

# THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

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MAY 2022



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# THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

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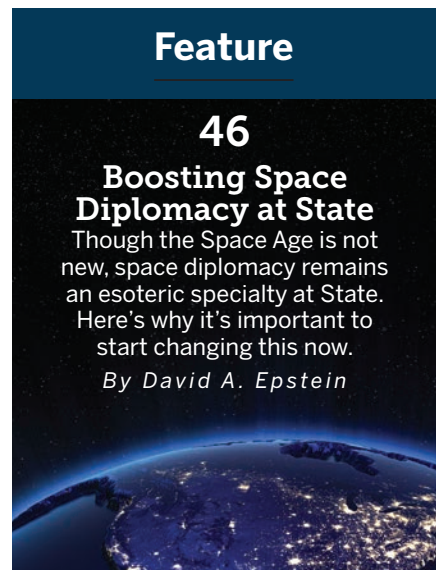
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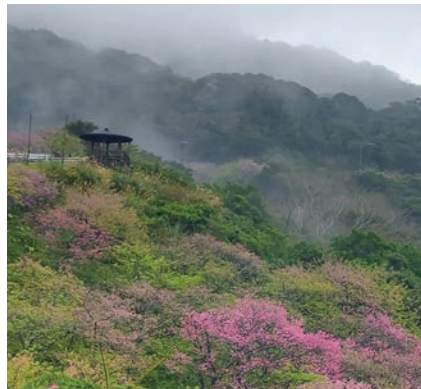
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**On the Cover**—Background scenic images: iStockphoto.com/Biletskiy Evgeniy/Panso/Lunamarina. Photos courtesy of Focus authors. Composition by Caryn Suko Smith.



# One Foreign Service Family

BY ERIC RUBIN

As I noted in my April column celebrating the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, our Foreign Service is so much stronger and more capable because of its diversity: among the foreign affairs agencies, within the agencies, and in the makeup of the Foreign Service itself. On the latter front, we need a lot more diversity, and AFSA is determined to do its part to achieve the needed reforms and changes.

The Foreign Service is and must be “one family,” all working together in service to our country. One critical element is the inclusion, support and protection of our local employees overseas, traditionally known as Foreign Service Nationals, but now officially called locally employed (LE) staff by the State Department.

There is a long list of things that our Foreign Service Nationals need and deserve, but do not have. One is a guaranteed retirement income. State has been talking for years about a global LE staff pension plan, but there still is none. There has also been talk of including LE staff in the federal Thrift Savings Plan,

but that would require legislative action and would be an expensive and heavy lift. As a result, our local staff in affluent countries

## We must take care of our people.

with good national pension systems can retire with real guaranteed income for their later years. Our staff in the rest of the world cannot.

We do provide health insurance to local staff across the globe (we did not always do so), and it is usually a big improvement over the bare-minimum national insurance plans in most countries. But again, LE staff in rich countries with top-notch medical care tend to receive better care than those in poorer and less developed parts of the world. That is not surprising, but it is a concern that should continue to be addressed.

And then we come to the question of protection. Our regular emergency action planning exercises and training usually give scant attention to the safety and well-being of our local staff in the event of a natural disaster, war, civil conflict or revolution, even as we, ironically, often call upon them to support a U.S. response.

In just the past year, we have had two major crises—in Afghanistan and Ukraine—illustrating that not enough attention, planning and forethought was paid to what would happen to our local colleagues if and when we evacuated our American staff and family members.

In regard to the Kabul evacuation, Secretary Blinken has created a senior panel of experts (headed by former Acting Secretary of State Dan Smith) to determine what we could have done

better—and what we should do better next time. I expect the report will confirm that the previous and current administrations moved too slowly to process the thousands of Special Immigrant Visa applications for our local Afghan staff and for those who served as interpreters and facilitators for the U.S. military.

By the time the full U.S. withdrawal was underway, there was no possibility to complete the cumbersome bureaucratic processes quickly. We took out as many colleagues as we could in the largest human airlift in history, truly a heroic accomplishment.

But we clearly should have fixed the SIV process long before the U.S. left Afghanistan. We also need to do more to help those LE staff who do make it to the U.S.

In Ukraine, many of our local colleagues in Kyiv—some with more than 30 years of service to our country and including the leadership of the official LE staff committee—voiced feeling abandoned, and their concerns were amplified by AFSA and the media.

We must do better. We must take care of our people. We have to start making changes now to ensure that our planning reflects the need to do our utmost for our local staff, our FSN colleagues. They are an indispensable part of our Foreign Service family, and we must do more to ensure that they are treated that way. ■



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



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# There Is Life After

BY SHAWN DORMAN

For almost everyone in the FS community, there will be life after the Foreign Service. Thanks to the “up-or-out” system, many diplomats start new and exciting avocations, and even careers, while still relatively young. In addition, the mandatory (legally binding) retirement age of 65 for the Foreign Service (younger for Diplomatic Security agents) means some FS professionals are required to move on while at the top of their game.

As a career that still comes with a pension after just 20 years of service, the Foreign Service puts members in an unusual—and, some might say, envious—position of “retiring” while still young enough to go out and do something else, with the freedom a guaranteed income delivers.

So, the world is your oyster: What do you do? Where do you go? How do you decide?

Our focus on life after the Foreign Service begins with these questions. In “The Last Assignment: Moving into Retirement,” Donna Scaramastra Gorman presents strategies and ideas from those who have been there and made the moves.

One of the most popular post-FS employment opportunities is to come back to your agency to work in a different

capacity, on short-term contracts (generally up to six months at a time—there is a cap on hours per year allowed). Some retired

FSOs get to fill in as temporary ambassadors or in short-staffed embassy offices around the world.

FSO (ret.) and former Director of the State Retirement Office John Naland walks us through returning to work for the government in “An Insider’s Guide to the Re-Employed Annuitant Program.” Pro tip: networking is the key.

Another possible, and potentially lucrative, employment avenue for retired FS employees involves “Working with the U.S. Military.” Ambassador (ret.) Larry Butler gives his experience and advice on connecting with a wide variety of opportunities from role-playing for military exercises and working on security force assistance programs, to speaking and writing for war colleges or combatant commands. Pro tip, once more: network, network, network.

Then there are those who take a hobby or passion and turn that into a paid gig. Ambassador (ret.) Charles Cecil shares such a journey in “Global Photography: From Hobby to Career.”

For most retiring FS members, the path from full-time employment to full retirement is gradual. USAID Health and Population Officer (ret.) Charles Llewellyn tells how he made his way doing short-term consulting jobs in “Setting Sail: Life after USAID.”

Next, we meet AFSA Counselor for Retirees Dolores Brown who provides a look at “AFSA Resources for Retirees”—from Next Stage programming to tailored content in the *FSJ* and AFSA newsletters and seminars online.

The Speaking Out this month is hard-hitting. In “On Our Own: Diplomats Deserve Equal Access to Reproductive Health Services,” USAID FSO Andrea Capellán presents an extension and expansion of the issues raised in a letter signed by 200-plus FSOs expressing concern about inadequate reproductive health care for FS women (see March Talking Points).

FS women are demanding change. Given that the piece includes criticism of the Bureau of Medical Services, we provided an advance copy to MED with an invitation to respond in the next *FSJ*.

This month’s feature is timely. “Boosting Space Diplomacy at State” from FSO David Epstein describes why space diplomacy matters and how State must build knowledge and expertise to work the issue in the interagency community.

In FS Heritage, Professor Michael Zirinsky tells the story of a “Lethal Encounter in Tehran: The Attack on U.S. Vice Consul Robert W. Imbrie and Its Aftermath” from a century ago.

In “One Foreign Service Family,” AFSA President Eric Rubin makes the case for more attention and care for local staff worldwide, from the day-to-day to times of crisis like the recent evacuations from Afghanistan and Ukraine.

We continue to follow the horrors of Russia’s war on Ukraine, wondering where and whether a diplomatic solution is possible amid such destruction.

Please keep in touch with AFSA and consider writing for the *FSJ* on Ukraine. Send your thoughts and pitches to us at [journal@afsa.org](mailto:journal@afsa.org). ■



Shawn Dorman is the editor of The Foreign Service Journal.



## Speaking the Language

I heartily concur with Larry Butler's excellent point about diplomats needing to practice cultural awareness, especially in language usage ("Language Lessons," Letters, March 2022, response to my December article, "Practical Lessons for Today's Foreign Service"). We reporting officers from Consulate General Leningrad were all forewarned and highly aware of the sensitivity of some Balts to speaking Russian.

When we had initial conversations with Baltic contacts, our practice was to apologize first that we did not speak their native language and then try to work out what other language we might have in common in order to communicate.

Since none of us spoke any of the Baltic languages (nor did the Foreign Service Institute teach those languages at the time), and most of our contacts did not have fluency in English or any other language other than their native tongue and Russian, the default language in most of our communication, by mutual agreement and necessity, was Russian. Russian was also the lingua franca among the three Baltic peoples themselves when they got together.

In addition, most of us picked up courtesy phrases in the Baltic languages that went over quite well, especially in our public engagements. I continued that practice when serving in other non-Russian states of the former Soviet Union to great effect.

I do recall one or two Estonian contacts, who were hypersensitive about speaking Russian, on principle, and would complain to us about the fact that the State Department did not teach us Estonian and the fact that we were from Leningrad, USSR. Their preference was



to go to nearby Helsinki to speak with the U.S. embassy's Estonian speaker.

But the vast majority of our Baltic contacts, including most Estonians, had no problem speaking

Russian with American diplomats from Leningrad. They enthusiastically welcomed our presence and our support in those dark days.

Finally, we Leningraders highly appreciated Office Management Specialist Sally Snow's heroic efforts to transcribe our "scribblings" into classified cables. She exemplified why OMSs are utterly crucial colleagues in the diplomatic profession, a fact every FSO should recognize.

Fortunately for Ms. Snow's eyesight, by late spring 1991, Leningrad resumed its classified comms, and we were able to report directly on the historic occurrences that took place in our consular district from then on. Many, many thanks, Sally. You earned your place in heaven. May you rest in eternal peace.

*George Krol*

*Ambassador, retired*

*Middletown, Rhode Island*

## The Afghan Evacuation Mission Continues

Thank you for the ambitious retelling of last year's tragic evacuation from Kabul ("Operation Allies Refuge: The FS View from the Front Lines," March 2022). The articles evoke the courage, resourcefulness and compassion displayed by so many Afghans, Americans and others. Allow me to add these observations:

Your map of "lily pad" and destination countries includes several U.S. allies that only permitted us to operate the evacuation airlift from bases on their territory for

a week or two. The U.S. approached several countries seeking a haven where we could host, for up to a year, Afghans whose cases required special processing. Only one agreed—the Republic of Kosovo.

As U.S. ambassador in Pristina, I had the privilege of making the request to Kosovo's president and prime minister. I was pushing on an open door. As President Vjosa Osmani said, "First and foremost we believe it's a moral obligation. We have been refugees ourselves during the nineties, and we are alive today because the world did not turn its back on us."

Other countries, such as Albania and the UAE, continue to host NGO-sponsored refugees over half a year after the evacuation. For as much as some in Washington would like to put Afghanistan in the rearview mirror, the evacuation mission continues. Thousands of at-risk Afghans, many with close ties to the United States, remain in Afghanistan under dangerous circumstances.

As I write this, the Taliban are stepping up house-to-house searches for pro-Western Afghans, while the world's attention is riveted on Ukraine.

The administration and Congress need to match their rhetorical expressions of support with action—providing State and the Department of Homeland Security with new resources; streamlining visa and refugee procedures; and passing the Afghan Adjustment Act to give more evacuees a clear path to long-term residence and eventual citizenship.

Thousands of government employees, dozens of NGOs and countless private citizens are working tirelessly on evacuation and resettlement. Much remains to be done before we can claim "Mission Accomplished."

*Philip Kosnett*

*Ambassador, retired*

*Black Mountain, North Carolina*



## Time to Reorient

I have returned to Bucharest, Romania, after two long COVID-19 years to empty and sell the little apartment I have had here for the last quarter century.

As I write, Putin's forces surround Kyiv, and war is much on people's minds. Last night I spent two hours with a dear friend who is a former foreign minister and Ukraine expert. The letter arises from the fact that no one in the U.S. embassy will talk to him or benefit from his insights.

Sitting here, looking at a profession I know well from the inside but is now at a remove, there are three major mistakes that we Americans have been making in Romania and possibly in other countries, as well.

The first is that we won't talk to people who aren't "nice" or don't agree with us or have some stain on their escutcheon. My friend from last night is a case in point, but perhaps a better example is Corneliu Vadim Tudor. Vadim was, in fact, fairly odious in many ways: He was an ultranationalist politician who pandered to the worst instincts of his supporters with anti-Semitic and homophobic editorials.

That said, he had a strong following—26 percent of the popular vote for president at one point—and was both influential and influenceable. After I retired, a friend asked if I wanted to meet him. I did, and we became "friends" of a sort.

Then a senator and still influential, Vadim asked me what he had to do to make the Americans accept him. I replied honestly that I wasn't sure, but he had to stop the anti-Semitic and homophobic rhetoric if he wanted even a chance. He did so immediately. I don't think Vadim was actually anti-Semitic—it was simply a nasty ploy.

He even hired two Israeli PR advisers, though they were, according to another

friend, only window dressing. Nice young men; I met them.

The important point here is that if we don't talk to people, we can't understand their thinking or hope to influence them. Neither can we gain a complete picture of what is happening in their country.

The second mistake has been to criticize Romania in public. Aside from being against the tenets of the Geneva Convention, this is just plain stupid as it wins us no friends and gives us no long-term influence. I brought this up with a U.S. diplomat here, and the answer was: "It's the only way we can make them do anything."

Excuse me? Perhaps some politicians were forced to do something for fear of public U.S. criticism, but the Romanians resent the U.S. for it.

The third mistake came to my attention in Greece. We only talk to "important" people, and when politicians lose elections or retire, they are often dropped from our overfull rosters. In this case the politician said, "What they don't understand is that our politics are a revolving door, and I will be back in power in the future. Your diplomats will forget they dropped me when they thought I wasn't important ... but I won't."

In the U.S., retirement and age throw people into a gray area of nonexistence as far as their former profession is concerned, but this is not the case in many other countries. Here, in Bucharest, all of these problems are compounded by the unfortunate move of the embassy out of town, even though the GOR had offered us an excellent central location for it. No one I know has talked to a U.S. diplomat in years, if ever.

Our officers are sequestered in a fortress that my friends won't go near; it's too far away and the security procedures are humiliating. And it's difficult for our

officers to come into town to venues where they could meet them given tight control of motor pool resources, limited parking and enormous traffic.

There are fixes, some fairly easy, some not. We need to reorient our thinking about who is "important" and who isn't. We need more motor pool and representational resources. We ought to encourage officers to get out, walk the street, go to art openings, have interests that bring them into contact with a wide array of Romanians, and make time for them to do this. And we need to be more careful about the advice we are given by local staff as to who we see and who we avoid.

*Kiki Skagen Munshi*

*FSO, retired*

*Julian, California*

## Moscow Signal

I am writing to salute Jim Schumaker's article ("Before Havana Syndrome, There Was Moscow Signal," January-February 2022) and commend him for his bravery and professionalism. He has long been known for his stellar work on Soviet affairs.

When reports of Havana syndrome started hitting the press recently, I, too, immediately thought of Embassy Moscow and my experiences there. As Jim points out, this is hardly a new topic for many old Soviet hands.

An earlier summary of the "Moscow Signal" may be found in an old article by Lee Hockstader, "Top Hat to Cap Off Moscow Embassy Saga" (*The Washington Post*, Feb. 22, 1996). He outlines some of the long history of radiation being directed at Embassy Moscow, especially microwave, and points to "an Old Orthodox Church across the street, which U.S. investigators dubbed our Lady of Telemetry."



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Actually, that church was suspect years earlier, during the days of the Soviet Union. When I worked at Embassy Moscow (1988-1991), there was general concern about directed radiation from that building. I was warned about it, and even took some primitive defensive measures. But, as Jim Schumaker suggests, the embassy staff was driven by the great importance of the mission at hand, and we more or less just lived with it.

As part of my job in Moscow, I became versed in the mentality of Russian science. While I have great respect for areas of Russian science, I also know it does not place as much value on safety as we do in the United States. I saw this myself, but any cursory review of their space program makes the point. As I also witnessed, Russian science can too easily move beyond the proven, and launch into taking action on the basis of unproven scientific assertions.

My own view is that Havana syndrome and what happened (and may still be ongoing) at Embassy Moscow are inter-related. Perhaps old operations directed at Embassy Moscow were a kind of prototype and, I would like to think, not designed to hurt USG personnel, but rather to gather intelligence on us, which was anxiously sought by quite a variety of means.

However, as posited above, any possible side effects and safety considerations of such an intelligence operation would likely have been downplayed by Soviet or Russian intelligence agencies. Perhaps modifications used more recently elsewhere have more nefarious objectives, including intentionally injuring embassy personnel, but I simply do not know.

I understand why for legal reasons there is a desire to bracket the problem of Havana syndrome and limit it to a specific time period. Having said that, the likely real

roots of the problem run much deeper.

*John Blaney*  
*Ambassador, retired*  
*Arlington, Virginia*

## Another Stellar Edition

Congratulations on another stellar edition of the *FSJ* (January-February 2022) with its plethora of interesting articles.

First, James Schumaker's exposition of the similarity between Moscow Signal and Havana syndrome ("Before Havana Syndrome, There Was Moscow Signal"), something so obvious that I have wondered why the U.S. has tried to keep this secret. It is another frail response to Moscow's aggression, as we are learning today.

Second, John Limbert's fine review of Kai Bird's book on Jimmy Carter ("A Decent and Honest Man") hits all the right notes regarding Carter's misadventure on Iran (where I served as political counselor and acting deputy chief of mission from 1976 to 1979) with one important exception.

With the benefits of hindsight, Limbert points to Bird's citation of an entry from Carter's diary to suggest that everyone got it all wrong. The president's inaccurate shorthand note was: "Ambassador Sullivan thought we ought to permit Khomeini to take over and that it would lead to democracy. Huyser [National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski's man in Tehran] thinks it would lead to communism."

In point of fact, Sullivan did not think it had to lead to democracy, any more than Secretary of State Cyrus Vance (Brzezinski's counterpoint), who thought, as Sullivan's and my own reports also suggested, that it was difficult to visualize a religious regime directly governing a major country in the 20th century, and there was no viable alternative in any case.

Moreover, if General Huyser believed communists would take over, he never said that to me when he told me (in front

of our deputy chief of mission): “George, you take care of the civilians, and I will take care of the military.”

Huyser never mentioned communists when he took me to Washington in his personal plane and then sat in on the very high-level White House meeting in which I repeatedly argued that Khomeini’s people prevented any communist resurgence.

Though this meeting was chaired by Brzezinski, President Carter was absent—which could help explain why Carter got things a bit wrong in his diary.

President Carter ultimately accepted Khomeini’s pledge in secret letters to Washington that he would be friendly toward the U.S. if the Iranian military were kept from opposing his return to Iran.

However, Khomeini’s letters were not

shared with us in Tehran, presumably because Carter was reportedly angry with Amb. Sullivan’s outburst of frustration after he repeatedly received diametrically opposing instructions from Brzezinski and Vance, each speaking in the president’s name.

Overall, this underscores the importance of having American diplomats on the ground to provide the accurate information that their masters in Washington should use in suggesting policies to the president and Congress. ■

*George Lambrakis*  
FSO, retired  
Paris, France

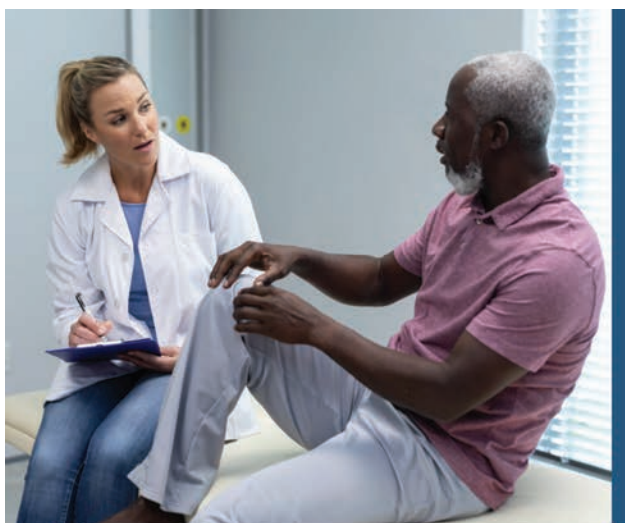
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## CORRECTION

On the map “Afghanistan Evacuation 2021” (March 2022, pp. 30-31), Kosovo and Bahrain should have been identified as landing spot countries. We regret the omissions.

As we noted in the March *FSJ*, we worked hard to compile the data on which countries were involved at various levels in the August 2021 evacuation. To our knowledge, complete information still does not exist authoritatively in any one public place.

We appreciate readers’ assistance in filling in any inadvertent gaps. You can find an updated map at [afsa.org/operation-allies-refuge-fs-view-front-lines](https://afsa.org/operation-allies-refuge-fs-view-front-lines).



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## CEOs Build Corporate Foreign Policy

As the Kremlin ratcheted up violent attacks across Ukraine and the humanitarian crisis there worsened in March, hundreds of companies began curtailing ties with Russia—and looking to foreign policy experts to help them navigate the shifting geopolitical landscape, Axios reports.

Facing supply chain disruption, economic sanctions and pressure from customers, multinational executives with operations in Russia have sought advice to stay ahead of fast-moving events in the region.

This expertise often comes from consultancies staffed by national security and diplomacy alumni, as well as congressional, administration and defense officials who help companies weigh risks and explore safe options.

Robert Gibbs, for example, who served as President Barack Obama's first press secretary, is now employed as senior counsel at Bully Pulpit Interactive, a D.C.-based consulting firm that describes itself as “an outcomes agency at the intersection of business, politics and policy.” Gibbs developed strategic communications for McDonald's as it worked to close its approximately 850 locations in Russia in mid-March.

In addition to managing their messaging, companies may need to bring on experts to navigate Russian expropriation of their operations. President Vladimir Putin announced on March 10 that the economic development ministry drafted legislation that lays the groundwork for seizing the assets of foreign-owned businesses that exit the country, Radio Free Europe reported.

The ministry has already created a list of some 60 foreign companies that have left the Russian market and may be

## Contemporary Quote

“Only in America could the daughter of refugees become Assistant Secretary of State with responsibility for refugee policy. Will roll up my sleeves and get to work.”

—Julietta Valls Noyes in a March 24 tweet following her confirmation.

nationalized, *Izvestia* newspaper wrote. The list includes Volkswagen, Apple, IKEA, Microsoft, IBM, Shell, McDonald's, Porsche and H&M, among others.

According to a list compiled by the Yale Chief Executive Leadership Institute, more than 450 multinational corporations have withdrawn from or reduced activities in Russia.

Companies not at risk of asset seizure may face other threats from the Kremlin. At the Business Roundtable CEO quarterly meeting on March 21, President Joe Biden warned business leaders to strengthen their cyber defenses, as “evolving intelligence” suggests Russia is preparing cyberattacks against the U.S. in retaliation for economic sanctions.

John Chipman, chief executive of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, has argued since Russia's 2014 invasion and annexation of Crimea that companies cannot assume the strategic status quo will be sustained in any part of the world by predictable balances of power.

“In this new reality, the most successful multinational companies will be those that make expertise in international affairs central to their operations, adopting what can best be described as a corporate foreign policy,” he told the *Harvard Business Review*.

## GAO Calls on State to Improve Crisis Response

The State Department oversaw a chaotic evacuation of federal personnel stationed abroad at the start of the COVID-

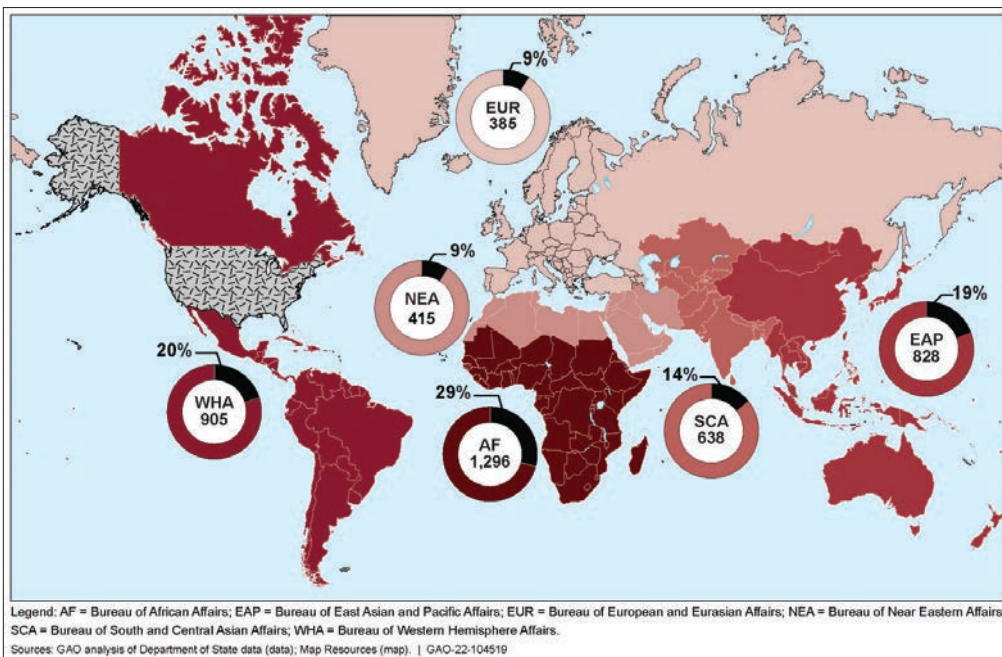
19 pandemic, the Government Accountability Office said in a March 16 report, and needs to strengthen policies to ensure a smoother operation in future crises.

About 20 percent of the 22,000 federal employees working at more than 290 overseas posts returned to the U.S. in the first months of the pandemic, though the process was conducted on an ad hoc basis that left agencies and staff unclear on eligibility and implementation details. According to federal internal control standards, as GAO points out in the report, new policies must include the appropriate level of detail.

State first issued global evacuation guidance in March 2020. Most employees were eligible to leave, but not required to do so. However, the department failed to communicate its plans with the approximately two dozen federal agencies with a presence overseas, leaving them to react only after the guidance had been made public.

State initially authorized evacuations for 60 days, subsequently extending them for 30 days at a time through December 2020. GAO calls these extensions “disruptive,” as employees and their families did not know when they would have to return to their posts.

As each 30-day period ended, employees faced uncertainty about housing, their children's schooling and other issues. Because they did not know whether State would continue to approve the global evacuation until a week before it was about to expire each month, many



Percentages of evacuated overseas staff, by region, from Jan. 2020 through Dec. 2020.

lived in one-month leases and moved frequently while stateside.

Although the global evacuation lasted a total of 270 days, staff were only eligible to depart post within the first 54 days. As a result, staff in regions that experienced a spike in COVID-19 cases after the 54th day of the policy—during early May 2020—could not participate.

While State’s approach was understandable given the evolving nature of the pandemic, said Jason Bair, lead author on the report and GAO’s director of international affairs and trade, it made

the process “much more difficult and so much more stressful.”

The 64-page GAO report concludes with six recommendations, including that State review its global evacuation policies, maintain timely communication with other agencies present overseas, develop a plan to track overseas telework and develop a procedure to ensure collection of lessons learned.

State agreed with five of the recommendations and partially agreed with one: ensuring timely communication with interagency partners during crises.

## Slow Going on Confirmations

As of this writing in early April, the Senate has confirmed 21 ambassadors and senior officials at the foreign affairs agencies since our last update (see the March 2022 FSJ).

Among those confirmed are five career Foreign Service ambassadors (for Honduras, Malawi, Ghana, Pakistan and Madagascar/Comoros), eight appointees from outside the Foreign Service (for Jamaica, Holy See, Germany, Portugal, Greece, Iraq, Finland and the U.N.

## Site of the Month: FSJ Special Collections ([afsa.org/fsj-special-collections#Russia](https://afsa.org/fsj-special-collections#Russia))

The FSJ digital archive special collections contain vital and fascinating diplomatic history on a range of foreign policy issues and regions from the viewpoint of the foreign policy practitioner. Drawn from the pages of our magazine over the past 100-plus years, the articles gathered in the special collections trace major geopolitical events and debates from expert and insider perspectives. These can help readers piece together the history and significance of rapidly evolving situations today.

Now of heightened pertinency, the “Russia, Soviet Union



and Ukraine” special collection, for example, highlights FSJ articles that date as far back as 1934, when a State Department press officer discussed the normalization of U.S. relations with the Soviet Union. This compilation from the digital archive provides nearly a century of context for the current crisis and sheds light on the roots of Kremlin irredentism.

In addition to regional features, the special collections page also contains bundles of articles focused on issues such as tradecraft, dissent, diversity, reform, career and family, economic diplomacy, political appointees, human rights and many more.

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



Human Rights Council), two retired Foreign Service ambassadors (for Serbia and the U.N. Economic and Social Council) and seven senior officials, including the assistant secretaries for population, refugees, and migration (PRM), arms control, verification and compliance (AVC) and international security and nonproliferation (ISN), the ambassador at large for global criminal justice, special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism, and two USAID assistant administrators.

Currently, seven senior positions at the Department of State have nominees who have yet to be confirmed. In addition, two positions do not yet have a nominee, including the position of under secretary of State for public affairs and public diplomacy. State still has no one nominated to be inspector general.

At USAID, four nominees remain unconfirmed and only one position lacks a nominee. The Director General of the

Foreign Commercial Service and the CEO of the U.S. Agency for Global Media have yet to be confirmed, despite being nominated a year ago.

AFSA is currently tracking 61 ambassador vacancies across the globe, 28 of which have a nominee. Among the most high-profile vacancies are the United Kingdom, Italy, Australia, Brazil, India, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, South Africa, Ukraine and three of the five Nordic countries (only Finland and Sweden have confirmed ambassadors in place).

Members can follow AFSA's ambassador tracker for real-time updates at [afsa.org/ambassadorlist](https://afsa.org/ambassadorlist).

In a Jan. 31 letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Scott said he was placing holds on "all relevant State Department nominees" until President Joe Biden lifts the Pan American Health Organization's legal immunity so it can be sued in U.S. courts by Cuban physicians who have allegedly been trafficked.

## Three Pillars of Diversity and Inclusion

Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley wants to make the State Department a leader in governmentwide efforts to improve diversity and has developed three pillars to support her office's efforts.

In December 2021, Ambassador Abercrombie-Winstanley announced that the Office of Diversity and Inclusion would focus on intentionality, or who isn't being represented and why; transparency, collecting detailed data on the demographics of the department's workforce; and accountability, holding perpetrators of discrimination, harassment and retaliation accountable.

"A State Department that looks like America will enhance our national security and better position us to handle the challenges of the 21st century," Abercrombie-Winstanley said at the Senior Executives Association's Federal

## 50 Years Ago

### Know Your Environment (Or Bureaucratic Survival for Fun and Profit)

It is important for the officer coming to Washington to know what he is. He is only occasionally the advocate, only in limited doses the academic; on rare and stimulating occasions a policymaker, but he is none of these basically. Basically, to be successful, to be effective, and to give to the Secretary of State the kind of support he needs, the Foreign Service officer must be essentially a professional expert capable of analyzing a situation in an area, functional or geographic, and distilling the essence of problems and the alternatives which face us for the consideration of the higher levels of the Department and of the United States Government.

In this definition there is wide scope for initiative, freedom of expression, and the courageous pursuit of that which an officer believes to be right. Such a role is distinguished, however, by an intelligent recognition of the total environment, in which policy must be made and carried out; by recogni-

tion of the pressures upon the higher echelons of the government; and by recognition that at some point the debate must stop and decisions must be made. ...

The man sitting across the table from an FSO in an interdepartmental meeting works for somebody else who rates his performance on a different, perhaps opposite, set of objectives than the FSO's boss. The FSO's job is to convince or to reconcile these opposing viewpoints in order to present to the ultimate decision-makers the most effective recommendations on dealing with an issue.

—FSO David D. Newsom, then—Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, excerpted from his article of the same title in the May 1972 FSJ.



#### HEARD ON THE HILL



### Support for U.S. Mission Ukraine Staff

We write to express our concern for the safety of the Foreign Service National and Locally Employed staff employed by the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development in Ukraine. These individuals and their families have made significant contributions to U.S. foreign policy objectives and diplomatic efforts in Ukraine and the region and are now at grave risk following the Russian invasion.

—Congressmen Mike Quigley (D-Ill.), Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) and Jimmy Gomez (D-Calif.) in a March 11 letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken signed by 30 members of Congress.

### Remembering Madeleine Albright

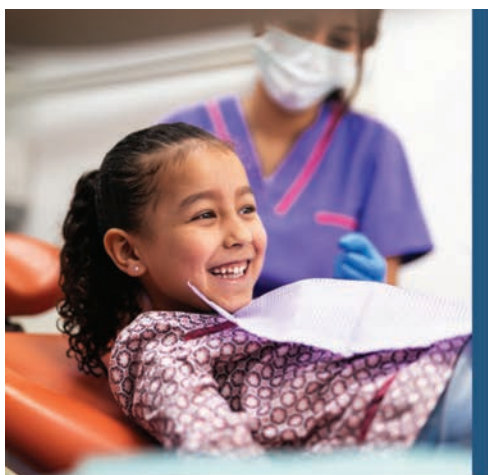
From her incredible personal story to representing America on the international stage, Madeleine Albright broke through barriers for future generations of female leaders. She will always be remembered as a trailblazer.

—Senator Shelley Capito (R-W. Va.) in a March 23 tweet reacting to the death of former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

### Celebrating the Former Secretary of State

Madeleine Albright, a true stateswoman, was the first female Secretary of State and a fierce champion of democracy & human rights globally. May we never forget her exemplary contributions & commitment to our nation.

—Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.) in a March 23 tweet reacting to the death of former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.



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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley delivers remarks on being named Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer in April 2021.

Leadership Summit in December. “When we have more diversity—of thought, of expertise, of lived experience—at the table, our policies and initiatives are stronger, smarter and more creative.”

AFSA’s upcoming interview with Abercrombie-Winstanley will be published in the June *FSJ*.

## Limited Support for Local Staff in Ukraine

A letter written by Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Karen Donfried and obtained by *Foreign Policy* urged eligible local staff working for the U.S. embassy in Ukraine to apply for Special Immigrant Visas and warned that the State Department may be constrained in providing long-term support.

“If the crisis persists, there may come a time when we will have to make difficult decisions about our operations and your employment status—but we are not there yet,” Donfried wrote to the local Ukrainian embassy staff in mid-March. “What we can guarantee is that we will keep you informed every step of the way to give you enough time to make decisions about what’s best for your personal situation.”

Only Ukrainians who worked for the U.S. government for more than 15 years are eligible to apply for SIVs. Before the embassy evacuated to Lviv ahead of the Russian invasion in February, approximately 600 Ukrainians worked at the mission.

Donfried’s letter suggested that nearly

half of those employees would be eligible to relocate permanently to the U.S. with SIVs, leaving an uncertain fate for the remaining 300.

According to several U.S. diplomats in contact with Ukrainian embassy staff, some employees fled to western Ukraine, while others stayed and volunteered to fight the Russian invasion with the Ukrainian defense forces. Still others remain trapped in Kyiv or have family trapped there.

On March 11, locally employed staff in Kyiv sent a letter to the State Department saying they felt abandoned by Washington and feared the State Department was reneging on promises to provide them with long-term financial assistance.

AFSA President Eric Rubin told *Foreign Policy* in a March 16 article that the State Department needs to do more.

“It is about morality and decency, but it’s also about whether anyone would want to work for us again overseas if we don’t show that we would do everything we can for them in a situation like this,” Rubin said.

“There are still legitimate reasons to ask why we did not help them evacuate Kyiv when we have dozens of abandoned embassy vehicles with full gas tanks in the courtyard of our embassy that’s padlocked in Kyiv,” Rubin said. “All the bureaucratic reasons for not doing that do not strike me as sufficient or appropriate.” ■

*This edition of Talking Points was compiled by Julia Wohlers.*

# On Our Own: Diplomats Deserve Equal Access to Reproductive Health Services

BY ANDREA CAPELLÁN

**T**his is the story of a group of women who have decided not to stay silent any longer, despite the shame, sadness, fear, anxiety and trauma we still feel in the aftermath of the experiences we share in the following.

From fertility issues, missed miscarriages and complications from unwanted pregnancies, to embryo reductions, endocrinal therapies and menopause, women in the Foreign Service community have faced serious reproductive health-related medical concerns—not only without the support of the State Department Bureau of Medical Services (MED), but even as it actively and repeatedly forced patients into impossible decisions and significant financial burden, and put them in life-threatening situations.

After weeks and months of deliberating how to best advocate for change, the authors of this article sent a letter in December 2021 to Ambassador Carol Perez, then-acting under secretary for management and sent a copy to MED. The letter, viewable at [bit.ly/HealthAtPost](https://bit.ly/HealthAtPost), calls for equal access to reproductive health services when at post overseas.



*Andrea Capellán has been a USAID Foreign Service officer for 10 years, serving as a contracting officer in Dakar, Senegal, Lima, Peru, and now in the Management Bureau's Foreign Operations Division in Washington, D.C. Her onward assignment is as the supervisory contracting officer for USAID/Mexico.*

As of late March, MED had not responded to this letter.

## How the Outcry Began

It all started with a post on the FS Women Facebook group in which a Foreign Service officer assigned overseas asked if other women had faced challenges accessing reproductive health care abroad. This woman had found out at four weeks of gestation that she had an unwanted pregnancy. After having promised her immediate assistance, the health unit told her that her only option was to wait another two months to medevac for genetic counseling.

Soon after that Facebook post, she made contact with another woman who, after receiving health unit-supported fertility treatments, was abandoned by that same unit when she needed a lifesaving embryo reduction. This woman scrambled to evacuate herself to receive the lifesaving treatment she needed.

Once connected, the two learned about more women who had dealt with similar struggles. Over the past six months, this group has unleashed a wave of protest and solidarity, with dozens of women joining in.

Their reports are more than just troubling and pervasive; they are, at times, horrific. They point to a systemic disregard for women's health care and female-specific needs by MED, a bureau currently led and managed by five men, and its mission health unit outposts. This lack of care remains despite the fact that 40 percent of our workforce consists of women (not

including the family members of those serving under chief-of-mission authority overseas, for whom MED and its outposts are also tasked with providing care).

## FSOs Share Stories of Mistreatment and Trauma

Because medical care is often a private matter—and even more so when dealing with reproductive health issues—many of those affected within our Foreign Service community have chosen to share their experiences only with close friends or family; some experiences are simply too traumatic to relive through retelling. For this reason, names have been changed in the paragraphs below and the complete list of drafters of the letter are not identified.

**Kina** had tried to get pregnant for some time and used the health unit-approved doctor list to find a reputable OB/GYN to assist with fertility issues. Following treatment, she found out that she was carrying four embryos, which the doctor said would jeopardize her life and the survival of any of the embryos. To save her life and remaining embryos, the OB/GYN recommended an immediate embryo reduction no later than eight weeks of gestation. This procedure was not available locally.

Despite a health insurance determination that the embryo reduction was medically necessary immediately, MED refused to medevac her before 12 weeks. MED also refused to locate a provider to perform the procedure in the U.S., refused to schedule an appointment for the procedure, refused to allow her to return to post after the procedure, and insisted on



## The reports point to a systemic disregard for women's health care by MED.

calling the medically necessary embryo reduction an “abortion.”

Unable to find a provider to perform the procedure in the U.S., Kina was forced to find a doctor in a third country, schedule the procedure on her own and fund the travel herself. Instead of supporting her, the health unit told her she “should have known this would happen.” When Kina contacted MED about these issues and then asked how to file a grievance, her emails were ignored.

**Naomi** found herself with an unwanted pregnancy, at four weeks gestation, despite having used protection. If she were in the United States, at this early stage Naomi would have been able to get a doctor's prescription for mifepristone/misoprostol, a safe, widely available and FDA-approved medical abortion pill. This was not available at her health unit. Abortion was not legal in her country of service. Neither was the health unit willing to medevac Naomi to access these services in the U.S. prior to 12 weeks of gestation.

Instead of supporting Naomi with reproductive health choices similar to those available in her home country, the health unit said they could not assist, and Naomi was forced to seek other options. She ended up in a local hospital with internal hemorrhaging.

**Sharon** was facing a risky pregnancy. Because her pregnancy required close monitoring, her U.S.-based OB/GYN did not want her to return to post in light of the civil unrest there. The roads to access any medical facility were being set ablaze daily during violent protests that included gunshots and burning tires.

MED declined that recommendation and forced Sharon to return to post.

The health unit implored MED to medevac Sharon, again to no avail. Having returned to post, she experienced inexplicable excruciating abdominal pain but could not access a health facility.

Not receiving the support she needed to feel safe, Sharon made the difficult decision to take leave without pay (LWOP) and depart from post on her own dime, getting on the very next flight back to the U.S.

Once in the States, Sharon went to the hospital and was told that due to a severe cord prolapse, her baby could have died had she waited any longer. She was immediately hospitalized while doctors determined a treatment plan, which included an emergency C-section.

“The whole thing was very traumatic and terrifying,” Sharon told us, “and I am just glad I left when I did.”

When **Cadence** got pregnant, she was ecstatic as she had been trying for some time. However, just weeks into the pregnancy, she began to bleed and experience pain. Fearing the worst, she reached out to her health unit, where staff confirmed she had likely had a miscarriage and would need to see a doctor. But there were no doctors in her small post, so MED recommended she drive herself across an international border from a high-threat post, into another high-threat post, to access lifesaving medical care.

Instead of authorizing a medevac, or the use of motor pool to facilitate safe passage of a patient who was bleeding, the health unit compelled her to drive herself; and because it was a high-threat post, she was to then walk herself to

and from the clinic while bleeding and medicated.

In short, she was left on her own to access lifesaving medical care in a crime-riddled, high-threat post with zero support from post.

### MED's Failure to Support

Other stories we heard include incidents in which women did not receive support from MED:

- when unable to access a routine Pap smear at post for two years;
- when suffering an ectopic pregnancy and sent to an inadequate local clinic where the patient almost died;
- when suffering a miscarriage at one of the most polluted posts in the world;
- when needing treatment for a urinary tract infection at a priority-service post;
- when needing comprehensive prenatal care for a complicated twin pregnancy that was not available at post, but the patient was not authorized for early departure from post to do so;
- and when being unable to access needed endocrinological testing locally after multiple pregnancy losses.

The treatment by health unit staff has also been described as condescending and judgmental when patients sought reproductive health care.

One woman requested access to testing related to potential early menopause and was told “to go see a [mental health] therapist.” After engaging in an assessment on her own, she was found, in fact, to be experiencing early menopause and in need of medication, which she only discovered after going on LWOP due to the symptoms she was experiencing.

One individual who was refused medevac for a complicated pregnancy was told by a MED professional: “Well, I was eight months pregnant in [a different priority-service post], and I made it out OK.”

The Foreign Affairs Manual states: "Where local medical facilities are inadequate to provide required services, travel to locations where such services can be obtained may be authorized." In none of these cases did MED authorize necessary interventions. Lifesaving medical evacuations for reproductive care are routinely shouldered by female diplomats after the State Department refuses to assist.

Health care should always be impartial and nonjudgmental. Further, medical professionals should know that each individual and the country in which they are serving is unique; every situation must be carefully evaluated, without comparison to other individuals or posts.

We are immensely grateful to those who came forward to share these profoundly personal stories. They have done so to help bring to light the mistreatment and negligence that has occurred at far too many posts and health units around the world. As their experiences underline, the State Department has a long way to go to achieve health care equity for all who serve in its ranks.

## Demanding Change: In Practice and In Writing

We ask that the Department of State effectuate the Biden administration's commitment to women and girls' sexual and reproductive health in the United States and globally, and provide access to the same reproductive rights we have in our own country when we serve overseas. These rights should be guaranteed in the Foreign Affairs Manual, including:

- Allow medevac prior to 12 weeks of gestation for access to reproductive health services.
- Require the State Department Bureau of Medical Services to include emergency contraception medication, mifepristone and misoprostol, and rape kits at each

*Editor's Note: We have invited MED leadership to respond in the June FSJ.*

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](mailto:journal@afsa.org).

overseas U.S. government health unit.

- Allow medevac to access other related reproductive health services, such as endocrinological testing, perimenopausal and menopausal counseling and screenings.

- Require all health units to develop contacts with and maintain access to local, high-quality obstetric and gynecological medical professionals or offer medevac for high-quality care if it is unavailable locally.

- Require all health units and their staff to provide respectful, impartial care that is free of judgment to any diplomat, regardless of their reproductive choices.

- Require the Bureau of Medical Services to instate leadership that is representative of its constituents.

In just 15 days, we secured hundreds of signatures from U.S. diplomats, both men and women, in support of these demands.

As we note in the letter: "Diplomats representing America in countries across the world are denied access to the same services that are legal and readily available in the country we represent and are told, *You are on your own.*"

We will no longer stand for this. We have united to demand access to reproductive health care equal to what we are afforded in the country we represent abroad. ■



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# The Last Assignment

## Moving into Retirement

**Deciding where to settle in retirement, and making it happen, is not easy. Here are tips from some who have successfully navigated this process.**

BY DONNA SCARAMASTRA GORMAN

Kurt and KC Rice hit the ski slopes in Montana.



**Y**ou've put in your 20 years—or more. You've saved the maximum in your Thrift Savings Plan. You've collected challenge coins in a dozen countries across the globe. You've spent way too many hours on international flights to places most people have never heard of. It's finally time. Time to retire

and find a forever home where you can display all those carpets and tchotchkes that have been moving with you from post to post.

But is it really time? And if it is, where are you going to go?

Many Foreign Service members describe themselves as rootless. Or, if they're tied to a specific geographical location, it's one in which they haven't lived in decades. Deciding where to put down roots after a life on the move can be one of the biggest challenges a Foreign Service family will ever face.

We talked to current retirees to find out how they decided where to live after leaving the Foreign Service, and how they made it happen.

### Make a List

What does a good retirement look like to you? Make a list of everything you think you might want. Sunshine? Snow? A nearby shopping mall? Easy access to hospitals, theaters or international cuisine? This list can help you narrow down rough geographical areas to consider.



*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 Washington, D.C., area with her family after her husband, Embassy Moscow Deputy Chief of Mission Bart Gorman, was expelled by the Russian government. She wishes to thank the members of the Facebook group "FS-Retirement Planning" who very generously shared their best advice and adventures for this article.*



Retired FS Specialist Peter Kennett says the list that he and his wife developed included things like quality medical care, good weather, culture, cuisine and a low local cost of living—all of which eventually led them to New Mexico. Peter has become an expert astrophotographer, with his own backyard observatory, and he and his wife harvest honey and raise chickens on their ranch.

Jim Jessee, a Foreign Service specialist, and his spouse, Mary, plan to retire next year. They wanted “a strong Asian community and an active lifestyle” when they chose Chandler, Arizona. They have friends and family in the area and say “it’s close to California without the taxes.” Their house is currently rented through a national home management company, but the couple looks forward to settling there in 2023.

Former FSO Ali Jalili was looking for a smaller city with access to cultural amenities, a walkable downtown, shops and restaurants. A friend suggested Burlington, Vermont, and it checked all the boxes. It had everything on his list, plus “a convenient small airport, a great teaching hospital, a progressive vibe, a spectacular natural setting on Lake Champlain, and easy access to all sorts of nature.”

## Get Professional Help

Realtor Carolyn Connell, whose husband Ladd is a retired Foreign Service officer, has sold houses to and for FS retirees. She says the process of helping retirees choose a home is similar to helping first-time buyers. She recommends that both spouses make separate lists of everything that is important in a new town. They then combine their lists and work on prioritizing the items they’ve each listed. The list will change, she says, and that’s okay. “Something they don’t think is important will rise to the top. And when they fall in love with a place, they may realize something that was nonnegotiable isn’t there, and that’s okay with them.” Connell’s clients often want warm weather, no yard maintenance, a vibrant downtown, access to a major airport or a town with “like-minded people.”

Ambassador John Ordway hiking in California.



COURTESY OF JOHN ORDWAY

## Moving into Mom’s Place

### Mt. Hood, Oregon

She spent every home leave at her parents’ place in Mt. Hood and loved it, says FSO (ret.) **Elizabeth Marker**, even dreaming “in a vague way” of one day living there. After her dad died, her mom grew tired of taking care of the property on her own, so Elizabeth and her husband, an avid gardener, bought the house and attached orchard—about 14 acres total.

The orchard is leased out, and Elizabeth enjoys being “part of the food chain, feeding the world cherries and pears.” Retirement is more expensive than Elizabeth anticipated, but her husband works at a nearby hardware store, which helps. And anyway, she says, “all the evaluations of taxes, benefits and nearby services didn’t really figure into the decision; being able to work this place and be close enough to my mom to have lunch is what mattered to me.”

Elizabeth advises other retirees to take their time settling in. “The burnout we all feel is real,” she says. She retired eight months ago and is still too busy unpacking and digging in her garden to even think about re-employed annuitant work.



PETER KENNETT



PETER KENNETT



COURTESY OF PETER KENNETT

Astrophotographer Peter Kennett inside the observatory dome room he built on his property in rural New Mexico. Top left inset: The Spiral Nebula galaxy as photographed by Peter Kennett. Bottom left inset: One of his photos, the Horsehead Nebula.

## Seeing Stars

### New Mexico

Five years before they retired, **Peter Kennett** and his wife, **Megan**, spent their home leave traveling across the United States, investigating possible retirement locations. They had a list of things they were searching for, including quality medical care, good weather, culture, cuisine and a low local cost of living. They also wanted a large tract of land in a dark rural area to accommodate Peter's astrophotography hobby—he built his own observatory on the property, and now that he's retired, he can stay up as late as he likes taking pictures of the stars.

Working with local Realtors, they scouted out four areas in New Mexico and found a solar-powered home on 15 acres, complete with chicken coop, an hour's drive from the nearest skiing. They rented the house out while on their final assignment to Uganda. Peter reports that their current monthly cost



PETER KENNETT

Megan Kennett at work beekeeping.

of living, including their mortgage, is about one-third of their total pensions.

Peter is also an excellent photographer of things down here on Earth. His photo essay of a close encounter with a hippo in Uganda was the inaugural "Off-Road with the Foreign Service" feature in the January-February 2020 *FSJ*.



How will you pay for this dream house of yours when it's time? Connell recommends that you find out the average sales price in the area you're dreaming of. If the down payment isn't coming from the equity in your current home, she says, set a goal for what 25 percent of that price would be, and save it in a separate account.

### Crunch the Numbers

There's no magic number that will tell you when you can afford to retire, says Chris Cortese, a former Foreign Service officer who now owns Logbook Financial Planning. He looks carefully at each client's financial situation, helping them plan out "cash flow for life" and looking at both their goals and their risk tolerance as he helps them decide if they can afford to make the leap into retirement. "A decision of that magnitude should be looked at by an objective third party," says Cortese, who recommends working with a fee-only, fiduciary professional. (Check the National Association of Personal Financial Advisors at <http://napfa.org> or the XY Planning Network.)

## A Mild Climate

### Monterey, California

**Virginia Keener** joined the Foreign Service straight from graduate school in Monterey, California, and always dreamed of retiring there. She watched real estate prices go up and feared she'd be priced out of the market, so when COVID-19 struck, she took advantage of the money she was able to save while stuck at home and used that money, along with funds from the sale of her house outside Baltimore, for a down payment on a house. She's renting out the house in Monterey until next year, when she plans to retire after a 37-year career.

Monterey's mild climate appeals to her, as does the fact that she'll be close to family. She took out a 30-year mortgage on the house and doesn't plan to find a post-retirement job—pension, TSP and Social Security will cover her costs.

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To fund the purchase of a retirement home, Cortese says there are two main strategies. “One is to own a rental property or two that you purchased during your working career, then sell those to use the equity to launch into this next phase and buy your retirement dream home. The other strategy is to forgo real estate earlier in your career and invest in a well-diversified portfolio.”

## Retiring Overseas

### Mexico City

When FSO **Judith Bryan** and her EFM husband started thinking about retirement, they made a list of places to consider, including several places in the United States, two in Europe and two in Mexico. Most of these locations were either places they’d been posted or places where they had friends and family. They planned to narrow down the list to four cities, put everything in storage when they retired and spend a year traveling, with a few months spent in each candidate city.

But six months before retiring, they attended a family destination wedding in central Mexico and stopped in Mexico City, where they’d been posted twice. When they returned home, says Judith, they “both admitted that our hearts were happy, and we felt at home in Mexico City.”

And that was that. It’s been more than four years, and they are still enjoying the “gorgeous weather, low cost of living, good health care, friendly people and interesting culture, and a good group of friends, both retired FS and locals.”



**Judith Bryan and her husband, Daniel Bezol, at the family wedding in central Mexico that led to their decision to retire to Mexico City.**

COURTESY OF JUDITH BRYAN

Do you need to put more than 20 percent down on a home if you’re no longer working? Cortese recommends that rather than focusing on how much to put down on your home, you examine your total spending and liquidity in retirement. “The advantage of not having a mortgage is that you lower your fixed expenses, which gives you more flexibility in down markets,” he explains, but “if the majority of your withdrawals are flexible, like travel, entertainment or dining out, you can adapt more naturally” to market fluctuations, making a mortgage possible.

If you are retiring at an age where you cannot or should not yet access your TSP, Cortese recommends that you keep plenty of cash and investments in a taxable account at your disposal. “I would hesitate to put all my liquid savings into paying off the mortgage,” he says, as you need to first test out this new location to ensure it meets your needs. Having financial options, he says, is key to a successful retirement.

### Put Down Roots Now

Several retirees recommended putting down roots before retirement, and even early in your career if possible. While on assignment in Ottawa, Ali Jalili and his spouse took the plunge and bought their “forever house” in Burlington, Vermont. The couple visited periodically and started to settle in, meeting other former Foreign Service members, as well as others “who are engaged in all sorts of different nongovernment, non-FS careers.” Jalili retired in 2020 and lived there throughout the pandemic. He’s now the trailing spouse in Sarajevo but plans to move to Burlington permanently after his wife retires.

Jack Dootzie, a retired FSO, and his spouse bought a house in the Colorado mountains when their children were young teens. “We wanted them to build strong ties to the mountain West,” he says, because that’s where the couple planned to retire in the future. They returned to the town for home leave and R&R trips, sending the kids to a nearby summer camp each year. Their kids now attend college in Colorado and use the family home as a “base camp” to gather with friends over breaks. “We’ve worked to build a community now that we can rely on when we retire.”

Ambassador (ret.) John Ordway’s family has been in California since the 1850s, so that’s where he wanted to live—near the cabin his parents built in the mountains 50 years ago. He and his wife, MaryJo, found a house not far from there and bought it while on a break from an assignment in Armenia. They used the proceeds from the sale of their Virginia home to pay for the new house, which they rented out until it was time to retire. He recommends putting down roots in a place early, especially if you have kids. “Find somewhere that feels like home, or at least ‘home-ish.’”

## Life on the Farm

### *Lopez Island, Washington*

**Mark Allen** was born in Seattle but moved frequently throughout his life. His wife, Dingdong, is from the Philippines, and the couple lived overseas until their daughter was 14, so finding a home in the United States was “complicated.” They began looking in rural Washington state and settled on Lopez Island when they noticed people waving hello as they drove by. “My parents are from rural Oklahoma,” says Mark. “I always loved how strangers would wave from their cars on the country roads between towns.”

They knew nothing about farming, but they began gardening and soon turned the property into a working farm. Dingdong’s Garden now sells fruits and vegetables at the local farmers market, along with cuttings and scionwood that they sell online.

“We live a more frugal life than when we had steady paychecks,” says Mark, but “in many ways our lives are much richer.” And, he notes, the ferry-served islands of Puget Sound have many part-time job opportunities, including for high schoolers like his daughter, Sophie.



COURTESY OF MARK ALLEN

**The Allen family at the local farmers market.**

The biggest shock wasn’t the transition from urban to rural, or from overseas to the United States. Rather, it was the fact that they had never been homeowners or worked with their hands. “We were paralyzed when we retired straight from New Delhi to our older home and overgrown property,” says Mark, but they attended the “University of YouTube” and learned how to roof the barn, put down flooring and plant an orchard.

### Visit During Multiple Seasons

Kurt Rice, a retired Diplomatic Security special agent and former deputy assistant secretary, and his wife, KC, a retired member of the Civil Service, started narrowing down their possibilities 10 years before retirement eligibility. They both love skiing, hiking and nature photography, so they were drawn to the mountain West; but with no extended family in the region, they had no specific place in mind. The couple began using their vacation time to visit various places that seemed to meet their requirements. Eventually they purchased a condo near a ski resort they enjoyed visiting in Montana, and six years later, they used that as a base to find their permanent retirement home in the area. Last year they started new jobs as ski hosts for the resort, which gets them ski passes and discounts on gear.

If at all possible, Kurt advises, travel extensively to the place you are thinking of moving, and do so in all seasons. “The brochure can be great,” he says, “but the reality, not so much.”

Chris Cortese concurs. “Visit during multiple seasons before you buy. Renting for a time in your new location can also be a

good idea, depending on your situation (and if you can stomach another packout).”

While her job is to sell houses, Carolyn Connell recommends spending time in a place to see how it feels, perhaps even renting at first. It’s logistically possible to buy a place remotely, she says, but “I’ve had people retire to a place, hate it and come back.” Don’t be afraid to change your mind, or to test out a few places long-term until you decide what’s best for you.

### Make a Plan

The most important thing is to start planning early. “You cannot and, except in rare, exceptional cases, should not try to work for the Mother Ship forever,” says Kurt Rice. It is incumbent upon each of us, he says, to plan for life after government service. “Having no plan can leave you trapped in a joyless situation,” he warns. And, he suggests, start developing hobbies and honing skills now, to prevent boredom later.

So get out your notepad and start mapping out your plan. It’s never too early to turn your dream into a roadmap. The only question is: Where do you want your map to take you? ■

# *An Insider's Guide* to the Re-Employed Annuitant Program

**Having second thoughts about leaving government service? Here's a candid and authoritative look at returning to work for the government.**

BY JOHN K. NALAND

**F**rom 2015 to 2021, I worked as a re-employed Foreign Service annuitant at the State Department's Foreign Service Institute. One of my duties was to give presentations at retirement planning seminars on post-retirement federal employment opportunities. Several thousand readers of this article no doubt watched one of those presentations. Below is an updated overview of the topic, accompanied by more candid commentary than I was able to give while speaking in an official capacity.

## **Employment after Retirement**

If early- and mid-career employees think at all about life after the Foreign Service, they most probably envision happily turning in their badge and going on to pursue other interests. But as retirement nears, many of us have second thoughts about completely leaving government service. The topics and tasks that we worked on during our careers still interest and energize us. The knowledge, skills and abilities that we acquired over many



*Retired Foreign Service Officer John K. Naland is in his third term as AFSA retiree vice president. He has also served as AFSA State vice president and twice as AFSA president. He was the director of the State Department Office of Retirement from 2011 to 2015.*



years give us much to continue to contribute to the nation. And, especially for those of us obligated by the up-or-out system to retire in our late 50s or early 60s, we may need additional income for at least a few more years.

Thus, many newly retired Foreign Service members return to work for the government. A survey conducted by FSI of employees who retired in 2018 and 2019 found that 32 percent had taken new federal positions. Those numbers undoubtedly would have been higher if Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had not frozen hiring from February 2017 to March 2018.

Some Foreign Service retirees who return to government service find employment under a personal services contract (PSC) or, more rarely, in a full-time Civil Service job. But the vast majority work part time in the re-employed annuitant (REA) program. Because 85 percent of the Foreign Service works for the State Department and my REA experience was there, this article focuses on the REA program at State.

For information regarding the U.S. Agency for International Development's similar short-term appointment roster (STAR) program, see USAID Automated Directives System (ADS), Chapter 414.3.3.6.

## The Re-Employed Annuitant Program

The REA program, which previously went under the clunky title “while actually employed” (WAE), allows Foreign Service retirees to work up to half of each calendar year while still receiving their full federal pension (but see the note later in this article about annuity supplement payments). The specific limit is 1,040 hours, although the number actually worked varies from position to position. For example, I averaged 480 hours per year in my REA job. The work schedule also depends on the position. REAs sent overseas to cover staffing gaps at embassies and consulates might work several months straight, followed by a long inactive period, whereas my FSI position had me working every single month for an average of 40 hours.

In addition to the limit on hours worked, the REA program has an annual salary cap. Annual REA earnings plus your annuity payments may not exceed the higher of your annual base salary (including locality pay) at retirement or the annualized salary of the REA position. The cap's 12-month calculation period starts on the day of your appointment. For those of us retiring under the Foreign Service Pension System, which came into force in 1984, our pensions rarely exceed 50 percent of our final salary, so the earnings cap usually does not come into play.

Another important fact is that the REA program is decentralized. Each bureau controls its own positions and decides whom

## A survey conducted by FSI of employees who retired in 2018 and 2019 found that 32 percent had taken new federal positions.

to hire to fill them. While retirees looking for REA opportunities can investigate multiple bureaus, only one bureau can put them on their REA rolls (bureaus can temporarily lend an REA to another bureau, but it is not done often). Appointments are for one year, subject to renewal if the bureau still has the need and liked your performance. REAs serve “at will” and thus can be terminated with no appeal. Bureaus are selective about the number of individuals on their rolls, as there are administrative costs associated with each name on the rolls.

Salaries vary from bureau to bureau and from job to job. I was paid as a GG (Government Grade)-13 Step 10 (currently \$66.54 per hour before deductions for Social Security, Medicare and taxes), for example. But some REA jobs pay more, and some pay less. Note that most retirees under age 62 who are receiving an annuity supplement in addition to their regular pension face an earnings test that will reduce their annuity supplement by \$1 for every \$2 in wage income over \$19,560 a year. Since REA salaries—like all wage and net self-employment income—are categorized as earned income, they factor into the earning test.

Bureaus pay for international travel, but typically only from Washington, D.C. Bureaus pay per diem during required training such as the Foreign Affairs Counter Threat course. REAs assigned overseas receive applicable allowances. A valid security clearance is always required. For overseas positions, a worldwide medical clearance is almost always required. Very few REA jobs are virtual.

REAs are paid only for the hours worked. They do not accrue annual leave or sick leave. REAs may not contribute to the Thrift Savings Plan. Federal health and life insurance premiums are deducted from their Foreign Service pension, not their REA salary. A rarely mentioned fact is that, even when not actively working, a retiree who is on a bureau REA roll is a federal employee and is thus subject to Hatch Act restrictions on certain political activities.

## Because the REA program is decentralized, there is no departmentwide list of job openings.

### Network, Network, Network

Because the REA program is decentralized, there is no departmentwide list of job openings. This disappoints many retiring employees because it puts the onus on them to proactively contact one or more bureaus to ask about employment opportunities. This need to network is like lobbying for a highly bid job during your active-duty career—a task that many of us were looking forward to never having to do again in retirement.

Another hurdle facing job seekers stems from shortcomings in the departmentwide registry of retirees seeking positions. While retiring employees can and should submit their contact information to the REA Central Registry run by State's Bureau of Global Talent Management, that registry has two limitations. First, it does not include a searchable database of past assignments, skills and languages spoken. Thus, the registry is of little use to a bureau looking for someone with specific experience or abilities. Second, many bureaus simply never consult the registry. Instead, they add names to their REA rolls only after people proactively apply to them.

A final hurdle is that the number of REA applicants exceeds the number of positions available. Thus, employees nearing retirement who are interested in REA employment must expend effort to find opportunities and convince the hiring official that they meet their needs. For a retired consular officer applying to interview visa applicants during staffing gaps, that probably means not saying that you are unavailable to work in the summer. For someone applying to join an Office of Inspector General inspection team, that means being available to work continuously during a nearly four-month-long inspection cycle.

The best time to investigate potential REA jobs is in the year before retirement. That is when you still have access to the Global Address List and intranet staffing rosters to help you reach out to offices who hire REAs or contact past supervisors who might serve as a reference. While still on active duty, your security clearance remains valid, making post-retirement

revalidation potentially quicker. And, as you go through your pre-separation medical exam, a few additional tests can be done to renew your medical clearance for REA work.

Some people ask if taking a six- to 12-month break at retirement to decompress before returning to work will harm their chances of finding a REA job. While the answer is probably yes, any disadvantage can be mitigated by keeping in touch with contacts in your bureau(s) of interest. But you will probably get a multimonth break even if you do not want it because it is rarely possible to start REA work immediately after retirement. Some bureaus have a long hiring process, and your security clearance may need a time-consuming update.

For those who have been retired for more than a year before seeking an REA job, finding one may be very difficult. Whether true or not, bureau hiring officials may assume that you have not kept up with current technology and office procedures. Also, eligibility for noncompetitive appointments to Civil Service positions, including REA jobs, expires three years after retirement.



### For More Information

A limited amount of information on the REA program can be found on the State Department's Retirement Network internet site at <https://RNet.state.gov>. It helpfully includes a list of bureau REA coordinators with telephone numbers and email addresses.

A 30-minute briefing on post-retirement federal employment opportunities is included in FSI's four-day RV101 Retirement Planning Seminar. Those seminars are currently being presented virtually and are thus available to employees anywhere in the world. The next sessions are June 20-23, July 25-28 and September 26-29. For details, visit [www.state.gov/career-transition-center-ctc](http://www.state.gov/career-transition-center-ctc).

For employees retiring via the RV102 Job Search/Transition Program, that presentation is followed by a panel discussion by representatives of offices that employ many REAs. In recent years, that panel has included the bureaus of Administration (declassification offices), African Affairs and Consular Affairs along with the Office of Inspector General (Office of Inspections) and USAID. ■



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# Working with the U.S. Military

**A retired FSO ambassador offers insights and tips—the real deal—on working with the U.S. military after nearly a decade as a private contractor.**

BY LARRY BUTLER

**S**ince retiring from the Foreign Service, I spend three to four months a year on the road supporting U.S. military exercises and training events. Ignoring the advice in FSI's superb Job Search Program to do something unrelated to my former career, I had already set up a part-time position with the State Department Inspector General and had an offer from a former colleague to be a role player and interagency expert for U.S. Army field exercises. I imagined that working episodically and visiting parts of the United States and the world I had never served in would scratch my travel itch and supplement my annuity.

Two years of working on and off for State gave way to working exclusively with the U.S. military. The colleague who first recruited me had set up a company to provide embassy role play-

ers (e.g., chief of mission, public affairs, USAID, RSO) to prepare brigade combat teams headed for Iraq and Afghanistan. He knew that I had worked closely with the U.S. military; I had served at embassies dealing with armed conflict (Balkans) and on assignments as a foreign policy adviser (POLAD) to NATO and the U.S. military in Iraq and Germany.

Why role players? Since the State Department rarely can spare an FSO for two to three weeks to support pre-deployment training at the Army's training centers (including those in Pennsylvania, Louisiana, California, Indiana and Germany), the business opportunity arose for defense contractors to supply those persons. It was a challenge (with mixed outcomes) to find people with real-world and relevant experience prepared to spend considerable periods of time away from home in austere, uncomfortable locations (e.g., exposed to spider bites in Indiana, sweltering in Louisiana's humidity, and frying while locked in the back of an armored vehicle in the Mojave). But I signed on.

## The Exercise Network

A few weeks later, I found myself at Fort Irwin, California. There may be more remote locations in the United States, but this one's in the top five. For two weeks I was the head of a small diplomatic mission in a fictitious country working with a real Army brigade commander charged with defeating an invading enemy force while interacting with us and local civilian leaders (also role players). Each of the three main Army combat training locations have 10 or more exercises annually, hence the challenge for the many defense contractors to have a bench deep enough to field an adjustable size range of diplomatic missions.



*Ambassador (ret.) Larry Butler served for 40 years with the State Department, starting in Finland and the People's Republic of Bulgaria during the Cold War and finishing his career in the Greater Middle East with postings in Iraq and Afghanistan. He has a record of involvement in peacemaking, including working for President Bill Clinton at the White House for the Northern Ireland Good Friday Accords and with Richard Holbrooke in Belgrade for the Dayton Accords. A Balkans expert, he served in Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia, Kosovo and as U.S. ambassador to Macedonia (2002-2005). He retired from the Foreign Service in 2013 and now provides interagency operational expertise to U.S. military organizations from his home bases in Maine and Virginia.*



COURTESY OF LARRY BUTLER

**Larry Butler, at right, on a training exercise at Fort Irwin in California in September 2017, role-playing the head of a small diplomatic mission in a fictitious country, Atropia. Col. Jay Miseli, at left, commander of the 2nd Stryker Combat Brigade, 2nd Division, was charged with defeating an invading enemy force while interacting with the mission and local civilian leaders (also role players).**

military has to deal with, at other times to dynamically replicate the information and message flow as the exercise plays out.

On a separate track, I was also recruited by name as a “highly qualified expert” or senior mentor for a one-week annual planning

Then I moved up to role-play chief of mission, deputy chief of mission or POLAD for higher-level exercises. There are five of these exercises annually, and they normally occur at the unit’s home post, which may be anywhere from South Korea to Germany or across the United States. Due to my interaction with senior Army commanders and other interagency role-player veterans of these exercises, I started getting requests from other defense contractors to support special operations forces, U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Air Force. In the last three, my duties range from providing instruction (Embassy 101) to officers and units getting ready, or having to be ready, to deploy and work with an American embassy, to replicating an actual embassy. Sometimes I go for just two or three days, sometimes up to three weeks. In 2021, I flew more than 50 segments with United Airlines and logged 110 nights in hotels.

I also support one of the American geographic combatant commands (think CENTCOM, SOUTHCOM, EUCOM or INDOPACOM) for very high-level exercises. Duties start with helping to sketch out the scenario and rollout, and then scripting. We draft authentic-looking embassy cables, news releases and other documents that replicate the environment in which the military has to operate. We are then present when the exercise takes place, sometimes to role-play one of the embassies the

exercise conducted at the Army War College in Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. And West Point invited me to be a co-chair at its annual Student Conference on United States Affairs. Both of these affiliations only lasted for two years, but they were professionally rewarding. I was also asked to serve on a National Defense University workshop examining risks to the Baltics, which led to interactions with the Army’s Foreign Area Officer Association. All of the above helped widen my network and led to new employment opportunities, including a new track to work with NATO.

## Semper Gumby!

One thing to consider in working with the military is that it doesn’t last forever, and one must be adaptable. *Semper Gumby* (Always Flexible) is an unofficial motto in the military. Case in point: I wrote this piece in December 2021. At that time, my work calendar for January through June was packed. Because of Ukraine, nearly every gig was canceled or postponed, a good example of one of my “laws of the Foreign Service”—no job is certain until you get off the airplane.

Contracts end or get modified, senior military leaders move on and new ones have new ideas—and one’s relevance has a sell-by date. The longer you have been retired, the less value you bring. Hence, defense contractors are constantly looking for

## One's reputation combined with effective networking is a force multiplier.

fresh talent. But the opportunities are many and varied and the networks for accessing them dynamic.

Rounding out my experience have been requests from various military publications to author book reviews, articles or opinion pieces, or deliver a lecture. Some are compensated, most not. In early December, I was invited to be a panelist (on Zoom) for one of the Joint Special Operations University's quarterly forums to provide a State Department perspective. Based on that, I am also working with that organization on another project tied to one of my prior assignments.

Other opportunities exist in the arena of working with, or on behalf of, the U.S. military in a full-time capacity. I have referred a dozen retired colleagues for full-time jobs in the Balkans and Middle East to support security force assistance programs funded by both State and the Department of Defense. There are also positions on faculty for the senior defense service schools (National Defense University cluster, and the Army, Navy, Air Force War Colleges) and the Marshall Center in Garmisch, Germany, as well as civilian employee positions at the major commands that have foreign policy adviser shops.

Prior experience is critical here, but there are fewer opportunities today in part because not so many U.S. Army units are in combat zones. This, and other factors, has led to State dialing back the number of FSOs assigned as POLADs since 2013, when the number of FSOs on DoD exchange peaked at about 85, up from 35 to 40 in 2000. This reflected both the ending of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the strain on the Service to provide qualified people. (Sometimes qualified people were sent to places where they were not being used; sometimes they weren't qualified to do the job, and senior military officers can spot that in an instant.) At the same time, as the positive interaction experienced in Iraq and Afghanistan fades, some American military commanders who want to have more say over their foreign policy adviser shops have been opting for direct hires from

among retired military officers—known quantities—rather than State-DoD details.

### The Bottom Line

Here are some of the nitty-gritty factors that made my post-retirement experiences possible and could help with yours.

*Networking.* Much like my Foreign Service career, nearly every contract I have found me. Some were thanks to a tip from a fellow role player, others from former State and Department of Defense colleagues. One's reputation combined with effective networking is a force multiplier, another of my "laws"—it isn't who or what you know, it's who knows you. I get several recruiting help requests monthly and have recommended about a

dozen retired, or retiring, colleagues for jobs. There are dozens of companies, larger and smaller, that hire retired FSOs ranging from midlevel officers to former chiefs of mission. Valiant, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon (and their subcontractors) are the major players, but there are also many small firms. LinkedIn is a good way to find them, or help them find you, and to do proactive networking long before you retire.

A case in point: my turning down another chief-of-mission assignment in favor of going to the U.S. European

Command in Germany for my last Foreign Service gig. Connections made there led to multiple post-employment job opportunities.

*Security clearance.* All of the things I list require at least a current secret clearance, and the company that hires you will hold that clearance under the DoD system. The longer you are away from State and not in the DoD system, the harder to regain a clearance.

*Experience and "life" expectancy.* I spent much of my career in conflict/crisis locations working closely with the U.S. military; my last three assignments were with the military. The military customer wants the real deal, someone who has authentic overseas experience and is fluent or can become fluent in military jargon and acronyms. But military exercises can be contrived, which can be challenging for an FSO to accept. This has led to some being invited to leave and never come back. One's relevance to the military has a shelf life; you are most valuable the day you retire, but it is possible to keep up by maintaining good



Larry Butler supporting an exercise with the 3rd Infantry Division at Fort Stewart in 2021.

COURTESY OF LARRY BUTLER



contacts with the current Foreign Service—I read AFSA's daily Media Digest religiously. And I subscribe to the department's emailed announcements about what senior officials are doing.

*Employment status.* I established a sole-proprietorship LLC (easy to do in Virginia) as the preferred vehicle to sell my services to most defense contractors, which makes me a "1099-MISC" self-employed person for income tax purposes. However, several of my employers have me on their rolls in a "part-time, on call" status, which means they deduct for taxes and social security. Sometimes this means benefits not available in the LLC relationship, though IRS has very generous options to contribute to a "Simplified Employee Pension Plan" (SEP) IRA if one is so inclined.

*Culture shock.* Members of the military have a fixed idea about who we FSOs are: liberal tree-huggers, savers of whales and promoters of socialist values. If you want to work for the military, you have to expect a conservative (and very well-educated) group of people. They are OK with you bringing a different set of values and perspectives (I get humorously stereotyped early and

## You are a contractor, and personality matters.

often), but you should ask yourself, are you capable of returning the favor? I get too many sad anecdotes from my "customers" of how they are treated by FSOs overseas.

*Employment security is an oxymoron.* Contracts come and go. The company I started with lost all the contracts it had with the Army, but the competitors that prevailed on two picked up the interagency team. Several times I got hired for a one-off event. Other times the requirement for role players changed, and positions were eliminated. And there are plenty of people seeking these opportunities. The first time you turn down an opportunity, you might never hear from that company again.

Final words: you are a contractor, and personality matters. Team players who get along well with a diverse group of people succeed. Those who don't, don't get invited back. ■




David L. Mortimer, CPA, has over 25 years of experience in tax planning and research. Including developing tax minimization strategies, planning business/real estate transactions and audit representation.

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# Global Photography From Hobby to Career

For this FSO, commitment to a second career as a photographer was gradual.

BY CHARLES O. CECIL

**"Ensuring  
Your Safety."  
Public  
surveillance  
cameras in  
Yangzhou,  
China.**



CHARLES O. CECIL

Photography had always been my hobby. As I neared my 60th birthday, I began to think of it as a second career. The market for “stock” photography images to illustrate textbooks and magazine articles was good, and it seemed a reasonable way to contribute to helping Americans understand the wider world around us, since it was the cultures of the developing world that interested me the most. After three years as chief of mission in Niamey, I returned to Washington, D.C., in 1999 for an assignment on the Board of Examiners. In 2001, after 35 years in the Service, I decided to retire, to devote myself, I thought, full time to photography and writing.

It turned out to be a gradual, rather than “cold-turkey” retirement. And it would take six more years and a “cataclysmic event” to decisively launch my post-retirement career as a photographer.



For starters, I really enjoyed giving oral exams for BEX, identifying promising candidates for the Service. Moreover, I enjoyed the opportunities to spend two to three weeks at a time in cities around the U.S., giving exams in places I had never visited. Until March 2006 I continued to work for four to five months a year for



*During a 35-year career, Ambassador (ret.) Charles Cecil served in nine Muslim countries in Africa and the Middle East—Kuwait, Zanzibar (now part of Tanzania), Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Mali, Oman, Côte d’Ivoire and Niger, where he was chief of mission. Assignments in Washington included the bureaus of Near Eastern Affairs, African Affairs, Political-Military Affairs and Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, as well as the Board of Examiners of the Foreign Service. He also spent a year on Capitol Hill as a Congressional Fellow. He retired in 2001, but subsequently served in Libya as chargé d’affaires from November 2006 until July 2007. Since that time he has devoted himself full time to his second career, working as an international travel photographer. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, he served as an officer in the U.S. Air Force. He and his wife, Jean, whom he met in Kuwait on his first assignment, have three children and six grandchildren. He can be reached at [chuck@cecilimages.com](mailto:chuck@cecilimages.com).*



CHARLES O. CECIL

**“Desert Conversation.” In In-Gall, a town in the Agadez region of Niger, Tuareg nomads parade camels at the Cure Salé, an annual gathering.**

BEX in re-employed annuitant status, and traveled overseas at my own expense when I could.

Then in late 2006 I benefited from a sudden, unexpected opportunity when the chargé d'affaires at our newly opened embassy in Tripoli fell ill and had to leave the post. The department needed someone to fill in while our first ambassador went through the process of obtaining agrément and Senate approval. I agreed to go to Tripoli in November and wound up staying eight months. It was a fantastic opportunity to observe Libya under Muammar Qadhafi's ironfisted rule and to revive my reporting and management skills.

Geologists speak of the cataclysmic event—the earthquake, the 1,000-year flood—that changes the face of the earth far more than the daily erosion of grains of sand carried away by streams, or the wind, or the waves of the sea. The defining event in my long involvement with photography occurred in Tripoli. I knew

I could not get 35 mm color slide film developed there, and I didn't want to risk X-ray damage while sending film back to the States in the pouch for development. To solve the problem, I bought a digital camera, along with lots of memory cards, and never looked back. I have not exposed a piece of film since.



When I returned to the United States in July 2007, I decided it was time to commit myself to this new career full time. By 2010 I had earned enough publication credits to be accepted as a member of the Society of American Travel Writers and met the membership requirements for joining the American Society of Media Photographers. In 2012 I was named a “Best of 2012” ASMP photographer for documenting daily life in two Islamic madrasas in northern India. In subsequent years, I won awards from SATW for portfolios of images of Bali, Bhutan and Singapore. I currently





**“Navarathri Celebrations.” A priest performs a ritual prayer before a Hindu deity at Temple Sri Vadapathira Kalliamman in Singapore.**

market my images through a British stock agency, Alamy, and through my own website at [www.cecilimages.com](http://www.cecilimages.com).

Because my 10 overseas Foreign Service assignments were all in Muslim countries (six Arab, four in sub-Saharan Africa), I initially focused my attention on Islamic culture, benefiting from the department’s having enabled me to learn Swahili, French and Arabic along the way. But as a good part of the Arab world became more politically volatile during our invasion of Iraq and the events of the “Arab Spring” and its aftermath, I began to cast my gaze further afield. After returning from Libya, I’ve made trips to Nepal, Zanzibar, Cuba, New Zealand, Cambodia, Myanmar, India, Senegal, South Africa, Morocco, Indonesia, Peru, Honduras, England, Tanzania, Malaysia, Thailand, Bhutan and Singapore, plus two trips to China and two to Mexico.

With the freedom the pension provides, I’ve found that photography offers me wonderful outlets for artistic creativity and for continued learning about the cultures of the world.

I went back to my community college to learn Spanish; and after twice taking every course they offered, I applied for admission to George Mason University as an undergraduate—successfully, thank goodness!—so I could take a third-year Spanish course. (Senior citizens in Virginia benefit from free tuition at our state universities.) To augment that, I spent weeks in Oaxaca, Mexico, and Antigua, Guatemala, studying in schools that accept foreigners by the week. My camera was always nearby.



While a cataclysmic event moved me to digital photography, the market for photographic images has experienced the erosion phenomenon. The proliferation of digital “point-and-shoots” and cell phones has had the effect of flooding the market with images that many editors and publishers now decide are “good enough” for their purposes. The prices for stock photographic images have fallen considerably in the last 10 years, making it a struggle to recoup travel expenses and make a small profit by producing and selling them. It is easier when I can find an outlet for an article to accompany my images, but it’s the photography I most enjoy.

I couldn’t recommend this work to anyone who does not have a good pension as a safety net. But with the freedom the pension provides, I’ve found that photography offers me wonderful outlets for artistic creativity and for continued learning about the cultures of the world. My new professional associations have introduced me to entirely new networks of creative and knowledgeable individuals. My health is great. Prospects for the next five to 10 years look good. ■





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# Setting Sail Life after USAID

**Short-term consulting gigs with USAID made for a gratifying transition to full retirement for this FSO.**

BY CHARLES LLEWELLYN

One of the benefits of a career in the U.S. Foreign Service is the possibility of early retirement with a federal pension, allowing one to pursue a second career or latent dreams.

As a USAID health and population officer, I experienced highs and lows. The upside was truly making a difference by working with incredible colleagues to improve the health status of citizens and building the skills of host nationals to develop stronger health systems. There were also trying times working under policies and administrations not in line with my views about development. Sometimes I was tempted to resign in protest, but the threat of losing my pension was enough to nudge my cost-benefit calculation in favor of sticking it out to fight the good fight from within instead of running away.

Let me share my journey.



*Charles E. Llewellyn III joined USAID in 1988 as a health and population officer and served overseas in Bolivia, Ghana, Nepal, Bangladesh and Tanzania, in addition to assignments in USAID's Global Health Bureau and Asia Near East Bureau. He retired from the Foreign Service in 2010 to Beaufort, North Carolina. His daughter, Bronwyn, a Foreign Service officer with USAID, continues the Llewellyn family tradition.*



I joined USAID relatively late, at age 35, and served in five missions in South America, Africa and South Asia. While I loved my job, my last two tours took their toll on my health. I was the director of USAID Bangladesh's Population, Health and Nutrition Office from 2000 to 2005, including managing the agency's largest family planning program. I had extended a fifth year to allow my son to graduate from the American International School in Dhaka, and in the last year had the responsibility to report to Congress in 2004 the first-ever violation of the U.S. government's Mexico City policy that had been reinstated in 2001.

The restriction on U.S. federal funding for NGOs that provide abortion counseling or services made continued support of certain organizations offering family planning in Bangladesh very challenging, but was a part of our job. However, the administration's response to the notification of the violation was extreme and totally consumed our office for a whole year, causing great stress to the program, our staff and to myself.

My next posting was as director of the Health and Population Office in Tanzania. We had a small \$12 million portfolio of child survival and family planning activities because the HIV/AIDS program was managed by a separate office. Between the time I was appointed, and arrived at post in late 2005, it was announced that Tanzania was designated one of the first three





**Llewellyn's retirement office, November 2021.**

President's Malaria Initiative countries. I had a wonderful time helping to develop that program and was also able to greatly expand the family planning, maternal and child health and other disease portfolios to the point that when I left, the office budget was over \$120 million a year, with 20 employees. So my quiet new job became one with giant challenges and responsibilities. Not without stress but with many successes.

I loved the work and the life (I was a sailor and the diving secretary of the Dar es Salaam Yacht Club). But when I men-

tioned to my wife, Deborah, that we should start looking for another post, she resisted. Deborah was ready to enjoy the North Carolina coastal home we had purchased, spend more time with extended family and launch a few creative endeavors. I was still focused on my international public health career and was not sure what else I could do outside USAID, where I had seniority and stable employment.

Deborah was also concerned for my health. I was exhausted from the long hours and responsibilities. She argued that I should retire, relax and take on some consulting where I would be paid more, set my own work schedule and have fewer actual responsibilities. After looking at the surprisingly old man in the mirror, I agreed.



In March 2010, at age 60, I took the Foreign Service Career Transition Center Job Search Program (aka Retirement Seminar), which I found very well done and useful. I retired and began collecting my annuity. Rather than starting a second career, I looked to my role model for retirement, USAID Health Officer Sam Haight, who had been my mentor in Ecuador during my Peace Corps service. After his retirement from USAID,

## I had lots of adventures, and some challenges, but really enjoyed the work, especially mentoring junior officers.

Sam worked as a part-time adviser in the USAID Health Office in Peru, where I served in 1986, and for other missions.

I was able to get several short consulting contracts with former institutional contractors (cleared by USAID Legal because I was advising them on general directions in health development and in no way representing them to USAID). For short-term assignments, not reimbursed by the government, they were happy to pay me a generous daily rate, which established my salary history.

From 2010 to 2020, I worked part time with 13 USAID mission health offices under a wide variety of agency hiring mechanisms,

including GHPro, Mission Personal Service Contracts, BPA, STAR, the Firehouse and others. I would do almost anything a mission health office wanted me to do, and could put up with nearly anything, anywhere on a short-term basis.

There was a lot of demand for challenging missions like Angola (home of the \$250 cheeseburger) and Nigeria (where I would go to and from the airport in an armored vehicle with an armed guard in the front seat, unless they forgot to send someone, in which case I would take a taxi). My wife encouraged me to take one-month assignments, so we could enjoy more retirement time together. So if a mission wanted me for a longer-term assignment, I would negotiate terms like one month on, one month off.

I had lots of adventures, and some challenges, but really enjoyed the work, especially mentoring junior officers. I was recruited to work in Benin and Mali. When I protested that I don't speak French, the missions said they didn't care—I spoke USAID-ese, which is all they wanted. Fortunately, the USAID/Benin health office assigned a third-year Peace Corps volunteer



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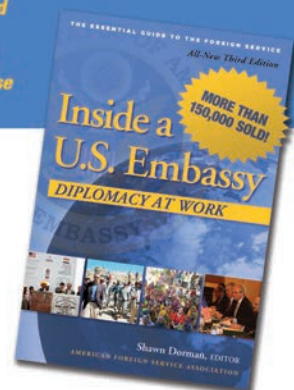
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to me, so I wouldn't starve, and we enjoyed zipping around by moto taxi. I also returned to familiar missions, such as Nepal where I was able to save the government housing money by living with my daughter, Bronwyn, who had joined USAID as an FSO when I retired. It was very personally satisfying to help Nepal's health sector recover from the earthquake in 2015.

Finally, I went to Ghana in January 2020 for the first of two monthlong assignments, but COVID-19 put a stop to that. So I resigned my personal services contract and reentered retirement full time, yet again.



This retirement strategy has worked very well for me. I was able to "keep my hand in" public health on a part-time basis and provide some greatly appreciated support to beleaguered missions based on my 30 years of experience. At age 70, I decided to finally hang it up and leave this work to younger minds and bodies.

By working half time during this 10-year period, I was able to

**By working half time during this 10-year period, I was able to gradually transition to more typical retirement avocations—woodworking, diving and sailing.**

gradually transition to other more typical retirement avocations, such as woodworking, diving and sailing. Indeed, this article is being drafted from a sailboat I am crewing from North Carolina to the Virgin Islands! Consulting allowed me to make a considerable amount of money to finance my retirement, including lots of tax-free per diem and frequent flyer airline mileage. I realize that this lifestyle is not for everyone, but it surely worked for me! ■



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# AFSA *Resources* for Retirees

BY DOLORES BROWN

I can still remember reading a random headline when I was about a decade away from retirement that asserted I would need \$1.5 million in IRAs to keep the wolves from the door. That shook me, as I would have nowhere near that amount of money in 10 years, even though I had been consistently putting the maximum in my Thrift Savings Plan. In fact, that headline was patently wrong for me, as it would have been for you, because it was meant for people who would not have a guaranteed federal annuity or pension for life.

Moral of the story? It is easy to fall into false assumptions concerning retirement. I did not realize until rather late in my education on the topic that the retirement package for federal employees rests on three pillars. Current Foreign Service members will ultimately have at least three income streams in retirement: an annuity; Social Security benefits; and distributions from the Thrift Savings Plan. There is, in addition, a fourth pillar—namely, government-subsidized Federal Employees Health Benefits, a significant benefit. I've come to think of the package as something like a very sturdy kitchen stool.

## AFSA's Programs on Retirement

Join us for retirement-related programming. A few examples:

### Finances and Benefits

- Planning for Your Life and Lifestyle, with Financial Planner Dwayne Jackson, RPJ Advisors
- Reviewing Your Retirement Plan, with AFSA VP John Naland, former director of State's Retirement Office

### Next Stage Programs (to discuss with your FS colleagues how they made successful career transitions)

- Teaching International Affairs and the Art of Diplomacy
- Post-FS Careers for Diplomatic Security Personnel

## Keep in Touch!

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Regardless of our unique retirement package, it's crucial to start thinking about positioning yourself for retirement early, even if you plan to retire at the latest possible date or it isn't in your DNA to think that far ahead. Preparing for a healthy financial retirement is a complicated subject, full of variables that will evolve over time and, at least for me, required repetition and reinforcement to fully understand. The decisions you make early in your career concerning things like how much to save in your TSP and IRAs and whether to invest in a rental property will reverberate either positively or negatively as you get closer to your retirement date.

We at AFSA help our members prepare for a successful retirement as a continuum, which starts early in your career and extends beyond retirement. Our Retirement Newsletter, for instance, is sent to all members—active duty and retired—and contains information of interest to people at all points of the continuum.

Our Federal Benefits programs are concise but comprehensive guides to what members should be thinking about, depending on where they are in that continuum. They help to reinforce and crystallize what you will learn from the excellent in-depth courses on retirement at the Foreign Service Institute. Indeed, one of our most popular annual webinars is a Review of Your Retirement Plan, which helps you determine whether a course correction is needed, which is very helpful after retirement.

But successful retirement rests on more than financial stability. AFSA offers support in many other ways as members cross the retirement Rubicon. We established a series of programs, titled

## Putting a Face to the Name: Meet Dolores Brown

Over the past four years, Counselor for Retirees Dolores Brown has offered her guidance to many AFSA members, helping them access vital information about their retirement benefits and post-Foreign Service work and life.

Hailing from a small town in central New Jersey, Brown studied Russian and art history at Barnard College before earning a master's degree from Columbia University's School of International Affairs, with a focus on Soviet affairs.

She joined the Foreign Service as a management officer in 1985. Years later, in her oral history interview with the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Brown shared her first impressions of A-100: "I could see immediately that this was my tribe. They had a serious intellectual side, a sense of wonder about the world and a sense of adventure. We also believed in the basic idea of the goodness of American values. I didn't look back."

Brown's career has been varied and includes service as director of the watch in the State Department Operations Center, deputy chief of mission in Estonia, management counselor in Cairo and deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations. Brown



also was the first State Department officer seconded to the FBI to establish the Terrorist Screening Center after 9/11.

Alongside four Superior Honor Awards and the FBI Director's Award from Robert Mueller, Brown's bio contains an unusual accolade: In 2018, she was inducted into hamburger purveyor White Castle's "Cravers Hall of Fame," for her work as a diplomat and for her undying loyalty to

the fast-food chain's onion-covered sliders.

In 2018 Brown began working for AFSA. "This job is a purely helping position, and I like that," Brown says of her role. "I felt I had the right kind of knowledge of the State Department to help solve problems."

She believes that retired practitioners of diplomacy are a unique brain trust for the United States, and their skill set can easily be parlayed into a second profession.

"The Foreign Service is not a job; it's a way of life," she says. "I wanted to support people through their transitions—how can you use this incredible bank of knowledge and this distinctive background after retiring? I deal with bread-and-butter issues in this role, but I also have the ability to help people understand what comes next."

"Next Stage" in which colleagues who have successfully transitioned to careers after the Foreign Service share how they did it. After all, the Foreign Service brain trust is unique in the U.S. and formidable, and for those who wish to continue working there are plenty of opportunities.

And because the Foreign Service is not just a job, but a way of life, AFSA offers community through social media and gatherings that give members the opportunity to meld their past with their present.

Finally, and most practically, once that Rubicon has been crossed and you no longer have access to the intranet and your range of contacts in your agency, AFSA provides you with an advocate to turn to if you hit bureaucratic snags.

For all these reasons and more, we at AFSA consider our members lifelong partners, and we work to make that membership meaningful and beneficial at all stages. ■

### Top Retiree Member Benefits

*Staying Aware:* The *Foreign Service Journal* including a regular column from Retiree VP John Naland, AFSA's curated Media Digest, and topical events such as Ambassador (ret.) Marie Yovanovitch's presentation on her memoir, *Lessons from the Edge*, and AFSA President Eric Rubin on the state of the Foreign Service.

*Staying Smart:* Retirement Newsletter and AFSA's One-Stop Shop at [afsa.org/retirement-services](https://afsa.org/retirement-services).

*Staying Engaged:* Directory of Retired Members, Retiree Associations, Speakers Bureau.

*Staying Secure:* Counselor for Retirees Dolores Brown ([brown@afsa.org](mailto:brown@afsa.org)) is available to offer you and your family personalized support if you run into bureaucratic roadblocks or need advice.

### AFSA's Retirement Newsletter

Six times a year, AFSA publishes the Retirement Newsletter and sends it to all members. Our aim is to provide concise and digestible content to help demystify retirement—from the planning phase through making the most of your benefits. If you are an AFSA member and are not receiving the Retirement Newsletter, please email [member@afsa.org](mailto:member@afsa.org).

# BOOSTING SPACE DIPLOMACY at State

**Though the Space Age is not new, space diplomacy remains an esoteric specialty at State. Here's why it's important to start changing this now.**

BY DAVID A. EPSTEIN

**W**ith ever-increasing speed, humanity is expanding the scope of its activities in outer space, thanks to private enterprise as well as via national pursuits. In the last two years alone, for example, the number of active and defunct satellites in low Earth orbit has increased by more than 50 percent, to around 5,000, with plans to add tens of thousands more in the coming years. Equally surprising, these satellites are owned and operated by nearly 100 different countries and organizations around the world—not just the small but growing number of nations with domestic satellite launch capabilities—and involve a wide range of commercial, scientific and security and defense endeavors. Dangers lurk, however, and U.S. diplomacy must be prepared.

The United Nations took steps in December 2020 and November 2021 to reduce space threats and establish norms, rules and principles of responsible behavior in outer space. The importance of such efforts was demonstrated by Russia's Nov. 15, 2021, anti-satellite missile test, which caused a massive and dangerous debris field that threatened space assets and forced astronauts and cosmonauts aboard the International Space Station to take refuge in emergency escape capsules.



*David A. Epstein joined the Foreign Service in 2007. He currently serves at USNATO in Brussels where his portfolio includes space policy. He also taught space policy while on detail at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Other assignments include Embassy San Salvador, then-Consulate General Jerusalem, Embassy Kabul and Embassy Sofia, as well as a tour in Washington, D.C. He is married with three sons.*





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The 2019 establishment of the U.S. Space Force is tangible recognition that humanity's future lies among the stars, representing as it does an acute awareness that where human beings venture, conflict often follows. In January NATO released its formal space policy that recognizes space as a new operational domain, alongside air, land, sea and cyberspace. At the same time, much positive bilateral and multilateral work has occurred in space. From U.S.-Soviet space cooperation dating to the 1970s, to the International Space Station and now the Artemis lunar program, collaboration has proven more the rule than the exception.

It is imperative that the State Department, too, be in space. Today's diplomats, not tomorrow's, must develop a deep understanding of the interdisciplinary legal and policy aspects of outer space and a firm grasp of national priorities, interests, opportunities and policy constraints in space. State must invest in space as an increasingly vital element in all the various areas in which we work.

Everything from agriculture and the environment to commerce and defense will be influenced by humanity's expansion into the cosmos. Space activities and operations may take place in their own separate domain for cooperation and for conflict, but satellites and other space assets will also serve as platforms that affect and are affected by terrestrial developments, as well. The Department of State and the Foreign Service are uniquely

situated to help address the cross-cutting and interconnected nature of the opportunities and challenges of this activity.

## DIPLOMACY IN THE SPACE AGE

Thus far, much of U.S. space policy and diplomacy is limited to a small cadre of subject matter experts. However, the positions dealing with space are few and far between and often represent a one-time career flourish. Quite simply, State does not have generalists who can engage on space regardless of posting and develop these skills over time.

Understanding space issues and opportunities begins with education, training and awareness raising. Our Department of Defense colleagues are preparing this generation of national defense professionals for careers involving space operations; the State Department must do the same. While on detail as Department of State Visiting Professor at the United States Air Force Academy, I had the honor and privilege of being part of a team to consider and devise curriculum for cadets graduating into the United States Space Force. As part of this effort, I directed and taught a course on space policy in the political science department. Alongside DoD, NASA, Commerce and other agencies, State will join interagency discussions and policymaking that will increasingly demand proficiency in the language of space.

America's diplomats must become fluent in this language like

On April 18, 2020, 967 U.S. Air Force Academy cadets became the Space Force's newest second lieutenants. Here they are marching on to the terrazzo to start the USAF's Class of 2020 Graduation Ceremony in Colorado Springs, Colorado.



U.S. AIR FORCE/TRANG LE

## Alongside DoD, NASA, Commerce and other agencies, State will join interagency discussions and policymaking that will increasingly demand proficiency in the language of space.

any other, though to varying degrees depending on the role space plays in individual portfolios. The Foreign Service Institute should consider a course—brief and online, at first—to introduce Foreign Service officers to space law, history and policy. Subsequently, FSI can develop a tiered approach, with topic-specific modules to prepare FSOs to integrate space into their work.

We must also become familiar with what our interagency colleagues are doing in space, along with allies and partners around the globe. While most people consider the European Space Agency or nations such as Russia, China and India, as “space-faring nations,” few are aware, for example, that NASA engages with more than 100 countries conducting space exploration and research. We have professionals in embassies in each and every one of these countries working in areas that intersect with this international space cooperation. We need diplomats who can engage on space to build on this cooperation and expand its potential for bringing peace and prosperity. Unfortunately, we must also become better attuned to the actions of adversaries that utilize and exploit space to advance their interests at the expense of our own.

The Department of State must have professionals who understand the enduring interests, policies and procedures of the United Nations and NATO, as well as NASA and the Department of Defense, on space issues, but also those of commercial enterprises such as SpaceX, and the aspirations of allies, partners and adversaries around the globe.

The department and the Foreign Service cannot subcontract this knowledge to others within the interagency, the private sec-

tor or the international community; nor can we rely exclusively on a small corps of Civil Service colleagues. It is no exaggeration to say that, increasingly, such knowledge will be vital to our ability to do our jobs on behalf of the United States and for the peace and prosperity of planet Earth. Just as we have Foreign Service officers who develop expertise in human rights or energy policy, the State Department will require specialization in space as well as general, introductory exposure for all officers, no matter their cone or location.

Many Civil Service colleagues already possess impressive backgrounds and institutional knowledge regarding space, and the U.S. State Department has numerous talented professionals working on space-related matters at any one time. But such talent and resources need to be expanded and coordinated across the department because space increasingly affects all aspects of U.S. foreign policy and our collective work to advance America's interests and values. A deliberate, organized approach to space at State will ensure that talent and experience are expanded, retained and applied where needed, and not lost or neglected throughout individual careers.

The synchronization of our space-related work will allow State to lead U.S. efforts with global allies and partners and to support other more targeted undertakings throughout the interagency, as well as within the scientific, commercial and academic realms.

### THE FUTURE IS NOW

Space already plays a critical role in so many aspects of life and so much of what we do as diplomats. The role it can play in

**Additionally, there are aspects of humanity's future in space we have not yet considered nor fully addressed from a legal or policy standpoint that will depend on State's interdisciplinary expertise.**

aiding democracy protesters, for instance, to communicate via uncensored commercial satellite communication technology should be just as important to and just as well understood by human rights officers as it is to the interagency colleagues and the private sector firms seeking to protect those satellites from attack or disruption by malign actors. It seems self-evident that the State Department has a role to play in supporting and advancing these objectives.

Public affairs officers, too, must be able to tell the story of why outer space is important in what we do, and share that message alongside the other essential communication roles they perform. More broadly, cell phone communication, e-commerce and other aspects of our daily, digital lives rely on space and have interagency interests that intersect with nongovernmental equities as well.

Additionally, there are aspects of humanity's future in space we have not yet considered nor fully addressed from a legal or policy standpoint that will depend on State's interdisciplinary expertise and perspective to ensure U.S. interests and values are secured. Existing agreements such as the Outer Space Treaty contain significant gaps in coverage and ambiguities in verification that can lead to misunderstanding and conflict without constant awareness of developments in civil, commercial and military space capabilities. Alternatively, though, filling these gaps and clarifying such ambiguities can serve as a framework for communication and cooperation.

Unforeseen circumstances and scenarios, to say nothing of technologies, will require space expertise to craft the next generation of agreements, alliances and partnerships for and in space. Humanity's future in space, in other words, presents the same challenges and opportunities for conflict or cooperation as in other domains, but the stakes will soon be far greater than ever before.

Future cooperation, and potential conflict in space, will not be limited to purely political or scientific realms but cover the full spectrum of human and international interests and disciplines. The United States Department of State and the Foreign Service represent the greatest combination of experience and expertise

to help lead American and global efforts for a peaceful and bountiful future of extraterrestrial innovation and achievement.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

In time, various positions at our missions around the world should expand their portfolios to include space, depending on the contours and needs of the relationship. Environment, science, technology, and health (ESTH) and political-military (PolMil) officers seem a natural fit, but so too are public affairs officers. So many of us work in countries where space is or is becoming a part of the relationship with the United States that the variety of participants in such programs appears limitless. In the future, certain posts may require a dedicated space portfolio officer or even a unit or section within the mission. The Bureau of Global Talent Management's Professional Development Unit may one day offer programs or other support that leads to an M.A. or LLM in space-based studies for officers demonstrating a dedication to space diplomacy.

The State Department is represented on the reestablished National Space Council and has a select number of positions dealing with space at multilateral missions. Foggy Bottom also has positions in the bureaus of Arms Control, Verification, and Compliance and Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, among others, focused on space activities. Our Civil Service and Foreign Service colleagues in these positions have already made tremendous contributions to international treaties and agreements. It may be time, however, for more FSOs and members of the Civil Service to be aware of space and prepared for space-related policy decision-making. Satellite imagery will, for example, aid the work of State Department officials focused on alleviating humanitarian and refugee crises just as much as it serves officers engaged in energy and security issues.

Highlighting the importance of outer space in our future diplomacy may require a special envoy or ambassador-at-large or even a functional bureau down the line. For now, however, introducing space to as many members of the Civil Service and Foreign Service as possible would be a tremendous beginning.

State will be needed in space. Now is the time to prepare. ■



# LETHAL ENCOUNTER IN TEHRAN

## The Attack on U.S. Vice Consul Robert Imbrie and Its Aftermath

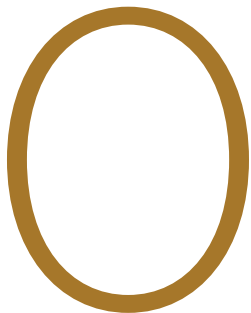
**Almost a century ago, an American diplomat died overseas at the hands of a mob.  
The implications of this tragic incident reached far beyond Iran's capital city.**

BY MICHAEL ZIRINSKY



On an inspection tour in Tehran in 1924, U.S. Vice Consul Robert W. Imbrie (at left) poses in front of a vehicle with a staff member and local aides.

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n Friday, June 22, 1956, my suburban New York family arrived in Tehran. The next day my father began his Cold War job as counsel to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf District supervising construction contracts for Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. In September I began ninth grade at the American Presbyterian Mission's Community

School. Soon afterward, an uncle sent me his old Rolleiflex camera, a present for my 14th birthday. As I readied it for use, my parents warned me strongly, "*Do not take pictures in public!*" They had heard that an American diplomat had been killed years earlier for doing so.

Fast forward to 1979: The Iranian Revolution found me in Idaho, a newly minted Ph.D. teaching modern European and Middle Eastern history at Boise State. Although I had been trained as a Europeanist, the revolution provoked me to investigate U.S.-Iran relations. I arrived at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 26, 1981. That day I was attracted by a strange entry in the 1939 *Foreign Relations of the United States* regarding the killing in Tehran on July 18, 1924, of Vice Consul Robert W. Imbrie—that same diplomat. The Iranian government had objected to publication of some relevant documents, so "the Department reluctantly reached the conclusion that it would be best to defer publication [on Imbrie] until such time as the Iranian Government was in a position to give its consent." (The department has never published the documents in FRUS.)

Undeterred, I started with Imbrie's personnel file. There I discovered that one of the many explanations suggested for his murder was that the crowd that beat him to death objected to his

photographing a religious "shrine." The archivists also pointed me to the Dulles papers at Princeton University and the Presbyterian archives in Philadelphia. Allen Dulles was chief of the State Department Near Eastern Affairs Division in 1924, and most Americans in Iran then were Presbyterian missionaries who for decades had operated schools and hospitals throughout northern Iran.

The next day, as I began to connect this episode with my parents' warning, I became aware of an exodus from the archives. The U.S. Embassy Tehran hostages were on their way from Andrews

Air Force Base to the White House! I joined the crowd on Pennsylvania Avenue. While we waited, a rumor swept through the throng: The buses were coming from the east, in the far lanes. As one, we flooded the near lanes, despite horrified efforts by police to keep us on the sidewalk. We all cheered the heroes of our national humiliation, then returned to work. But as I contemplated the Tehran crowd of July 1924, I realized I had just received a lesson: A crowd is more than a group of individuals. It can—as had the Paris crowd of July 14, 1789, and as had the crowd that killed Imbrie—take on a life of its own and do what no individual intends to do.

### On That Friday in July 1924

The bare outline of what happened that Friday in July 1924 seems clear. One of the

nodes of anti-Baha'i violence, rife in Tehran that summer, was a *saqqa-khaneh*, a "fountain" where a Baha'i was said to have been struck blind when he failed to bless the Shia saints, then had his sight restored when he did so. Imbrie, accompanied by Melvin Seymour—an oilfield roughneck serving a one-year sentence in the consular prison for assaulting another American oil worker with a baseball bat—approached the fountain with a camera.

Imbrie seems to have anticipated violence because he had armed his prisoner with a blackjack. Someone called out "Baha'is!" and the crowd attacked. Imbrie and Seymour ran away. They were caught and beaten. Extricated by the police, they were taken to a police hospital for treatment. There they were attacked again, the crowd augmented by soldiers from Reza Khan's army whose barracks were nearby. Imbrie died of his wounds, including a saber slash to his head. Mrs. Imbrie believed Seymour survived because attackers relented at the sight of his naked body: "Certain physical appearances gave evidence that Seymour might be a Mohammedan."



A portrait of Robert W. Imbrie, 1924.



Michael Zirinsky, emeritus professor of modern history at Boise State University, calls himself a "utility outfielder" who taught European and Middle Eastern history at Boise State from 1973 to 2012. Schooled in New York, Iran, Ohio, North Carolina and Washington, D.C., he has researched early 20th-century Western relations with the Middle East in archives in London, Paris, Washington, Philadelphia and Birmingham (U.K.).



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**U.S. Vice Consul Robert W. Imbrie and his wife, Katherine, in 1924.**

I published my conclusions in the August 1986 issue of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, connecting the incident both to international and Iranian domestic contexts. In the international context, Britain was attempting to dominate Iran in order to stabilize the borders of its Indian empire and its new mandate for Iraq, as well as to secure control of Iranian oilfields. The Anglo-Russian “Great Game in Asia” continued in Iran in the 1920s, although the terminology had become that of the “Cold War.”

Britain failed to make Iran a “colony by treaty” with the abortive 1919 Anglo-Persian Agreement, despite paying members of the Iranian government to ensure ratification. Subsequently, British officials in Iran encouraged Cossack General Reza Khan to seize power in Tehran in early 1921, to forestall a feared Soviet incursion after Britain withdrew its army from Iran in the spring.

Anglo-American rivalry also continued in Iran, especially over oil. In 1914 Winston Churchill had bought a controlling interest in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (now BP) in order to end the Royal Navy’s dependence on American oil. A decade later Foreign Secretary George Curzon expressed Britain’s continuing intent to keep American “fingers” out of Britain’s “oil can,” opposing Iran’s efforts to grant an oil concession to an American-owned company.

In the Iranian domestic context, Reza Khan sought to curb independent tribal forces and the domination of cities by local bazaar merchants and their clerical allies by establishing a military dictatorship over the entire country. He supported the

American financial mission Iran had hired in 1922 in an effort to break dependence on British subsidies. In March 1924, Reza sought to end the Qajar monarchy and make himself president of a republic, as Mustafa Kemal had recently done in Turkey.

Popular opposition to Reza’s proposed republican dictatorship was mobilized by Shia clergy, both in the Majlis and in the streets. In the Majlis, Ayatollah Sayyid Hassan Modarres led the resistance, arguing: “The source of our politics is our religion.” During World War I, Modarres had been a member of the Ottoman-supported Nationalist government, opposing Russia and Britain, and in 1919 he had helped lead opposition to the Anglo-Persian Agreement. Other clerics in Tehran mobilized a crowd of demonstrators, who were attacked in the Majlis garden on March 22 by two regiments of Reza’s Cossacks.

The Majlis refused to pass the bill. Reza was believed to be ready to flee the country; instead, he recovered by paying obeisance to the ulama, going to Qom and promising Ayatollahs Hairi, Naini and Isfahani that he would never make a republic. Whether explicit or tacit, he also seems to have given free rein to the clergy to organize anti-Baha’i violence.

## So Who Was Robert Imbrie?

Why was Imbrie in Tehran? He was no diplomat. “Adventurer-spy” is a better description. Bored with the practice of law in Baltimore, he had joined an expedition to the Congo in 1911. When war began in Europe in 1914, he volunteered for the French Army, serving as an ambulance driver at Verdun and Salonika. In 1918 he published an account of his adventures, *Behind the Wheel of a War Ambulance*.

When the U.S. joined the war in 1917, Imbrie entered the Foreign Service and was sent as a special consular agent to Petrograd, where he repeatedly clashed with Bolsheviks. Expelled from Soviet territory, he moved to Viborg, Finland, running agents into Soviet Russia until June 1920. Subsequently, he was sent to Istanbul to work with Pyotr Wrangel’s White army in the Crimea, but Wrangel was defeated before he arrived.

In Istanbul he became friendly with young Allen Dulles, then deputy to American High Commissioner Admiral Mark Bristol. Dulles seems to have been instrumental in assigning Imbrie to Ankara, where he opened American relations with the Kemalists and facilitated Admiral Chester’s efforts to obtain an American mining and oil concession in Anatolia. In October 1924, *The National Geographic Magazine* posthumously published Imbrie’s adventure tale, “Crossing Asia Minor, the Country of the New Turkish Republic.”

Imbrie was recalled to Washington in July 1923 to answer



charges that his friendship with Turks had endangered the lives of Greeks and Armenians. He was also accused of calling Louise Bryant, the widow of John Reed and pregnant fiancée of William Bullitt, a Bolshevik. After clearing Imbrie of the charges, Dulles, by this time chief of the Near Eastern Affairs Division at State, assigned him to the consulate at Tabriz, again to spy on Soviet Russia and to facilitate the American oil concession for northern Iran that Tehran had offered as collateral for an American loan.

Dulles knew he was gambling, writing on Sept. 19, 1923, that “in sending a man of Imbrie’s impetuous disposition to far away countries we are taking a certain risk. ... The only question is whether the advantages ... justify this risk. I am rather inclined to think they would.” In Iran, Imbrie was temporarily assigned to the Tehran consulate.

Why did Imbrie go to the saqqa-khaneh? He had recently intervened with the Iranian government on behalf of American Baha’is, Dr. Susan Moody and her nurse Elizabeth Stewart, so his curiosity was understandable. He was also a freelance writer and photographer. In retrospect, his investigation appears to have been insufficiently cautious, perhaps because of his ignorance of the domestic political situation on that day of public prayer, shortly before the onset of Muharram, a time of public mourning for the martyrdom of Imam Hussein and of ritual cursing of foreign enemies: Sunnis, Arabs, Turks and—more recently—Western imperialists.

## The U.S. Reaction to Imbrie’s Death

As I reconsider this episode in U.S.-Iranian relations, what strikes me most sharply is the ignorant arrogance of American reaction. The press, whose information came primarily from U.S. government sources, regarded the murder as the result of religious fanaticism. Or perhaps it was “a Bolshevik mob,” as a *Chicago Tribune* report from Istanbul put it, alleging that Imbrie had been on a “Bolshevik death list for six years.”

The prejudice, racism and violence of the American government response to the murder were appalling. The U.S.

**A crowd is more than a group of individuals. It can take on a life of its own and do what no individual intends to do.**

demanded justice, but official documents suggest “justice” was a euphemism for “revenge.” Reza’s army held a court-martial for supposed rioters. The U.S. believed the process was a sham, and Chargé d’Affaires Wallace Murray protested strongly to the Iranian foreign minister. Murray wrote, “The Persian is venal. His promises and lip service can be bought for a song.”

Eventually the court delivered 20 guilty verdicts and death sentences for three teenage scapegoats. One, 19-year-old Cossack Private Morteza, was executed for disobeying orders, not for murder. Death sentences for 14-year-old camel-driver Ali Rashti and 17-year-old “mullah” Sayyid Husain were commuted to life imprisonment. On learning of the commutations, Dulles exploded in anger to the Iranian chargé. The Iranian government reinstated the death sentences. American Chargé Murray refused pleas for mercy, and the executions were carried out in the presence of a U.S. representative, chief legation translator Allahyar Saleh. Saleh, who had been educated by American Presbyterian missionaries, went on to become Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh’s ambassador to the United States in the early 1950s and, afterward, leader of National Front opposition to the shah’s dictatorship.

An unsigned NEA memorandum, which I believe to have been written by Dulles, presented the old cliché, “human life

as such is not greatly valued by Orientals,” as justification for seeking blood. Dulles later testified to Congress, “When you are dealing with a government like Persia ... if you ask them to execute a Moslem for the death of a Christian ... if they do it, you accomplish more for the prestige of your country than if they paid a million.”

The U.S. also insisted Iran pay compensation.



**A headline captures the news of Robert W. Imbrie the day after his death, on July 19, 1924.**



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**Widow of Robert W. Imbrie, Katherine Imbrie, at the U.S. Capitol. She would appear before the House of Representatives Foreign Relations Committee, asking for an additional allowance for his death.**

Mrs. Imbrie received \$60,000. Seymour received \$3,000. The U.S. government received \$110,000 for expenses incurred transporting Imbrie's body by warship from Iran to Washington, for interment at Arlington National Cemetery. Given Iran's poverty and the dollar's purchasing power at that time, these were enormous sums.

### The Broader Implications of Imbrie's Death

Reza Khan used the incident to rally support for his military dictatorship. Whether or not there was any substance to the rumor that he sought the death of a foreigner to justify imposition of martial law, he made clear to the legations that their choice was either to face continuing clerical-led riotous unrest or to support his new military order. As U.S. Minister Joseph Kornfeld put it, "Whatever justice we obtain must come from [Reza] through his military courts," the alternative being, in Chargé Murray's words, fanaticism led by the "senile old man" Hassan Modarres.

In this, Murray echoed British Chargé Esmond Ovey who regarded Modarres as "a bigoted and unwashed Sayyid, the Diogenes of the Majlis, who lives in a hovel and ostentatiously refuses money for himself." This description of Modarres entirely ignores the cultural context, in which living modestly is both a sign of piety and the Iranian political equivalent of corporate lawyer Abraham Lincoln campaigning as a "rail-splitter born in

a log cabin." Not to mention that Modarres's ostentatious refusal to accept bribes was an implicit criticism of those who accepted foreign subsidies.

The episode moved American policy into line with that of Britain. Before the murder, the British legation regarded the Americans as hostile, writing that Murray "hardly takes the trouble to conceal his Anglophobia," and worrying that independent American policy might give Iran "another fatal chance of playing off one Great Power against another." British Minister Percy Loraine feared that "Anglo-American rivalry destroys [the] last hope of salvation." After Imbrie's death, America approved Reza's "desire to create a disciplined armed force ... and not to be the commander of a horde of tribesmen." In London, the Foreign Office crowed: "America is being educated in Eastern matters—which is to the good—especially as regards ourselves."

The result of all this was Reza's ability, with the support of foreign legations, to make himself the Shah of Iran. In parliament, Mossadegh—who had served Reza as minister of finance and as a provincial governor—argued that while Reza had done brilliant service to the nation as war minister and prime minister, if he were king, he would no longer be responsible to the Majlis. Only three other parliamentarians joined him to vote no. Unchecked henceforth by the Majlis, Reza Shah proceeded forcibly to create the modern Iranian state, eliminating opposition—real or imagined—by violence.

Ayatollah Sayyid Hassan Modarres was among Reza's many victims. Surviving a 1926 assassination attempt, he was arrested in 1928 and exiled to a small town in Khorasan where in 1937 he was strangled while at prayer.

By the late 1930s, the British Foreign Office came to view Reza Shah as "a dull savage of the sergeant-major type," pro-German and a "bloodthirsty lunatic." The U.S. legation concurred, Minister William Hornibrook fearing that Reza Shah's "wholesale introduction of European customs, his hostility to the clergy, his ruthless methods and his success in inculcating ... ultra-nationalistic feelings may possibly result in a bitter anti-foreign feeling in the event of his demise."

Ironies happen. "Modarres" means "teacher," and Sayyid Hassan was dubbed Modarres long before he achieved the clerical rank of ayatollah. Among the students influenced by his personal modesty and outspoken political views was Ayatollah Hairi's student, young Ruhollah Khomeini. The Islamic Republic regards Modarres as a *shahid* (martyr), and his image was placed on Iranian currency where the shahs' faces had once loomed. My high school, formerly the hospital where Imbrie's autopsy was conducted, is now Shahid Modarres High School. So it goes. ■

## 2022 AFSA Leadership and Management Survey Results

BY JULIE NUTTER, DIRECTOR OF PROFESSIONAL POLICY ISSUES

In two recent AFSA member surveys—the workplace bias survey in 2020 and the retention survey in 2021 (in conjunction with Harvard’s Kennedy School)—our active-duty members frequently raised the issue of how leadership behavior and decision-making affect morale, retention and job satisfaction in the Foreign Service.

Due to this sustained focus, in January 2022 AFSA launched an active-duty member survey on leadership and management in the Foreign Service. In total, 1,661 people, or 13 percent of active-duty AFSA members, responded.

The survey’s design is broadly similar to the annual Federal Employees Viewpoint Survey, or FEVS, in that it posits positive statements about Foreign Service leadership and management, and respondents rate the statements along a spectrum of responses, from strongly disagree (one star) to strongly

agree (five stars). The survey then allows members to contribute additional written responses explaining their ratings.

Overall, the ratings of leadership and management across all agencies in the Foreign Service averaged three stars.

In their written comments, many respondents noted that they gave the survey statements three stars (a “neutral” rating) due to the pervasive *inconsistency* of the quality of Foreign Service leadership. Members cited numerous examples of having a wonderful boss in one position and enduring a terrible boss in the next.

**Inconsistency of leadership.** The inconsistency of leadership quality poses a substantial challenge to maintaining high morale in the Foreign Service workforce. For example, when asked who inspired them, members said they per-

formed well in their jobs despite deficits in leadership and did not necessarily look to leadership for inspiration.

Members instead cited strong personal work ethics and bedrock beliefs in the mission of the Foreign Service as their sources of inspiration. Greater consistency in leadership might produce more trust and would undoubtedly reduce friction and raise morale in the workplace.

**Lack of policy vision, policy execution, policy prioritization.** Members highlighted a perceived lack of a clear policy vision in their agencies and a serious deficit in the execution of policies, even when policies are clearly articulated. Members noted that crises drive energies to certain issues, but otherwise, prioritization of policy goals was found wanting by a number of respondents. A lack of prioritization was mentioned as contributing to overwork and burnout.

## CALENDAR

Please check [www.afsa.org](http://www.afsa.org) for the most up-to-date information.

May 5  
**AFSA Foreign Service Day Events**

May 6  
**Foreign Service Day**

May 17  
**Deadline: Nominations for AFSA Dissent and Performance Awards**

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

May 30  
**Memorial Day AFSA Offices Closed**

June 15  
12-2 p.m.  
**AFSA Governing Board Meeting**

Members noted that consistent, clear agency vision needs to be paired with definable goals that produce results, and employees up and down the chain of command

*Continued on page 62*

## AFSA Hosts Policy Planning Director

Salman Ahmed, director of the Secretary of State’s Policy Planning Staff (S/P), spoke to more than 100 AFSA members in a closed virtual session on March 8.

The conversation, which followed his interview in the March *FSJ*, offered members the chance to pose questions about the newly launched Policy Ideas Channel and Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s modernization agenda. Ahmed also discussed the strategic implications of the Ukraine crisis and other priorities for Secretary Blinken.

The event was co-hosted by Ambassador Eric Rubin, AFSA president, and Christopher Barnes, first vice president of the American Federation of Government Employees Local 1534, which represents State Department Civil Service employees.

After welcoming the director, Rubin raised the question of “how to invigorate the process by which career employees share ideas and concerns.” He said AFSA is hopeful that, through this channel, innovation can strengthen the Foreign Service at a pivot point in U.S. foreign policy.

*Continued on page 61*





## Locality Pay for Local FS Hires: It's Time

Locality pay adjusts the base rate of pay to compensate for the pay disparity between federal and nonfederal jobs in a particular geographic area. While each position is assigned to a specific grade and each employee is assigned to a step within that grade, the pay rate varies by location. For the Washington, D.C., area, the 2022 locality pay is 31.53 percent.

Joining as a local hire in October 1991, I looked with envy on the per diem and housing that my nonlocal colleagues received but accepted that this was not possible for local hires. Locality pay, which was only instituted in the mid-1990s, was not provided either. Instead of going out to lunches, dinners and happy hours with my newfound A-100 buddies, I had to beg off and watch every penny I spent.

Yes, the out-of-towners had moving expenses that I did not have and they had to live in temporary quarters, but didn't we local hires still pay high D.C.-area rent, food and other costs? I always thought that this part of the on-ramping process was inherently unfair—and still do.

Fast forward 30 years and local hires continue to miss out on locality pay. Here are some comments local hires from recent orientation classes have shared with AFSA:

• "I understand that as a local hire I am not on TDY and temporary housing and per diem does not apply. ... However, I do not understand why we are unable to receive D.C. locality pay from the beginning of A-100. We have the same expenses as any other federal employee in the D.C. area, and in some cases more. Somehow it is considered reasonable to pay local hires at a rate determined to be below the D.C. cost of living for up to 30 weeks (A-100 plus 24 weeks before D.C. locality pay will be paid)."

• "I think I can say for all local hires that we are all thrilled to be starting our journey and have truly enjoyed our training, but it's difficult to overlook the inequity between local and nonlocal hires. As someone put it, it almost feels like we are being punished for being here already."

• "I find it makes no sense that, as a local hire civil servant, I had locality pay, which I lost upon entry into the Foreign Service. I understand not receiving a more lucrative per diem allotment, but I do not see any sense in this current decision."

**The State Department's position.** AFSA has raised this inequity repeatedly with department management but has been told that local hires cannot get D.C. locality pay until they complete FS orientation and their length of training has been deter-

**Now is the time for the department to assign new local hires to their training location, and to provide locality pay from day one.**

mined to extend beyond six months. The department points to a 1998 Office of Personnel Management memo, and GAO opinion, as the basis for this position.

AFSA strongly disagrees. First, a lot has changed since 1998 that affects the cost of living, salaries and commutes. The OPM memo is also silent on the length of training it is referencing. Therefore, AFSA maintains that there is nothing preventing the department from providing locality pay from the start.

There is also little that explains how the department reasons that Foreign Service orientation is not considered training *per se*, because current rules and regulations do not envision training before you are formally assigned to a position. Given the importance of FS orientation—the length of which most current reform efforts want to increase—AFSA believes State's reasoning makes little sense. By helping vulnerable local hires, many of whom are at the lower end of the pay scale, changing this policy would demonstrate

that the department cares about its employees.

There used to be a time when local hires who underwent training for more than six months still did not receive locality pay. But AFSA fought hard to right this injustice, resulting in two favorable Foreign Service Grievance Board decisions.

We believe that now is the time for the department to assign new local hires to their training location regardless of whether the training extends one week or beyond six months, and to provide locality pay from day one.

**Next steps.** As of this writing, AFSA continues to discuss the matter with the Bureau of Global Talent Management, and is considering filing a cohort grievance against the department. We are also weighing alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and/or legislative changes. We will keep you informed. The bottom line is that AFSA wants to fix this once and for all.

Please let us know what you think at [member@afsa.org](mailto:member@afsa.org). ■



## Now Is the Time to Think about Retirement

Whether you're a seasoned FSO bursting with anecdotes and memories of your illustrious career or a new officer preparing for your first directed assignment, please start preparing now for your retirement.

My AFSA colleagues and I hear from too many FSOs on the cusp of retirement, or worse, retired (or at least out of the system) who face bureaucratic woes during what should be the joyful start of a new adventure. And while the agency does have an obligation to help support you along the road to retirement, at the end of the day, it is your retirement.

So I am using this column as something of a public service announcement to offer a few observations, suggestions and pieces of informal counsel based on the reports of USAID clients who have contacted AFSA on this subject.

The agency has reinvigorated its Employee Services and Benefits division, bringing on new colleagues and taking a more proactive approach toward supporting employees as they approach retirement.

A recent agency webinar made clear the renewed focus on customer service and responsiveness. The session broke into groups part-way through, separating FS and GS colleagues to address their distinct retirement systems; this was a very

welcome step. I encourage you to get to know ESB and its offerings now, and make the time to attend the agency webinars.

AFSA provides members a broad array of retirement support, including for those who are about to retire and those who have already taken the leap. I encourage you to explore now the range of retirement-related information from pre-retirement checklists to articles, videos and links detailing retirement benefits as well as work opportunities post-Foreign Service.

Attend the various workshops and webinars AFSA offers to members. Reach out to AFSA Counselor for Retirees Dolores Brown if needed, and attend the valuable AFSA retirement-related sessions offered throughout the year. You can find more information at [afsa.org/retirement-services](https://afsa.org/retirement-services).

Perhaps one of the most critical steps to take now (and regularly!) is to review your electronic official personnel file (eOPF). Your eOPF has—or at least should have—your permanent and temporary documents for USAID as well as previous federal employment.

Many FSOs gain experience in Peace Corps or other federal agencies; please make sure that your records are current and complete, and that your time in other agencies is accurately captured and counted.

**USAID has reinvigorated its Employee Services and Benefits division, bringing on new colleagues and taking a more proactive approach toward supporting employees as they approach retirement.**

Review your file and ensure it includes things like certified benefits forms and beneficiary information. Are they there? Are they accurate and up to date? The agency can help track down old records, correct errors and update forms, but you need to start the process. When? Now!

As USAID FSOs, we are fortunate to have access to the excellent retirement planning courses offered by the Foreign Service Institute's Transition Center throughout our careers (learn more at [state.gov/career-transition-center-ctc/](https://state.gov/career-transition-center-ctc/)).

Within USAID, these courses are not always well marketed, and it can be unclear how to register, access and attend them. AFSA is engaging with the agency to make the process more transparent and accessible for FSOs and their family members. This includes our newest FSO colleagues, so that they can prepare from the outset for their unique FS retirement pathway. Start learning about these courses now.

Looking forward, AFSA

is (now!) advocating for the agency's development of a USAID ADS chapter and procedural guidance for FSO retirement. Such a policy would complement USAID's ADS 494 on Civil Service retirement (viewable at [bit.ly/ADS-494](https://bit.ly/ADS-494)) and provide a consolidated guide to FSOs on their retirement and the agency's roles and responsibilities. Based on the feedback of AFSA members, such a document would be helpful at all stages of an FSO's career.

There are so many retirement considerations, and I can only touch on a few in this column. Bottom line: it's never too early to plan for retirement. I appreciate the very real efforts the agency is making to improve retirement awareness, education and support for FSOs.

And while I am confident that both AFSA and the agency will continue to collaborate in strengthening services to FSOs, at the end of the day—or rather, career—it is your responsibility to plan for your retirement. So, get started—now! ■



## Standing Behind Those Who Step Up

FAS demands a lot from its FSOs, and we consistently step up and deliver.

Like our colleagues in other agencies, we serve in countries that put our health and safety at risk and we uproot our lives every few years. We assume these risks willingly, largely due to the rewarding aspect of living and solving complex challenges in the countries to which we're assigned, and our commitment to the FAS mission.

However, we also expect to receive accurate and timely compensation for doing so. What does it say to FAS FSOs when widespread payroll errors remain uncorrected more than eight months later, resulting in underpayment

**Accountability will increase transparency, rebuild trust and reconfirm that FAS stands behind its dedicated FSOs, especially in their time of need.**

or overpayment by tens of thousands of dollars?

While the origin of these payroll issues is not related to similar ones currently affecting State Department personnel, the very real financial and tax implications are the same.

Because these and other tax issues were not corrected in 2021, FAS FSOs are left to hire tax advisers on their own dime to address them. FAS has recently (informally) vowed to address the errors and is making welcome prog-

ress toward this goal. AFSA continues to fight for affected FSOs to be made whole, including through receiving interest on back pay.

Unfortunately, even after these long-standing errors are corrected, morale and retention issues will linger, including for FSOs who weren't affected. While the mistakes were clearly unintentional, failure to address them in a timely fashion suggests that export and trade policy successes are more important than taking care of

the people who deliver them.

We remain hopeful that FAS will demonstrate that its people come first by improving communication with staff, resolving the issues and offering relief to affected personnel within legal parameters.

Moving forward, the widespread nature of the payroll problems also justifies a comprehensive audit that ensures all errors are corrected, employees are remunerated appropriately and effective process improvements are put in place to prevent a similar situation in the future.

Such accountability will increase transparency, rebuild trust and reconfirm that FAS stands behind its dedicated FSOs, especially in their time of need. ■



### AFSA Governing Board Meeting, Feb. 16, 2022

Due to ongoing concerns over the COVID-19 omicron variant, the AFSA Governing Board met via teleconference on Feb. 16. ■

### AFSA Governing Board Meeting, March. 16, 2022

The Governing Board met at AFSA headquarters on March 16, the first in-person meeting since December 2021.

**New Representative:** The board approved the appointment of Sharon Carter as USAID representative to the Governing Board.

**Associate Members:** The board approved the applications of two new associate members to AFSA.

**Disbursement:** The board authorized the pledged and budgeted disbursement of \$25,000 to the National Museum of American Diplomacy for 2022.

**New Working Groups:** The board authorized the president and vice presidents to form working groups for priorities developed by the Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Service Reform, combining some priorities as appropriate and calling on members of the committee to serve as needed.

**Congressional Policy Priorities:** The board unanimously accepted a list of priorities for inclusion in AFSA's 117th Congress policy priority agenda and ongoing advocacy efforts.

**Ratification of Virtual Votes:** In accordance with AFSA bylaws, the board ratified in-person the decisions made during virtual meetings, and actions taken in reliance thereon, held between January and February 2022. ■





## Staying Connected with Colleagues

As the global pandemic fades (hopefully permanently), activities are restarting at most of the 16 state or regional Foreign Service retiree associations around the country. These groups, while independent of AFSA, support the common goal of keeping Foreign Service retirees and other former foreign affairs personnel in touch with each other and the profession to which they dedicated decades of their lives.

If you have never participated in one of these groups, please see the list starting on page 9 of your 2022 AFSA Directory of Retired Members or at [afsa.org/retiree-associations](https://afsa.org/retiree-associations). There are groups in 12 states plus two that

serve a multistate region (for example, New England). California and Texas have multiple chapters. If you live near one, please consider contacting the organizer to join.

The group that I coordinate—the 250-member Foreign Affairs Retirees of Northern Virginia—is a good example. Founded in 1994, we meet five times a year for lunch and a guest speaker. The best part of the meetings is the informal table talk before the presentation during which longtime friends catch up with each other and meet other colleagues who served at the same posts in different years. Once a year, we visit a winery owned by a retired ambassador.

**Foreign Service retiree associations around the country ... support the common goal of keeping retirees and other former foreign affairs personnel in touch with each other and the profession to which they dedicated decades of their lives.**

If any of the other retiree associations have not yet resumed operations, I encourage them to do so. If the leaders of any of those groups stepped down during the long pandemic hiatus, or if there is not a group in your area and you are interested in starting one, AFSA is available to help area retirees connect with each other to form a coordinating committee.

For assistance and more information, contact Christine Miele, AFSA's director of programs and member engagement, at [miele@afsa.org](mailto:miele@afsa.org) or (202) 338-4045.

In addition, I am available to share my experience on programming and coordination based on six years leading the Northern Virginia group. You can reach me at [naland@afsa.org](mailto:naland@afsa.org). ■

## Annual Report: Legal Defense Fund

BY MARY DALY, LDF COMMITTEE CHAIR

The AFSA Legal Defense Fund supported three Foreign Service members in 2021, including one related to an ongoing case in the Southern District of New York stemming from 2019 Ukraine hearings.

This marks a return to the average number of requests for assistance AFSA has typically received annually (1 to 2) in the past; 2019-2020 saw 12 requests, an unusually high number by comparison and all impeachment-related.

Between donations and investment income, the fund did well financially during 2021. The fund began the year with \$331,500; at year-end, it contained \$341,963.

During the year, five disbursements were made in support of three AFSA members for a total of \$17,401. Over the same period, \$16,511 was raised through donations to the fund from members and supporters.

The LDF Committee, working with AFSA's Gov-

erning Board, has conscientiously invested the LDF funds to ensure the long-term sustainability of this vital member-centered program.

The Legal Defense Fund was created in 2007 and since then has provided financial assistance to members enabling them to retain an outside attorney with expertise in a particular area of law.

These cases have been—and will continue to be—lim-

ited to those with legal issues of far-reaching significance to the rest of the Foreign Service, such as cases involving due process or fundamental fairness.

The governing documents for the Legal Defense Fund call for an annual report to AFSA membership on the main activities of the fund during the previous year. For more information about the fund, please contact AFSA General Counsel Sharon Papp at [papps@state.gov](mailto:papps@state.gov). ■

## A Conversation with the Women Who Produced “The American Diplomat”

On Feb. 28, AFSA hosted a panel discussion on the new PBS American Experience documentary, “The American Diplomat,” which features the lives and careers of three pioneering Black ambassadors who overcame historical and institutional barriers to become high-ranking State Department officials.

Maria Hart, a member of AFSA’s Governing Board, led the conversation on Zoom with the film’s creators: director Leola Calzolari-Stewart and co-producers Kiley Kraskouskas and Rachell Shapiro. The three are also the co-founders of FLOWSTATE Films, a production company based in the Washington, D.C., area.

Their documentary, which aired on PBS on Feb. 15 and is also streaming on the PBS website and app, tells the story of Ambassadors Edward Dudley, Terence Todman and Carl Rowan, who served as diplomats during the height of the civil rights movement and the Cold War.

At a time when the State Department was largely white, the three walked a tightrope, representing American values abroad while challenging segregation and discrimination at home.

Calzolari-Stewart said her personal connection to the film’s subject matter fed into her motivation for sharing these particular stories. “My husband’s [been] a diplomat ... for a little more than 20

years,” she said. “We would often go to post and be one of the few—if not the only—Black Foreign Service families within the post community. After a while, you want to dig into why that’s so.”

At the same time, her husband met Black diplomats who had begun working in the late 1950s and ’60s and learned how they navigated the early parts of their careers.

“These were really interesting stories that not many people knew about,” she added.

As the Cold War intensified in the 1950s, Edward Dudley—the first African American to hold the rank of ambassador—argued that the growing movement for decolonization in Africa and Asia made the treatment of nonwhite people a major issue in international affairs. He believed that societies seeking liberation across the developing world looked to America to live up to its values.

Today, civil unrest in the U.S. still affects the work of diplomats abroad, Calzolari-Stewart noted.

“What happens domestically in terms of racial justice and equality does impact our foreign policy and how we are perceived overseas,” she said. “Ambassador Todman never shied away from an honest conversation about difficult civil rights moments. What a diplomat of color brings to the

table is an authentic representation of their experience in the United States.”

In addition to educating the public about the contributions of Dudley, Todman and Rowan to American diplomacy and civil rights, the filmmakers also hoped to pose larger questions about systemic inequity.

“We hope this film will inspire more people to a Foreign Service career,” said Kraskouskas. “But also, institutionally, we hope it will prompt decision-makers involved in promotion cycles and hiring to think about the nuanced ways [in which] opportunities are created.”

Calzolari-Stewart pointed out that the diplomatic service should reflect the American people. “This has to be intentional,” she said. “I believe that [Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer] Ambassador Abercrombie-Winstanley and her team will interrogate this issue to change the culture and pipeline institutionally.”

In gathering the vast amount of visual material required for a historical documentary, the filmmakers received support from the Dudley, Todman and Rowan families. One memorable moment came when the team brought Jeffrey Rowan, son of Carl Rowan, into the State Department for an interview.

Although the briefing room there is named after his father,



From left: Rachell Shapiro, Kiley Kraskouskas and Leola Calzolari-Stewart at the State Department.

Rowan had never before had the chance to visit and see the plaque and photograph on the wall. “That was a really touching moment, to witness him seeing that for the first time,” Shapiro recalled.

Since its airing, “The American Diplomat” has elicited a positive response—both broadly and within the Foreign Service community—and the State Department has arranged screenings at posts overseas. AFSA plans to show the film as part of its upcoming Road Scholar programs.

Funding for the film was provided by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Humanities, Firelight Media, Black Public Media, Boston Public Radio’s WGBH and PBS American Experience.

The one-hour documentary is available at [to.pbs.org/3tUGZ6e](https://to.pbs.org/3tUGZ6e), and the panel discussion can be seen at [bit.ly/AmerDipPanel](https://bit.ly/AmerDipPanel). ■

## A Talk with Former USAID Counselor Chris Milligan

Chris Milligan brought three decades of experience to the role of counselor at USAID, a position he held for three years, advising several administrators and many front office leaders through some of the agency's most rigorous challenges before retiring in 2021. On Feb. 15, he shared his wealth of experience in a virtual Q&A session hosted by AFSA USAID Vice President Jason Singer.

Milligan began by discussing how the agency has evolved since he began his career there in 1990.

"I have seen how USAID's identity and role have been shaped by the major periods of our national history, from the Cold War to the aftermath of 9/11," he said. "We are at

another inflection point now, which is once again redefining the role of development in promoting national security."

As the 21st century is marked by the growing ambitions of authoritarian regimes, accelerating climate change and shifting power dynamics, Milligan noted that there is a heightened awareness of the importance of USAID's work and a greater emphasis on how the agency can engage in the interagency and foreign policy space.

"I believe there is a far greater appreciation of USAID as a national security agency than ever before," he stated.

When asked about the qualities necessary for success in a USAID career, he said interpersonal skills such



Former USAID Counselor Chris Milligan spoke with AFSA about a career with the development agency on Feb. 15.

as empathy and humility are key, and that officers should learn to write and communicate clearly. He also advised FSOs to make strategic bidding decisions.

"Go overseas, gain that experience—that is an important component of your

USAID career," he advised. "But plan for that Washington tour at the midpoint of your career. You need to know how Washington works, get to know the key staffers on the Hill, key State counterparts and interagency colleagues. For me, my time in D.C. was essential to my career. I was promoted much more rapidly and [had] a great opportunity to build [my] network."

At the end of the day, he said, a career at the development agency is as rewarding as it is challenging.

"What I love about working for USAID is that it is unlike much else in public service," he concluded. "I am envious of those joining the C3 classes and would gladly do it all over again." ■

Policy Planning Director  
Continued from page 55

Director Ahmed said S/P is making it a priority to consult around the department to ensure that novel ideas are informed by the people who are experts on those topics.

"S/P needs to be a force multiplier in the building," said Ahmed, "and we want to be available to the bureaus and offices to make sure the views of the career professionals help set the agenda."

Ahmed pointed out that many of the issues handled by his office are of a cross-cutting nature and might not have a neat, bureaucratic

home. While it would be easy to be consumed by day-to-day events at the State Department, the role of the policy planning staff is to focus on long-term and strategic elements of U.S. foreign policy.

With authoritarianism on the rise, geopolitical competition increasing and national security strategies evolving, Ahmed believes the U.S. must marshal its "tremendous resilience and innovative capacity" to face today's foreign policy challenges.

"We need our best and brightest minds on the case,"

he said, "and they are our career professionals in the Foreign and the Civil Service. This means the Policy Ideas and Dissent channels will become all the more important. The Secretary wants an avenue for those ideas to come to him directly. It's about a cultural change in which dissent and idea generation are elevated to the level at which they need to live."

During a question-and-answer session, Barnes asked the director how to ensure the channels endure.

"They will live on if they're

useful, so we have to demonstrate the integrity of these channels," he said. "Confidentiality must be protected. The seriousness of the response [to the submissions we receive] will build and sustain institutional support from within."

AFSA welcomes the engagement with Salman Ahmed and the S/P staff and looks forward to future collaboration. For questions regarding the use of the Policy Ideas Channel, please email [ideaschannel@state.gov](mailto:ideaschannel@state.gov). ■



Survey Results  
Continued from page 55

should be accountable for doing their part. Respondents generally said they know how their work contributes to agency goals. Members also said they broadly believed leaders kept them well informed on agency developments.

**Problematic leadership accountability.** Members prioritized a lack of leadership accountability as a problem, often commenting that leadership was not “walking the talk” and that double standards of conduct exist between senior leaders (and their immediate subordinates) and all others in the agencies. This perception was illustrated by allegations that leaders indulged in problem behaviors themselves and tolerated poor conduct in their subordinates with few personal consequences.

**Lack of trust in promotions/assignments.** Among

the lowest scores in the survey (one to three stars) were those highlighting the difficulties with the bureaucratic systems and processes that affected work operations and Foreign Service “life” issues. Members cited a lack of trust in these systems and a strong sense that they need to be much more transparent and vastly modernized.

Lack of trust in the EER and assignments system was also linked with a lack of leadership accountability and fairness—both the sense that there were overly favored employees, and also that “problem” performers were not dealt with and failed upward.

**Lack of resources, especially staff.** A lack of resources came up many times, with staff shortages overwhelmingly the most frequently mentioned deficiency, followed by funding and by time. Members often cited a lack of time as a reason why

training in the Foreign Service is given short shrift.

**Career opportunities.** In the survey statement asking members to opine on whether career opportunities in their agencies are promising, two-thirds of employees said yes; those who did not bemoaned the dearth of promotion slots as a primary factor in limiting their career prospects.

**Management processes.** Members painted as very problematic the amount of time work processes like evaluation and promotion and bidding and assignments take from the workday. In addition, a significant percentage of respondents noted that better technology and modernized systems could improve the efficiency of processes and systems.

In response to the companion statement regarding systems and processes managing Foreign Service “life” issues, many respondents said current systems are not

nimble enough to keep pace with fast-moving global events and, again, observed that potentially beneficial technology was not being used to create efficiencies.

**Good guidance from leadership.** Some members said they observed a recent improvement in leadership accountability and that their superiors gave them positive and productive guidance in their day-to-day work. While the survey brought to the fore a dissatisfaction with the widespread structural and cultural impediments to risk-taking in the Foreign Service workplace, some respondents reported that their supervisors encouraged appropriate risk-taking. Very broadly speaking, the shorter the chain of command, the higher members rated their leaders.

Copies of the survey results for each agency are available from Julie Nutter at [nutter@afsa.org](mailto:nutter@afsa.org) and will be posted on the AFSA website. ■

## Diplomats at Work Event

# A Day in the Life of an Agricultural Diplomat

AFSA hosted Candice Bruce, a diplomat with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Foreign Agricultural Service, for a virtual event on Feb. 23 to discuss the crucial role of agricultural diplomats in strengthening the U.S. economy—work that many Americans may not be familiar with.

Bruce began by explaining that FAS, consisting of about 150 officers, is the USDA’s lead agency on international cooperation.

“We’re a small agency, but we have a really big mission ... and a direct impact on the American economy,” she said. The FAS mandate is to promote the export of U.S. food and agricultural products, which supports more than a million American jobs.

Bruce particularly enjoys the creative element to trade

promotion, a key part of expanding U.S. exports. “We have trade missions where we take buyers or exporters overseas to meet potential buyers; promotional activities; social media campaigns and a wide range of marketing events,” she told viewers.

When at post overseas, FAS officers serve as the U.S. ambassador’s primary advisers on agricultural issues. At embassies, Bruce said, FAS officers collaborate closely with other mission staff, especially USAID, the economic team and the regional environmental officer.

During her assignment to Peru, one of her favorite experiences involved driving from Lima over the Andes Mountains into the high jungle to observe local coffee production for two weeks.

“I spoke to local contacts,” she recounted, “wrote a report

## Payroll Failures: AFSA Files Cohort Grievance

Since the State Department's Bureau of the Comptroller and Global Financial Services switched to an automated payroll system in February 2021, employees have experienced a range of problems, including missing or incorrect differential and allowances, incorrect pay amounts, and incorrect statements of earnings and leave, among other issues.

AFSA has been urging the department to agree to pay interest on all back pay that has become outstanding since the introduction of the new payroll system. In the absence of a positive response, on Feb. 24 AFSA filed a cohort grievance seeking restitution.

At present, there are six named members of the cohort. AFSA has requested

the department to enter into an agreement with AFSA whereby it would apply the outcome of the grievance to all similarly situated Foreign Service members and retirees.

If the department does not agree to this, AFSA anticipates providing the department with a list of all employees and retirees who wish to join the cohort grievance. If this becomes necessary, AFSA will let all members know.

The Back Pay Act requires interest to be paid when a nondiscretionary payment is delayed for more than 30 days. In 2017, the Foreign Service Grievance Board issued a decision ruling that there was an obligation to pay interest when the State Department delayed paying

the grievant's post differential.

While AFSA appreciates the efforts of the staff of CGFS in Charleston to overcome the overwhelming number of problems and errors caused by the introduction of the new system, these continuing errors and problems are unacceptable.

The adverse effect on people's pocketbooks, on morale and on employees' faith that the department "has their backs" has been devastating, and department leadership must work hard to regain the confidence of Foreign Service members and retirees.

It remains our goal to ensure that the State Department:

1. Fix the problem.
2. Make people whole.
3. Ensure accountability.

We have repeatedly called on the department to use every possible means to ensure that no one is financially disadvantaged or loses leave

as a result of what can only be called a fiasco. This includes encouraging the department to see if the contractor can be held liable for damages caused to individuals.

AFSA has been in close contact with the relevant House and Senate committees on Capitol Hill. Like AFSA, our authorizers are disappointed in the department's inability to adhere to promised deadlines and make people whole.

AFSA has asked for the Hill's intervention to hold the department accountable for the haphazard rollout of the new payroll system and its inaction on problems resulting from it.

AFSA will also continue to insist that the department conduct an in-depth investigation, whether via the Office of the Inspector General or other means, to establish how this epic failure happened and to ensure it never happens again. ■

and made [the findings] publicly available to inform both Washington and U.S. stakeholders about coffee production in Peru."

For those interested in working for FAS, Bruce suggested pursuing a degree in economics, data analysis, international affairs or animal science. She also emphasized the importance of resilience, adaptability and good judgment in appropriately representing the U.S. overseas.

"Trade is an essential part of food security," Bruce said in closing. "We are helping to feed the world, and that's a meaningful part of our mission."

Candice Bruce currently works as director of the Caribbean Basin Agricultural Trade Office, where she covers 25 countries. She joined the Foreign Service 13 years ago and has previously served in Costa Rica. She is the first FAS officer to be featured in this speaker series.

Diplomats at Work tells the stories of the Foreign Service,



FAS Officer Candice Bruce introduces Ambassador S. Fitzgerald Haney at "Cooking with the Ambassador" in San José, Costa Rica, in June 2017.

introducing the important and varied work of diplomats to new audiences as part of AFSA's outreach efforts.

A recording of this event is available at [youtube.com/AFSATube](https://youtube.com/AFSATube). ■

## Book Notes

## American Ambassadors

On Feb. 17, Ambassador (ret.) Dennis Jett joined AFSA President Eric Rubin for a virtual discussion about the updated and revised edition of Jett's book, *American Ambassadors: A Guide for Aspiring Diplomats and Foreign Service Officers* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

The U.S. Constitution does not provide clear parameters regarding how ambassadors are to be appointed, Jett pointed out, beyond Article II's statement that "the president shall nominate, and by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, shall appoint [them]."

During the 20th century, this ambiguity led to what Jett calls "the 70-30 era," the tradition of allocating 70 percent of ambassadorships to career diplomats and 30 percent to political appointee ambassadors.

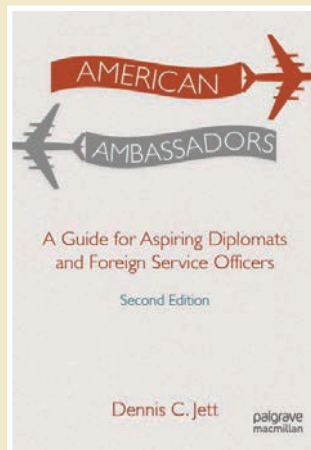
"The problem I have with the American system is how

it monetizes representation," he says. "And we're unique in the world for having an open market on political appointees who buy their way to an ambassadorship. People coming in from the outside have no significant experience in international affairs."

In Jett's view, the practice of naming political appointees to key posts purely as a reward for supporting the president is detrimental to America's standing in the world.

"The essence of soft power is good diplomacy," he observes. "And if you debilitate that, when you're confronted with a challenge your only options are [to] ignore it or to use your hard power: economic sanctions or sending in the Marines."

He argues that money has thoroughly corrupted the political process. Because of the proliferation of "bundlers,"



Ambassador (ret.)  
Dennis Jett.

political fundraisers who collect contributions from donors on behalf of a presidential campaign, "elections have become a \$6.6 billion industry and it will be hard to change that," Jett says. But he hopes insisting on transparency, candidate qualifications and accountability can improve the performance of political ambassadors.

He also believes the Office of the Inspector General should measure the performance of every ambassador annually: "The job of IG is

to root out waste, fraud and mismanagement, but those priorities are backward. I care if the ambassador is managing the embassy well."

Dennis Jett is a founding faculty member of the Penn State School of International Affairs. During his 28-year Foreign Service career, he served as ambassador to Mozambique and Peru and worked in Argentina, Israel, Malawi and Liberia.

View the complete book talk at [youtube.com/AFSAtube](https://youtube.com/AFSAtube). ■

## AFSA Speaks to Job Search/Transition Program

On March 15, AFSA President Eric Rubin joined FSI's Job Search/Transition Program participants virtually to discuss what the association offers Foreign Service members as they transition into the next phase of their professional and personal lives.

After thanking the class members for their years of service, Amb. Rubin high-

lighted AFSA's ongoing work to advocate for current and retired FSOs.

By remaining a part of AFSA, he said, members stay connected to their unique community, support the association's advocacy work and ensure that their voices are heard across critical issues. They'll also stay abreast of the diplomacy and develop-

ment matters in which they've invested their careers.

He reminded the class that they must take action to remain a member. Those approaching retirement should contact Member Services ([member@afsa.org](mailto:member@afsa.org)) to let AFSA know and to secure all the benefits of being an AFSA member.

The March 2022 JSTP

class consisted of just over 100 participants: 83 percent from the State Department, 16 percent from USAID and 1 percent from the Foreign Commercial Service.

The majority of those enrolled hail from the Foreign Service, with 19 percent from the Civil Service and 28 percent members of the Senior Foreign Service. ■



## AFSA Welcomes Pardee Graduate Students



AFSA President Eric Rubin and FSJ Editor Shawn Dorman meet with Pardee School graduate students at AFSA headquarters.

An impressive group of 27 American and international graduate students from Boston University's Pardee School of Global Studies visited AFSA with Ambassador (ret.) Mark Storella, Pardee professor of the practice of diplomacy, on March 8. This was AFSA's first in-person public event at headquarters in more than two years.

FSJ Editor Shawn Dorman opened the meeting with an introduction to AFSA, *The Foreign Service Journal* as a resource and the Foreign Service career. She was later joined by AFSA President Eric Rubin, who offered his take on the current situation in global affairs, and in particular on the Russian invasion of Ukraine. A lively Q&A session followed the presentations.

Amb. Storella—a friend of AFSA, *Journal* author and enthusiastic guide for students exploring future careers—later shared feedback from the event: "AFSA's

presentation captivated the students. Shawn Dorman and Ambassador Rubin provided a candid view of the rewards and challenges of diplomatic life for professionals and for their families, and their comments on the current Ukraine crisis—based on their extensive experience in the region—wowed the group.

"Several students came away from the session saying, 'I want to do that.' I was proud to have the chance to show these students how American diplomats are working to rise to the current challenges," Storella added.

The group, which included students from China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, France, Italy, Republic of Korea, Spain and Turkey, was in Washington, D.C., for the school's annual trip to the capital to help master's degree candidates explore opportunities for careers in international relations. ■

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■ **Edwin Thomas “Tom” Chapman**, 86, a retired Foreign Service officer with USAID, passed away peacefully at home in Georgetown, Washington, D.C., from a stroke on Dec. 10, 2021.

Mr. Chapman was born in New Kent County, Va., on Aug. 10, 1935. He earned master’s degrees from Duke University and the University of Michigan and a Ph.D. in political science from Harvard University.

After joining USAID in 1965, he served two tours in Vietnam, followed by Sudan, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Washington, D.C., and the Soviet Union. After retiring in 1990, he worked as a USAID contractor in Moscow, New Delhi and Mosul.

Mr. Chapman was particularly adept at planning, negotiation and collaboration. He advanced the international development agenda and improved lives and institutions wherever he worked.

He is remembered by those who knew him for his love of helping others. The network of “Friends of Tom” is vast and constituted by people of many cultures, ages and languages. He lived life large and traveled extensively with his many close friends and family.

He was called on to be the officiant at multiple family and friend weddings due to his eloquence and humor. He was an enthusiastic advocate for gay rights, international peace, human development and democratic values.

Mr. Chapman is survived by many nieces, nephews, and great-nieces and great-nephews to whom Uncle Tom was a huge and positive figure.

■ **Larry Colbert**, 81, a retired Foreign Service officer, passed away on Feb. 4, 2022, in Denver, Colo.

He was born in 1940 in Glouster, a former coal town in southeastern Ohio,

and graduated from high school there. He earned a bachelor’s degree in history and political science from Ohio University and a master’s degree in European history from the University of Missouri.

Subsequently he spent two years teaching English in rural Turkey as a Peace Corps volunteer.

In 1967 Mr. Colbert joined the Foreign Service and was in the first Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support class to attend the Vietnam Training Center in Arlington. His first posting was as CORDS refugee adviser in Da Nang, where he witnessed the Tet Offensive from the roof of his apartment.

Four months later he married Christina Ku, a Taiwanese citizen, whom he had met in Arlington.

After Vietnam, Mr. Colbert was posted to Ankara as a junior political officer, following which he was promoted to a one-officer posting in Oran, Algeria. He was assigned to Dublin as the head of the consular section from 1978 to 1981, and then served in Manila as chief of American services from 1981 to 1984.

He returned to Washington as director of visa operations and later attended the National War College. In 1987 he was assigned to Tijuana as the consul general, and after four years there was appointed consul general in Madrid.

He returned to Mexico a second time, as consul general in Ciudad Juárez from 1994 to 1998. His final tour was as consul general in Paris from 1998 to 2001.

Although he retired in 2001, Mr. Colbert continued to work as a Foreign Service inspector for several years.

He was a devoted husband and father, colleagues recall, and, as so many consular officers are, a colorful raconteur. He enjoyed telling how, in Juárez, he managed to convince

Washington to add more badly needed visitor restrooms to the overcrowded consulate. The department had routinely refused his string of requests for additional such facilities.

So, two hours before a Foreign Service inspection team was due to arrive, CG Colbert ordered the consulate doors closed, and then reopened only a few minutes before the inspectors walked in. The VIPs were appalled to see such a long line of agitated visitors waiting to use the restrooms, and quickly convinced the department to authorize several more.

Mr. Colbert was diagnosed with PSP, an unusual brain palsy, in 2017 and, following the death of his wife in 2020, moved to Denver to be closer to his daughter.

He is survived by his daughters, Gail Seymour of Shanghai and Lyllis Emerson of Denver; by six grandchildren; and by siblings, Suzanne Tompkins, Carolyn Alison and Philip Colbert.

■ **Carleene Dei**, 77, a retired Foreign Service officer and former USAID mission director, passed away peacefully on Jan. 31, 2022, in Colorado Springs, Colo., in the home she shared with her daughter, son-in-law and granddaughter.

Born on Dec. 31, 1944, in Kingston, Jamaica, to Cynthia Claire and Wycliffe Samuel Bennett, Ms. Dei immigrated to New York City at the age of 11. Her school noted her academic abilities and placed her in the seventh grade.

She then attended the High School of Music and Art (now known as LaGuardia High School) based on her gifts as a singer. She played the piano, as well.

Ms. Dei earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from Cornell University, a Master of Education degree from Harvard University and a Ph.D. in urban

anthropology from Columbia University.

After living in Côte d'Ivoire for several years and having two daughters, Ama Otubia Dei and Ajowa Obeaku Dei (who passed away in 1989), Ms. Dei went on to have a distinguished career with the U.S. Agency for International Development.

During her time with USAID, she served as an officer and mission director in Haiti, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa and Mali before retiring in 2015 from the Senior Foreign Service. She continued to work as a counselor for USAID until a few months before her death.

Drawing on her childhood experiences, Ms. Dei was driven by a profound need to help others. Friends and family recall that she often engaged in acts of kindness, sharing whatever she had and serving as a mentor to many.

She loved colors, patterns, jewelry, music and art. She relished a good mango sorbet and a well-written story or TV show, long walks and crossword puzzles. She was witty and had the gift of repartee.

Ms. Dei is survived by her daughter, Ama Dei, and son-in-law, Paul Davis; her granddaughter, Zara; her brother, Wycliffe Bennett, and sister-in-law, Dothlyn Bennett; her niece, Kahrin Bennett, and nephew, Kendal Bennett; her nephew-in-law, Lenny Lefebvre; grand-nephews, Kahlayo and Keanu Lefebvre; and her grand-niece, Willamina Lefebvre.

Her article on the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, published in the January-February 2020 *FSJ*, can be read here: [afsa.org/tremblement](https://afsa.org/tremblement).

■ **John Paul Modderno II**, 79, a retired Foreign Service officer, passed away from lung cancer on Jan. 8, 2022, in the comfort of his home in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Modderno was born on Nov. 20,

1942. His mother, Agnes Elizabeth Broderick, after giving birth to him, wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt asking if her husband, John Paul Modderno I, could leave his military post in Greenland to meet their new son. The first lady agreed, annoying the commanding officer and kicking off a novel life for their child.

Mr. Modderno graduated from Georgetown's School of Foreign Service and, following a short stint in the Commerce Department, landed his first State Department assignment in 1969.

His career included promoting fish farming in the Vietnamese countryside, negotiating the first tax agreements with China and throwing dinner parties that fostered free elections in Nicaragua, where he served as chargé d'affaires.

He raised four children with his signature gallows humor and tales of adventure across Brooklyn, Maryland, D.C., Vietnam, the former Yugoslavia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, Cuba, Nicaragua and the Philippines.

After retiring as a member of the Senior Foreign Service in 1993, Mr. Modderno moved between Beijing, Naples (Fla.), New Haven (Conn.) and Washington, D.C., always eating well, raising his family and chasing his curiosities.

He read widely and eclectically, and audited Yale classes and online lectures ranging from Roman architecture to the birth of Judaism, the paintings of Kerry James Marshall, Bayes' theorem, the dominance of the U.S. dollar and, of course, foreign policy.

Friends and family members say he never stopped seeking to "fill the gaps" in his knowledge. Those who knew him will remember him for his brilliance, appetite for life and wicked wit.

In addition to his loving wife, Jamie Patricia Horsley, and their children, Elizabeth Shires Modderno, Anne Vanessa

Modderno, John Paul Modderno III and Jane Casey Modderno, he is survived by four grandchildren, two great-grandchildren and four siblings: Mary Law, Joseph Modderno, James Modderno and Patricia Ryan.

■ **Jose Tito Ledda Nakpil**, 69, a retired Foreign Service officer, passed away on Jan. 20, 2022, after a long battle with Parkinson's disease.

Born Feb. 6, 1952, in the Manila area, Philippines, Mr. Nakpil was the oldest son of Sim Pingul and Julia Nera Ledda Nakpil. He graduated from Notre Dame of Greater Manila high school in 1969 and attended the University of the Philippines before immigrating to the U.S. with his mother and siblings in 1971, two years after his father had done so.

Mr. Nakpil became a U.S. citizen in the late 1970s. He obtained a B.S. degree in 1979 and a master's degree in computer science from Pennsylvania State University in 1981.

He worked for IBM for 13 years. In 2001 his sister Vicky, a Foreign Service officer, persuaded him to join the State Department. While on assignment to Burkina Faso, he met his future wife, Martine, in 2003. They married in 2005.

During his State Department years, Mr. Nakpil, his wife and their children lived in Niger (2004-2006), Nigeria (2006-2008), Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (2008-2010) and, finally, Washington, D.C. He worked at this last post as an information system officer until retiring in August 2013.

Mr. Nakpil's many eclectic interests included doing extreme sports such as motor biking, mountain biking, kayaking and hang gliding; reading constantly; camping in the snow (once for two months); and traveling to all 50 states (driving to 49 of them).



He was a member of the National Rifle Association and enjoyed serving as a scoutmaster. Wearing shirts covered in Boy Scout patches and medals, he cared about his scouts so much that he called them “his kids.”

His family remembers him as a precise, quirky, wonderful husband, father, brother and role model who encouraged others to be courageous, curious and self-reliant.

Mr. Nakpil is survived by his beloved wife, Aya Martine Nakpil; his sons, Jules Nakpil, Sim Nakpil and Karl Nakpil; his siblings, Victoria L. Nakpil of Fernandina, Fla., Luis L. Nakpil (and his wife, Michelle Lee) of Potomac, Md., Albert L. Nakpil (and his wife, Cynthia) of State College, Penn.; and many nieces, nephews and cousins.

■ **Phyllis Oakley**, 87, a retired Foreign Service officer and former assistant secretary of State, passed away on Jan. 22, 2022, at a hospital in Washington, D.C., following a cardiac arrest.

Phyllis Elsa Elliott was born in Omaha on Nov. 23, 1934, and grew up in Lincoln, Neb., Columbus, Ohio, and St. Louis, Mo. Her father was a salesman for the Rawlings Sporting Goods Company, and her mother was a high school math and chemistry teacher.

She was always interested in public affairs, and received material from the State Department about job opportunities when she was just 12 years old, as she related in her interview with the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training.

In 1956 Ms. Oakley graduated from Northwestern University with a bachelor's degree in political science and the next year received a master's degree from Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

In 1957 she joined the Foreign Service; yet her marriage the following year to a fellow FSO, Robert B. Oakley, meant the end of her career within the department. (It wasn't until 1971 that an unwritten rule stipulating only single females could be FSOs was abolished.)

She resigned and accompanied her husband to Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire, France and Lebanon. Ms. Oakley later called Beirut her favorite post.

When her husband went to Vietnam from 1965 to 1967, she stayed behind

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and taught American history at Centenary College in Shreveport, La.

In the early 1970s, the State Department relaxed its ban on both members of a couple working for the agency, and Ms. Oakley was reinstated in the Foreign Service in 1974. She once again began at an entry-level position before slowly carving out an expertise in Arab-Israeli relations and the Panama Canal Treaty.

She accompanied her husband to Africa when he was named ambassador to Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) in 1979, and she served as an employee of the U.S. Information Agency, not under his direct supervision. He later served as ambassador to Somalia in 1982.

Ms. Oakley was working in a mid-level job on the Afghan desk when in 1984 her skillful appearance on PBS' "MacNeil-Lehrer NewsHour" one night attracted the attention of Secretary of State George P. Shultz. Two years later, he tapped her as deputy spokesperson for the department. She did that job from 1986 until 1989, when her husband was appointed ambassador to Pakistan. The Oakleys did not want to be separated again, so she worked at the USAID mission.

Amb. Oakley retired from the Senior Foreign Service in 1991 and fully supported his wife's career until she retired.

Phyllis Oakley was the first female staff assistant to work on the seventh floor, alongside the highest-level State Department officials. Her 25-year diplomatic career culminated in assignments as the first assistant secretary of the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (1994-1997) and as deputy director and, later, the first female assistant secretary of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (1997-1999).

After her retirement in 1999, Ms.

Oakley worked as an adjunct professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and as a visiting professor at Mount Holyoke College and Northwestern.

Both as an active-duty officer and a retiree, Phyllis Oakley delighted in serving as a mentor. In addition, she took part in numerous symposia as a pioneering female FSO, such as a 2015 ADST panel discussion, "Cracking the Glass Ceiling: A Conversation with Foreign Service Women." Her thoughtful recommendation of the Foreign Service as a career, "I Would Do It All Again," appeared in the December 1999 *FSJ*.

Fittingly, Ms. Oakley also contributed a chapter titled "Paving the Way for Women" to the first edition of AFSA's *Inside a U.S. Embassy* (1996), also published in the 2003 edition. Reflecting on her career, she concluded: "In spite of the danger, sharp shards left in the breached glass ceiling, and complexities of family life, I still see the Foreign Service as the most interesting and worthwhile career in the world. I am pleased that so many outstanding young people still seem to agree."

She was predeceased by her husband in 2014 and is survived by her son, Thomas Oakley, of McLean, Va., her daughter, Mary Kress, of Falls Church, Va., and five grandchildren. ■



If you would like us to include an obituary in *In Memory*, please send text to [journal@afsa.org](mailto:journal@afsa.org).

Be sure to include the date, place and cause of death, as well as details of the individual's Foreign Service career. Please place the name of the AFSA member to be memorialized in the subject line of your email.

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## The X Factor

### **Stabilizing Fragile States: Why It Matters and What to Do about It**

Rufus C. Phillips III, University Press of Kansas, 2022, \$44.95/hardcover, e-book available, 348 pages.

REVIEWED BY KEITH MINES

When Rufus Phillips III passed away last December at the age of 92, I lost a good friend and mentor. Phillips was truly a “gentle, decent man who served his country with humility and devotion and fearless truth-telling,” as historian, author and foreign policy analyst Max Boot has described him.

With his death, America also lost one of its most creative foreign policy thinkers, who worked until his last moments to argue for a new approach to dealing with failed and fragile states, believing strongly that this is one key to a more stable and humane world order.

To our great fortune, he finished the manuscript for *Stabilizing Fragile States: Why It Matters and What to Do about It*, just before he died. It was published posthumously in April.

### **The Vietnam Crucible**

Like all of us, Phillips is prisoner to his own experience, an experience that is as varied as it is enlightening. His first assignment as a CIA officer was in 1954 to South Vietnam. There he joined the team of Edward Lansdale, the legendary officer whose unorthodox methods of elevating the political over the military had led to the defeat of the Huk insurgency and establishment of an imperfect but non-communist democracy in the Philippines a few years earlier.

Phillips would return to Vietnam in 1962 as head of Rural Affairs for USAID,

where newly minted FSOs Richard Holbrooke, John Negroponte and Tony Lake served as field officers. (See his April 2015 *FSJ* article about this period.)

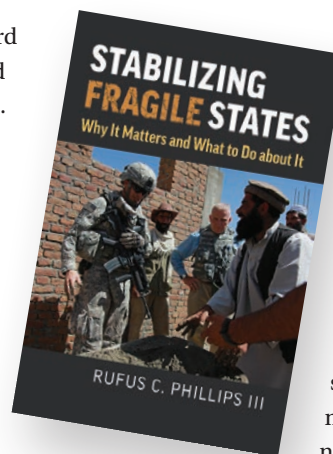
In an earlier volume that gained him national attention, *Why Vietnam Matters: An Eyewitness Account of Lessons Not Learned* (Naval Institute Press, 2008), Phillips describes how he absorbed Lansdale’s experience and wisdom, and his wholly different way of looking at state fragility.

There, Phillips established the core premise that we did not lose the Vietnam War because we did not exact a heavy enough price on the North Vietnamese,

**Phillips turns in the second half of *Stabilizing Fragile States* to what is perhaps the most interesting for this audience: the architecture and personnel for doing stabilization.**

or because we failed to “win hearts and minds” in the transactional way it was then being used by a president (Lyndon Johnson) who was convinced he could buy off Ho Chi Minh with a massive Tennessee Valley Authority-style project for the Mekong River basin.

Rather, Phillips refers in that book to what Lansdale described as “the X factor,” the human, political side of the war. “The official American view of the war,” he writes, “missed the single most influential component—a South Vietnamese political cause worth fighting for—while the enemy, the Vietcong, framed every action as furthering its political cause against colonialism and feudalism, and for unification. We underestimated



the motivating power of Vietnamese nationalism. ...

This conflict was at its heart a political one, a war of ideas and of the spirit.”

Did outsiders have the ability to shape these sentiments among the Vietnamese people, one could reasonably ask?

Phillips was realistic about this question, contending “only the local people can save their own country.” But with enough skill and insight, “our help can be instrumental.”

Lansdale tried to pitch this approach to McNamara, and Phillips had one meeting with President John F. Kennedy where he urged less focus on body counts and a singular focus on the political structure developing in Saigon and its reflection throughout the country.

But there was always something esoteric about it all—feelings and psychology could hardly stand up to bombing runs and troop levels in the corridors of power. It was a war, after all, and wars are won by killing the enemy. Phillips watched in dismay as some of his advice to focus on politics took hold locally, but not on a national level where it could have swung the balance.



## The Stabilization Debates

*Why Vietnam Matters* was published in 2008 when the U.S. was struggling through two other counterinsurgency campaigns that to many were reminiscent of Vietnam. It established Phillips' place in the debates then underway about state stabilization, debates which ultimately led Congress to pass the Global Fragility Act of 2019.

But it was a period of intense frustration for Phillips, who watched Iraq and Afghanistan play out with seemingly no application of the many lessons that by then should have been absorbed or at least led to caution and humility.

In the chapter on Iraq in *Stabilizing Fragile States*, he comments, for example, on the “stunning lack of cultural awareness and political acumen” in the early team there, followed by economic and military surges that were never matched by a consistent effort to build a political system that would deliver for the Iraqi people.

In Afghanistan, where he spent time as an election observer and adviser on his 80th birthday, he similarly notes the early failure to support political negotiations with the Taliban, with “U.S. brute force tactics” often fueling the very insurgency they were intended to curtail.

He concludes that the strategy overall simply “failed to consider the reaction of the Afghan people and their leaders to having their country used as a counter-terrorist platform with little or no support for their own self-defense.”

There are bright spots in the narrative, and Phillips is keen to highlight them. He suggests that El Salvador is a country where the government, with indirect U.S. support, robbed the insurgents of their political cause, fought them to a standstill and made peace.

And in a chapter on Colombia's strug-

gle with the FARC insurgency group, he shows how the U.S. did not smother or undercut the nationalist credentials of the country's leaders, but rather encouraged their good instincts in developing a new “culture of citizenship,” alongside an effective national military strategy. He holds out the Colombia case as a “guideline for action” for other struggling states and their supporters.

## An Entirely New Concept

Phillips turns in the second half of *Stabilizing Fragile States* to what is perhaps the most interesting for this audience: the architecture and personnel for doing stabilization, centered on a proposal for an entirely new task—political action. An entirely new officer would

be needed to conduct the new task—the political action officer, working in a new organization, the State-USAID Joint Stability Assistance Team.

Phillips reflects back on times when such a unit could have made a difference in what became a national catastrophe—Somalia in 1993, for instance, when weak U.N./U.S. political work led to the Black Hawk Down fiasco and the unraveling of the entire mission; or Iraq in 2003, when lack of a “viable political strategy for creating a national compact among the country's contending factions” led to that country's undoing.

The team's first task would be to understand the country's “competitive environment.” While they are not there to directly intervene, they are there to know what the host-country government will need to do to win, a step well beyond conventional reporting and representation.

From there, they are to seek out ways to help effective local leadership, with whom they have developed relationships of trust and confidence, design and help carry out political and military strategies to achieve stability.

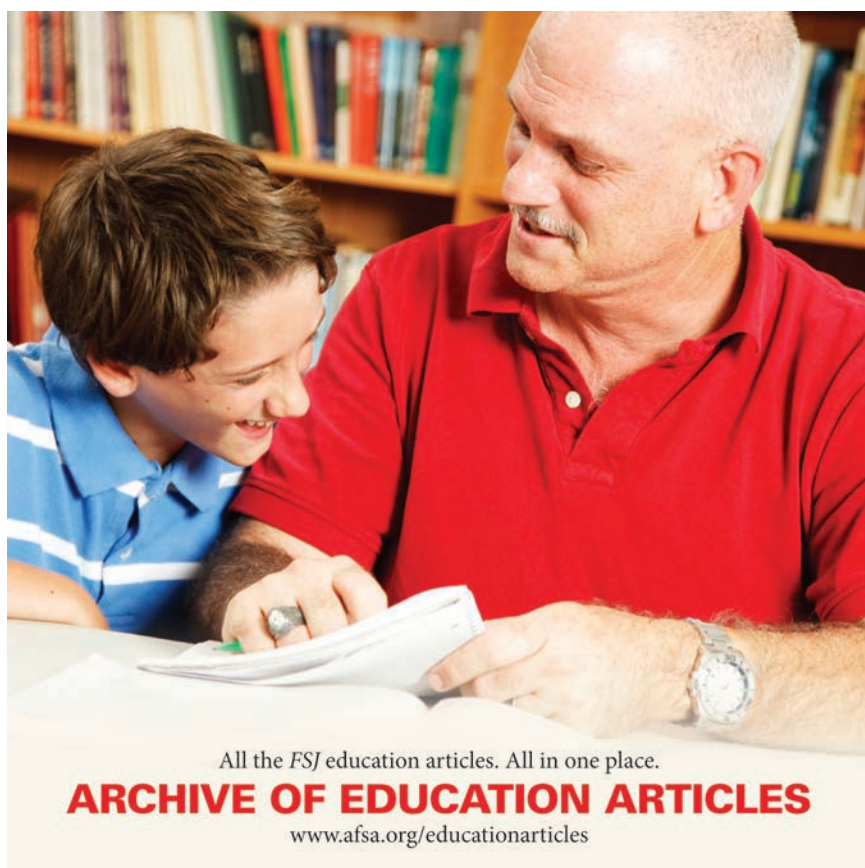
All of this is done with an eye to fostering “sustainable economic and social improvements with a positive political impact” and “boosting citizen participation in government.”

The models for these specially selected and trained officers, Phillips suggests, are T.E. Lawrence, Lansdale and, more recently, retired Ambassador James Bullington, whose work under the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations in 2012 helped resolve the political dispute between the Senegalese government and its Casamance region. Bullington became a “facilitator, coach, adviser, partner and personal trainer,” able to earn the good faith of both sides



**Rufus Phillips on a 1954 inspection trip to a formerly Viet Minh-controlled area in the Mekong Delta recently handed over to the South Vietnamese Army.**

COURTESY OF RUFUS PHILLIPS



and build a peace between the government and three rebel factions.

Some things in the book, however, bear scrutiny. First, it may be overly infused with Vietnam, a quite different period with conditions that don't exist in many places today.

Second, there is often a blending of the local and national levels. With expeditionary diplomacy, Phillips is implying officers in the countryside; but many of the issues he raises about building national-level trust and support would be worked on by embassies in capitals.

And third, there seems to be an assumption that the U.S. will always be the key player, when in many cases it simply may not be well placed to bring about the changes it seeks and others, notably the United Nations, could do it better.

But when a persistent deficit has led to so many painful failures in so short a period, it is worth asking whether fixing the problem might be easier than fighting it or, even worse, denying it. Rufus Phillips' gift on his way out was a blueprint for what fixing the problem could entail. We should debate it—and embrace much of it.

And in our work, we should all be a bit more like Phillips, whom H.R. McMaster described as having "wisdom tempered by humility and empathy." ■

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*Keith Mines is Director for Latin America at the U.S. Institute of Peace. He retired from government service in 2019 after a career that included military and diplomatic assignments on the margins of nine conflicts. His book, Why Nation-Building Matters: Political Consolidation, Building Security Forces, and Economic Development in Failed and Fragile States (Potomac Books, 2020), recounts these experiences.*



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# The Power of Our Example

BY RONALD E. HAWKINS JR.

“We will lead not merely by the example of our power but by the power of our example.”

President Joe Biden made this statement when speaking about the global leadership role of the United States during his inaugural address, and it caused me to reflect on some of the public diplomacy initiatives in which I have been involved.

When promoting American values abroad to support and achieve our foreign policy objectives, did we do more than just give sermons? Did we engage in a concrete way, showcasing the best examples America has to offer?



**Martin Luther King III laid flowers at the bust of Dr. Martin Luther King in Tuzla in 2009.**

At several postings where I was fortunate to be part of the team promoting nonviolence, diversity and inclusion to bolster local democratic institutions, we worked with Mr. Martin Luther King III to share his family's legacy. This work, I believe, has been powerfully effective.

While we could schedule numerous presentations at various schools, community centers and the like for mission personnel to extoll the importance of equity and nonviolence, nothing resonated more with host audiences than hearing it from the son of the civil rights icon himself.



In the early 1990s, as history books indicate, Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) saw terrible fighting, including genocide, as Yugoslavia imploded. The 1995 Dayton Accords ended the hostilities, but this peace agreement did not result in Bosnia becoming a stable democratic state.

While diplomatic efforts focus on preserving BiH as one political entity, the ethnically tripartite country—comprising Bosniaks (Muslims), Croats (Catholics) and Bosnian Serbs (Serb Orthodox)—continues to educate its children with ethnically tailored curricula. In some cases, they even use the same school facilities but at different times, thus avoiding having to integrate



**In Stolac, Martin Luther King III engaged with students at the local, ethnically divided high school.**

the children. The segregated schools are reminiscent of Jim Crow America.

In 2009, when I was on assignment in Bosnia, U.S. Embassy Sarajevo invited Martin Luther King III to help commemorate the 55th anniversary of the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, which legally ended segregation in the United States.

Mr. King, then head of the nonprofit organization Realizing the Dream, was to visit and relate the legacy of his family to the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina. He was joined by Realizing the Dream's Chief Operating Officer Dr. Johnny Mack, who has an impressive set of credentials working for social change himself.

The weeklong tour began with a public address to which numerous political, civil society and community leaders and others were invited. As Mr. King entered the room, even before uttering a single word, he received a standing ovation. I got goosebumps thinking of how we were truly engaging with the people of Bosnia through the example of the King family.

Mr. King also traveled to the city of Tuzla, a Bosnian city with a long tradition of tolerance and multicultural existence, to lay flowers at a bust of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Tuzla Mayor Jasmim Imamovic, who greatly admired King and his message, had ordered the sculpture, donated by U.S. Embassy Sarajevo, and it was unveiled on King's birth anniversary in 2003.



Ronald E. Hawkins Jr. is currently a student at the Foreign Service Institute in preparation for his onward assignment as deputy chief of mission in Lome, Togo. He is a recent graduate of the U.S. Army War College, where he pursued a master's degree in strategic studies. From August 2018 to July 2020, he served as the public affairs officer (PAO) in Kampala. Previously, he was PAO in Bucharest and Khar-toum. He has also had assignments in Washington, D.C., and served in Sarajevo, Reykjavik and Algiers. His article, "The Legacy of Jackie Robinson," was published in the March 2021 FSJ.

But the high point of the week was a trip to the village of Stolac to visit the “poster child” of segregated schools. Here, the principals of the divided high school did not even speak to one another. They did, however, give permission for Mr. King to address a joint student body. Mr. King was so moved by the interaction with the students, he returned a year later to officially cut the ribbon for an embassy-funded Dr. King Reading Room, a space open to all pupils at once.

Shortly after, as a follow-up to this remarkable event, the U.S. Navy, through the embassy defense attaché’s office, invited the high school students to jointly tour the USS *Higgins* when it was visiting the nearby Bosnian port of Neum. The students even rode the bus there together.

A few days later, I received a telephone call from Svetlana Broz, the head of a local nongovernmental organization that focuses on teaching adolescents to confront corruption and to battle social and political discord. The embassy had not previously worked with Ms. Broz; she was not keen on working with Americans.

During our meeting, I asked her why



Invited by the U.S. Navy, Stolac high school students jointly toured the USS *Higgins* at the port of Neum.

now. She responded that the King legacy is what attracted her to the embassy. (Ms. Broz is the granddaughter of Josip Broz Tito, who as president of Yugoslavia from 1953 until his death in 1980 maintained the peaceful coexistence of the nations of the Yugoslav Federation.)



Back in the nation’s capital, on Oct. 17, 2011, the day after the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial was officially dedicated, Mr. King came to the State Department to participate in a global conversation focused on his father’s legacy. We held watch parties at our American Corners overseas, and the event was streamed online. The result was a discussion on inclusion and nonviolence with people from 25 countries on five continents. This was the State Department broadcasting the example of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Dr. King far and wide.



Several years later, while I was posted in Romania, U.S. Embassy Bucharest put a great deal of effort into assisting that country in dealing with its own inclusion issues. The Roma, also known by the pejorative term “Gypsies,” were often looked down upon, discriminated against and even subjected to violence at the hands of less tolerant people. Mr. King was invited for a few days to share his father’s message on nonviolence and equality.

Aside from a well-covered public address in Bucharest, Mr. King was also asked to speak in Transylvania at the University of Brasov. The university was very excited to be hosting him. On arrival we found the staff hurriedly unfolding chairs, filling up every vacant spot they could find throughout the lecture hall. According to the dean, a nearby high school had called and insisted that they, too, be allowed to



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During the 4/4 for Friends annual event in Romania, volunteers plant trees and clean up public facilities and spaces.

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After the successful visit, we wanted to do more to keep the King legacy and example of service alive and current. In 2014, working with American Councils in Romania, we developed 4/4 for Friends. This program—marking the April 4 anniversary of Dr. King’s martyrdom—established a day dedicated to volunteerism, which was not widely practiced in Romania.

The program resulted in thousands of hours of service with more than 4,000 volunteers throughout 38 of the 40 counties in Romania, all in a single day. Not only did the U.S. ambassador participate, but so did Romanian celebrities, such as a recent Olympic gold medalist, famous actors, well-known musicians and even a member of the royal family. This event is now held annually. At this writing, based on registrations, participation this year is estimated to be greater than 20,000.



Working with Mr. King, we drew on the United States’ troubled and imperfect past and offered it as an example for other nations struggling with their own issues of inclusion. We were not shrinking from our history, but rather using it as a valuable illustration to help other countries experiencing similar trials and tribulations.

We were being true global leaders, through the power of our example. ■





**T**he morning mist was still rolling over the surrounding hills when I photographed these cherry trees in full bloom on Mount Yae on the northwestern side of Okinawa's main island. I was struck by the contrast of the wild palm and banana trees interspersed with the pink blossoms. The cherry blossom season in Okinawa is mid-January through early February.

In the distance, you can see a small viewing pavilion farther up the road. Not pictured: dozens of sightseers queueing up along the road to admire the blossoms. Japan has been mostly closed to foreign tourists since the start of the pandemic, so the other visitors were Japanese. ■

---

*Fiona Masland is a second-tour State Department Foreign Service officer currently serving at U.S. Consulate General Naha in Okinawa. She previously served in Lagos. She took this photo in late January on her personal cell phone, a Motorola Moto G Power.*

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