mosque because of its significance to both Christians and Muslims. The mosque contained the tomb of the head of Saint John the Baptist and was also where “Moslems stand around and pray like we would,” waiting for the “end of the world.” She noted that Muslims also believed that “the Prophet Mohamed [Peace Be Upon Him] will come ... for first judgment



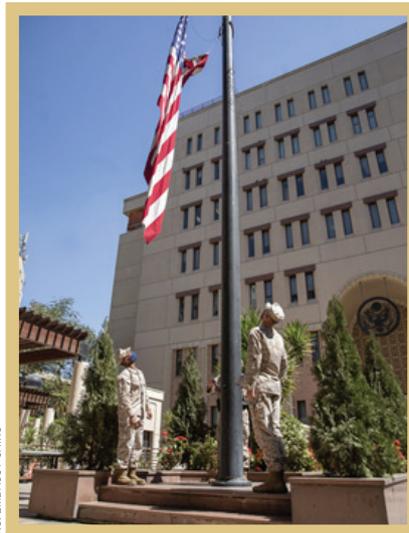
Left: Jeannette (at left) and her friends tour Luxor. Right: Next to the portrait of Jeannette Lafrance is a letter from U.S. Ambassador to Egypt Jonathan R. Cohen to Ms. Lafrance's sister, Alice Plautz, acknowledging her sister's pioneering role in the Foreign Service and her untimely death in Cairo. The flag was raised at the embassy in Lafrance's honor on March 18, 2021, the 67th anniversary of her death.



[in one of the mosque's minarets] and God will be in the opposite minaret [*sic*]." Amman, by contrast, was an "oasis in the middle of the desert ... nothing but sand and sand-colored houses." From there, on to the holy city of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem impressed Jeannette with what many modern visitors also grapple with—the proximity of the ancient religions to one another, the divisions between them and the difficulty explaining the "mixed feelings one experiences here." Jerusalem was divided in half, "Jews on one side, Arabs on the other." She would have been one of the early American witnesses of 60,000 Arab refugees living in tents in nearby Jericho, fed by the newly formed United Nations. At the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, she observed that Muslims are responsible for opening its doors every day and that sections are partitioned between the Greeks, Armenians, Copts, Protestants, Syrians, Ethiopians and Catholics for their services.

Jeannette remarked on the beauty of many of the mosques, such as the Mosque of Omar, where Jews had chased the merchants from the temple in the Old Testament, and which still had a stained glass window with a cross in its dome. In writing to her sister, a nun, Jeannette said she would not admit to the rest of the family that she had been inside mosques because the "family wouldn't admit me inside their house if they knew." Nonetheless, she visited the Holy Land's many sites with curiosity.



The U.S. Embassy Cairo salute to Jeannette Lafrance on March 18, 2021, during Women's History month in the United States.

grounds in Jeannette Lafrance's honor. The flag was flown in observation of her public service in World War II and at the Department of State, and the courageous spirit that took her across the globe. As her friend, Ray Noles, had aptly remarked after her death: "She fulfilled her destiny in service of her country and died in its service in one of the remote outposts of the diplomatic service. We can all be quite proud of her record."

Remembering the untold stories of past trailblazers like Jeannette can help us appreciate the present and strive to improve the future. ■

A Worthy Record

In early 1954, Jeannette was preparing to depart Cairo at the conclusion of her tour and travel to Rhode Island for home leave. She had collected Christmas presents to share with the family on her return, as many Foreign Service officers are wont to do. One evening, she drew a bath at the end of the day as she normally would. After midnight, Jeannette's roommate woke up to find the light still on in the bathroom. Looking inside, she found Jeannette submerged in the water. She had died by accident; the water boiler's candle having blown out, the emission of carbon monoxide had left her unconscious, and she drowned.

On the 67th anniversary of her death, March 18, 2021, U.S. Embassy Cairo flew an American flag over the embassy

HOW TO BE A ZOOMING SUCCESS

With virtual meetings and hybrid arrangements likely to remain standard practice, this primer is bound to come in handy.

BY ROBIN QUINVILLE

I confess: In the deputy chief of mission (DCM) course, I multitasked during media training. Why? Because the U.S. ambassador to Germany was a media professional. I knew one thing for sure: I would never have to go on camera.

Big mistake. My cozy thought bubble burst when the ambassador left for a new job in February 2020, and COVID-19 arrived. Suddenly, everything we did was on camera: staff meetings, town halls, policy discussions with government officials, public speeches, media interviews. Sure, there were times we could get together (small groups in big rooms). But for the most part, the pandemic meant our work—in all its facets—was filtered through our screens.

The Foreign Service adapted. So did our contacts in the governments and organizations we work with. Formality slipped away as some of our starchiest overseas colleagues suddenly turned up from their living room, relaxed in a polo shirt and jeans, for a



vibrant bilateral debate. What mattered was keeping our dialogue going. We were navigating new cultural norms together.

We flexed, we adjusted, we learned. And we realized: We can do better. So as we look ahead to the next stage (hybrid model, anyone?), here are five hard-earned lessons to help us be a zooming success.

Set the Stage

In real life, we make sure to know the run-of-show before we head to the event. How many attendees? Will we speak from a podium or in a conversational format? Seated at a table? Who are the other speakers? Will the host collect and select the questions?

We need the same answers for events in the virtual world. How many folks will be on screen? Just the speaker and host? A “panel” of five? Are presenters speaking off the cuff, or delivering prepared remarks? For an international or overseas audience, what language is expected? Do the organizers have a logo backdrop they want you to insert electronically? What does it look like, and do we want to promote their brand or our own?

Is this “just” a live transmission, or will the organization record it and post it? Do we agree? Are we expected to monitor the “chat” function, or will the host? If it’s a meeting with an official, who else is in the (virtual) room?



Robin Quinville recently retired after 33 years in the Foreign Service, specializing in European foreign and security policy. She began her career in Stuttgart just before the Berlin Wall fell. Her last assignment was as chargé d'affaires in reunited Germany.

It is no fun to find this stuff out after joining the event! Organizers will appreciate the advance preparation; it improves their own planning. And we can concentrate on the message we want to deliver.

You're Not on Screen, You're on TV

At the pandemic's start, we were self-satisfied with our plucky little home office setups. We mastered several online platforms. We got used to odd angles and shadowed faces. It wouldn't be for long, right?

Wrong. So now it's time to raise our production values. Remember: Someone somewhere may be streaming your event to their TV. That person can count your freckles if they're bored. Even on a small screen, they'll be checking out the décor and bookshelves behind you. It's not nosy; it's human.

Blur the room or drop in an electronic background. Then the audience will concentrate on you, not your collectibles.

Check the lighting. Can people see your face, as they would in a meeting? I once tuned in to an event featuring three of my friends. One looked great; the others looked like they'd completed a couple of back-to-back tours in war zones. The difference? One had a ring light. So if your home office has weird lighting, take action. If the audience can't see you, their attention will wander.

Be your own costume department! It's a professional meeting, so dress professionally. If you're a featured speaker, the organization will likely take screen shots for Twitter or Instagram during the event. My one concession to a home office: no shoes for virtual meetings. I'm from California; it's my birthright.

You're an Actor, Sort Of

Engaging with others online means projecting ourselves *way* more than in a normal office meeting. This is why a day full of virtual meetings is so tiring! Our screens are both broadcaster and barrier. We have to constantly show engagement and be fully present.

Be an active listener and watch closely for visual cues. Make sure you're providing some, too. When giving a speech or leading a discussion, we need to be as concerned about holding the audience as in real life. The stakes are higher in the virtual world: The audience can log off, and we'll never know they're gone.

Treat Zoom as a Room

When meeting virtually, think of Zoom as a room. Let's—mentally—be in an executive office. That means no multitasking. Even off camera, we should hold back from checking email, messages and all of our alternate devices. Phones should be on silent.

If staff members are “accompanying” us to a virtual meeting, they need to stop multitasking, too. That way, they're ready to add their expertise to the discussion. It's how we'd operate in real life, right? Even if the person on the other side of the screen is distracted, we'll look organized, and our respect will be appreciated.

Keep Calm and Carry On

This phrase—originated in London during the Blitz—is my mantra when things go wrong. Which they will; you've already lived through months of online disasters and near misses. It helps to think ahead, log in 30 minutes early in case of technical issues, and have a backup plan for when things go wrong. Like:

- *It's a shark-tank contest, and folks will be making their pitch to you and other judges.* You need to hear it all to make a fair judgment. Schedule someone from your organization to monitor online; if your participation suddenly drops, you'll be alerted and given some practical advice on how to reconnect. Keep calm and carry on.

- *You've logged in early.* The organizer's technician has put you in a virtual “side room,” promising to retrieve you when it's your turn. You hear the moderator introduce you, but the screen shows you're still off camera. Keep calm, carry on, start talking!

The technical error is their problem. They'll let you know if they want you to stop. When this happened to me, the audience could hear but not see me. It was tougher for the speaker they could see but not hear.

- *There's stuff accumulating in the “chat,” but you're busy speaking and interacting with the host.* Keep your eye on the camera and focus on the host. Ideally, you've anticipated this issue and have arranged with the organizers to have someone monitor the chat and put questions to you. If no arrangements are in place, keep calm, carry on and ignore the chat. Once you've finished speaking, ask the host how to handle comments there.

- *The screen goes blank.* You can't see the folks who were on screen just a few minutes before. But you can hear them, so you know your meeting is continuing. Keep your eyes on the camera, continue to engage, and only correct the technology if you absolutely have to.

- *Zoom or Webex or Microsoft Teams worked from your device yesterday—but not today, when the event is starting.* Have an alternate device ready just in case.

- *The fire alarm goes off in your building.* Thirty-five CEOs are in a virtual meeting with you. Don't burn! If you are the featured speaker, you have planned ahead and asked one of your stellar staff to participate with you. Hand the meeting off to that person, vacate the building, return if there's no crisis. You'll win points by showing you can keep calm and carry on. ■

View from Washington

AFSA President Discusses Challenges Facing the Foreign Service

America is searching for its role in the world, and so the Foreign Service must also reconsider and renew its own mission. This was a theme of the talk by AFSA President Eric Rubin during a Jan. 26 virtual “View from Washington” meeting with FS retirees.

“Being in the U.S. Foreign Service doesn’t have the same meaning that it had when I joined in the mid-1980s,” he said. “That’s not to say it’s not critical, but we’re up against some serious headwinds.”

The percentage of FS members serving domestically is the highest it’s ever been. Jobs that had been moved to Iraq and Afghanistan posts from other embassies were brought back to Washington, D.C., rather than redistributed to U.S. embassies and consulates abroad.

Those serving overseas are therefore experiencing “terrible understaffing



AFSA President Eric Rubin.

and burnout,” Rubin said, “because there are not enough people to get the job done. Training and professional education need to be a more significant part of the career, but the training float is gone and COVID doesn’t make it easier.”

He noted that applications to join the Foreign Service have dropped off dramatically over the past decade. The number of test takers for the Foreign Service Officer

Test, usually seen as a proxy for interest in a diplomacy career, fell to just 5,500 last year. In Fiscal Year 2013, a total of 21,069 people took the test.

“The need is double or triple what we’re hiring,” Rubin said. “The candidates are great; I’m very impressed with the people we’re getting, as priority is given to those with overseas experience, language experience and job experience. But three-quarters of the candidate pool has dropped away.”

To allow the Foreign Service to hire more, create a training float and fill more positions overseas, AFSA has pushed for an increase in appropriations. The financial boost has bicameral and bipartisan support, but Continuing Resolutions have persisted for months into Fiscal Year 2022. Still, AFSA is expecting congressional

Continued on page 62

CALENDAR

Please check www.afsa.org for the most up-to-date information.

April 4
Deadline: 2022 High School Essay Contest

April 18
Federal and State Taxes Due AFSA Tax Guide: afsa.org/taxguide

April 20
12-2 p.m.
AFSA Governing Board Meeting

May 5
AFSA Foreign Service Day Events

May 6
Foreign Service Day

May 17
Deadline: AFSA Awards Nominations

May 18
12-2 p.m.
AFSA Governing Board Meeting

May 30
Memorial Day AFSA Offices Closed

AFSA Meets with Secretary of State Blinken

AFSA President Eric Rubin and AFSA State Vice President Tom Yazdgerdi met with Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Brian McKeon on Jan. 24.

During the meeting, Ambassador Rubin raised concerns about employee morale and encouraged the Secretary to increase the pace of his Foreign Service reform



and modernization agenda.

AFSA had last met with Secretary Blinken on Feb. 1, 2021, and looks forward to continuing the engagement and working with the State Department

on reform efforts. Now that Ambassador John Bass, a career FSO, has been confirmed as the Under Secretary for Management, AFSA will meet with him regularly, as well as with Deputy Secretary McKeon. ■



The Need for Data-Driven DEIA Decisions

There has been much talk from State Department leadership lately about ensuring that decisions regarding diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) are driven by hard data. Of course, decisions should not be based on data alone, but AFSA agrees that this approach makes sense.

We have been working closely with the office of Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley to educate ourselves and our membership about initiatives prioritizing data that can be applied to help make the Foreign Service more reflective of the American people.

DEIA Data Working Group's Barrier Analyses.

One way data can help promote diversity is through barrier analyses, studies that can identify barriers to advancement based on race and gender. In an early February meeting with AFSA, CDIO staff briefed us on five studies the department's DEIA Data Working Group is conducting in both the Foreign Service and Civil Service.

Three FS analyses are mid-level bidding, long-term career outcomes and the provision of awards. (Two of the five analyses deal exclusively with the Civil Service.) CDIO staff told us they now have a trove of demographic data on mid-level bidding going back years that could determine if gender or race affect bidding

outcomes. CDIO focused on this area because something appears to be happening at mid-career that results in a lack of diversity in the department, particularly at the senior ranks. While diversity in recruitment has improved markedly, CDIO staff noted that the Senior Foreign Service is still overwhelmingly white and male.

Regarding long-term career outcomes, CDIO staff are studying cohorts that entered the Foreign Service at five-year increments and then tracing career progression, again controlling for gender and race. The barrier analysis on awards is still in the planning phase.

CDIO emphasized that barrier analyses are a key tool for advancing DEIA at State as they can identify what policies and procedures might need to be changed to ensure all employees have an equitable chance at career development. Given that, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (S/ODI) has hired a data scientist and intends to bring on more. CDIO noted that greater diversity at State may not happen overnight, but that every single year can show progress.

January 2020 GAO Report. CDIO also briefed us on the four barrier analyses pre-dating the CDIO's establishment that were conducted by the GTM Bureau in response to the January 2020 Government

With access to data and the people who know how to analyze it, the Foreign Service is in a position to make progress.

Accountability Office's report on diversity at State (bit.ly/GAO2020).

CDIO noted that the evidence did not necessarily support the GAO assertion that FS promotions from FS-04 to FS-03 showed a clear and consistent disparity based on race. While a particular year might show a variation, when the department did its own analysis there was no demonstrated trend.

The other two FS analyses have to do with those who take the Foreign Service Officer Test and are offered a position after completing the oral assessment. CDIO and the DEIA Data Working Group are committed to making the barrier analyses available to the workforce when complete. (GAO is currently at work on a follow-up to their January 2020 report.)

AFSA's Take. With access to data and the people who know how to analyze it, the Foreign Service is in a position to make progress. We agree with S/ODI's focus on fixing fundamental processes related to the career cycle of our employees rather than on quick fixes. AFSA has seen

previous quick-fix efforts, such as the creation of a mid-level entry program, fail to achieve real progress and weaken the Foreign Service as an institution.

With S/ODI's data driven approach, we will likely be more effective at finding out what is needed instead of just guessing at what a solution might look like. It may indicate that underrepresented and underprivileged groups do not have the same access to career mentors, that they continue to experience microaggressions in the workplace, or that the diversity training being provided is not effective.

The bottom line is that we know there is a problem—and there are likely additional data studies that can be done to demonstrate this and point to possible solutions.

To communicate the barrier analyses and other diversity information to the department workforce, CDIO agreed to report on their conclusions in an upcoming edition of the *FSJ*.

Please let us know what you think at member@afsa.org. ■



FSO Scarcity: Stretching the Limits

It's no secret by now that USAID has long been short of career employees, both Foreign Service and General Schedule. This helps explain why USAID has 1,100 personal services contractors (PSCs), 400 non-career Foreign Service Limited appointees and hundreds of institutional support contractors (ISCs), quite apart from thousands of invaluable Foreign Service National colleagues. That is why AFSA very much welcomed the Administrator's Nov. 4, 2021, speech acknowledging the shortage and resulting unsustainable workarounds.

Administrator Power said: "Over several years, USAID's workforce has been sorely depleted, and our current numbers of Civil Service and Foreign Service staff are well short of our needs, even as global conflicts are lasting longer, development needs are accelerating, and the number of complex emergencies we deal with each year has ballooned in the past 20 years from 16 to 44.

"As a result, USAID has created unsustainable workarounds to fill staffing shortfalls—some 90 percent of our positions in our Global Health, Humanitarian Assistance, and Conflict Prevention and Stabilization bureaus are on short-term contracts. To this end, we will seek to increase our career workforce over the next four years."

Here I want to focus on one consequence of chronic FSO scarcity, namely, repeated service in stretch positions, and how it can adversely affect both individual FSOs and the agency.

The Foreign Service is a rank-in-person system, and as such, FS employee ranks do not necessarily equate to the rank of the positions on which FSOs may bid, nor to which they are assigned.

For example, a relatively new FSO who entered at a rank of FS-4 may bid on higher-ranked positions (e.g., FS-3 or FS-2), which, if graded properly, carry commensurate higher-level roles. To be clear: The pay is no higher, and USAID has emphasized repeatedly that serving in a stretch position is not a consideration for promotion.

But FSOs are nothing if not flexible, and these stretch positions can bring rewarding challenges, as well as potential perks such as better housing. FSOs often make aspirational bids, hoping to get to a dream post via a stretch assignment, or a post that offers better employment opportunities for eligible family members (EFMs) or a suitable school for children.

There is certainly an element of personal choice in bidding and assignments, and not all FSOs serve in repeated stretch tours. At the same time, many FSOs excel

FSOs serving in repeated stretch positions often push themselves, and can be pushed by the bureaucracy, into overwork and exhaustion.

in their stretch tours, ably advancing the agency's mission and their professional development.

Yet USAID's shortage of career officers, lack of strategic workforce planning and consequential complex bidding requirements mean that too many FSOs serve tour after tour in positions beyond their personal ranks—and this has a number of negative consequences.

First, stretch assignments can lead to stress. Already passionate about USAID's mission, FSOs serving in repeated stretch positions often push themselves, and can be pushed by the bureaucracy, into overwork and exhaustion. The pandemic has exacerbated this situation. Officers and families suffer.

FSOs in stretch assignments can also become resentful toward the agency and colleagues. It is only natural that after repeated service in a stretch position with no extra pay or competitiveness for promotion, one may feel taken advantage of or see colleagues as having an easier time of things.

This is especially true when there is no agency strategic workforce plan to address the situation. Resentment is not healthy for individuals or for agency morale. In some cases, resentment and related tensions can even undercut operations.

Though missions often compete for FSOs to fill stretch positions, there is no robust, standardized approach to evaluating the candidates' preparedness or assisting them to take on such responsibility. Some missions and leadership excel at mentoring FSOs and providing them with needed support. But there are unfortunate circumstances in which an FSO risks being unjustly labeled a failure, jeopardizing mission morale.

Agency colleagues are aware of this challenge and are examining the scope and impact of stretch assignments. This is a welcome step, as is the agency's effort to increase FSO career hiring over the next several years. Both actions should help alleviate at least some of the tensions of being over-stretched. ■



Foreign Service and AFSA Centennials

Plans are advancing to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 1924 founding of the U.S. Foreign Service and its professional association, the American Foreign Service Association. Commemorating these centennials is a unique opportunity to increase understanding among the American people, Congress and the media about the vital role the Foreign Service plays in sustaining U.S. global leadership.

Starting with the outreach opportunity that has the longest lead time, last summer AFSA submitted a proposal to the U.S. Postal Service to issue a U.S. Foreign Service Centennial stamp in 2024. Secretary of State Antony Blinken sent a supportive letter of endorsement to the Postmaster General.

The Postal Service annually receives more than 40,000 such proposals and issues fewer than 100 commemorative stamps, so our chances of success are uncertain. We should learn the answer by early 2023.

In December, we secured the agreement of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California, to host an exhibit on the Foreign Service in 2024. Having signed up the most visited presidential library (400,000 visitors annually pre-COVID), we are now contacting other presidential libraries around the nation to reach audiences



beyond the Beltway.

Each exhibit will likely open with a ceremony and a VIP speaker. We will invite area Foreign Service retirees to attend.

We have commissioned Harry W. Kopp to update the 2015 first edition of *The Voice of the Foreign Service: A History of the American Foreign Service Association* for publication in 2024. Mr. Kopp is the author of the 2015 edition.

AFSA also commissioned the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training to conduct oral histories of AFSA officers and staff from recent decades.

Transcripts of those interviews will be posted alongside more than 1,200 other ADST oral histories on the Library of Congress website to capture, preserve and share their accounts of

fighting for the interests of the Foreign Service.

To accompany these efforts, AFSA's Online Communications Manager Jeff Lau designed a centennial logo. The version that graces

this page will be used when communicating primarily with AFSA members. A version that does not mention AFSA will be used with external audiences whom we want to focus on the Foreign Service.

With these initial projects underway, AFSA's Centennial Celebration Committee, which I chair, is now brainstorming other ways to mark these centennials. Possibilities include a video documentary, podcasts, a nationwide lecture tour, a gala dinner in Washington, D.C., and a congressional resolution.

Our Centennial Celebration Committee will seek to identify the best ideas. We welcome your suggestions. Please send them to me at naland@afsa.org. ■



AFSA Governing Board Meeting Jan. 19, 2022

Due to ongoing concerns over the COVID-19 omicron variant, the AFSA Governing Board met via teleconference on Jan. 19.

New Committee: The Foreign Service Reform Committee was constituted without objection for the purpose of working with the AFSA advocacy team to advance issues relating to Foreign Service reform with Congress and the foreign affairs agencies.

The committee will report periodically to the Governing Board on activities and recommendations. Initially consisting of 10 current members of the Governing Board, the committee will choose a chairperson and will be authorized to appoint additional members of the board to serve on the committee.

The first committee meeting took place on Jan. 24. ■

AFSA Treasurer's 2021 Report



The 2021-2022 Governing Board at AFSA headquarters on Dec. 8, 2021. Front row (from left): Jay Carreiro, John O'Keefe, Eric Rubin, Tom Yazdgerdi, Kimberly Harrington, Camille Dockery and Christy Machak. Back row (from left): Steven Herman, Philip Shull, John Naland, Joshua Archibald, Jason Singer and Daniel Crocker. Not pictured: Lisa Ahramjian, Maria Hart, Tina Wong and Mary Daly.

Despite the volatility we all experienced in 2021, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the American Foreign Service Association is in excellent financial health at year-end.

AFSA's financial reserves remain strong. The operating reserve fund stood at \$4.4 million at year-end, compared to \$4.2 million at the end of 2020, providing a cushion of approximately nine months' operating expenses—three months longer than the standard for nonprofits.

That level represents approximately 79 percent of AFSA's operating budget for 2022 and is a solid indicator of the association's sustainability. Salaries were below projections, and we had lower expenditures from curtailed operations due to the pan-

dem. Investment gains were robust.

The ongoing financial support of our membership base and other contributors allowed us to advocate and to reach out to Congress and foreign affairs agencies on behalf of members and their interests.

As we move out of the pandemic, there are significant opportunities to press for reforms long overdue. The AFSA team pledges to capitalize on those on your behalf.

Budget Operations

AFSA's \$5.8 million planned operating budget for calendar year 2022 is funded primarily from membership dues. AFSA's membership base stood at approximately 16,750 as of year-end 2021. That number represents

more than 80 percent of active-duty employees across the foreign affairs agencies, plus approximately 25 percent of Foreign Service retirees. Dues increased by 5.49 percent for 2022 to match the consumer price index levels, as per our bylaws.

AFSA operations continued throughout the pandemic, but with significant workarounds and modifications. Reaching new Foreign Service members was a particular challenge, but sustained and extensive efforts to establish new memberships ultimately paid off.

AFSA has greatly strengthened its public advocacy and outreach over the past several years to highlight the contributions the career Foreign Service makes to U.S. national security, an impor-

tant element in garnering support for your work.

In spite of the pandemic, *FSJ* and web advertising revenue climbed significantly during the past year to more than \$550,000 and is the second-highest funding source for AFSA's operating budget after membership dues.

AFSA's Political Action Committee continued to advocate with Congress on a bipartisan basis for a sustained professional Foreign Service, as well as on issues of importance to members during the upcoming election cycle.

The Legal Defense Fund received \$143,000 in donations by year-end 2020 following 2019's approximately \$600,000 in contributions. Unexpended funds of \$342,000 remain in reserve.

Fund Operations

In 2021, AFSA maintained long-term investment discipline and kept sufficient liquidity to meet any unexpected cash flow needs related to the pandemic. AFSA's investment portfolios performed very well, appreciating 8.5 percent net of all investment-related expenses. In the fourth quarter this year, we shifted a substantial amount of these funds from equity to bonds on the recommendation of our investment advisers.

For 2021, the combined portfolio ended the year at \$18 million in comparison to 2020's \$17 million. Investment

Continued on page 58

expenses totaled just over \$111,000 in 2021.

Operating Reserve.

AFSA's reserve fund was valued at approximately \$4.4 million at year-end, a large boost over 2020's \$4.2 million. This is consistent with AFSA's efforts to build up its operating reserves through prudent stewardship of all its resources, which will continue to be our aim.

Scholarship Fund. This 501(c)(3) entity was founded in 1924 to help the children of Foreign Service members pay for college. The fund has grown substantially over the decades, and at the end of 2021 stood at \$12.8 million, a significant increase over the \$11.6 million at the end of 2020.

The fund annually withdraws 4.5 percent of its five-year average value to fund scholarships to Foreign Service children and partially underwrite the operating expenses of the scholarship program. Demand in the form of applications for scholarship monies has remained relatively flat over the years.

In 2021, the Scholarship Fund awarded \$255,000 in needs-based financial aid and \$151,000 in merit scholarships. Although the fund's asset value increased significantly in 2020, the annual withdrawal amount did not. This practice is designed to ensure that any given year's applicants are not disadvantaged should there be a dramatic market decline.

Fund for American Diplomacy. The FAD's mission is

to help educate the American public about the role of the Foreign Service and diplomacy as a tool of America's influence on the global stage.

At the end of 2021, the FAD principal balance stood at \$582,000. The FAD is envisaged to provide sustained, dedicated support for continuing AFSA's public outreach, and AFSA and its leadership continue the effort to build up its principal value.

The approved 2022 AFSA operating budget dedicates approximately \$513,430 to FAD activities, the costs of which will largely be underwritten by transfers from the operating reserve. That number compares to \$429,000 in the 2020 operating budget. Revenue from continuing strong sales of AFSA's *Inside a U.S. Embassy* book also contributes to this fund.

AFSA strongly encourages donations to the Fund for American Diplomacy, which is organized as a 501(c)(3). Donations will assist AFSA's continued work to improve public knowledge about the vital contributions made by U.S. diplomats to preserving U.S. security and prosperity.

Sinclair Fund. AFSA also maintains the Matilda W. Sinclair Fund, which is intended to support excellence in language achievement. AFSA draws on that fund annually to pay for language achievement awards.

The Sinclair Fund ended 2021 with \$629,776. ■

—John O'Keefe,
AFSA Treasurer

NEWS BRIEF

Save the Date

AFSA's Foreign Service Day Programming

This year, Foreign Service Day will be held on Friday, May 6. The AFSA Memorial Plaque ceremony will also take place on that day.

As has become tradition, AFSA will host a full day of programming the day before, on May 5. We are planning to host both virtual and in-person programs.

Additional aspects of the commemoration will include our annual letters-to-the-editor campaign, leveraging local papers to help raise awareness about the work of the Foreign Service. During the first week of May, leading up to Foreign Service Day, we will have a social media campaign themed "Why I Serve" to recognize and celebrate members of the Foreign Service.

AFSA members will receive more information about all these initiatives later this month. Members seeking information about events taking place at the State Department for Foreign Service Day should email foreignaffairsday@state.gov. ■

NEWS BRIEF

Consult AFSA's Tax Guide Online

Don't forget! The deadline to submit 2021 tax returns or an extension to file and pay tax owed is Monday, April 18, 2022, for most taxpayers, with an automatic two-month extension to June 18 for U.S. citizens and resident aliens living outside the United States.

To help you navigate filing federal and state tax returns, AFSA's 2021 Tax Guide is available online at afsa.org/taxguide. It summarizes tax laws that members of the Foreign Service community will find relevant, including the taxation of annuities.

Note: The guide reported that only taxpayers with a principal place of abode in the U.S. for more than one-half of 2021 qualify for the *expanded* child tax credit. The article should have stated that only taxpayers with a principal place of abode in the U.S. for more than one-half of 2021 qualify for the *advanced payments* (paid out between July 15 and Dec. 15, 2021) of the child tax credit. We apologize for any confusion. ■

AFSA Seeks Award Nominations for 2022

AFSA seeks to highlight achievement, performance, courage and sacrifice within the Foreign Service community. Our awards program began in 1968 and has continued to expand to recognize the work of our colleagues. We are proud to be able to spotlight the best of our community.

Constructive Dissent Awards: AFSA's Constructive Dissent Awards recognize Foreign Service members who work within the system to change policy and performance for the better.

Such dissent may be made in any nonpublic channel including meetings, emails to superiors, memoranda, telegrams or via the State Department's formal Dissent Channel. Thus, AFSA's Constructive Dissent Awards may be given to, but are not restricted to, employees who make use of the Dissent Channel.

These awards are unique within the federal government and remain the lynchpin of AFSA's awards program. There is no democracy without dissent, and the U.S. Foreign Service must remain a leader in the encouragement of respectful yet provocative constructive dissent.

As Secretary of State Antony Blinken put it in his October modernization address at FSI, "Dissent is patriotic. It should be and will be welcomed."

We invite nominations for the four constructive dissent awards:

- **The W. Averell Harriman Award** for entry-level Foreign Service officers.
- **The William R. Rivkin Award** for mid-level Foreign Service officers.
- **The Christian A. Herter Award** for Senior Foreign Service officers.
- **The F. Allen "Tex" Harris Award** for Foreign Service specialists.

Exemplary Performance Awards: AFSA also invites nominations for exemplary performance awards. These awards are meant to highlight the professionalism and spirit of service and volunteerism within the Foreign Service community.

These awards honor Foreign Service employees, and in particular community liaison officers, office management specialists and family members for their important contributions at work, at home and in the community.

• **The Nelson B. Delavan Award** recognizes the work of a Foreign Service office management specialist who has made a significant contribution to post or office effectiveness and morale, both within as well as beyond the framework of their job responsibilities.

• **The M. Juanita Guess Award** recognizes a community liaison officer who has demonstrated outstanding leadership, dedication, initiative or imagination in assisting the families of Americans serving at an overseas post.

• **The Avis Bohlen Award** honors a Foreign Service family member whose volunteer work with the American and foreign communities at post has advanced the interests of the United States.

• **The Mark Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy** is bestowed on a member of the Foreign Service from any of the foreign affairs agencies, especially individuals at the early- to mid-career level, serving domestically or overseas. The award recognizes the promotion of American policies to advance democracy, freedom and governance through bold, imaginative and effective efforts during one or more assignments.

Note that we accept awards nominations all year, but the deadline for 2022 is Tuesday, May 17. Anyone may send in a nomination; self-nominations are also accepted for performance awards.

AFSA is grateful to the many individuals and organizations that make our awards programs possible through their generous support. Our thanks to the Delavan Foundation, the Ambassador William R. Rivkin family, the Avis Bohlen family, Dr. Sushma Palmer and Clements Worldwide. We deeply appreciate their dedication to the Foreign Service community.

All of AFSA's awards programs, as well as the AFSA memorial plaques, are administered by Awards and Scholarships Manager Theo Horn. Contact him at horn@afsa.org, and visit www.afsa.org/awards for more information.

AFSA's Awards and Plaques Committee has institutional oversight over these programs and has primary responsibility for the recommendation of award recipients and plaque honorees. ■



AFSA award recipients on the cover of the December 2019 FSJ. Front row (from left): Lawrence Fields, Moises Mendoza, Jonette Vaughan, Nora Brito and Ambassador (ret.) Herman "Hank" Cohen. Back row (from left): Anna Boulos, Christopher Gooch, Timmy Davis, Laurent Charbonnet, Michelle Ross, F. Allen "Tex" Harris and Keith Koehler (father of Katherine Elizabeth Koehler, who was unable to attend the awards ceremony).

AFSA President Speaks at Havana Syndrome Conference

In the first symposium of its kind, UT Southwestern Medical Center's department of psychiatry and the Peter O'Donnell Jr. Brain Institute invited AFSA President Eric Rubin to speak on Feb. 10 about the impact of Havana syndrome on the Foreign Service and American diplomacy.

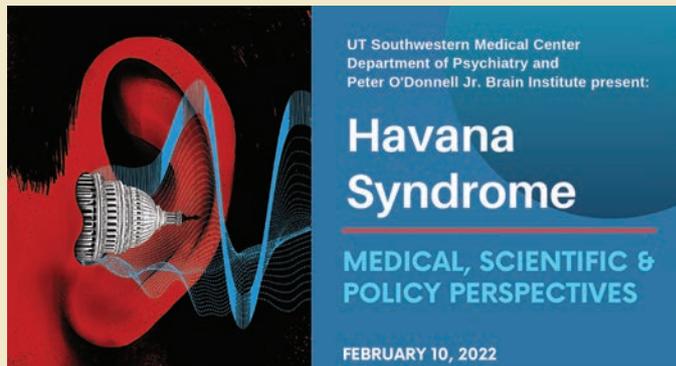
The virtual conference, "Havana Syndrome: Medical, Scientific and Policy Perspectives," brought together speakers from health policy, media and victim advocacy. Speaking on behalf of AFSA, Amb. Rubin said in his keynote address that career public servants affected by this syndrome have struggled against "the constant drumbeat of skepticism."

"Several hundred of our colleagues reported very serious symptoms," he said. "I don't claim to know anything

about causation. But it's clear to me that people have suffered real trauma and real injury. It has dramatically hurt morale, our readiness, our ability to recruit new members and our retention. Failure to solve a mystery illness is not proof it doesn't exist or that it is psychogenic in nature."

He explained that AFSA has been working hard for its members to ensure they receive the help and support they need while advocating measures to protect others who may be at risk. AFSA is also pushing the government to make the process of reporting anomalous health incidents simpler and more standardized.

"We're pleased by recent developments at State, including the appointments of [Ambassadors] Jonathan



Moore and Margaret Uyehara to lead the response task force and coordinate care," Rubin said.

"But we still find that our bureaucracy is not transparent, and that State is not willing to share information, even when the employees involved have asked them to. There needs to be a stronger interagency effort, not just in establishing causation but also in providing care."

AFSA was consulted by senior congressional staff and members of both chambers to develop the Havana Act, Rubin said, but in application, the legislation needs to be broader and more inclusive.

"This is a critical moment. It's never easy to serve our country overseas, and it's gotten harder," Rubin stated. "Were adequate steps taken to respond and protect our people? That's our agenda, and we'll be pursuing it: taking care of our people and ensuring that people want to join and stay in public service through the Foreign Service."

The event was billed as the most comprehensive discussion about the unexplained medical condition presented from a scientific perspective, highlighting the critical role of clinical research in understanding and treating victims of Havana syndrome.

It also emphasized the importance of public-private partnerships between U.S. government entities and academic medical centers in addressing complex 21st-century biomedical challenges.

Also speaking were Marc Polymeropoulos, retired CIA officer and advocate for Havana syndrome victims; Greg Myre, national security correspondent for NPR; Daniel Hoffman, national security analyst for Fox News; Jeffrey Staab, chair of psychiatry and psychology at the Mayo Clinic; and Dr. Kenneth Dekleva, a former State Department medical officer and psychiatrist who is leading an effort at UT Southwestern to coordinate research on Havana syndrome. ■

NEWS BRIEF Daily Chatter Offers AFSA Discount

The largest email newsletter devoted exclusively to world news is offering a special discount for AFSA members. Smart, succinct and nonpartisan, Daily Chatter delivers global news directly to your inbox every weekday at 6 a.m. ET.

The first year of your subscription provides 260 issues for \$19.56, which includes a 30 percent discount. Sign up for a free four-week trial and the subscription at dailychatter.com/AFSA. ■



AFSA Welcomes New Hires to the Foreign Service

AFSA was pleased to welcome new members of the Foreign Service in a series of virtual meetings earlier this year. This included a new class of USAID officers, a group of Foreign Agricultural Service officers embarking on their first overseas assignments and the State Department Foreign Service Orientation 163-209 classes, which are combined generalist and specialist classes.

AFSA President Eric Rubin welcomed all groups and outlined AFSA's current work and priorities in support of members.

Meeting with the USAID C3-28 class on Jan. 12, AFSA USAID Vice President Jason Singer spoke about his role

and the work of AFSA's Labor Management Office, and AFSA staff members gave an overview of how to join the association.

The USAID class is made up of 12 officers across five different specialties, or backstops: business, industry and private enterprise; environment; humanitarian assistance; crisis, stabilization and governance; and contract management. Seven have previous USAID experience, and other professional experience ranges from government and nonprofits to international organizations, universities and the private sector.

In total, they speak 13 languages and have worked and studied in 63 different

countries. One is the founder of a nongovernmental organization in Nepal.

The 11 new FAS officers, whom AFSA met with on Jan. 27, have been assigned to Hanoi, Santo Domingo, Guangzhou, Mexico City, Brasília, Beijing, Bogotá, Shanghai, Cairo and Kuala Lumpur.

On Feb. 3, AFSA met with the FS Orientation 163-209 class, which comprises 89 Foreign Service generalists and 62 specialists. It includes two Pickering and Rangel fellows, one Foreign Affairs Information Technology fellow and 10 Mustang Civil Service converts.

There are 98 class members with prior U.S. govern-

ment experience, as well as entrepreneurs, medical officials, educators and public sector employees. Education levels range from high school to postgraduate degrees.

One member of the class performed in President Barack Obama's 2009 inauguration parade as a member of their high school marching band. Class members speak 39 languages, including the "big six" languages of the United Nations.

AFSA is continuing to welcome new classes on Zoom and looks forward to hosting in-person lunches again for incoming classes at our Washington, D.C., headquarters as soon as it is safe to do so. ■

Become an AFSA Post Representative

AFSA post representatives serve as a vital connection between AFSA and members around the world. They play a significant role not only in disseminating AFSA messaging at post, but also in bringing potential areas of concern to AFSA HQ and Labor Management so that we can better support members and the Foreign Service as a whole.

As sometimes occurs, with the departure of an AFSA post rep, a post may be temporarily without a rep. If there is a vacancy at your

post, we encourage you to consider stepping into this role.

The AFSA post rep has five important areas of responsibility:

- Representing the collective and individual interests of Foreign Service personnel at post.
- Responding to questions members may have regarding AFSA messaging and advisories.
- Bringing to AFSA's attention issues of collective and individual concern at post.
- Expanding AFSA's

membership and encouraging others at post to seek the AFSA post rep position when a rep moves on.

- Working with AFSA to update membership information at post.

The only employees excluded from serving as official AFSA reps are management officials and/or confidential employees, including chiefs of mission, deputy chiefs of mission, management officers, human resources officers, regional security officers and office management specialists for

chiefs of mission and deputy chiefs of mission.

To read more about the AFSA post rep program and how to volunteer, visit [afsa.org/post-representatives](https://www.afsa.org/post-representatives). If you are a post rep leaving post soon, please let us know about your departure and help us find a replacement.

You can find the full listing of post reps on the AFSA website at [afsa.org/post-representatives](https://www.afsa.org/post-representatives). For further information or to update the post rep information for your post, contact us at member@afsa.org. ■

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AFSA NEWS

View from Washington
Continued from page 53

leaders to come to an agreement, implementing these increases in FY22.

Rubin went on to address the exclusion of the Foreign Service from positions of authority. While the number of career professionals in leadership roles has vastly improved under the current administration, "it's still not good enough," said Rubin, "and too few people can now aspire to reach the top of the Service."

Many career colleagues

are still awaiting Senate confirmation, and the Biden administration has not nominated people for a host of ambassadorships as well as positions that do not require Senate confirmation.

"We need to make this a more attractive career. You shouldn't have to resign and go the political route to get a senior position," he added.

AFSA hosts a "View from Washington" session with Foreign Service retirees every quarter. ■

AFSA Welcomes New Publications Coordinator

AFSA is pleased to welcome Hannah McDaniel to the FSJ team as publications coordinator.

Hannah obtained her B.A. from the University of Montana in Missoula, Montana, in communication studies with a minor in international development studies.

Recently, she completed an M.A. in peace and conflict management at the University of Haifa in Haifa, Israel, as a Fulbright Fellow. During her fellowship, she explored the role of communication in social justice across the Israeli NGO sector, with a focus on sustainable, person-to-person approaches to conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

Hannah grew up primarily in the Pacific Northwest (Washington, Idaho and Montana), but also spent several years living in the rural Midwest (Texas and Kansas).

Outdoor recreation, music and food scenes are among her favorite ways to connect with new places and people, and she looks forward to exploring opportunities related to all three in and around Washington, D.C.

She can be reached at mcdaniel@afsa.org. ■



Nominate Family Members for AAFSW and DACOR Awards

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2022 Secretary of State Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad

(SOSA) and the Champions of Career Enhancement for Eligible Family Members (CCE-EFM) Award, both sponsored by Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide, as well as DACOR's Eleanor Dodson Tragen Award.

The nomination deadline for all awards is April 29, 2022, and all American USG direct-hire employees under chief of mission authority and family members over the age of 18 are eligible.

Created in 1990 at the suggestion of Secretary of State James Baker and Mrs. Susan Baker, the SOSA Award recognizes remarkable volunteer efforts and is given for activities performed while the nominee was posted to a U.S. mission.

Winners receive a cash award of \$2,500, a certificate signed by the Secretary of State and a one-year AAFSW membership.

The CCE-EGM Award was developed to recognize those who go above and beyond their job descriptions to expand and elevate job opportunities and long-term



career enhancement for Foreign Service family members.

The winning individual or group receives a cash award of \$750.

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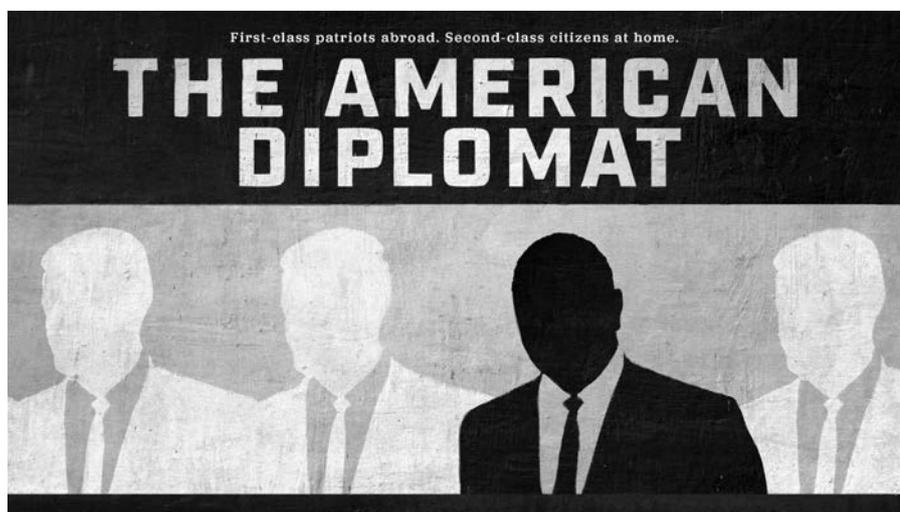
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Reflections on "The American Diplomat"

Directed by Leola Calzolari-Stewart, written by Ken Chowder, A Flowstate Films, LLC production for American Experience, aired Feb. 15, 2022, on PBS, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/american-diplomat/>.



I: They Persisted

BY JANE CARPENTER-ROCK

In the summer of 2002, I attended an informal backyard barbecue in Northeast Washington, D.C., organized by Leaford Williams, a retired diplomat and family friend, to welcome me and several others into the Foreign Service. It was a delightful affair with about 30 attendees and the best rum punch I have ever tasted.

I had joined the State Department in April, and by the time of this June soiree, I was preparing to head to my first diplomatic assignment in Johannesburg, South Africa. I was wide-eyed and eager to learn as much as I could.

What distinguished this event from others was the fact that all of the attendees were African American diplomats, including Ambassador Terence Todman (who

passed away in 2014). I'm embarrassed to say that I did not really know who Todman was. That day, I did not realize that battles had been waged and barriers broken by

The filmmaker paints a larger picture of an institution held accountable by its own employees to practice the values of freedom and equality it advocates abroad.

Ambassador Todman, Mr. Williams and others so that we could join their ranks. I did not understand the urgency they felt to ensure our nation continued to send representatives abroad that looked like America.

The mood was jubilant, the conversation light, and no one spoke of struggles, but we were quietly inheriting a legacy of service they had fought hard to estab-

lish and maintain. I would eventually understand this over the course of my career, particularly after reading Michael Krenn's book *Black Diplomacy: African Americans and the State Department, 1945-69* (Routledge, 1999), but I wish I had learned it sooner. For this reason, I am grateful for the PBS documentary "The American Diplomat" by filmmaker Leola Calzolari-Stewart.

Through compelling archival footage, beautiful historical photos, powerful academic analysis and touching family reflections, the film shares the stories of three towering figures in American diplomacy: Ambassador Edward Dudley, Ambassador Carl Rowan and Ambassador Terence Todman. It details how they, in their successive generations, worked for change inside the Department of State—change that benefited the institution and diplomats of color and added to the power of American diplomacy abroad.

"The American Diplomat" fills a void on many levels. Not only are most Americans unaware of the practice and impact of diplomacy; but most Americans, including State Department employees, are unaware

that so many individuals confronted exclusion and discrimination within the diplomatic profession. In telling these stories, the filmmaker paints a larger picture of an institution held accountable by its own employees to practice the values of freedom and equality it advocates abroad.

The stories of Dudley, Rowan and Todman are also significant because they foreshadowed the experiences of many

other historically marginalized groups that have pushed for greater opportunities to serve and thrive at the Department of State, like women, the LGBTQ+ community and disabled colleagues.

The film contains many lessons in persistence for those of us in the department, but three stood out for me. First, we should persist in lifting as we climb. The generational struggles of Dudley, Rowan and Todman demonstrate that change is never final nor complete, and each generation must make its own strides to lift others and shape the institution from within. As stewards of the profession, we should always hold the department accountable to care for its people, and when it does not, we should care for one another until it does.

Second, we should persist in reminding our institution that our nation is judged as much for what it does domestically as internationally. As American diplomats, we cannot separate ourselves from the racial backdrop of our country.

As American diplomats, we cannot separate ourselves from the racial backdrop of our country.

It is always lurking when we talk to others about human rights and equality. As one of the scholars in the films says, race in America has been our “Achilles’ heel,” as foreign counterparts watch and judge how we treat our own people. We should always be prepared to address our domestic issues and shortcomings with informed honesty and humility.

Finally, we should persist in telling our stories. Recording and sharing the experiences of a wide range of American diplomats is imperative for both our institution and its staff to understand our successes and failures and make lasting improvements for the future. Just as the



A Foreign Service welcome party in 2002. From left: FSO Leaford Williams, new FSO Jane Carpenter-Rock, Mrs. Doris Todman, Ambassador Terence Todman and new FSO Brinille Ellis.

labor of learning about these stories has heretofore been left to each individual at State, the labor of recording and sharing these stories has similarly been left to individuals, private entities and offices with

very limited staffing and funding.

Organizations like the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and the National Museum of American Diplomacy have been working to gather and share these stories for many years, but more prioritized support from the department is needed because both entities are struggling to survive.

During my time as deputy director of the National Museum of American Diplomacy, I had the privilege of meeting Ed Dudley Jr., the son of Ambassador Edward Dudley. Among the items he donated to NMAD was the original memo his father wrote advocating an

end to the “Negro Circuit,” a phenomenon described in the film.

This document and others are now preserved in the NMAD collection, but how many more stories and artifacts are being lost every day? By finding and preserving these valuable stories, the department can demonstrate care for its people and honor their experiences. Our foreign counterparts will certainly take notice.

Until then, many at State are grateful to Leola Calzolari-Stewart and her team for their persistence in cinematographically sharing the stories of these diplomatic trailblazers. We want to see more films like this. “The American Diplomat” is the type of symbolic torch-passing Dudley, Rowan and Todman knew was so important.

Maybe if I had seen this film before meeting Ambassador Todman on that June day, I might have asked more informed questions, listened more attentively, thanked him more and sought his counsel during my career. Sadly, I did not. However, his presence and the presence of the others gathered that day gave me the

excitement and encouragement to fully embrace this career.

Now I know how much they persisted. So should we all.

Jane Carpenter-Rock is a recently retired Foreign Service officer with a 20-year career at the U.S. Department of State. Most recently she was director of the Orientation Division at the Foreign Service Institute, and prior to that, she served as the deputy director of the National Museum of American Diplomacy. She is currently deputy director for museum content and outreach at the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

II: Feeling Seen

BY MARYUM SAIFEE

The film “The American Diplomat,” a PBS documentary chronicling the lives of three Black ambassadors during the Cold War—Edward Dudley, Terence A. Todman and Carl Rowan—felt bittersweet to me. On one hand, it was sobering to absorb just how actively the State Department fought to keep women, people of color and other

groups deemed “unfit” on the periphery. But on the other, as a diplomat of color, I felt seen as a part of my institution’s story for the first time. It was the first time I’ve seen diplomats of color portrayed not just as protagonists in America’s history, but as heroes representing the very best of America and the very best of diplomacy.

I have three takeaways: (1) For our institution to heal, we need to reckon with our own history with honesty and humility; (2) to make our foreign policy credible and thereby effective, we need to reconcile contradictions between our domestic record on human rights and the narratives we project abroad; and (3) our future is bright if we can channel the courage of the ambassadors featured in this film.

Reckoning with History

On Feb. 1, on the anniversary of the Greensboro lunch counter sit-in, Secretary of State Antony Blinken named the State Department cafeteria after Ambassador Terence A. Todman. The Secretary’s speech highlighted Ambassador Todman’s exceptional accomplishments—not for a diplomat of color, but for all diplomats of

all time. He wove in beautiful anecdotes about how Todman had excelled and spoken truth to power, not just in desegregating department dining facilities as an entry-level officer, but his creative savvy and diplomatic skill later in his career negotiating with Fidel Castro to open up the first U.S. interests section in Havana.

Having the Secretary of State recount our history, in its entirety, with such eloquence and humility is needed to both heal the generations of us who have felt unseen, and inspire all of us to continue striving to live up to the ideals Todman and so many of our institution’s heroes embodied.

Reconciling Contradiction

The film’s tagline, “first-class patriots abroad, second-class citizens at home,” is a lived reality for many diplomats of color today. How do we credibly represent our country’s greatest ideals abroad—freedom, dignity, equality—when we fall short at home?

There is a powerful scene in the film in which an Indian journalist introduces Carl Rowan, whom President John F. Kennedy would later appoint to lead the U.S. Information Agency, as “an excellent propagandist for America.” The journalist goes on to ask: “We are all interested in how a man with a Black skin who has been unable to know freedom can talk so learnedly about a free society?”

As the United States was trying to steer countries, including nonaligned nations like India, away from communism during the Cold War, our domestic record on race was a roadblock. For all diplomats, and especially diplomats of color, when our record at home is routinely called into question, our messaging on democracy, human rights and equality falls flat and, often, is exploited by our adversaries.

The more we can take steps to recon-



At a Feb. 1, 2022, ceremony, the State Department cafeteria was named after Ambassador Terence A. Todman. From left: Patricia Todman, FSO Maryum Saifee, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Terence Todman Jr., FSO Yolonda Kerney and Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley.

Our future is bright if we can channel the courage of the ambassadors featured in this film.

cile this contradiction, the more credible and ultimately effective our foreign policy will be.

Reimagining the Future

One of my favorite lines in the film is when Ambassador Aurelia Brazeal states: “Optimism is the currency of diplomacy.” The film’s backdrop is heavy; it’s set against Jim Crow, segregation and protests erupting across the country, including nine Black high school students wading through an angry mob to attend class at Little Rock Central High School in 1957.

This darkness continues into the present moment. In the summer of 2020, the murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and so many others sparked a wave of protests demanding racial justice not just in our own country, but around the world. Last summer, the Biden administration took a significant step in answering this call through an executive order, the first of its kind, tasking every government agency to develop concrete plans to advance diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility. When Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley reflected on Ambassador Todman’s

legacy during a recent panel discussion, she said his story gives her hope.

We have the possibility of reimagining our future and living up to our ideals, if we channel the courage of those who came before us. ■

Maryum Saifee is a career Foreign Service officer and senior adviser in the Secretary’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Her overseas postings include Cairo, Baghdad, Erbil and Lahore. In Washington, she has served in the Secretary’s Office of Global Women’s Issues, the Secretary’s Office of Religion, and Global Affairs, and in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs.

The views in this article are the author’s and do not necessarily represent those of the State Department or the U.S. government.



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A Great Adventure in Service

Lessons from the Edge: A Memoir

Marie Yovanovitch, Mariner Books, 2022, \$30/paperback, e-book available, 376 pages.

REVIEWED BY ERIC RUBIN

Most *Journal* readers will recognize Marie “Masha” Yovanovitch’s name. Many knew her and worked with her during her 33-year Foreign Service career. To those who did, she stands out as a superb and talented ambassador and Foreign Service professional, and

The book stands out in the vividness of its writing and the meaning it has for all who have devoted their lives to public service abroad and at home.

also a collaborative, creative and supportive presence at every post and in every bureau to which she was assigned.

Those who did not work with Ambassador (ret.) Yovanovitch may know her from the painful, jarring events of the first impeachment process against former President Donald Trump, in which she figured as a witness and—in the context of what really became the diplomatic equivalent of a Hollywood thriller—a central player in the televised drama that unfolded.

In this moving and illuminating memoir, Yovanovitch tells the story of her parents’ escape from Nazi and Soviet totalitarianism in the wake of World War II, first to Canada and then—when her father got an offer to teach at a prestigious New England prep school—to the United States. Her story is that of an immigrant to this country, the daughter of refugees from war and dictatorship, who sought to repay

this country’s generosity with service and a deep sense of patriotism.

The book is serious in many ways, given her family’s history, the obstacles she encountered as a young woman in the Foreign Service of the 1980s, and the difficult postings and political headwinds she encountered along the way. But Yovanovitch presents it as a great adventure, one filled with surprises and, ultimately, fun and success, as well as trouble and drama.

The book stands out in the vividness of its writing, the expert weaving of various strands of the author’s life into a single compelling narrative, and the meaning it has for all who have devoted their lives to public service abroad and at home. This is the tale of a career and a life devoted to values: American values of the best kind, as well as universal values.

Yovanovitch pulls some punches in telling her story, changing some names to protect the guilty as well as the innocent, and refraining from making sweeping judgments about colleagues who were also caught up in the impeachment drama. She makes clear, though, that the going was not always easy for her, as a woman, an immigrant with an unusual name, and as someone who was unwilling to cut corners and bypass laws and rules to achieve objectives.

Yovanovitch captures the sights, sounds, smells and context of her overseas



postings with flair and skill—from her first tour in Mogadishu, where she was treated by her supervisors as a ditzy young woman when she was anything but that; to the priceless image of Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, making a bawdy joke to her in earshot of the Queen in a receiving line at

Buckingham Palace; to the wrenching challenges from both American colleagues and the Soviet and post-Soviet realities she confronted in Moscow.

Her three ambassadorships—Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Ukraine—were all in truly difficult postings in the former Soviet Union, where she defended and protected her staff while insisting that U.S. diplomatic work had to be informed by who we are as Americans. Six years in Kyiv made her a real expert on Ukraine and its problems and possibilities, something that at the end of the day came to be more of a problem than an advantage with Washington.

This is not a morality tale. It is not full of preaching and lecturing on what is right and what is wrong, and it is not divorced from the practical realities of diplomacy and our country’s essential national interests and objectives.

Yovanovitch is a pragmatist at heart, and she has seen enough to know that the pursuit of perfection is ultimately an obstacle to true progress. But she does make clear her belief that there are moral and ethical lines that must be respected if we are to be true to who we are as people and as a nation.

At the end of the book, the reader is left with a clear set of messages: Our country is either about its core values or nothing at all. Choices we make as individuals matter,

sometimes more than we understand at the time. Our oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States is as solemn an obligation as any who have taken it will ever carry. This is a republic of laws, not men and women; and we cannot be a model and a mentor to other countries if we get that wrong here at home.

And finally, courage and integrity matter, deeply, and their absence is corrosive—and can undermine the foundations of our society.

Eric Rubin is the president of AFSA.

Dealing with Kazakhstan's Nuclear Inheritance

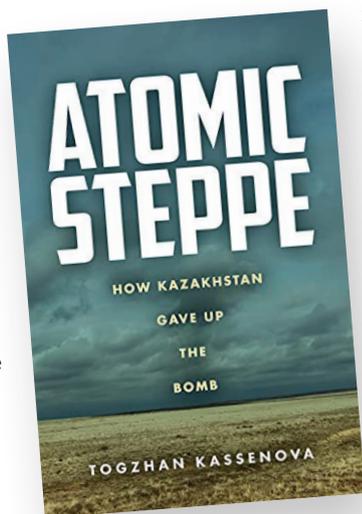
Atomic Steppe:

How Kazakhstan Gave Up the Bomb

Togzhan Kassenova, Stanford University Press, 2022, \$95/hardcover, \$30/paperback, e-book available, 384 pages.

REVIEWED BY LAURA KENNEDY

Togzhan Kassenova's review of 70 years of Kazakhstan's history in *Atomic Steppe* is the definitive study of that country's nuclear inheritance and its associated internal politics and international diplomacy (in which the United States played a decisive role). Nuclear affairs scholar Kassenova, a senior fellow at the State University of New York at Albany and the Carnegie Endowment, covers arms control, nonproliferation, environment, science, the quest for Kazakh nationhood and much more in this extraordinarily rich book.



Kassenova starts with nuclear testing, in particular atmospheric testing, which has taken a toll on populations around the world, including in the United States. One of the world's most damaging human and environmental legacies of nuclear testing, however, was compiled by the Soviet program from 1949 to 1989, largely carried out at the Semipalatinsk testing site (a massive area as large as Belgium) in the former Soviet republic of Kazakhstan.

The Soviet program was carried out in great secrecy, and revealing its dimensions and ramifications took a decade of research by the author, who notes that Russia still refuses to share all of its data on the effects of testing with Kazakhstan, where the vast majority of nuclear blasts took place.

Although a longtime resident of the United States, Kassenova is a native of Kazakhstan. She is equally concerned with the political repercussions of the nuclear testing there and how the testing protest movement intersected with developing national consciousness. Americans will note the ties between Kazakhstani activists and fellow U.S. "downwinders" forged in the Nevada-Semipalatinsk movement.

Over the decades of testing, medical professionals and activists sought to document the resulting damage despite personal risk to Soviet citizens given the official climate of either ignoring or minimizing consequences. The author interweaves the story of these efforts with official steps to limit testing via negotiated international agreement or unilateral restrictions, including the 1963 Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty that

ended the most damaging atmospheric tests.

Kazakhstan succeeded in officially banning all nuclear tests on its territory shortly before its independence in December 1991. (The United States halted its own testing in 1992 and signed the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, but has yet to ratify it.)

A New Status for the Nuclear Arsenal

Scholars of diplomacy will particularly appreciate Kassenova's second focus: the history of the effort to negotiate a new status for the nuclear arsenal inherited by Kazakhstan after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The stakes were huge and were a focus of U.S. policy from the outset of this new era in Kazakhstan.

At its independence, Kazakhstan inherited the world's fourth-largest nuclear arsenal of warheads, ICBMs and heavy bombers; the world's second-largest uranium reserves, and the facilities to process them; and a substantial stock of weapons-grade fissile material. Those stocks included 14 metric tons of highly enriched uranium and three metric tons of plutonium, enough for hundreds of nuclear weapons.

While Soviet military installations had been heavily sequestered, internal accounting procedures were slipshod and post-USSR security became chaotic. All of this helped to raise U.S. concerns about nuclear security in the post-Soviet space to the top of the national security agenda. Congress contributed to a major (and bipartisan) U.S. foreign policy success with the passage and implementation of a massive cooperative threat reduction program popularly known as the Nunn-Lugar Act.

In view of the nuclear security stakes in Kazakhstan, the United States had the

foresight to choose William Courtney, who had substantial nuclear arms control experience, as its first ambassador. Kassenova traces the diplomacy in Almaty, in Moscow (with Russian leadership in disarray), and in Washington over the disposition of this arsenal and its associated infrastructure.

Through a U.S.-funded undertaking lasting many years, nuclear facilities were dismantled, and missiles, bombers and warheads and their nuclear material were repatriated to Russia. An exception was the highly sensitive operation codenamed Project Sapphire, in which the United States in cooperation with Kazakhstan removed huge quantities of nuclear material (including a half ton of weapons-grade uranium) from a secret fabrication

plant in Kazakhstan and flew it directly to the U.S. on a series of C5s.

In hindsight, Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev appeared to have privately decided early on not to attempt to hang on to a nuclear arsenal that would make no sense militarily and be a substantial political liability. Nevertheless, he played his hand shrewdly in an effort to extract maximum political and financial benefit for his fledgling state.

The Global Context

U.S. diplomacy was complicated by the need to negotiate in parallel with the other post-Soviet nuclear legacy states, Ukraine and Belarus. Immediate goals were to have these states adhere to the limits specified in the START I treaty

concluded just prior to the Soviet collapse and to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty as non-nuclear weapon states. These goals were accomplished by 1993, thanks to hard bargaining and top-level engagement on both sides.

Given the current international focus on Ukraine's status, Kassenova's account provides a valuable counterpart to the history of Ukraine's decision on its own (even larger) nuclear inheritance. She details how Kazakhstan sought to maximize its leverage in parallel with Ukraine in the complex maneuvering that culminated in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum codifying the transfer of the Soviet nuclear arsenal from these republics to Russia.

Her knowledge of the international nuclear world allows her to place this



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story of the Kazakhstan nuclear inheritance within the context of the global nonproliferation regime and the geopolitical pull and tug of the Cold War and its aftermath.

Other strengths of the book are the author's ease with nuclear science and her ability to translate technical issues into an easily understood narrative. Her documentation is scrupulous and takes up almost a third of the book. She has mined both English- and Russian-language sources, including U.S. and Kazakhstan presidential archives, and has interviewed many of the key individuals involved in this history.

After tracing the nuclear dismantlement in Kazakhstan, Kassenova brings this historically positive transformation up to the present by recounting the country's numerous steps to cooperate with the United States and to be a responsible player in arms control and nonproliferation: negotiating a Central Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, hosting an international nuclear fuel bank, actively participating in the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (one area in which the U.S. and Kazakhstan do not agree).

The suffering and resilience of the nuclear victims, as well as Kazakhstan's modern diplomatic achievements, Kassenova concludes, leave an air of both "joy and pain" on the "mesmerizing" atomic steppe. America's part in dealing with the aftermath of this painful legacy was an important chapter in bold and effective diplomacy. ■

Ambassador (ret.) Laura Kennedy spent much of her 38-year Foreign Service career working on Russia, Central Asia and nuclear issues. She first worked in Kazakhstan in 1978 with an official U.S. exchange exhibit.

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Touching the Ceiling

BY VINCENT CHIARELLO

In late March 2021, Gianluigi Colalucci, one of the most noted art conservators in Italy, died in Rome. The announcement of his death triggered the memory of the only time I met him, and the circumstances surrounding that encounter.

In the fall of 1990, Lynne Cheney, then chair of the National Endowment of the Humanities, came to Rome and requested the embassy arrange a visit to the Vatican, where the restoration of the Sistine Chapel was underway. The officials at the Vatican Museum were helpful, as always; and the date and time were set for Cheney's visit. I was the control officer and accompanied her to the chapel.

Cheney's program, totally arranged by the Vatican, began with an informative talk by a "Michelangelo expert," who described the origins of the chapel (built on what had been a pond) and how Michelangelo painted the biblical figures with such proportional precision that no computer-generated xerography could improve on it.

She also described how, given the shifting foundation, cracks in the ceiling had allowed water to enter, resulting in the need to use solvents to seal the fis-



ANTOINETTE JAVENEUX

The Sistine Chapel ceiling.

tures. Over the course of centuries, the solvents and the smoke from candles combined to darken the ceiling, so much so that when the English of the 19th century did the "Grand Tour" of Europe, they paid little or no attention to the Sistine Chapel's ceiling.

After the introductory talk, which lasted well over an hour, we were invited to ascend in a small elevator to the scaffolding where the restoration of the ceiling was taking place. At that point, a man wearing a white coat, similar to one often seen on a medical doctor, approached, and introduced himself: It was Gianluigi Colalucci, who was overseeing the restoration.

At the time of our visit, approximately 80 percent of the ceiling had already been restored; hence, we were able to see the "before" and "after" of the restoration. Colalucci described the process: An area of about one meter squared was selected and wiped with a sponge, which was then dipped into a bucket containing a bubbly liquid that reminded me of Alka-Seltzer.

The contents of the sponge were then tested, and if any trace of a solvent was found, the sponge went back into the

bubbly liquid until its contents were free of any of the chemical solvents used over centuries. Only then was it used to wipe the next square meter.

The results were staggering. The vibrancy of the color of the fresco painted by Michelangelo was immediately evident, although centuries old.

As we were about to leave the scaffolding, Colalucci asked (in Italian): "*Volete toccare?* (Did we wish to touch the ceiling?)" I recall being so taken by the offer that I hesitated, but then responded positively.

At that point, Colalucci instructed a few restorers on the team to place a board in the spaces that were originally used by Michelangelo; and, mounting them, Cheney and I were able to touch with our hands the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

Colalucci informed us that unlike the movie version, where Michelangelo did most of the work lying on his back, in reality he had stood on the scaffolding and, on his tiptoes, painted the frescoes. It was an experience that one remembers clearly, even decades later.

What remains with me from the event is something that is difficult to describe, for although the ceiling and the surrounding figures were painted nearly half a millennium ago, they bear witness to the fact that I was fortunate enough to have been able to see what can only be described as "the presence of genius." And, as a result, it is unforgettable. ■



Vincent Chiarello taught high school history before joining the Foreign Service in 1970. He served overseas in Colombia, Guatemala, Spain, Norway, Italy and at The Holy See. Now retired, he lives in Northern Virginia.

At left is the Vatican's Tesserà, or official pass, that gave him entry into the inner Vatican, a place few are able to see firsthand.



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Adam West is the deputy political counselor at U.S. Embassy Bangkok. He completed a temporary duty assignment with the UAE Afghanistan Task Force in Abu Dhabi in the fall of 2021. He took this photo with his iPhone 10.

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