

# THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

DECEMBER 2022



HONORING  
EXCELLENCE AND DISSENT

DEMOCRACY IN  
TUMULTUOUS TIMES

EDUCATION SUPPLEMENT



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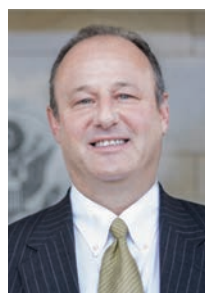
# Celebrating—and Strengthening—Constructive Dissent

BY ERIC RUBIN

All of us at AFSA were thrilled to be able to host our annual October awards ceremony in person for the first time in three years. We honored Ambassador Anne Patterson with our award for Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy, and recognized 17 others who contributed to advancing our country's policies and interests. You can read more about all the recipients and their accomplishments in this issue of the *FSJ*.

Most rewarding and encouraging was the revival of applications for AFSA's awards for constructive dissent. Not only did we have the greatest number of nominations for constructive dissent awards in recent memory, we were also able to honor some of the recipients for their success in achieving changes in U.S. policy.

I am proud to have been part of the group that won the 1994 William R. Rivkin Award for Constructive Dissent by a mid-level officer. Our dissent was over policy on the breakup of the former Yugoslavia and the lack of U.S. engagement to stop what was the worst war on the European continent since 1945 (recently echoed in Russia's outrageous invasion of Ukraine).



We did not see or achieve any quick turnaround in U.S. policy, but I hope to this day that we contributed to the conversation that

led the U.S. to decide to intervene to stop the slaughter.

Constructive dissent is a long Foreign Service tradition. The formal Dissent Channel dates back to the U.S. wars in Southeast Asia and the widespread opposition of members of the Foreign Service to such U.S. actions as the Christmas bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong and the bombing and invasion of Laos and Cambodia. The FAM (Foreign Affairs Manual) language reads:

"It is Department of State policy that all U.S. citizen employees, foreign and domestic, be able to express dissenting or alternative views on substantive issues of policy, in a manner which ensures serious, high-level review and response. ... Freedom from reprisal for Dissent Channel users is strictly enforced; officers or employees found to have engaged in retaliation or reprisal against Dissent Channel users, or to have divulged to unauthorized personnel the source or contents of Dissent Channel messages, will be subject to disciplinary action. Dissent Channel messages, including the identity of the authors, are a most sensitive element in the internal deliberative process and are to be protected accordingly."

To our knowledge, State and USAID are the only federal agencies that guarantee the right to express—internally—dissenting policy views. While this is something that we should be rightly proud of, the truth is that the use of and confidence in the Dissent Channel has varied widely over the years. There have

been times when it was made clear that dissenting views were not welcome and would not be seriously considered. Unfortunately, some FS members reacted to that discouraging message by going public with dissenting views, something that should never happen.

I am glad to report that we are back to having robust and healthy use of the Dissent Channel and, more importantly, we are seeing the current administration consider and even implement some of the dissenting recommendations. Secretary Blinken personally reads every dissent message and contributes to the responses, and the current leadership of the Secretary's Policy Planning Staff has been assiduous in encouraging use of the channel and taking submissions seriously. That is worthy of our praise and appreciation.

Further, the current administration encourages employees to contribute to dialogue and debate on policy, not only through the Dissent Channel but in the course of their regular work. The most important principle, which Secretary Blinken has spoken about publicly, is not that good leadership *tolerates* dissenting internal views and ensures that dissenters are not the subject of reprisals. Rather, it is the recognition that constructive internal dissent can lead to better policies, better ideas, higher morale, and a stronger United States if it is encouraged and taken seriously.

That is the U.S. Foreign Service tradition at its best. ■

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



# THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

**Editor in Chief, Director of Publications**  
Shawn Dorman: [dorman@afsa.org](mailto:dorman@afsa.org)

**Senior Editor**  
Susan Brady Maitra: [maitra@afsa.org](mailto:maitra@afsa.org)

**Managing Editor**  
Kathryn Owens: [owens@afsa.org](mailto:owens@afsa.org)

**Associate Editor**  
Julia Wohlers: [wohlers@afsa.org](mailto:wohlers@afsa.org)

**Publications Coordinator**  
Hannah McDaniel: [mcdaniel@afsa.org](mailto:mcdaniel@afsa.org)

**Business Development Manager—  
Advertising and Circulation**  
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**Fax:** (202) 338-8244  
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## CONTACTS



[www.afsa.org](http://www.afsa.org)

**AFSA Headquarters:**  
(202) 338-4045; Fax (202) 338-6820  
**State Department AFSA Office:**  
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Sean O'Gorman: [ogorman@afsa.org](mailto:ogorman@afsa.org)

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Colleen Fallon-Lenaghan:  
[FallonLenaghanC@state.gov](mailto:FallonLenaghanC@state.gov)  
**Senior Labor Management Advisor**  
James Yorke: [YorkeJ@state.gov](mailto:YorkeJ@state.gov)  
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# Excellence and Integrity in Diplomacy

BY SHAWN DORMAN

**T**his month we honor the recipients of AFSA's annual awards. It was my pleasure to interview Ambassador Anne Patterson, recipient of the award for Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy. My first encounter with Amb. Patterson was 20 years ago when I interviewed her as our featured ambassador for the 2003 *Inside a U.S. Embassy* book. She was so impressive then and has since gone from one huge challenge to the next, serving as a role model and mentor all along the way.

The inaugural Foreign Service Champions Award went to Senator Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska) and Representative Joaquin Castro (D-Texas), both outstanding public servants who not only recognize the critical role of the U.S. Foreign Service, but act on that through efforts on the Hill, including creation of the Senate Foreign Service Caucus (Sullivan) and legislation like the Foreign Service Families Act (Castro).

AFSA prides itself on supporting constructive dissent through its four awards honoring those who seek to make a difference by opposing policy they believe is wrong—constructively and within the system—and standing up for what they

believe is right. This year's honorees are Benjamin Dille (Herter Award), Jennifer Davis (Rivkin Award), Elisabeth Zentos

and Anton Cooper (Rivkin Award), Steven May (Harris Award), and Michael White (Harriman Award).

On a related note, FSO Steve Walker looks back at dissent over the U.S. response (or lack thereof) to the Bosnia War in the early 1990s, and asks, "When Is It Ethical to Resign in Protest?"

And remembering his own Rivkin Award tied to the same policy, AFSA President Eric Rubin devotes his column to "Celebrating—and Strengthening—Constructive Dissent."

The nine recipients of the awards for exemplary performance are an equally impressive group, and the stories of their work are inspiring. They are Virginia Carlson (Bohlen Award), Denis Rajic (Delavan Award), Judit Kaczor (Delavan Award), Christine Peterson (Guess Award), RaeJean Stokes (Palmer Award), Jacob Surface (Palmer Award), Jeff Osweiler (Post Rep Award), Susan Johnson (AFSA Contributions Award), and Sharon Papp (AFSA Special Achievement Award).

This month's feature by retired FSO Bill Wanlund looks at "Promoting Democracy in Tumultuous Times." The Speaking Out by FSO Brendan Rivage-Seul makes the case for expanding State's Diplomat in Residence program.

In Reflections, FSO Zach Przysup writes on "The Enduring Value of International Exchange." And Local Lens from FSO Maryum Saifee takes us to a Samar-kand market.

Last month, we featured our annual

## Editorial Calendar 2023

**JAN-FEB:** 50 Years of AFSA as a Union

**MARCH:** Foreign Service Reform: A Progress Update

**APRIL:** Diplomacy and the Future of the Digital Economy

**MAY:** Countering Disinformation—USSR Exhibit Guides Case Study

**JUNE:** Policy Failures, Diplomacy Lessons

**JULY-AUG:** DEIA in the Foreign Service: An Update on Progress

**SEPTEMBER:** Foreign Service Family Matters

**OCTOBER:** Public Health and Pandemic Diplomacy

**NOVEMBER:** FS Authors—In Their Own Write

**DECEMBER:** AFSA Awards: Honoring Excellence and Constructive Dissent

roundup of books by and of interest to the Foreign Service community, and an article on writing a memoir. The FS community is brimming with both published and potential authors. Sometimes, an article for the *Journal* becomes the seed for a book. You know where I'm going with this.

As we head into 2023, think about writing for the *Journal*, the unique "insider" space for discussion and debate about diplomacy and development. The *Journal* tells the Foreign Service story through the eyes of the practitioner. We accept submissions on a rolling basis, with articles for particular focus topics due at least three months in advance of publication. See the 2023 focus topic calendar on this page and consider pitching an article on one of those topics or any other timely subject.

We are also always seeking submissions for Speaking Out, Features, FS Heritage, FS Know-How, and Local Lens. And we welcome your responses to what you read in the *FSJ* for Letters to the Editor. See our Author Guidelines page for more details. We look forward to hearing from you!

Wishing everyone a peaceful and joyful holiday season and new year. May diplomacy flourish in 2023. ■



Shawn Dorman is the editor of The Foreign Service Journal.



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## Putin and NATO: An Evolution

I would like to compliment Ken Moskowitz for his excellent article, “Did NATO Expansion Really Cause Putin’s Invasion?” (October 2022 *FSJ*).

The answer is, of course, no. It was always just a cover for President Vladimir Putin’s emerging design, which was to reconstitute the Russian empire.

Despite Russian complaints about NATO behavior and outrage over Kosovo, Putin’s original policy was, in fact, to have Russia join NATO as quickly as possible—just without having to go through all the folderol that other lesser countries had to endure.

Apparently, Putin didn’t really understand what NATO was. He viewed the alliance as just another very powerful group that could benefit his own interests, and over which he might exert influence.

It typified his transactional nature, in which he allied with anyone who could benefit him. During his St. Petersburg years, he worked with local organized crime groups. During his early Moscow years, he relied on his clique of former Leningrad KGB officers to help him rise rapidly to the top.

Putin initially viewed NATO in much the same way, as a club whose membership would confer status and benefits on himself and on Russia. It was only later that he realized he could not deal with NATO in the same way he dealt with criminal gangs and political allies.

As Putin consolidated his control over Russia, his objectives changed, and new enemies were required. Mikhail Khodorkovsky explained this evolution to Fareed Zakaria on the Oct. 2, 2022, broadcast of “GPS” (Global Public Square): “In [the early 2000s] ... it became clear that [Putin] had decided to rule the country as one

would rule a gang, but at that time he wasn’t a bloody dictator. This happened in front of our eyes. In front of our eyes, step by step, from somebody who violated a sovereignty of a neighboring country in 2014, when he annexed Crimea. From that person, through the person who decided to attack a neighboring country, this evolution has happened from an autocrat through a—via a dictator into a bloody murderer, a bloody assassin.”

So, Putin’s complaints about NATO, while compelling for many Russians, have always just been a propaganda ploy, conveniently adopted when circumstances dictated. Now, the die is cast. As long as Putin rules, NATO will be the enemy.

As Fiona Hill recently told Susan Glasser: “There’s an element of self-delusion to much of the current commentary about the possibility of Washington and the West continuing to back Ukraine while avoiding conflict with Putin—who, after all, launched his war against Ukraine not in February but eight years ago when he invaded the country and illegally annexed the Crimean Peninsula.”

As far as Hill is concerned, we are already fighting in the Third World War, whether we acknowledge it or not: “We’ve been in this for a long time, and we’ve failed to recognize it.”

*James F. Schumaker*  
*FSO, retired*  
*San Clemente, California*



perceptive article (“Did NATO Expansion Really Cause Putin’s Invasion?”, October 2022 *FSJ*), is long-standing and unlikely to be resolved definitively.

Nevertheless, I will share my perspective as one who served in Romania from 1991 to 1995, a time when the issue

of “joining the West” was prominent in many minds there.

In Romania, at least, the U.S. did not push the Romanians to adhere to NATO—it was something that they desperately wanted on their own. Their main foreign policy goals then were to gain membership in NATO and the European Union (E.U.) as quickly as possible.

The reasons are self-evident, especially in light of their unhappy experiences as an involuntary ally of the Soviet Union. NATO membership would provide security against possible predations by others, especially Russia, whom the Romanians in general feared, distrusted, and disliked or hated. The E.U., on the other hand, offered the promise of much better economic circumstances and of belonging to the “civilized world,” something Russia could never hope to match.

The U.S. role in Romania, in the early 1990s at least, was to promote changes and reforms that would make the country eligible for NATO membership—greater democracy, civilian control of the military, reduced corruption, peaceful relations with its immediate neighbors, and so on. The decision on whether to seek membership was entirely up to the Romanians.

We were eager to help them to achieve the needed reforms. If that led to NATO membership, we were fine with that; but fundamental reforms were our

## Why Romania Joined NATO

The question of whether NATO expansion into Eastern Europe caused Russia to behave as it has in Ukraine and elsewhere, as posed in Ken Moskowitz’s



highest priority. If the Russians want to know why countries like Romania were so eager to become NATO members, they need only to look in the mirror.

*Jonathan B. Rickert*

*FSO, retired*

*Bainbridge Island, Washington*

## The Democracy Challenge

If you're an FSO and find yourself feeling (as I do) appalled at the recent and continued internal threats to our democracy, or even just discouraged at seeing your professional efforts apparently go for naught, then stop what you are doing and find "Democracy as a Vocation" (September 2022 *FSJ*)—the only *Foreign Service Journal* article I've ever kept at my desk.

While calling his article "a love letter to junior FSOs everywhere," José M. Garzón doesn't sugarcoat the challenges, disappointments, and dangers we face. On the contrary, as a retired FSO with three decades of USAID work behind him, he provides a clear-eyed and experienced view of them.

But rather than despairing, Mr. Garzón quotes Max Weber to enjoin us all to arm ourselves "with that steadfastness of heart which can brave even the crumbling of all hopes." Again borrowing from Weber, Mr. Garzón then provides a helpful and inspiring summary of what it takes to do so.

So take two minutes and read it. All of us can use a reminder of why we should—and how we can—"brave even the crumbling of all hopes."

*Will Denham*

*FSO*

*U.S. Consulate General Vancouver*



## Guinea Opening: Setting the Record Straight

As one of the two officers who opened the first U.S. embassy in Guinea in 1959, I must correct a couple inaccuracies in Gregory Garland's interesting article on the Kennedy-Nixon competition for credit in advancing U.S. policy toward Africa (September 2022 *FSJ*).

Garland notes that Guinea rejected President Charles de Gaulle's offer to join what amounted to a sort of commonwealth based on the British model, Guinea being the only former French colony to do so, in September 1958. But Garland claims that the U.S. did not open an embassy in Conakry until eight months later.

The first American chargé d'affaires, Robert Rinden, and I arrived to open the embassy on Friday the 13th, in January 1959, a fateful date for the troubles that followed (see my memoir, *So You Want to Be a Diplomat?*).

We had been held back for more than a week in Dakar, Senegal, until the State Department felt we had pacified de Gaulle sufficiently.

In fact, this was four, not eight, months after September 1958, though it was well after the Soviet and British ambassadors arrived. We were snubbed on arrival at the airport. The first U.S. ambassador, John Howard Morrow, arrived on July 30, 1959, more than six months later.

Garland also asserts that the new Bureau of African Affairs opened its doors on Sept. 8, 1959, just prior to President Touré's state visit to the U.S. from Oct. 15 through Nov. 9, 1959.

But before going to Guinea, I had been fully briefed at the Bureau of African Affairs, which was established in 1958, not 1959, a fact Garland appears

to recognize when he later corrects Kennedy's debate assertion that it was established in 1957 by parenthetically adding "[sic, 1958]" on page 47.

I would add that a December 1960 congressional delegation led by Senator Frank Church (D-Idaho) that visited Conakry with young Ted Kennedy (before he was a senator) made no noticeable mark on Touré's pro-Soviet foreign policy.

*George Lambrakis*

*Senior FSO, retired*

*Paris, France*

## Guinea Opening—The Author Responds

I am thoroughly appreciative of the *Journal's* loyal readership being capable of eyeballing every detail; had I known of the letter writer, I would have interviewed him! In fact, I have found [ADST] oral histories a goldmine for Conakry and other posts.

Lambrakis' letter accurately places the date of the opening of the new Bureau of African Affairs (AF) in 1958. It was organized in August of that year and the new assistant secretary took office Sept. 8, 1958. My article should have included that year along with the day and month. That was my mistake.

*The Foreign Service Journal* published an article by me in May 2008 commemorating the 50th anniversary of AF; titled "The Africa Bureau's Intellectual Godfathers," it details the story behind the bureau's creation (I referenced it in the original footnotes). It's a good source of information on a not-very-studied epoch. In any case, the Touré visit was indeed its baptismal program of importance, as I state. It was a marked success for the bureau, even if Vice President Richard Nixon gave it an envious thumbs-down because of the Kennedy tour de force.

As for the opening of the mission in Conakry, Chargé Rinden was certainly in place. What took eight months was the arrival of an ambassador, the fault of the Eisenhower administration. I should have clarified that for our FS readership.

Eight months without a chief of mission may not seem like an extended period in today's Foreign Service, but it infuriated the thin-skinned Touré, who considered the presence of an ambassador the respectful sign of a full embassy and the prolonged absence of one a purposeful insult.

Ambassador John Morrow belatedly arrived; he himself didn't take lightly what he perceived as hostile and racist U.S. staff attitudes toward himself as a Black political appointee. He walked into a chief-of-mission residence in disarray

despite the many months to prepare, the details of which he spelled out in his memoir.

The Edward Kennedy visit presents another curious episode, whose symbolism was not lost on the family-centered Guineans. Due to *FSJ* word limits, this and the Morrow anecdote were deleted from my article.

However necessary, the editor's cutting knife can be imperfect. In any case, there's ample scholarship on Kennedy's Africa policy once he entered the White House, where I would argue the tale of little brother's brief adventure more appropriately belongs.

These are exactly the stories the *Journal* is in a position to dig up from the likes of us and that enrich our understanding of the past as a nation. I hope

you're ready for more. Three cheers for the *FSJ*'s work!

Greg Garland

*FSO, retired*

Washington, D.C. ■



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## New National Security Strategy Released

On Oct. 12, President Joe Biden presented his National Security Strategy (NSS) outlining the administration's priorities in response to current threats worldwide.

The four-part strategy lays out the country's approach to power competition between democracies and autocracies; the maintenance of and investment in U.S. industrial, military, and diplomatic efforts; climate change, food insecurity, and other sources of global instability; and a breakdown of relational strategies by region.

Part 3 highlights the importance of "out-competing China and constraining Russia," while still emphasizing "cooperation on shared challenges," such as transitioning away from fossil fuel dependency.

According to *Politico*, the congressionally mandated document reflects aspects of both the Obama and the Trump administrations' outlooks on national security, with interests in strengthening international alliances while investing in domestic economic initiatives.

The Pentagon's National Defense Strategy and Nuclear Posture Review are expected to follow in the coming weeks, in alignment with the president's and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan's vision of "a step forward toward the reduction of the role of nuclear weapons in American strategy," according to *The New York Times*.

Critics of the 48-page NSS say that while the plan integrates a full range of critical issues, ideas for implementing solutions fall short on specifics and practicality. They also note that the plan's reduced focus on the Middle East is unexpected, given that

many experts in Washington believe what happens in that region is vital to American security and prosperity.

In a press statement about the strategy, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that "American diplomacy will continue to leverage our country's unrivaled networks of allies and partners to build the strongest possible coalition of nations ... at a moment when revisionist, authoritarian powers are undermining international peace and stability and we face unprecedented, shared challenges that threaten the lives and livelihoods of all our people."



## Senior Appointments at State and USAID

Despite a lull in nominations and confirmations during the autumn Senate recess, the month of October saw a series of important appointments to senior positions in the foreign affairs agencies.

On Oct. 3, Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced the return of Ambassador Nina Hachigian to the State Department

as the first special representative for subnational diplomacy. In this role, she will also lead the newly established Unit for Subnational Diplomacy.

Most recently, Amb. Hachigian served as the first deputy mayor for international affairs for the city of Los Angeles. She previously served as the second resident U.S. ambassador to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and on the National Security Council during the Clinton administration.

In a press statement, Secretary Blinken said State recognizes that "U.S. cities and states are incubators for innovative and novel ideas that tackle global challenges, and the Department should harness these solutions. Amb. Hachigian will also lead and coordinate the development of subnational diplomacy policy across the Department."

Little has been made public about the formation of the new subnational diplomacy unit, although for several years diplomats and foreign policy analysts have called for the creation of such an office to centrally coordinate partnerships among cities, states, and the



USAID Administrator Samantha Power swears in Clinton White as the agency's new counselor on Oct. 4, 2022.

federal government (see the January-February 2022 *FSJ*).

On Oct. 4, Senior Foreign Service Officer Clinton White was sworn in as USAID's new counselor, replacing Senior FSO Chris Milligan, who retired in November 2021.

White brings more than 20 years of agency experience to the job, most recently serving as USAID regional representative for the Eastern and Southern Caribbean, based in Barbados. He previously held the positions of senior development adviser in Libya, deputy assistant administrator in the Bureau for Management, and regional controller at USAID missions in Egypt, Pakistan, Senegal, and Ghana.

At White's swearing-in, Administrator Samantha Power spoke of his unique ability to make vital connections: "We are looking to Clinton to strengthen our ambitious efforts, to build a more diverse

## Contemporary Quote

“We should be pushing our diplomats out to the edge, to the point of friction, as it were, and that doesn't mean bigger embassies, what it means is more points of presence.”

—Matt Pottinger, a deputy national security adviser during the Trump administration who now chairs the China Program at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, in interview with Politico reporter Nahal Toosi for her Oct. 23 Special Report, “Frustrated and powerless’: In fight with China for global influence, diplomacy is America's biggest weakness.”

agency that prizes different perspectives and nurtures diverse talent. And we seek his wisdom on how to elevate voices from the communities where we work, and dramatically ramp up our engagement with local organizations.”

Finally, on Oct. 6, the State Department announced the appointment of Dr.

Kelly Fletcher as its new chief information officer (CIO). Although she has never worked for the State Department, Fletcher brings with her six years of leadership experience at the Department of Defense, where she currently serves as principal deputy CIO. She will replace Keith Jones, who left the job in June.

## New Organization for Public Diplomacy Experts

The Public Diplomacy Council of America (PDCA), a new nonprofit organization launched in April 2022, brings together State Department employees and retirees, academics, and other experts to support American public diplomacy.

PDCA is a merger of the Public Diplomacy Council and Public Diplomacy Association of America, two professional organizations that worked in parallel for almost four decades to foster greater understanding of U.S. communication with the rest of the world and to mobilize active participation in statecraft by the American public.

The new PDCA's mission is “to encourage excellence and honor achievement in professional practice, academic study, and advocacy for public diplomacy.”

Programs such as the First Monday Forums offer new insights and understanding of the concept and practice of public diplomacy, while an annual award for outstanding public diplomacy initiatives highlights best practices and honors notable achievements. Mentoring, training, and teaching activities benefit current practitioners and rising professionals in a rapidly changing field.

Networking events promote closer collaboration among public diplomacy professionals and those with an interest in public diplomacy. PDCA also advocates for public diplomacy among members of Congress and the general public.

The new organization's membership comprises nearly 500 active and retired professionals as well as young colleagues who aspire to careers in the field. Members hail from foreign affairs agencies, academia, defense, media, nonprofits, and private enterprise.

Dr. Sherry Mueller, a scholar-practitioner at American University, and Joel Fischman, a retired Foreign Service officer, serve as co-presidents, and Ambassador Brian Carlson serves as vice president and membership chair. PDCA is governed by a 21-member board of directors.

Active-duty and retired personnel from the State Department and foreign affairs agencies are eligible to apply for membership at <https://publicdiplomacy.org>.

—Joe B. Johnson, Public Diplomacy Council of America board member





## Verizon to Modernize Embassy Infrastructure

The Verizon subsidiary Enterprise Infrastructure Solutions (EIS) has been awarded a 10-year contract with the State Department to upgrade technology and network infrastructure in U.S. embassies, consulates, and other diplomatic complexes. The contract covers implementation and management of network solutions at State facilities across South America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

Though the project is unique in its magnitude and geographic spread, it is one of multiple contracts Verizon has entered into this past year with the federal government. According to corporate press releases, Verizon recently signed a \$400 million contract with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in addition to three contracts with the Department of Defense amounting to almost \$1 billion.

"We are uniquely qualified to provide the Department of State with powerful solutions to their global network consolidation and management needs," states Maggie Hallbach, senior vice president of the public sector department at Verizon.

The contract with State falls under a \$50 billion arrangement between EIS and the General Services Administration focused on streamlining telecoms and IT improvements for federal agencies, according to Telecoms.com.

## State Department Team Receives Sammie Award

A team of State Department employees received the 2022 Service to America Medals, also known as the Sammies. Considered "the Oscars of government service," this national awards program honors the achievements of federal employees.

In late September, Refugee Processing Center Director Hilary Ingraham,

## 100 Years Ago

### Help Wanted

It's an old saying in the publishing world that "there's a good story in every man." There's one in every Consul, if only it can be discovered, extracted!

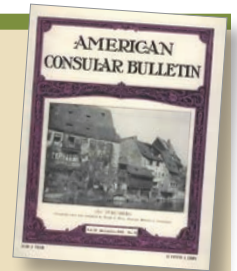
Experience since *The American Consular Bulletin* was first launched has established two facts in connection with its editorial policy:

First, that the men in the field like to read about what is going on in the Department itself—intimate descriptions of events which are not mentioned in official instructions or discussed in full in the press;

Second, that the man in the field likes to know what the other fellow is doing.

The Bulletin wants serious articles, of course, including useful hints on short cuts and new methods of office work or system. It wants travel and descriptive articles, too, and personal impressions of strange, far-away places; and it wants interesting photographs. But most of all it wants contributions of a personal character, descriptive of consular adventures and experiences, especially of a constructive or informative nature.

—Excerpted from the Editorial in the December 1922 issue of *The American Consular Bulletin* (renamed *The Foreign Service Journal* in 1924).



Domestic Resettlement Section Chief Holly Herrera, and Program Officer Kiera Berdinner, as well as the Operation Allies Welcome Resettlement Team of the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), were selected as the winning team among five finalists for the Safety, Security, and International Affairs Medal.

This Sammie award recognizes a significant accomplishment in fields such as counterterrorism, defense and military affairs, diplomacy, foreign assistance, and emergency preparedness and response.

The PRM team—and specifically, the three women named in the award—helped coordinate the largest resettlement of refugees in modern U.S. history, providing housing and services in record time to more than 72,000 Afghans who fled Afghanistan and came to U.S. military bases across the United States in 2021.

State Department officials said the trio's work will serve as a model for how such a process is managed moving forward.

"It's really revolutionized everything," said Sarah Cross, deputy assistant secretary of state for the PRM bureau. "We will see that pay off over the years to come."

The Service to America Medal award was created in 2002 by the Partnership for Public Service. A selection committee made up of leaders from Congress, government, businesses, foundations, academia, entertainment, and the media chooses the winners from more than 400 nominations.

Two individual State Department employees were also named as 2022 Sammie finalists in separate categories: Scott Busby, a finalist for the Paul A. Volcker Career Achievement Medal, and Samantha Sutton, a finalist for the Emerging Leaders Medal.

**Site of the Month: Carnegie Connects**  
<https://carnegieendowment.org/events/carnegieconnects>



**T**he Carnegie Endowment for International Peace podcast, Carnegie Connects, explores international affairs and policy issues through discussions with historians, scholars, journalists, and other experts from around the world.

Hosted by Aaron David Miller, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment who worked at the State Department for 24 years, podcast episodes are produced every other week and range from 30 to 50 minutes in length.

Recent themes include: a discussion with U.S. Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley on relations and nuclear negotiations as the country faces mass protests; diplomacy on the front lines with Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch; the impact of U.S. foreign policy on the American voter with David Axelrod, former senior adviser to President Barack Obama; and the Biden administration's trade policies with U.S. Trade Representative Ambassador Katherine Tai.

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

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## Quiet Crisis: Diplomatic Careers in Tension with Bureaucratic Roles

There is a perceptible and erosive tension within the modern State Department arising from the incongruity between the background and career experiences of its personnel and the roles they are called upon to occupy within the Department's bureaucracy.

The tension between the expectation of Foreign Service officers and the requirements of their roles within the organization is chiefly a reflection of one fact: the Department of State in the decade of the 1970s is an immense, complex and highly organized bureaucratic structure. As in any complex organization, the individuals who happen to be filling its many thousands of roles tend to be submerged within and dominated by the structure itself.

The bureaucratization of diplomacy ... has been the natural and gradual consequence of the growth of America's global commitment

and the refinement of the techniques of managing vast quantities of information that go with large-scale organizations.

Decision-making is centralized as never before.

Ultimately, the only solution seems to lie in a still more careful coordination between the way in which personnel are recruited and trained by the Department and the

actual requirements of the roles they will be expected to fill in the course of their careers. As military tensions are reduced among developed societies and contact among them becomes more and more intense, the State Department is likely to play an increasingly prominent role as both the architect and the agent of American policy.

—Warren L. Mason, political science professor, excerpted from an article of the same title in the December 1972 FSJ.



### Championing the FS in the Senate

I've seen the incredible work that our Foreign Service officers do, day in and day out. You're on the front lines of interactions all around the world and you do an exceptional job.

That's one of the reasons why in the U.S. Senate I've been very focused on trying to champion the work that you do by starting the Foreign Service Caucus, with Sen. Chris Van Hollen, that enables you to come to us, get us members of the Senate to understand FSOs and their needs, especially those of their families. We're trying to provide a forum for you to come to the Hill in an informal way and have a good discussion so we can support all of you.

—Senator Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska), in remarks delivered at the AFSA Awards Ceremony on Oct. 19.



### Wielding FS Diversity to Face Challenges

American diplomats and Foreign Service professionals are essential to our nation's security and prosperity. To strengthen our position on the global stage, we must continue to recruit and retain a world-class diplomatic corps. This starts with building a representative workforce that reflects the diversity and strength of our citizenry. When we empower aspiring leaders of all backgrounds, they will in turn help us meet complex global challenges.

The foundation for our infrastructure for diplomacy is the Foreign Service community and the public servants of the State Department, USAID, and across the federal government.

—Representative Joaquin Castro (D-Texas), in remarks delivered at the AFSA Awards Ceremony on Oct. 19. ■

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# “Winning the Competition for Talent”— The Case for Expanding the Diplomat in Residence Program

BY BRENDAN RIVAGE-SEUL

I read with interest Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Brian McKeon’s email blast to all State Department personnel earlier this year that carried the subject line: “Winning the Competition for Talent.” In it, “D-MR” touted the department’s numerous reforms in the past 12 months aimed at workforce retention and recruiting the next generation of U.S. foreign policy professionals.

State’s latest initiatives focused on retention (e.g., expanded remote work eligibility, more flexible options for leave without pay, tracking data from exit interviews) are promising—and long overdue. And the expansion of Pickering, Rangel, and Payne (USAID) Fellowship programs focused on diversity recruitment are welcome.

However, if our goal is to have a workforce that truly reflects the American people—and includes “talented people from all walks of life”—there is a compelling case for expanding and revamping the Diplomat in Residence (DIR)



*Brendan Rivage-Seul, a former recruitment director at Teach For America, is a 12-year veteran of the U.S. Foreign Service. He has served in Mexico, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and France, with multiple assignments in Washington, D.C. This is his second article for The Foreign Service Journal.*

program, as well. Organizational diversity starts with recruitment and selection—and is solidified through retention: The two go hand in hand.

Consider that no matter how well State does with retention, it will not *fundamentally* change the current Foreign Service demographics. According to the latest figures from AFSA, Foreign Service ranks—white men excluded—consist of women (37 percent), African Americans (8 percent), Asian Americans (7 percent), and Hispanics or Latinos (8 percent).

A Foreign Service that “looks like America” would, by contrast, track more closely with our nation’s demographics, which per the latest U.S. census data break down as follows: women (50.5 percent), African Americans (13.6 percent), Asian Americans (6.1 percent), and Hispanics or Latinos (18.9 percent).

These figures signal that, with the exception of one non-white male category, we clearly need more diversity in our pool of *successful* Foreign Service applicants (i.e., those who ultimately become U.S. diplomats). Expanding and rethinking our recruitment strategies would seem an obvious place to start.

After speaking with several colleagues who have served recently as DIRs, I am convinced that to attract the most talented and diverse group of Foreign Service candidates who can make it through the rigorous selection process, our DIR

team must become much bigger, more strategic, proactive, and data-driven. We must also equip DIRs with better resources, recruitment tools and technology, metrics, and accountability mechanisms to track their success in boosting the numbers of successful candidates from underrepresented groups.

Here I should add that my conversations with former DIRs left no question that they are doing well-intentioned, admirable work—and naturally trying to focus on diversity recruitment. But there is so much more the department could be doing to set them up for success.

The good news is we do not need to reinvent the wheel. Instead, the department can take a page from the recruitment playbooks of other successful nonprofit and government organizations that have made huge diversity gains in recent years, including Peace Corps, City Year, Teach For America, and even the U.S. military.

## Recruit Like a Nonprofit

Before I joined the Foreign Service, I worked as a recruitment director at Teach For America (TFA). TFA invested heavily in its professional recruitment operations (including training), and many parts of its model seem applicable to the State Department and worth emulating.

At TFA we had 50 regional recruitment directors, 50 recruitment associates, and hundreds of paid interns spread across

top university campuses throughout the country. In contrast, the department currently has just 14 Diplomats in Residence who receive minimal administrative support. One former DIR told me he spent “nearly half” of his time on administrative tasks related to travel (e.g., filling out mileage reimbursement forms and fighting with the E2 travel system).

Much like at State, our mission at TFA was to recruit the most talented, diverse group of public service-oriented applicants possible. Unlike the State Department, however, our TFA recruitment team had specific numeric goals and metrics for every diversity category imaginable.

Our “fundamental framework” at TFA was straightforward: 1) find the right people; 2) get in front of them; 3) invest them in the organization’s mission; and 4) convince them to apply and then matriculate.

Interns helped us find the most talented and diverse student leaders on campus; recruitment associates helped schedule meetings with those individuals and manage travel; and recruitment directors met the prospective applicants, gave them the pitch, and remained their point of contact throughout the application and matriculation process.

We used Salesforce software to build applicant profiles and track data on all our outreach and interactions. Colleagues who have worked recently as DIRs confirm that the department keeps no such comprehensive data on prospective applicants, nor does it have a well-developed screening process for determining which potential applicants DIRs should meet.

During my final year as a recruitment director, we increased applications to Teach For America from 18,000 to 24,000, and had the most ethnically and geographically diverse, gender-balanced group of corps members (4,000 applicants

## Unlike the State Department, however, our TFA recruitment team had specific numeric goals and metrics for every diversity category imaginable.

were ultimately admitted and accepted) in the organization’s history.

At more than 120 colleges and universities, including several historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), more than 5 percent of the senior classes applied, including 12 percent of all seniors at Ivy League schools, 7 percent of the graduating class at the University of Michigan–Ann Arbor, and 6 percent at the University of California–Berkeley. The State Department could easily achieve comparable results, though with a greater focus on graduate students.

### Imagine a Different Kind of State

I share this detailed background about my experience as a recruiter at TFA because, for too long, the department has taken for granted that it will continue to naturally generate tens of thousands of applications for the Foreign and Civil Service without doing or changing much of anything.

The hard truth is we have not been nearly forward-leaning enough about finding the right people, getting in front of them, and convincing them to take the FSOT and Presidential Management Fellowship (PMF) exam and join the Foreign and Civil Service.

Imagine, though, if we quadrupled the size of the DIR program from 14 to 56 officers and took a more systematic, data-driven approach to recruitment operations with a laser focus on increasing

the diversity (ethnic, gender, geographic, and socioeconomic) and excellence of our applicant pool.

We could have a critical mass of well-trained, mid-level diplomat recruiters (with proper administrative support) in every state and most major urban centers tasked with finding the next generation of talented, diverse Foreign Service officers and specialists and Civil Service staff. DIR positions are already highly sought after among FS-2 and FS-1 bidders, which would no doubt continue to be the case with more positions available.

Imagine, too, if the DIR launched a paid internship program for college and graduate students at top universities across the country to assist with identifying and recruiting the right applicants for the Foreign Service, including by scouring online professional networking platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Jobcase.

From experience, I can tell you that having interns who were themselves students at the universities we are targeting and who knew (or could help us find out) who were the top diverse student leaders on campus and online was essential to our recruitment success at TFA. Alumni of those DIR internships would also, naturally, become an additional talent pipeline for the Foreign Service.

Critics of the idea of expanding the DIR program will naturally question how the department could afford to commit to dozens of new domestic positions when we have staffing shortages overseas.



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The self-evident response is: How can we afford not to?

Consider, too, that State's Fiscal Year 2022 budget proposed an additional 500 positions for the Foreign and Civil Service. If we genuinely aspire to achieve the diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) goals articulated by the Secretary, it follows we must do everything possible to make sure these new hires (and those in the years ahead) are the most diverse and qualified possible.

### **Move the Needle**

D-MR's email noted that in the past year, the department conducted more than 3,000 recruiting activities, including more than 900 events specifically targeting diversity prospects, which engaged 15,000 individual prospects.

His email also touted the department's new 500-person Volunteer Recruiter Corps who participated in 150 events. Though impressive sounding and well intentioned, I fear these initiatives alone are unlikely to move the needle.

During my final year as a recruitment director at TFA, I and my colleagues met one-on-one with 50,000 individuals. Through in-person and online group information sessions, we collectively engaged with another 150,000 prospective candidates.

Our Salesforce entries helped us document who these applicants were and their motivations, interests, and barriers to applying. Importantly, it also helped us tailor our follow-up to encourage the most promising prospects to apply, including by connecting them with current corps members or alumni who had a shared profile or interests.

We should be doing the same with prospective Foreign and Civil Service applicants. Convincing someone to apply for a position within a given organization

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).

is, at its core, about influencing and motivating (something we diplomats get paid to do), identifying barriers, and knocking them down.

Our data-driven approach at Teach For America also helped us stay accountable.

### **A First Step**

Adding 42 officers to the Diplomat in Residence roster will help, but that is only the first step to "winning the competition for talent." Equally imperative is setting our new DIRs up for success by giving them extensive training in professional recruitment practices, providing them with tracking tools and administrative support, and ultimately holding them accountable for the successful applications (and profiles of applicants) they generate.

DIR assignments should no longer be viewed as low-key sabbaticals or pre-retirement tours. We also need to make sure the most effective DIRs are incentivized (and recognized) when it comes to promotions and onward assignments.

Promisingly, the department's current leadership is genuinely committed to increasing diversity within the Foreign and Civil Service. However, a trap we must all avoid is spending too much time talking about the problem and not enough time solving it.

It is time for action, and revamping and expanding the DIR program would be a good place to start. ■





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# The Power of Being There

## Anne Patterson as Leader, Thinker, and Mentor

**A**mbassador Anne W. Patterson, a four-time chief of mission, two-time assistant secretary of State, and a leader, thinker, mentor, and role model during her remarkable 43-year Foreign Service career, is this year's recipient of the American Foreign Service Association's Award for Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy.

(For coverage of the Oct. 19 ceremony, see AFSA News, page 63).

Patterson is the 28th recipient of this prestigious award, given annually in recognition of a distinguished practitioner's career and enduring devotion to diplomacy. Past honorees include George H.W. Bush, Thomas Pickering, Ruth A. Davis, George Shultz, Richard Lugar, Joan Clark, Ronald Neumann, Sam Nunn, Rozanne Ridgway, Nancy Powell, Thomas Boyatt, William Harrop, Herman "Hank" Cohen, Edward Perkins, and John D. Negroponte.

Anne Woods Patterson was born in Fort Smith, Arkansas, in 1949. She attended the Hockaday School in Dallas, Texas, and earned a bachelor's degree from Wellesley College in 1971 before attending graduate school at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Ambassador Patterson joined the State Department Foreign Service in 1973 and held a variety of both economic and politi-

***A Conversation  
with the 2022  
Recipient of the  
AFSA Award  
for Lifetime  
Contributions  
to American  
Diplomacy***

cal assignments, including in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research and the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs. Her first overseas posting was in Ecuador (1974-1977) as an economic officer. She later served as economic officer and counselor in Saudi Arabia (1984-1988), one of the first female diplomats to serve there. Ambassador Patterson went on to serve as political counselor to the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in Geneva (1988-1991), office director for Andean affairs (1991-1993), deputy assistant secretary for Central America and

the Caribbean (1993-1995), and deputy assistant secretary of Interamerican affairs (1996).

She then returned to Latin America, where she served as U.S. ambassador to El Salvador from 1997 to 2000, supporting its reconciliation process in the aftermath of that country's long civil war. From 2000 to 2003, she was ambassador to Colombia at the beginning of Plan Colombia, a multiyear, billion-dollar program to arrest Colombia's decline into drug trafficking and violence.

From 2003 to 2004, Ambassador Patterson was State Department deputy inspector general. She served as deputy permanent representative and acting permanent representative to the United Nations from 2004 to 2005, and from 2005 to 2007 she was assistant secretary of State for international narcotics and law enforcement affairs.

After holding these critical posts, Ambassador Patterson





REUTERS/ALAMY

**Ambassador to Pakistan Anne Patterson speaks at a ceremony launching the construction of the new U.S. consulate building in Karachi, May 8, 2008.**

returned abroad to serve as chief of mission in Pakistan (2007-2010), where she navigated the crisis surrounding the removal of President Pervez Musharraf. Then, as U.S. ambassador to Egypt (2011-2013), she led the U.S. mission through the Arab Spring and the election and subsequent overthrow of President Mohamed Morsi. Finally, she served as assistant secretary of State for Near Eastern affairs (NEA) at the Department of State from 2013 until 2017, when she retired with the rank of Career Ambassador after more than four decades in the Foreign Service.

Throughout her career, Ambassador Patterson has been a pathbreaker and an example of what a career of service means. A model of the best nonpartisan traditions of the Foreign Service, she served eight American presidents and their administrations with a commitment to excellence, doing her utmost to achieve

our nation's objectives. She broke through glass and other ceilings and navigated through constant crises during her time as NEA assistant secretary and in all four of her ambassadorial postings. A superb negotiator, she demonstrated confidence and skill in dealing with some of the world's most difficult leaders and situations.

In the course of her own outstanding career, Ambassador Patterson also trained and brought up several generations of FSOs who looked to her not only as an icon of American diplomacy, but also as a deeply caring and generous leader who never sought the limelight and who never acted as though her advancement should come at the expense of others. One of our best Foreign Service leaders of the past half-century, she is also a beacon, exemplifying what integrity, excellence, and decency look like at the heights of our profession.

Ambassador Patterson was named one of *Foreign Policy's* 100 Top Global Thinkers in 2011. She is a two-time recipient of the State Department's Distinguished Service Award. She received the Department of State's Superior Honor Award in 1981 and 1988, its Meritorious Honor Award in 1977 and 1983, and a Presidential Award in 1993.

Since retiring from the Foreign Service, Ambassador Patterson has continued to make important contributions to our country and our profession. She has been appointed to two congressional commissions: the Commission on National Defense Strategy in 2017 and the Syria Study Group in 2019. Since 2017 she has taught international relations and diplo-

macy as a Kissinger Senior Fellow at the Yale University's Jackson School of Global Affairs. She is a trustee of the Cox Foundation and the current chair of the Board of Directors at the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training.

Ambassador Patterson is married to David R. Patterson, a retired Foreign Service officer. She has two sons, Edward and Andrew, and two stepdaughters, Rachel and Jessica.

FSJ Editor in Chief Shawn Dorman conducted the following interview with Ambassador Patterson via email in October.

## ON BECOMING A DIPLOMAT

**FSJ:** What led you to join the Foreign Service?

**Ambassador Anne W. Patterson:** My mother saw an advertisement in a magazine that said "The Foreign Service needs



On Aug. 25, 2001, Ambassador Anne Patterson looks at dollars confiscated by Colombian police in a drug raid in Bogotá, totaling about \$35 million. From left: Colombian National Police Chief Gen. Luis Ernesto Gilibert, Defense Minister Gustavo Well, Patterson, and U.S. DEA chief in Colombia Leo Arreguin.

women” and provided information on the upcoming test. She told me, “You’re not doing anything. Go take this test.” So I did, and I joined the Foreign Service in October 1973.

**FSJ:** *What was notable about joining the Foreign Service in 1973? The unofficial policy that women had to resign if they married was dropped around that time. Was that, or the general call for opening up more opportunities for women in the Foreign Service, a consideration for you?*

**AWP:** Well, the Foreign Service was advertising its interest in hiring more women, so that was certainly a factor. At some point in the recruitment process, I called up the woman in charge of this effort and spoke to her. There were still a number of restrictions in the early 1970s on what women could do. But there were dramatic improvements in the career possibilities for women over the next 40 years, and women like me owe a lot to some of the pioneers.

The 1980s was a decade of considerable change for women in the Foreign Service. Women also received a huge boost early in the term of Secretary James Baker and Deputy Secretary Larry Eagleburger in 1989, when each bureau was told to select a female deputy assistant secretary (DAS). Not only did women receive jobs they had probably been denied in the past, but the “woman DAS” policy placed women in enough jobs, in enough different fields, so that it was clear that they could do any job the State Department had to offer. It meant that women began to reach critical mass in department leadership jobs.

**FSJ:** *What do you recall about the orientation and training of that time? How many women were in your A-100 class?*

**AWP:** There were four of us, and I was the oldest at 23. We were treated well by colleagues. Our supervisors made a point of having women like Ambassador Melissa Wells come talk to our class, and she made a big impression on me. Ambassador Wells is the only speaker I can remember after all these years. The training was fun and not overly serious.

## GLOBAL ASSIGNMENTS

**FSJ:** *What was your favorite posting and why?*

**AWP:** Bogotá was my favorite posting because I thought the United States made a difference with Plan Colombia. U.S. policy fundamentally turned around Colombia’s trajectory, reduced violence, and set the stage for an economic boom.

I learned a lot when we served in Saudi Arabia for four years in the mid-1980s. I was the economic counselor. It was a great opportunity to observe excellent embassy leadership and learn from them. And, unlike Latin America, it was also important to live in a society that was entirely alien to our own.

Pakistan was my most interesting post. It was the most strategically important post I served in during my career. But it was a difficult country to understand. I had no experience in South Asia and was blessed to have two deputies who understood the region, Peter Bodde and Gerald Feierstein.

I also had two multilateral posts, one in Geneva and one in New York. In both places, the U.S. had excellent political ambassadors. The Foreign Service needs to put more stress on multilateral experience.

**FSJ:** *You served as State Department deputy inspector general from 2003 to 2004. Was that a well-functioning office at that time? What was the job like, and why is the Office of Inspector General (OIG) important?*

**AWP:** Being in charge of the OIG was my first experience working predominantly with civil servants, and it made me appreciate the rank-in-person system of the Foreign Service, as opposed to the rank-in-job system in the Civil Service. Unfortunately, in the Civil Service system, it is hard to get promoted and recognized, which has a predictable impact on morale.

Most Foreign Service officers know the OIG by the regular inspections, but an important role of the OIG is to audit the huge financial activities of the State Department. The inspections, however, do identify problems and, ideally, provide suggestions for improvements.



**FSJ:** *You have served in tough places at tough times. Can you tell us about what it was like serving as ambassador to Pakistan (2007-2010)? How did you navigate trying to maintain good relations with Pakistan while putting pressure on the government to deal with Taliban and al-Qaida operating in the country, among other challenges?*

**AWP:** It was easy to establish and maintain personal relations with Pakistanis, who are among the most hospitable and friendly people on earth. But an American diplomat develops personal relationships not just to have friends, but to persuade foreign leaders to take steps in furtherance of U.S. interests.

Years ago, I got some good advice from a former ambassador. He told me foreigners must hear the bad news from you, the sitting ambassador in their country, and not some disembodied voice over the phone from Washington. I always tried to follow that. A good relationship can get you in the door, even if a foreign leader does not want to hear what you have to say. With all foreigners, you have to be polite, humble, and persistent, and make clear that you understand their point of view.

Let's be clear, though. The United States was a uniquely powerful country during most of my career, so most foreign decision-makers were always willing to engage with Americans.

**FSJ:** *You were ambassador to Egypt during a time of violent turmoil there (2011-2013), including the ouster of President Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood, following mass protests less than a year after President Hosni Mubarak was ousted. What were your biggest challenges leading U.S. Embassy Cairo at that time and your most significant achievements?*



Anne Patterson, then assistant secretary of State for international narcotics and law enforcement affairs (INL), visits a police station that INL was assisting in Iraq, Aug. 13, 2006.

**AWP:** Cairo had been the largest and best-staffed embassy in NEA [the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs] for years. We had outstanding professionals. Unlike many other NEA posts, dependents were allowed, which meant we could attract a broader range of employees.

The United States pushed hard for a democratic transition. But it led to a fundamental dilemma, which the U.S. increasingly confronts overseas. How does the United States respond when Americans—and in the case of Egypt, many of our allies—support democracy but profoundly dislike the results of elections?

I certainly made mistakes. I pushed too hard to have American civil society groups engage with Egyptians. I was unable to develop the relationship with President Morsi that I had developed with other leaders in other countries.

**FSJ:** *During your time as ambassador to Colombia, you kindly agreed to be the ambassador profilee for AFSA's 2003 book, Inside a U.S. Embassy: How the Foreign Service Works for America. The U.S. was undertaking the huge, interagency, complicated, and controversial drug eradication and counterinsurgency program, Plan Colombia, at that time. How did you manage a U.S. mission that had become the largest in the world? What was the primary lesson from working on that program, which is largely deemed a success story today?*

**AWP:** The implementation of Plan Colombia was unique in my career. It was successful because leaders like General Barry McCaffrey and Under Secretary of State Tom Pickering kept everyone focused on the plan's objectives, and the relevant assistant secretaries worked extremely well together. Interagency disputes were not tolerated, and decisions were made quickly. The Colombians were a fully engaged partner. Everyone worked hard to ensure congressional support and to sustain the funding. The Colombian ambassador in Washington was the absolute best.

Importantly, Plan Colombia was always considered a long-term effort that would take years to produce results, a good example of the strategic patience the U.S. needs in many other places.

The embassy itself was easy to manage because all agencies sent first-string representatives because of the priority of the program in Washington. The State section chiefs were first-rate. I fear Plan Colombia could not be replicated today, because our government is just too fragmented.

**FSJ:** *What opportunities and challenges did you face as assistant secretary for Near Eastern and North African affairs, your final active-duty assignment? What are you proudest of accomplishing?*



Ambassador Anne Patterson sits with Pakistan President Gen. Pervez Musharraf after presenting credentials, July 31, 2007.

**AWP:** Well, the accomplishments were few and far between. NEA was mostly crisis management in the wake of the War on Terror and the Arab Spring, which had caused widespread unrest throughout the Middle East. Much of the bureau's time was spent mitigating the effects of the civil war in Syria, the civil war in Yemen, and the spread of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

## ON RISK MANAGEMENT

**FSJ:** In your 2019 article "We Have to Be There" you argued: "We can't prevent conflicts, export our products, protect our citizens, or improve human rights if we aren't there. Staying safe cannot be our highest priority. Our highest priority must be to advance the interests of the United States with a knowledgeable, aggressive, and consistent presence overseas." As part of his modernization effort, Secretary Antony Blinken says he wants to prioritize risk management (as opposed to risk avoidance). Do you think the State Department has made progress in this area since you wrote that? What remains to be done?

**AWP:** I know there has been a lot of debate about getting our people back into the field, but progress has been slow. U.S. embassies for Yemen and Libya are still located in third countries; the American consulate in Basra is still closed. Embassies in the Horn of Africa were drawn down because of regional conflicts. Kyiv was reopened with a limited staff under considerable congressional and public pressure. If anything, COVID-19 aggravated our withdrawal from the world as staffing was reduced. Now it takes 857 days to get a tourist visa in Bogotá, arguably one of our closest allies, with predictable impacts on business and tourism. So we are not only not getting our people out to talk to foreigners but also not facilitating routine tourism and business travel, as well.



Ambassador to Pakistan Patterson answers questions from the press during a meeting with former prime minister and then-opposition leader Benazir Bhutto at her residence in Karachi, Nov. 19, 2007.

## ON THE PROFESSION

**FSJ:** When did you first join AFSA?

**AWP:** I joined in 1981. I was on the Governing Board for a while in the mid-1990s.

**FSJ:** How can AFSA provide the most value?

**AWP:** AFSA has been instrumental in securing rights and benefits for the Foreign Service in Congress and in the State Department. It provides a venue to address personnel changes, reform, and issues of fairness, like raising money to cover legal fees for members. AFSA's attorneys provide important balance in the system when they assist employees with grievances or disputes.





**Left:** On June 11, 2008, Ambassador Anne Patterson (center) visits with Consul General Lynne Tracy (to her right) and staff at Consulate General Peshawar.

**Below:** Ambassador Patterson walks with Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel upon his arrival in Cairo, Egypt, April 24, 2013.

**FSJ:** As you know, AFSA also honors dissent within the system through these annual awards. What has been your experience with dissent? Any advice for colleagues on when and where to dissent?

**AWP:** As I reached more senior positions, I found that the Secretary of State or the president would almost always listen to dissenting views. Take the case of Syria: Secretary [John] Kerry consistently argued with President [Barack] Obama for a change in policy, and Secretary Kerry always had a hearing. But President Obama was determined that the U.S. was not going to enter another conflict in the Middle East.

The most valuable dissent messages are reasoned, unemotional explanations of why the policy needs to change. You would be surprised how seldom a disagreement with policy is seriously focused and articulated, as it is in a dissent message, instead of just voicing complaints in late-night office conversations. If anything, dissent is probably a career enhancer since, done correctly, it will increase the visibility of the officer.

In my view, a related aspect of a dissent process would be a system to evaluate what went wrong and to learn from our mistakes. The State Department does not do this—unlike the U.S. military—because of potential embarrassment. What happened during the evacuation of Afghanistan? In Iraq? In Egypt? In the Horn of Africa? What can we learn from these events? And, just as important, when crisis situations are favorably resolved, what did we do right?

**FSJ:** What is the essential ingredient for a successful diplomat?

**AWP:** A successful diplomat should be able to develop relationships with foreigners, to understand their environment, and to attempt to influence them. Ideally, she or he will talk to foreigners in their own language. A successful diplomat is an equitable manager of physical and personnel resources. Increasingly, a



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE/ERIN KIRK-CUOMO

successful diplomat has to spend time with Congress to advance the policy, since Congress is not only a source of money but also of foreign policy expertise and influence. A successful diplomat needs to have a thick skin. And, finally, a successful diplomat needs to understand the environment in Washington. Of course, no one can be all things to all people, which is why you need a team with a mix of talents and to recognize your own shortcomings.

**FSJ:** Your nomination says that a frequent comment from people who have worked for you is that you are simply the best leader they have worked with in their careers. What makes a great leader in the Foreign Service? What tips do you have for aspiring leaders?

**AWP:** I am gratified to hear that. Surveys show that what subordinates want most is someone who makes decisions. That gets easier as you get more senior. Trust your instincts. You will mostly get it right. Give subordinates a lot of running room.

The State Department is full of smart, dedicated people with good judgment, and they don't like someone monitoring their every step. One of my problems as a leader was that I tended to



**Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Anne Patterson meets with Saudi Interior Minister Mohammed bin Nayef at the State Department in Washington, D.C., Feb. 11, 2014.**

bypass marginal performers and not try to improve their performance. Instead, I just gave the work to the superstars. When I was a counselor, one of my DCMs [deputy chiefs of mission] really worked with me on this personnel management problem, as well as discouraging me from consulting him every five minutes. In one of my ambassadorial posts, I saw a counselor absolutely transform one of his marginal performers into a highly productive member of the embassy instead of tending to write her off as I would have done. So you have to work always on your leadership shortcomings.

## LOOKING AHEAD FOR DIPLOMACY

**FSJ:** *Every administration comes in with new ideas for reforming the State Department and the other foreign affairs agencies. And yet, sometimes it feels like moving the chairs around. What are the most critical reforms needed?*

**AWP:** The most important institutional and cultural reform, I believe, is overcoming the aversion to risk so we can find out what is taking place in foreign countries. But the most important operational reform is increasing the State Department's ability to surge. The recent reform agenda prepared by Arizona State University and several distinguished retired officers [the American Diplomacy Project—Phase II] lays out legislative language to



**On Aug. 17, 2011, U.S. Ambassador to Egypt Anne Patterson presents her credentials to Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, who ruled Egypt for 17 months after Mubarak stepped down.**

get this done. If we had this capacity, we could have responded more effectively in Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, Iraq, and many places in Africa. We could backfill existing staff, so it does not take three years to get a visa in some posts. We might also be able to address some of the long-standing issues with work/life balance.

**FSJ:** *What issues would you point to that will require increased focus for American diplomacy in the coming years?*

**AWP:** Our international position is not as strong as it was 20 years ago. Being an American diplomat was not hard because we represented the sole remaining superpower, and everyone

had to listen to us. But now, we will need to up our game. We need more and better language officers, people who really speak hard languages and can conduct business in them. In most places, we are too dependent on talking to English-speaking elites. We need longer tours, so our officers really understand countries that are profoundly alien to Americans, like China, Pakistan, or Saudi Arabia. The Foreign Service needs a better grasp of international economics: how to articulate debt, sanctions, climate change, energy policy, competition from China, etc.





**The Patterson family gathers in the U.S. during Anne Patterson's tour as U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, 2008. From left: Anne Patterson, husband David Patterson, son Edward Patterson, stepdaughter Jessica Patterson Long (currently chargé in Namibia), and son Andrew Patterson. In back, stepdaughter Rachel Patterson.**

**FSJ:** *What is your advice to current members of the Foreign Service who may be considering leaving the Service?*

**AWP:** It depends on why they are leaving. Some leave because the financial rewards are too good to pass up. If an officer is dissatisfied with promotions or assignments, I would usually advise them to stick it out for a while. Careers often go through slow patches.

**FSJ:** *Do you recommend a career in the Foreign Service to young people today? Why or why not?*

**AWP:** I often speak to female students. I urge them to join the Foreign Service. There is no greater honor than representing the United States, which despite all our problems remains the gold standard for the rest of the world. The work is endlessly interesting. But the Foreign Service is not for everyone. It is hard on family, and we have never really resolved the issue of spousal employment. We have also never really resolved how to balance out the workload. Yes, you can take a two- or three-year job with shorter hours; but to really advance, you have to be prepared to put in a lot of hours.

For instance, if you are currently working on Ukraine, you need to be available seven days a week. The system is just not flexible enough to deal with crises, so we work our people really hard.

**FSJ:** *Are you optimistic about the future of professional diplomacy?*

**AWP:** Yes, because I am fundamentally optimistic about the future of our country. But our international position has shifted, and our Service must evolve with it. Fortunately, a lot of analysis has been done on readying the Foreign Service for these new challenges, but it needs to be implemented. ■



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**David L. Mortimer, CPA**

120 S Royal Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

**Tel:** (703) 869-0272 • **Fax:** (202) 204-5199

**Email:** David@mytaxcpa.net

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# 2022 AFSA AWARD WINNERS

– FOREIGN SERVICE CHAMPIONS AWARD –

*Senator Dan Sullivan*  
*Representative Joaquin Castro*

Launched this year, the Foreign Service Champions Award recognizes the accomplishments and achievements of a member of Congress, a member of the military, or another influential non-career member of the foreign affairs community who has made meaningful contributions to diplomacy and the Foreign Service, whether individually or as a group.

AFSA is pleased to recognize two public servants who have championed the Foreign Service's critical role in U.S. foreign policy and have had an enduring impact on the institution of the U.S. Foreign Service and the diplomatic profession.

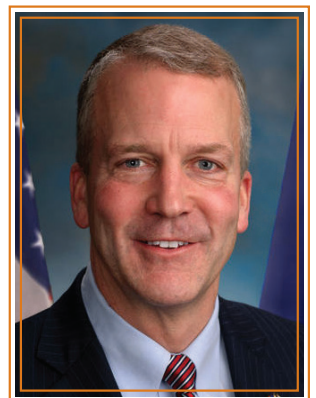
The inaugural recipients of this award are Senator Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska) and Congressman Joaquin Castro (D-Texas).

## *Senator Dan Sullivan*

Senator Dan Sullivan says his appreciation for the Foreign Service developed when he was assistant secretary of State for economic, energy, and business affairs under George W. Bush and saw first-hand the caliber and professionalism of U.S. State Department personnel.

"I also saw the hardships they face and the flexibility required," Sen. Sullivan says, "which I could personally relate to as a Marine who has been deployed."

When elected to the Senate as Alaska's eighth senator in 2015, he noticed that while many caucuses were meeting on the Hill to



*Award winner profiles compiled by Associate Editor Julia Wohlers. All images are courtesy of the award winners, unless otherwise specified.*

advance a specific cause, there was no group of senators that met specifically to discuss how to best serve Foreign Service professionals and their families.

“U.S. diplomats are posted to missions around the globe, often in difficult and dangerous environments, and I believed that their contributions to the advancement of democracy, the rule of law, and American security should be bolstered here in the Senate,” he says.

To fill this gap, Sen. Sullivan teamed up with Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) to form the Senate Foreign Service Caucus, which now includes 22 senators from both parties.

The two senators were instrumental in the December 2021 passage of the Foreign Service Families Act, which helps provide expanded career options and services to eligible family members.

“For many family members, the process of finding employment isn’t easy—frequent moves, language barriers, and limited options pose significant challenges,” Sen. Sullivan notes. “We can better support our Foreign Service personnel by prioritizing their access to State Department opportunities at the conclusion of their service and expanding private sector employment opportunities for the family members where they serve.”

Dan Sullivan began his military service in 1993 and currently holds the rank of colonel in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve. In 2004 he served as a staff officer to the Commander of U.S. Central Command and spent much time in the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Horn of Africa. In 2013 he was recalled to serve with a joint task force in Afghanistan.

Prior to embarking on his career as a politician, he served as a director in the International Economics Directorate of the National Security Council staff at the White House.

As a member of the U.S. Senate, he serves on the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee; the Armed Services Committee; the Environment and Public Works Committee; and the Veterans’ Affairs Committee. He is also co-chair of the Senate Foreign Service Caucus.

Senator Sullivan was born in Fairview, Ohio, in 1964 and graduated from Harvard University in 1987 with a degree in economics. In 1993 he received a joint law and master’s degree in foreign service from Georgetown University. He is also a recipient of the Defense Meritorious Service Award.

In reflecting on the Foreign Service Champions Award, Sen. Sullivan said: “I commend our Foreign Service for not only

promoting American values and ideals, but for supporting others in their efforts, as well. Our diplomats are the finest in the world. We in the Senate are tremendously grateful for their service and their sacrifice. They have our enduring support in the pursuit of our common goal: a better America in a better world.”

## Representative Joaquin Castro

Representative Joaquin Castro has demonstrated a strong commitment to American diplomacy and the Foreign Service through his work to advance the profession and promote a more diverse workforce that reflects U.S. values and enables our diplomats to meet complex global challenges.

To recruit and maintain a world-class diplomatic service, Rep. Castro believes that Congress should empower Americans of all backgrounds to pursue careers in international affairs. As chair of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Development, International Organizations, and Global Corporate Social Impact, he has worked to increase support and mentorship for aspiring diplomats from diverse backgrounds.

This is important, he tells the *Journal*, because “America’s diversity and heritage as a nation of immigrants is one of our greatest strengths, providing a unique advantage as diplomats work to advance our interests and protect our security and prosperity.”

To strengthen the Foreign Service workforce, Rep. Castro secured \$8 million in the Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations omnibus for paid internships with the State Department and held the first congressional hearings on a diverse State Department workforce. He introduced the Foreign Affairs Inclusion Reporting Act in 2016 to improve reporting on demographics at the department and expand the Rangel and Pickering programs by 10 fellowships each. In 2017, these provisions were signed into law.

Rep. Castro also introduced the Diversity and Inclusion at



the Department of State Act, to establish a senior-level office for the chief diversity and inclusion officer to improve retention and equity.

To better support diplomats and their families, he introduced in the House the Foreign Service Families Act, which allows the State Department to offer similar benefits to Foreign Service families that the Department of Defense is permitted to provide to military families. The bill was signed into law in 2021.

Joaquin Castro is an American lawyer and Democratic politician who has represented Texas' 20th congressional district in the U.S. House of Representatives since 2013. He is a longtime member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Rep. Castro was born and raised in San Antonio. His interest in public service developed at a young age from watching his parents' involvement in political campaigns and civic causes.

He graduated with honors from Stanford University with a B.A. in political science and communications, and earned a J.D. at Harvard Law School.

"I am deeply honored to receive AFSA's 2022 Foreign Service Champions Award for my work to strengthen our infrastructure for diplomacy," he says.

"In Congress, I am focused on creating a more inclusive Foreign Service that reflects our nation. This means establishing paid internship programs for young people interested in a career of service, protecting employees from discrimination, and ensuring that State Department personnel and their families are taken care of at home and abroad.

"As we continue to make progress, I remain committed to advancing our diplomatic corps and highlighting the important role it plays in U.S. foreign policy."

## – CONSTRUCTIVE DISSENT –

### Christian A. Herter Award for Constructive Dissent by a Senior Foreign Service Officer

#### *Benjamin Dille* Challenging Leadership to Protect Embassy Kabul Staff

While serving as minister counselor for management affairs in Kabul during the pandemic and through the August 2021 fall of the capital to the Taliban, Benjamin Dille willingly challenged leadership on health policies and departure contingency preparations, protecting thousands of embassy employees.

When Dr. Dille arrived in Kabul, the city was in a full-blown COVID-19 outbreak with limited medical care available. He found stringent limitations in place: events and meetings banned, telework and social distancing mandated, and few local staff permitted on the compound. This impeded the unprecedented work related to the impending U.S. military departure. His team brought day staff into separate, safely distanced areas so they could work more effectively on-site.



Benjamin Dille.

In response to a State Department policy of sending vaccines only for American staff—a morale hit to locally employed (LE) staff and endangering all—Dr. Dille quickly approved the purchase of vaccines from a reputable Indian company for all LE and third-country national (TCN) staff and contractors, with first doses administered before Ramadan. He advocated for this purchase despite the Bureau of Medical Services' reluctance, and his team's successful vaccination program led MED to pull soon-to-expire doses from other missions to send to Kabul.

When Embassy Kabul's policy of vaccinating LE staff family members was challenged by department leadership, Dr. Dille countered that it was implicit in mission responsibility and vital to achieving herd immunity. Thanks to his persistence, post eventually administered 14,000 doses, with all LE staff, family members, TCNs, and willing American staff protected, as well as key Afghan military and government contacts, staff of allied missions, and U.S. military and other agency members struggling to obtain vaccines from alternative sources. Almost all Afghan staff and families evacuated to the U.S. were vaccinated, protecting them as well as the U.S. communities receiving them.

American contractors' resistance to vaccination (only 30 percent consented) endangered and provoked fear among colleagues and helped lead to a June 2021 surge of 250 cases, with some near death, and at least two deaths among LE staff. To incentivize vaccination and reopen facilities crucial to morale during a stressful





**Benjamin Dille in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, where he served as chargé d'affaires in 2019.**

time, Dr. Dille convinced the front office to adopt his interpretation—counter to department policy, but a life-and-death matter in Kabul—of Equal Employment Opportunity Committee rulings allowing employers to limit activities of unvaccinated staff. Despite institutional opposition to his efforts, Dr. Dille did this legally with a voluntary program of access for those providing proof of vaccination. The White House soon extended the policy governmentwide, and pressure on the department convinced it to require contractor vaccinations by August.

Concerned that preparations for the imminent military departure were not being taken seriously by many colleagues in the embassy, in February 2021 Dr. Dille suggested advising Americans to take their valuables with them when traveling to the U.S. on leave. Leadership initially balked, fearing this might cause panic, but agreed to the notice, with careful wording.

After finding that overall embassy staffing numbers were not decreasing following April's ordered departure (OD), he unsuccessfully argued that many embassy offices could work remotely from the U.S.; but department leadership continued arguing for exceptions allowing select offices to bring staff in. This led to more Americans at post in late July than before the OD.

At the same time, leadership insisted that management staff be slashed, while Dr. Dille unsuccessfully argued that *more* management staff were needed to support evacuation, embassy closure, and operations at Kabul Airport. Days before the evacuation, Dr.

Dille sought department support to retain more management staff than the few designated to remain.

Similarly, in early August, leadership insisted that the staff of Embassy Air—the air wing under the management section that included 15 aircraft and more than 100 support staff—leave post, claiming the Department of Defense could evacuate the embassy with its assets instead. With the support of the assistant chief of mission, Dr. Dille pushed back, aware that this team was best equipped to airlift embassy personnel to Kabul Airport, and gained a delay to Aug. 15. Coincidentally, this was the same day Mission Kabul evacuated; Embassy Air airlifted most of the embassy's 2,000 diplomatic staff members to the airport in just 21 hours as Taliban fighters entered Kabul. Without them, DoD would have had to operate in a Taliban-controlled city.

Through his principled stands on a number of issues, Dr. Dille always sought to protect people.

In reflecting on his time in Kabul, he tells the *Journal* he is proud to have secured the support of the front office for his proposed vaccination policy. "I believe the State Department has an obligation to provide our locally employed staff and their families with medical care in the midst of a health crisis," he says.

Benjamin Dille currently serves as State Department chair at the Marine Corps War College, where he teaches diplomacy and statecraft to officers in the master's program. Before this, he completed a short tour as chargé d'affaires in Ashgabat after six months as deputy chief of mission and chargé d'affaires in Kolonia.

Previously, Dr. Dille was executive director of the Bureau of African Affairs. He has run embassy administrative platforms in Astana, Prague, and Minsk, and handled transitions during his year of service in Iraq. Since joining the Foreign Service in 1991, Dr. Dille has also served in Managua, Shanghai, Mexico City, Caracas, Khartoum, and Freetown.

He holds a Ph.D. in international and comparative law from the London School of Economics, an LL.M. from Exeter University (U.K.), a J.D. from the University of Minnesota, and a B.A. in history and international relations from Macalester College. Prior to the Foreign Service, he worked as a lawyer and state legislative administrator in his home state of Minnesota.

For his role in supporting the largest civilian evacuation in U.S. history, Dr. Dille shared in the State Department's Award for Heroism, and shares the American Academy of Diplomacy's 2021 Walter and Leonore Annenberg Award for Excellence in Diplomacy with all those who worked in Kabul.

## William R. Rivkin Award for Constructive Dissent by a Mid-Level Foreign Service Officer

### *Jennifer Davis* Ensuring Due Process and Support for Colleagues

While serving as consul general in Istanbul from 2016 to 2019, Jennifer Davis faced a particularly difficult period in the U.S.-Turkish bilateral relationship. Ms. Davis and her team were challenged by terrorist attacks that killed and injured U.S. citizens, the ordered departure of family members, terrorist threats against Ms. Davis herself, a constant stream of disinformation from malign actors about the U.S. mission's activities, and the politically motivated arrest of three of the mission's longest-serving locally employed (LE) staff.

In 2018, against this backdrop and at the request of the chargé d'affaires, Ms. Davis conducted a media interview with a Turkish journalist who had written a story containing inaccurate information about the U.S. strategy to obtain the release of the wrongfully arrested LE staff. During the interview, she explained the U.S. position regarding the LE staff.



Jennifer Davis.

Two years later, after Ms. Davis had returned to Washington, D.C., she learned she was the subject of a disciplinary action related to that media interview, but was given no information about why she was under investigation by Diplomatic Security (DS). The State Department then decided her case; she was only told she could “appeal the decision.”

It was not until three years after the media interview that Ms. Davis was afforded an understanding of DS' concerns and allowed to submit evidence in an appeals process. To her dismay, information regarding her case was leaked to the press, causing additional injury. Following her appeal, DS' decision was reversed.

Throughout the ordeal, Ms. Davis conducted herself with grace and courage. At every stage, she told the truth—that she gave the interview in Istanbul to protect her staff, which was her paramount duty, and that she did so entirely in keeping with State Department policy.

“As an attorney prior to being a diplomat, I was concerned that some of the practices of our investigations and discipline system lacked certain basic elements of due process protections—for example, that an investigation is conducted in a timely manner so memories do not fade,” Ms. Davis tells the *FSJ*.

“Because details of my case were leaked, I became a public face for what far too many diplomats were also encountering. The leak was perhaps the most hurtful part of it, but it gave me the opportunity to hear from and provide support to others, particularly senior women, facing similar challenges.”

In 2021 Ms. Davis wrote a dissent letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken and a set of reform proposals for Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Brian McKeon. With contributions from senior officials, former and current diplomats, and



Jennifer Davis poses with U.S. Consulate Istanbul staff in 2019 in the peace garden they planted for her as a sign of their gratitude for her efforts to protect them and wrongfully detained colleagues.

## Our proud tradition of dissent, to my mind, is the strongest part of our State Department.

—Jennifer Davis

others, she outlined the injustice caused by flaws in the department's employee investigation and discipline processes. Several officials noted that her letter helped the new team at the department understand the struggles of career U.S. diplomats.

Relying on her more than two decades of legal and diplomatic experience, Ms. Davis provided constructive recommendations for how the department could improve these processes, including: placing a one-year time limit on investigating and issuing a decision in administrative cases; moving forward the point at which an employee has the right to review the State Department's evidence and concerns and respond to them (*before* decisions are made, sometimes on incomplete or misunderstood facts, instead of after, as is currently the policy); and encouraging that DS and the Bureau of Global Talent Management officials receive unconscious bias training before evaluating the conduct of their colleagues.

This dissent was a demonstration of Ms. Davis' abiding commitment to America's foreign policy institutions and a strong testament to her character.

She says she is honored by this recognition from AFSA and proud to further the State Department's tradition of dissent: "Diplomats throughout our history have been willing to seek a place in our department (as women or minorities), to fix broken systems, and to object to policy decisions. The right to dissent that we protect is enshrined in our First Amendment and is part of a set of rights that are essential to any thriving democracy. Our proud tradition of dissent, to my mind, is the strongest part of our State Department."

At the end of her tour in Turkey, the U.S. Consulate Istanbul staff planted a "peace garden" for Ms. Davis. At its center is an olive tree, a symbol of their gratitude for her tireless efforts to protect them and seek the release of her wrongfully detained colleagues. One of those colleagues remains in prison.

"The presentation of that garden was the greatest honor of my career," Ms. Davis says. "I think it is important for the department to make clear that the safety and well-being of our employees is our first priority and that when we send diplomats into complex environments to do difficult things, we have their backs."

Jennifer Davis is a career Foreign Service officer currently serving as the chief of staff to Ambassador to the United Nations Linda

Thomas-Greenfield. She previously served as a Council on Foreign Relations Fellow at Georgetown University and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and as the director of orientation at the Foreign Service Institute.

Ms. Davis also served as the executive assistant to Secretaries of State Hillary Clinton and John Kerry, special assistant to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, a watch officer in the Operations Center, and a staffer in the Office of Children's Issues. In addition to Turkey, she has served overseas tours in Bogotá, Brussels (USNATO), and Mexico City.

She is a Distinguished Graduate of the National War College, where she received the George Kennan Award for Excellence in Strategic Writing and was the class vice president.

Before joining the Foreign Service, Ms. Davis was a corporate attorney specializing in media and banking law. She has a B.A. with distinction and J.D. with honors from the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill and a BCL (LL.M.) in international law from the University of Oxford.

## William R. Rivkin Award for Constructive Dissent by a Mid-Level Foreign Service Officer

### Elisabeth Zentos and Anton Cooper Dissenting from Kabul

While serving in U.S. Embassy Kabul's political section, Elisabeth Zentos and Anton Cooper embodied the best traditions of the Foreign Service and constructive dissent in a uniquely difficult moment, bringing to bear their intellectual courage, astute analysis, and willingness to speak an unpopular truth to power.

During 2020 and 2021, both officers watched with increasing concern as the security situation in Afghanistan worsened, negotiations with the Taliban faltered, and the Taliban began making territorial gains. They recognized that if the security situation in Kabul spiraled out of control, the embassy's local staff and other contacts would be left dangerously exposed.

Using the appropriate internal embassy channels, Ms. Zentos and Mr. Cooper presented their concerns and a proposed course of action, including: accelerate planning for an evacuation; develop and begin implementing systems for refugee processing of locally employed staff; and help keep safe those who had assisted the United States during its involvement in Afghanistan.



When the position and recommendations they shared differed from the established views of decision-makers, Ms. Zentos and Mr. Cooper turned to the Dissent Channel with a July 2021 cable. There, they laid out a clearly articulated case for the likelihood of a swift deterioration of the security situation in Kabul and the need to take steps to prepare for a possibly imminent evacuation.



Elisabeth Zentos.

While Mission Kabul leadership supported the two officers' use of the Dissent Channel, the pair's view was, at the time, controversial. Nevertheless, 24 of their colleagues at the embassy believed Ms. Zentos and Mr. Cooper had tapped into the reality that negotiations were unlikely to be successful, the Taliban may take Kabul by force in the near future, and the embassy would lack sufficient security; these colleagues contributed to the cable and elected to add their signatures to it.

The cable received the required response from the Secretary of State's Policy Planning Staff (S/P), and preparations reportedly sped up—but unfortunately, not quickly enough to avoid the events that transpired in Kabul.

Throughout this time, Ms. Zentos, Mr. Cooper, and the co-signers maintained their commitment to constructive principles of dissent and kept the text of their classified cable contained to established channels. Preservation of the confidential nature of the Dissent Channel is critical in appreciating the approach these award recipients took when sharing their objections to prevailing policy.

The pair's approach merits further recognition because it offered concrete policy recommendations to address the concerns they outlined. Their courage in sharing their warning and their creative proposals serve as an example to others who would speak truth to power, demonstrating how to disagree and offer a practical way forward.

Ms. Zentos and Mr. Cooper are emphatic that this award for dissent belongs not just to them.

"The award is being given to two people, but many more contributed to this cable," says Mr. Cooper. "I am certain that none of the people who signed it wanted to be in the position to have to do so. If there is any small measure of pride in recognition for something that was born of an untenable situation, it is from being in their number."

Ms. Zentos has dedicated AFSA's recognition to her State Department co-workers, to partners in the interagency, and to her

Afghan colleagues who, she says, "demonstrated unprecedented bravery and commitment to fighting for what was right."

Both officers also pointed to the importance of fostering dissent when constructing American foreign policy.

Mr. Cooper believes that "the tradition of saying uncomfortable things in a constructive way must ever be a foundational principle of our system of governance. Only this prevents the kind of blind obedience to power we see in other political systems from taking root in our own."

"Accepting an award related to such a tragic situation feels

uncomfortable, especially since it is our Afghan colleagues who most deserve recognition," Ms. Zentos tells the *Journal*. "But I am honored to receive it, as I believe the existence of this award is vital to demonstrating the unique value the department places on dissent and the importance of speaking out."

Elisabeth Zentos is currently deputy director of the Office of Russian Affairs.



Anton Cooper.

Prior to her tour as deputy political counselor in Kabul, she served in Tbilisi from 2018 to 2020 and in Moscow from 2017 to 2018, when the Russian government declared her persona non grata.

From 2015 to 2016, she served as director for Eastern Europe at the National Security Council, covering Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). From 2012 to 2014, she served as political military chief at Embassy Kyiv, where she covered Ukraine's Maidan Revolution and Russia's first invasion of eastern Ukraine. Other previous assignments include special assistant to the under secretary for international security and arms control and information officer in Yerevan.

Ms. Zentos has a bachelor's degree in international affairs from The George Washington University.

Anton Cooper is currently serving temporarily in Kyiv, having volunteered for this critical assignment. His long-term current position is external political unit chief at Embassy Tbilisi, a position he had also held at Embassy Kabul from 2020 to 2021. From 2017 to 2020, he served in Ukraine, with prior tours on the Ukraine desk, in Uzbekistan, and in Moldova.

Before joining the Foreign Service, he worked as a health care policy analyst for the Washington State Health Care Authority. Mr. Cooper holds an M.A. from the Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington, and a B.A. from The Evergreen State College.



**Steven May, front and third from right, poses with U.S. Marines and the Emergency Response Team in Baghdad in 2022.**

## F. Allen “Tex” Harris Award for Constructive Dissent by a Foreign Service Specialist

### *Steven May* Amending Bureaucracy to Protect Children

While serving as chief of the Criminal Investigative Liaison Branch of the State Department’s Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) in 2018, Supervisory Special Agent Steven May was alerted by interagency partners to a significant gap in the implementation of a law designed to protect children from sex offenders. Alarmed, he got to work and tirelessly advocated to amend department policies.



**Steven May.**

International Megan’s Law to Prevent Child Exploitation and Other Sexual Crimes Through Advanced Notification of Traveling Sex Offenders, known as IML, requires the State Department to include a unique identifier in the passports of registered sex offenders covered under the law based on their conviction for a sex offense against a minor. When an offender travels internationally, this identifier enables the U.S. Marshals Service National Sex Offender Targeting Center (NSOTC) to inform destination countries, and DSS to notify regional security officers.

Although IML specifically authorizes the department to ask passport applicants their sex offender registration status to identify who is covered by the law, Mr. May learned that

application forms currently do not include this question. Further, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) does not have the capacity to preemptively check the estimated 900,000 registered sex offenders in the U.S. to determine who is covered by IML. Counterparts in DHS’ Angel Watch Center (AWC) indicated to Mr. May that, if checked, as many as 500,000 of those individuals have convictions against children and would therefore require a unique passport identifier. By asking the question of applicants, AWC could focus on offenders most likely to travel.

Since the law was implemented in 2017, NSOTC and AWC have urged the department to include the question of sex offender registration status on the passport application form, as intended by the IML authors. Instead, Mr. May found that the department actively denied the request for years, suggesting that anyone honest enough to answer such a question would also volunteer their registration status on the form *without* being asked. In reality, the policy garnered just 80 self-declarations out of an estimated 60,000 covered offenders who most likely applied for passports from 2017 to 2020.

To address this critical omission, Mr. May organized stakeholder meetings with the Bureau of Consular Affairs, AWC, NSOTC, and DSS. He informed department leadership that IML implementation problems were also of grave concern to America’s leading child protection organizations, nonprofits, and reporting centers, drawing the attention of the department’s own Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and the White House’s National Security Council.

Mr. May dedicated significant time and expertise to improving the passport application process in order to combat the sexual exploitation of children. He repeatedly raised the issue to the appropriate bodies within the department, despite the risks



involved, as some in senior positions continually dismissed the problem and rebuffed proposed improvements to the system.

"I am most perplexed as to why we have resisted so," he tells the *Journal*. "At first, some in the department misunderstood the scope of the problem, believing that the number of potentially covered offenders under IML was 5,000 and not 500,000. But even after we saw the true number, no progress was made."

In November 2021, the Policy Planning Staff responded to his dissent cable, acknowledging the current gaps in policy. Although insufficient space on paper applications remains the justification for omitting a sex offender registration status question, the department has pledged to integrate requirements for IML into the passport application modernization process when it transitions to online applications.

Mr. May hopes that further action will follow. "To save kids from sexual assault and exploitation, yes, I think adding an extra page to passport applications would be worth it," he says.

"Every year, we publish a Trafficking in Persons [TIP] report, holding other countries accountable for not doing enough to protect people from exploitation. And yet for all the billions we spend to reduce child sexual exploitation, we in the department have failed children over the past five years, and that is largely due to our own apathy."

Thanks to Mr. May's courage to speak up and relentlessness in pursuing improvements to the system, the department is at last working to address vulnerabilities that limit prevention efforts and put children at risk due to the incomplete implementation of IML. For example, the department's passport application information website now suggests that offenders should self-declare, a change that has reportedly boosted the number of self-declarations from 25 to 250 per year.

Though he says he is grateful for some advancements, "I still think we need to do more—and do it immediately—to protect children," he adds.

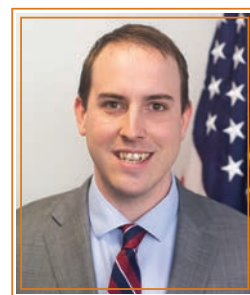
Steven May is currently based in London where he works as the deputy regional security officer. He previously served in Embassy Baghdad from 2020 to 2022, most recently as chief of two branches: embassy security forces, and investigations and vetting. With these portfolios, he was the contracting officer's representative for the State Department's largest security contract, overseeing 1,300 guards. He has also served in the DSS San Francisco field office, Kuwait City, Moscow, Criminal Fraud Investigations in Washington, D.C., Riyadh, Kandahar, Milan, and Karachi.

Prior to joining the State Department as a special agent in 2002, Mr. May was an officer with the Houston Police Department.

## W. Averell Harriman Award for Constructive Dissent by an Entry-Level Foreign Service Officer

### *Michael White* Improving Visa Adjudication, Protecting Workers' Rights

As a first-tour officer in Hermosillo, Michael White demonstrated the integrity to highlight major vulnerabilities in Mission Mexico's visa policy and adjudication standards for TN visas. This narrow visa category, also known as the NAFTA Professional Visa and based on what is now named the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, allows specialized professionals in Mexico to work in the U.S. in prearranged business activities.



Michael White.

In the fall of 2020, a review of TN visas across Mission Mexico exposed inconsistent adjudication standards and lack of a policy to inform TN applicants of their labor rights. As part of a TN visa working group that tried to harmonize these standards, Mr. White highlighted the problems and proposed pathways to rectify them to the working group and Mission Mexico leadership.

For example, posts across Mexico saw large variations in approval rates for TN applicants—particularly those going to work in the pork, dairy, aviation, and auto industries. The lack of guidance and harmonized standards resulted in some unqualified applicants being issued visas while other qualified applicants were denied.

Mr. White's suggestions to formalize TN visa adjudication practices and inform applicants of labor rights, particularly to prevent human trafficking, faced managerial and bureaucratic hurdles. Few serious actions were taken to address the growing evidence of inconsistent standards, which allowed fraudulent and exploitative companies to use vague categories such as "scientific technician" and "animal breeder" to recruit unqualified applicants for maintenance and farm work. Adjudicators at Mission Mexico approved these visas due to lack of guidance, and many workers who received them were subsequently thrust into misrepresented jobs and, in some cases, forced labor and abuse.

Further, Mr. White highlighted to post leadership that although not required by the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM), TN visa appli-



**Michael White, right, celebrates his A-100 flag day event in December 2018 with his class mentor, Ambassador Jeffrey DeLaurentis.**

cants, who will be performing work in the United States, should be informed of their legal rights under federal immigration, labor, and employment laws.

He highlighted known complaints of labor trafficking among TN workers, including court cases such as *Martinez-Rodriguez v. Giles*, and similarly disturbing reports from nongovernmental organizations.

As he delved further into the issue, Mr. White was concerned to find that “many American companies that could not get temporary nonimmigrant H-2 visas because the job was not seasonal were instead recruiting Mexicans to apply for TN visas with fake job letters,” he tells the *Journal*.

“Consular officers did not have time to scrutinize every TN visa or every company; there is already immense pressure to adjudicate a large volume of visas quickly. I knew I had stumbled onto something that needed to be addressed.”

Mr. White maintained that informing TN applicants of their labor rights as standard practice might help curb these issues and prevent abuse of workers in the U.S. Some in leadership opposed this change, citing costs of printing pamphlets and added time during the interview. Despite fear of jeopardizing his opportunity for tenure, Mr. White repeatedly shared his concerns with Mission Mexico leadership.

Even after departing from Hermosillo for his next assignment, Mr. White believed the TN visa issues were still prevalent, and in 2021 he decided to formally voice his dissent through a Dissent Channel message.

Mr. White showed great initiative and courage in reaching out to

top-level department leadership to highlight this important issue. Thanks to his efforts, Mission Mexico is consolidating all TN visa adjudications from 10 to three posts to limit inconsistencies and improve training, and the Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) and other stakeholders across the government are engaging on broader questions of treaty interpretation to further improve TN visa policy.

CA has also pledged to update the FAM to require consular officers to inform TN visa applicants of their labor rights, although this revision has not yet been made.

Mr. White believes further changes are necessary. But his dissent promoted safe, legal travel to the U.S., and also protected workers who may have otherwise been exploited by their employers, furthering the department’s implementation of the President’s National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, in the United States.

“Receiving this recognition is a vindication of all the hard work that went into this issue, and I’m honored to have played a part in bringing about change,” says Mr. White. “Some people actively discouraged me from pursuing it. I was an untenured officer and worried about the consequences of pushing an issue the Mission Mexico consular leaders did not want to confront. I received immense help from my fellow FAST [first- and second-tour] officers in Mexico and my A-100 colleagues.”

Mr. White says he often looked to the State Department’s culture of constructive dissent when advocating for change to TN visa standards: “I would not have had the courage to see this through without the example set by previous awardees. I hope my recognition encourages others to engage on critical issues; sometimes all it takes to fix the problem is for someone to say something.”

Michael White joined the Foreign Service in October 2018 as a management-coned officer. After serving in Hermosillo, he worked as the assistant human resources officer in Islamabad. He is currently a general services officer in Doha.

Mr. White previously served as a medic in the U.S. Army, and holds a master’s degree in public administration and a bachelor’s degree in government and politics from George Mason University. Hailing from Dallas, Texas, he is married to a fellow Foreign Service officer.

## – EXEMPLARY PERFORMANCE –

### Avis Bohlen Award for a Foreign Service Family Member

#### *Virginia Carlson* Creating Social and Educational Opportunities for Youth

Virginia Carlson, a Foreign Service family member, is being recognized for her hard work and creative initiative as she led myriad activities at post to enrich the experiences of youth in the U.S. embassy community and the host country.

Shortly after Ms. Carlson's arrival in Kingston, Jamaica, in 2019, she realized that activities for teenagers were extremely limited. With three high school-aged children of her own at home, Ms. Carlson took it upon herself to organize community-wide events and programming designed for teens and their families.

She even personally hosted socially distanced events, with the help of the embassy's community liaison office coordinator (CLO), when families returned from authorized departure.

"It was just so lovely to give kids a place to go and to see



**Virginia Carlson.**

them interacting again after so much isolation during COVID," she recounts.

To help newly arrived families integrate into the expatriate community in Kingston, she put together regular social events—from walking groups and luncheons to poolside barbecues.

The capstone event demonstrating Ms. Carlson's commitment to the local community took place in 2022, when she seized on

an opportunity to give back to Jamaicans. While completing an internship at the American International School for her master's degree in education, Ms. Carlson noticed a disparity in the educational and recreational resources available across the island.

In the spirit of Jamaica's national motto, "Out of Many, One People," and the country's popular saying, "One Love," she decided to organize a book drive dubbed "Share the Love." An avid reader who toted a large collection of books from post to post during her family's many moves, Ms. Carlson grew up relishing the offerings at her local library. Deploying her strong planning skills yet again, she set out to collect books for every age and on every topic for distribution to schools and libraries.

"I did not want to limit the pool of donors to just the small diplomatic community," she tells the *Journal*, "so I asked my Jamaican neighbors to spread the word. As a result, several older Jamaican ladies delivered their treasured book collections to my house, delighted to be able to pass on items that their own families no longer needed."

Ms. Carlson estimates that the drive generated donations of hundreds of magazines and DVDs, and about 3,000 books, all of which had to be sorted and organized for distribution.

She designated 500 children's books to go to the most remote and poorly resourced schools on the island, in partnership with the Peace Corps. Others went to the Jamaican Library Services, a high school, and a community in the mountains where the CLO and a locally employed staff member among the embassy guards had established a rapport. Books that did not meet school or library requirements were earmarked for an embassy book fair and other local causes.



**Virginia Carlson delivers boxes of books to Jamaican Library Services headquarters in March 2022.**



Despite the heavy lifting required, Ms. Carlson feels thankful that she could bring her community together to promote children's education and make a difference in the lives of the local population.

On receiving the Avis Bohlen Award, she says: "I am truly delighted, as I have never received an award like this before. In my time in the Foreign Service as an EFM, I have been incredibly proud to support our amazing members and FSOs. What a unique life experience we have had!"

Originally from the United Kingdom, Ms. Carlson had a successful career in information technology before moving to Portugal with her three children. It was there that she met her husband, who had just been accepted into the Foreign Service, and his two children.

Since then, Ms. Carlson has sought to build bridges between the Foreign Service community and locals overseas, always inventing ways to contribute to the host communities by organizing events and supporting CLO initiatives at every post.

Now a naturalized U.S. citizen, Ms. Carlson holds a master's degree in international elementary education from George Mason University, and a certification for literacy instruction from the Orton-Gillingham Academy. She and her husband hope to retire to Ireland and create a home base there for their family of five children and several grandchildren.

## Nelson B. Delavan Award for an Office Management Specialist

### *Denis Rajic* Supporting Community in Extreme Lockdown

During a season of particular hardship at Consulate General Shanghai, Denis Rajic applied his organizational and problem-solving skills to the community's most critical challenges. His commitment to the well-being of staff and their families ensured that the mission ran efficiently despite the city's unprecedented lockdown measures.

Mr. Rajic arrived at post in 2019; shortly thereafter, the country was overcome by the COVID-19



Denis Rajic.

### The memory of the shortages imposed by the war in Bosnia had mentally and emotionally prepared me for many of the challenges that we faced under lockdown in Shanghai.

—*Denis Rajic*

pandemic. Despite being the only office management specialist at this 400-person mission for most of the rating period, he provided outstanding support to the busy front office and guaranteed the consul general and deputy principal officer were always fully prepared for the day's engagements.

In response to the biggest surge in infections since the start of the pandemic, in April 2022, Shanghai authorities announced a four-day citywide lockdown. When days turned to weeks, essential supply chains collapsed, and food and medical supplies began to dwindle, the State Department evacuated all family members and nonemergency staff. As his wife and three children flew home—their second ordered departure from Shanghai—Mr. Rajic volunteered to stay behind.

Due to heavily restricted public services, mountains of trash accumulated at American embassy housing compounds and the main consulate building. Mr. Rajic negotiated with the foreign affairs office to convince the local neighborhood committee of the Communist Party to allow trash removal. When this request was denied, he tried again until he received approval. Mr. Rajic's persistence directly contributed to the health and safety of this compound and community.

American citizens still in the region were soon clamoring to escape the city and what many described as "a dystopian nightmare." However, the pouch containing dozens of passports had been held up at the airport, and the consular section sought a volunteer to retrieve them. With his characteristic alacrity, Mr. Rajic stepped up, donned full personal protective equipment, and talked his way through multiple checkpoints to successfully recover the documents.

When colleagues trapped in their apartments began to run out of food, Mr. Rajic sprang into action. Coordinating with the network of vendors he had developed, he convinced an authorized food distributor to use its government permission to provide families with essential provisions.

As the crisis dragged on, locally employed (LE) staff reached out with increasingly desperate calls for assistance obtaining

**Denis Rajic dons PPE (personal protective equipment) to retrieve essential travel documents for American citizens trapped in Shanghai during a 2022 citywide standstill order.**



food, medicine, and baby supplies. Undeterred when Washington determined that no funding was available through the Foreign Service National Emergency Relief Fund, Mr. Rajic raised more than \$30,000 from colleagues throughout Mission China to create nearly 300 care packages, supplying every local staff member and their families.

Consulate General leadership say that the logistical challenge of this feat cannot be overstated; Mr. Rajic's hours of phone calls and countless entreaties to local government officials resulted in middle-of-the-night pickups and the delivery of truckloads of essential supplies.

It was clear from the many emotional responses to the care packages that, at their moment of greatest need, local staff knew the mission was looking out for them. Like so much else at post in Shanghai, it would not have happened without Mr. Rajic's initiative, determination, and genuine care for his community.

Mr. Rajic believes his childhood wartime experiences in Banja Luka informed his ability to confront the demands of the pandemic. "The memory of the shortages imposed by the war in Bosnia had mentally and emotionally prepared me for many of the challenges that we faced under lockdown," he tells the *Journal*.

He says he is honored to have been a part of a dedicated group of colleagues: "I view this award as not only an individual recognition, but a team Shanghai recognition. Together we were able to maintain a strong level of morale and cohesion while alleviating some of the discomfort our community faced."

Born in Bosnia, Denis Rajic came to the United States in 1995 toward the end of the Bosnia War. His first exposure to the State Department came during his visa interview at the U.S. embassy in Zagreb, which sparked his determination to one day join the diplomatic corps.

Prior to entering the Foreign Service in 2009, he worked as

operations manager for a trade show company and as executive assistant in a government community relations firm. He holds a B.S. in anthropology, and a B.A. as well as an M.A. in international relations. He has served in Taiwan, Syria, Indonesia, Korea, Afghanistan, and China.

In 2021, he received the State Department's Office Management Specialist of the Year Award for his help sending urgently needed medical supplies from China to the U.S. in 2020.

## Nelson B. Delavan Award for an Office Management Specialist Runner-Up

### *Judit Kaczor* Above and Beyond in Colombo and Doha

Office Management Specialist (OMS) Judit Kaczor demonstrated exceptional dedication and unwavering support for the U.S. mission in Colombo, Sri Lanka, during staffing challenges, economic and political turmoil, food and fuel shortages, and violent protests.

Due to a staff shortage, she was pulled from her section to assist the front office, where she remained for two and a half years. Her attention to detail and ability to anticipate front office needs quickly made her invaluable to both the executive team and the mission.

Among her many achievements, colleagues highlighted Ms. Kaczor's initiative in updating the executive handbook to help new officers learn reporting expectations; initiating a new missionwide procedure for processing Diplomatic Notes to facilitate tracking and archiving; training and mentoring other office management staff; and proactively preparing for the incoming ambassador while maintaining support for the chargé d'affaires and acting deputy chief of mission.

Despite her busy schedule, Ms. Kaczor also served on the embassy's Green Team to help the community meet the State Department's goal of combating climate change and volunteered to become a Disability Action Group representative at post.

When the request for volunteers to support Operation Allies



**Judit Kaczor.**

Rescue went out in August 2021, Ms. Kaczor traveled without hesitation to Doha to assist with the largest noncombatant evacuation in history. She worked night shifts to manifest new batches of arriving evacuees, addressing medical emergencies and family separations. The work was grueling, but Ms. Kaczor rose to the occasion and kept morale high.

With her anticipatory actions and relentless drive to contribute to mission goals, Ms. Kaczor stands out as a model of administrative support in the field.

She counts the recognition from AFSA as both a personal and a professional achievement: “The OMS corps is often overlooked, but we provide a solid foundation to any office. This award is proof that everyone has an important part to play!”

Judit Kaczor joined the State Department in 2016. Originally from Hungary, she currently serves as OMS to the deputy chief of mission in Belgrade. In addition to Colombo, her previous assignments include Vienna and Islamabad.

Before joining the Department of State, Ms. Kaczor gained experience working in U.S. missions as an eligible family member in positions such as new embassy compound move coordinator, security escort, administrative and protocol assistant, classified pouch coordinator, and consular fraud investigative assistant.

**The OMS corps is often overlooked, but we provide a solid foundation to any office. This award is proof that everyone has an important part to play!**

—*Judit Kaczor*

### **M. Juanita Guess Award for a Community Liaison Office Coordinator**

#### ***Christine Peterson*** Assisting Afghan Colleagues Through the Evacuation

**D**uring the rapid closure of Embassy Kabul and in the aftermath of evacuation from Afghanistan, Christine “Christie” Peterson provided tireless support to staff as community liaison office coordinator (CLO). She advocated for the families of U.S. government personnel and locally employed (LE) staff alike, ensuring their welfare and boosting morale at every opportunity.



**Christine Peterson.**

In April 2021, President Joe Biden set a September deadline for the U.S. military withdrawal. The Department of Defense (DoD) decision to accelerate this process left embassy staff with only 10 weeks to prepare.

In this context, Ms. Peterson sought to ease the uncertainty and anxiety affecting staff. With pandemic restrictions in place, she developed remote CLO programs until most community members were vaccinated. She then organized morale-enhancing activities to combat stress amid exhausting contingency preparations and April’s ordered departure (OD).

Ms. Peterson tells the *Journal*, “Being a CLO in a hardship post like Kabul isn’t like being a CLO elsewhere. When you throw in the extra difficulty of a pandemic, the stresses and challenges of living on a small compound in a warzone come into sharp focus.”

She estimates that she and her co-CLO coordinator worked 65 to 80 hours a week each in their efforts to serve multiple





**Christine Peterson holds the son of an Afghan LE staff member at an evacuation camp in Fort Lee, Virginia, in September 2021.**

agencies, contractors, and LE staff. When her co-CLO departed on OD in April, her hours only increased.

On Aug. 14, the Emergency Action Committee decided to evacuate all diplomatic staff; except for a team at the airport, all U.S. direct hires left Afghanistan on Aug. 15.

As the only Kabul employee on the ground at the State Department in Washington, D.C., when the evacuation began, Ms. Peterson took up the role of local staff communications lead on the Afghanistan Coordination Task Force Logistics Team. Working Kabul hours from her hotel room, she brought her in-depth knowledge of the mission to bear while also manifesting local staff for flights out of the city.

Ms. Peterson's impact was perhaps most felt by Afghan staff, with whom she shared a deep bond. Throughout the evacuation, and as they faced harrowing days hiding in their homes or waiting at the mobbed airport, Ms. Peterson kept in contact with them. She regularly updated the regional security officer and DoD, including status reports when a busload of LE staff attempting to pass through a checkpoint to the airport was held at gunpoint by Taliban members. Her real-time information flow to the proper contacts at the airport headquarters helped gain the passengers' release and eventual travel to the U.S.

Working nonstop during what were often 20-hour days, she responded to hundreds of sensitive emails, WhatsApp messages, and texts with local staff, sharing vital information with security contacts.

She recalls, "Time was limited and we were all afraid to sleep

for fear of missing messages and not being available to our staff when they needed us. Continuing to facilitate communication and control rumors was vital to helping the community remain calm."

Critically, her networks provided updates and key information during the Aug. 26 suicide attack at the airport, ensuring mission personnel accountability and LE staff safety.

She also maintained her position as CLO coordinator—linking management, Afghan staff, and those on ordered departure, as well as advocating for and helping to organize GCLO-hosted town halls. She supported embassy staff working feverishly in both Doha and Kabul, sending essential supplies to the RSO team members in Kabul who had been forced to abandon their bags on the embassy helipad.

As evacuated staff arrived in Washington, D.C., Ms. Peterson used her evenings and even the early hours of the morning to coordinate and volunteer at welcome tables at Dulles International Airport, distributing information, SIM cards, and much-needed encouragement for exhausted travelers.

Continuing to serve with domestic support for arriving Afghan colleagues, Ms. Peterson traveled to Dulles Expo Center and Fort Lee in Virginia, Fort Dix in New Jersey, Fort Bliss in Texas, and Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico with information, supplies, and a caring ear for Mission Afghanistan's evacuated LE staff awaiting processing. She never stopped advocating for the Afghan community, including for prenatal care for pregnant women in the evacuee camps.

Ms. Peterson's dedication helped ease a fraught evacuation process and entry to the United States. Working across time zones and on a variety of issues, with minimal guidance as her own leadership evacuated, she excelled in providing care to the entire community, everywhere. Her extraordinary level of service in challenging times directly affected thousands of lives.

In reflecting on this award, Ms. Peterson says she is honored to have been selected: "I know that many CLOs around the world performed extraordinary service this past year. I can only say thank you to AFSA for providing the opportunity for CLOs to show the dedication and love we feel for our embassy and mission communities."

Hailing from Arizona, Christie Peterson is currently based in Canberra, Australia, where she serves as co-CLO coordinator. She holds a bachelor's degree in history from Northern Arizona University, where she met and married her husband, now a Foreign Service officer. The couple and their two daughters have previously been posted to Dakar, Prague, and Washington, D.C. Between the State Department and service with the U.S. Air Force, they have moved 24 times in the past 25 years.

## Mark Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy

### *RaeJean Stokes* Boosting a Fledgling Democracy Movement in Belarus

In support of Belarussian civil society groups and opposition forces, RaeJean Stokes' exceptional leadership and creative diplomatic engagement significantly contributed to strengthening the country's fledgling democracy and combating authoritarianism under the Aleksandr Lukashenko regime.

While serving as Belarus desk officer from 2020 to 2022, Ms. Stokes drove U.S. support for opposition leadership and democratic institutions, worked with colleagues to leverage public diplomacy tools, and provided a strong and clear response in the face of egregious human rights violations.

When Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya was pushed out of Belarus after most likely defeating 27-year-incumbent Lukashenko, she became a champion for pro-democracy forces; Ms. Stokes recognized that a Washington visit for the emerging leader would show U.S. support for the pro-democracy movement and send a strong signal to the Lukashenko regime that the U.S. would not work with him.

Ms. Stokes gained interagency buy-in for high-level meetings for Tsikhanouskaya in 2021, including with Secretary of State Antony Blinken and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan. She also secured a meeting with President Joe Biden—the first presidential meeting with a Belarusian leader since 1994.

These meetings helped give Tsikhanouskaya the boost of confidence she needed to continue leading democratic opposition forces while her husband, and many of her colleagues and supporters, remained in jail in Minsk.

Ms. Stokes says the gesture was a vital one: "When I saw how much our principled support meant to the brave members of Belarus' democratic forces, particularly after Tsikhanouskaya's historic visit to the White House, I was—and remain—inspired. The path to democracy can be difficult, and I am honored I was able to play a small part in Belarus' journey."



RaeJean Stokes.

When the Lukashenko regime's unwillingness to participate in diplomatic dialogue with the U.S. Embassy in Minsk challenged American engagement in support of democratic institutions, Ms. Stokes identified public diplomacy—and public statements from the State Department, in particular—as a viable tool to send crucial messages to Minsk.

Working closely with colleagues in the Press Office and across the interagency, Ms. Stokes helped craft public messages that highlighted America's commitment to human rights.

For example, in 2020, when the Lukashenko regime imprisoned the Belarus-born spouse of a U.S. diplomat serving as an independent journalist, on baseless charges, Ms. Stokes

worked with the Office of Hostage Affairs and Consular Affairs to secure his release.

Through discreet diplomacy, culminating in a call from Secretary Mike Pompeo to Lukashenko himself, Ms. Stokes played a pivotal role in convincing the regime to release the journalist from jail. Her carefully drafted messaging, analysis of the regime's tactics and motivations, and persistence in the face of challenges made this outcome possible.

When Tsikhanouskaya returned to Washington in the spring of 2022, Ms. Stokes again galvanized interagency support for high-level meetings to demonstrate continued U.S. government commitment to

Belarusian democratic opposition, which now operates from Vilnius, Lithuania.

While the Deputy Secretary agreed to meet Tsikhanouskaya during her second visit, a meeting with the Secretary of State initially seemed out of reach due to scheduling conflicts. Ms. Stokes delivered a different outcome.

Recognizing how critical a photo and pull-aside with the

**When I saw how much our principled support meant to the brave members of Belarus' democratic forces, particularly after Tsikhanouskaya's historic visit to the White House, I was—and remain—inspired.**

*—RaeJean Stokes*



# HONOR A COLLEAGUE

Nominations for AFSA's 2023 Constructive Dissent and Exemplary Performance Awards Are Now Being Accepted.

## DISSENT AWARDS

The W. Averell Harriman Award  
for an Entry-Level Foreign Service Officer

The William R. Rivkin Award  
for a Mid-Level Foreign Service Officer

The Christian A. Herter Award  
for a Senior Foreign Service Officer

The F. Allen "Tex" Harris Award  
for a Foreign Service Specialist

## PERFORMANCE AWARDS

The Mark Palmer Award  
for the Advancement of Democracy

The Nelson B. Delavan Award  
for a Foreign Service Office  
Management Specialist

The M. Juanita Guess Award  
for a Community Liaison  
Office Coordinator

The Avis Bohlen Award  
for an Eligible Family Member

The Post Rep of the Year Award  
for an Outstanding AFSA Post Representative

MORE INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE  
AT [WWW.AFSA.ORG/AWARDS](http://WWW.AFSA.ORG/AWARDS).  
THE DEADLINE FOR NOMINATIONS  
IS MAY 15, 2023.

Questions? Contact Theo Horn, Awards & Scholarships Manager, at [horn@afsa.org](mailto:horn@afsa.org) or (202) 719-9705.



During a visit to Vilnius in February 2021, RaeJean Stokes poses with Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya.

Secretary could be to encourage the opposition and those protesting Lukashenko's human rights abuses, she worked with the Deputy Secretary's staff and the line to arrange a brief meeting between Tsikhanouskaya and the Secretary.

Thanks to Ms. Stokes' diplomatic savvy, contagious optimism, and force of will, the opposition—and Belarus' fledgling democratic institutions—are stronger than they were two years ago.

RaeJean Stokes currently serves as special assistant in the Office of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. Since joining the Foreign Service in 2012, she has also served in Mexico City, Kyiv, and Ankara.

Prior to the Foreign Service, she facilitated State Department-funded exchange programs at American Councils for International Education in Washington, D.C., worked as a development assistance coordinator at U.S. Embassy Yerevan as an eligible family member (EFM), and served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ukraine. She also worked as a journalist for SmarterTravel.com and several local newspapers.

Ms. Stokes holds a master's degree in international development from the University of Denver and has a bachelor's degree in English and history from the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts.

A native of East Granby, Connecticut, she is married to fellow FSO Nick Stokes.



## AFSA Post Representative of the Year

### *Jeff Osweiler* Advocating for Community Health at Post

In the fall of 2021, employees at U.S. Embassy Kingston grew increasingly alarmed as they awaited news on the deployment of the COVID-19 vaccine booster. The State Department had not shared information on when staff at post could expect to receive it, and as Kingston had been the last post in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs to receive the initial vaccine, many employees feared the lack of transparency on boosters portended another lengthy wait.

Jeff Osweiler, the embassy's nonimmigrant visa chief and AFSA post representative, saw an opportunity to advocate for his colleagues during a period of stress and ambiguity.

"Significant and successive delays in the distribution of COVID vaccines and boosters to the field had become a widespread concern in the community," he recounts, "not least because host-country vaccination rates and access to appropriate care were very low."



Jeff Osweiler.

"Despite the successful (and desperately needed) delivery of tens of thousands of vaccine doses to the host government, access to these protective measures for post personnel lagged months behind their widespread distribution in the United States. I knew we could do better."

Mr. Osweiler actively yet respectfully engaged with mission management to determine the status of booster shots, prompting leadership to obtain more precise information from the Bureau of Medical Services (MED). These updates were shared in real time with post employees to alleviate uncertainty.

Thanks to his tenacity in chasing answers and sensitivity to the needs of his colleagues, boosters arrived in Kingston in December 2021 for immediate disbursal.

"AFSA was an extremely supportive partner as we articulated our concerns to post management and MED," Mr. Osweiler says. "I believe concerted action by both post and MED on vaccine procurement and delivery occurred as a direct result of our efforts to bring member concerns forward. This has improved communication with post personnel on subsequent rounds of distribution and, hopefully, given a template for improving the timeline as new boosters are made available."

Kingston is the third overseas post at which Mr. Osweiler has volunteered and been selected to serve as an AFSA post representative, a role he believes is crucial to connecting members with the guidance and resources they need.

"I learned early in my career how important AFSA is as an agent of advocacy, change, and equitable treatment," he says. "I have deeply appreciated the role of the association in ensuring that the Foreign Service takes care of those who bring it to life."

Jeff Osweiler currently serves as the nonimmigrant visa chief at U.S. Embassy Kingston, one of the largest nonimmigrant visa operations in the world. He began his Foreign Service career more than 10 years ago as vice consul in Abuja. He has since served in consular manager and reporting roles in Rabat, Antananarivo, Tunis, and Montreal.

Prior to joining the Foreign Service, Mr. Osweiler was a program officer at McGill University and an editor at a national, bilingual trade magazine for Universities Canada, Canada's higher education lobby.

He completed his bachelor's degree in political science at the University of Iowa and holds a master's degree in comparative politics and international relations from McGill University.



Jeff Osweiler drives his French Citroen 2CV, proudly bearing the AFSA logo, in his hometown's annual Fourth of July parade in 2016.

**I learned early in my career how important AFSA is as an agent of advocacy, change, and equitable treatment. I have deeply appreciated the role of the association in ensuring that the Foreign Service takes care of those who bring it to life.**

—Jeff Osweiler

He hails from Ames, Iowa, where he is the proud owner of the only parade float bearing the AFSA logo.

“Every home leave, my family and I enter a French Citroen 2CV that I brought back from Madagascar as an AFSA float in my hometown’s Fourth of July parade,” Mr. Osweiler tells the *Journal*. “We hand out the branded bumper stickers, lanyards, and bags that AFSA sends us. Next summer will be our third instance of this outreach. Rest assured that the town of Ames knows and appreciates AFSA’s work, too!”

## **AFSA Achievement and Contributions to the Association Award**

### **Susan R. Johnson** Defending Professional Diplomacy

In 2009, Susan R. Johnson made AFSA history as the first woman elected president of the association. Under her leadership, spanning two terms of two years each, she tirelessly spoke out against threats to the Foreign Service as a profession and worked to modernize AFSA as an organization.

Through public speeches, regular columns in *The Foreign Service Journal*, and op-eds for other media outlets, Ms. Johnson called for strengthening the professionalism of America’s diplomatic service and documented the steady decline in Foreign Service assignments to senior policymaking positions in the State Department over decades.

She took on the hard issues, including the need to boost appropriations, advance diver-

sity, improve Civil Service and Foreign Service relations, promote institutional reform of the assignment and promotion system, challenge the growing number of political appointees in the department and as ambassadors, and balance overseas security with the needs of diplomacy to manage risk effectively, among other issues.

Honoring Foreign Service members who made the ultimate sacrifice, Ms. Johnson led with sincerity. In April 2013, she traveled to Chicago to attend the funeral of FSO Anne Smedinghoff, who was killed during a car bombing in Kabul, and ensured that Ms. Smedinghoff’s story was included in the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training’s exhibit, “History of U.S. Diplomacy,” housed at the Foreign Service Institute.

One month later, Ms. Johnson presided over the only AFSA Memorial Plaque ceremony to be attended by a vice president of the United States. At that event, then-Vice President Joe Biden added the names of Ms. Smedinghoff and seven other Foreign Service members killed in the line of duty to the memorial wall.

Ms. Johnson was committed to building recognition for the professional history of the Foreign Service and AFSA. She commissioned a book on the history of AFSA (*Voice of the Foreign Service* by Harry Kopp, FS Books, 2015) and encouraged research into U.S. diplomats missing from the AFSA Memorial Plaque.

She worked to improve conditions for FS members, including successful advocacy for the first two tranches of overseas comparability pay (OCP). Under her leadership, and thanks to the hard work of AFSA’s labor management team, AFSA also won back pay and retroactive bonuses for dozens of Diplomatic Security agents who had been denied them.

In an initiative dear to the hearts of many in the Foreign Service, Ms. Johnson advocated for greater State Department support for members with animal companions as part of their family. She launched a successful AFSA member email campaign calling on United Airlines to include FS members in the policies it offered those traveling on military orders. And in 2010, with a Civil Service colleague, she created the Facebook group “Foreign Affairs Friends of Animals Network,” which now has more than 2,000 members.

To modernize AFSA as an organization, Ms. Johnson sharpened the roles of AFSA committees and established an ad hoc committee on professionalism and ethics in the Foreign Service.



**Susan Johnson.**





AFSA/DONNA AYERST

**Susan Johnson, in her role as AFSA president, addresses the crowd at the “Rally to Serve America” in April 2011 in Washington, D.C., a demonstration she led in support of the professional integrity of foreign affairs agency personnel.**

Ms. Johnson visited foreign affairs retiree groups around the country and advocated for them as a vital AFSA constituency. She assembled 15 former AFSA presidents as a brain trust to provide insights and institutional memory to the association, and always lent AFSA's support—as well as her own—to sister organizations, including the Diplomacy Center Foundation for the National Museum of American Diplomacy and the American Academy of Diplomacy's 2011 report on diplomatic professional education and training.

Susan R. Johnson retired from the Senior Foreign Service in 2015 after a 35-year career and currently serves as president of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. Prior to holding the AFSA presidency, she served in Bosnia as deputy high representative and supervisor of Brcko district, in Baghdad as senior adviser to the Iraqi foreign ministry, and in Romania and Mauritius as deputy chief of mission and chargé d'affaires.

Earlier postings include Moscow, Havana, Islamabad, the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in New York, and the National Endowment for Democracy. She also served as International Executive Service Corps country director for Central Asia based in Kazakhstan.

She is the recipient of several Superior and Meritorious Honor Awards and the 2001 Deputy Chief of Mission of the Year Award, and is a former Pearson Fellow and an alumna of the Senior Seminar. Before entering the Foreign Service, she worked in the private sector.

Ms. Johnson holds a B.A. in history from Principia College and an M.A. in international relations from the Johns Hopkins School of International Studies. She is married to Ambassador Riaz M. Khan, a retired Pakistani diplomat and former foreign secretary of Pakistan. She has served on the boards of numerous organizations, including the Diplomacy Center Foundation and DACOR.

## AFSA Special Achievement Award

### *Sharon L. Papp* Upholding Justice for Members

Over the course of her three decades of service as AFSA general counsel, Sharon L. Papp has made innumerable contributions to AFSA, its constituencies, and the whole of the Foreign Service community.

Ms. Papp and her team in the AFSA Labor Management Office assist more than 1,000 members per year from all of the foreign affairs agencies with grievances, investigations, proposals for disciplinary action, appeals of the revocation of their security clearance, and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaints.

Since joining AFSA in 1992, Ms. Papp has personally assisted thousands of members, often taking on the most difficult cases. She ensures that agencies abide by the rules and that members receive due process and fair treatment. In doing so, she has saved numerous careers and ensured the integrity of the Foreign Service as an institution.

In a significant 2020 victory, Ms. Papp assisted a dozen members who were charged with security violations after the State Department retroactively classified emails sent from Secretary of



**Sharon L. Papp.**



State Hillary Clinton's private server. With Ms. Papp's help, they were found not liable.

More recently, a legal brief authored by Ms. Papp and Deputy General Counsel Raeka Safai resulted in a ruling by the Foreign Service Labor Relations Board granting retroactive 2015 and 2016 Meritorious Service Increases (MSI). This was a particularly notable victory that followed an earlier loss on the issue before the Foreign Service Grievance Board (FSGB). Under Ms. Papp's leadership, AFSA also prevailed in the 2013 MSI dispute. As a result of AFSA's efforts in these disputes, more than 1,000 Foreign Service employees received a permanent increase to their salaries or annuities if retired.

Ms. Papp's 30 years of experience with discipline cases gives her clients a distinct advantage. For example, punishments are supposed to be consistent with those previously imposed on other employees. Since she is well versed in the history of similar cases, she has often succeeded in getting a client's penalty reduced from what an agency initially proposed to a fairer penalty.

Ms. Papp also authored two amicus briefs that helped achieve

**Few things make me prouder than seeing the name of an employee I helped out of a potentially career-ending situation on a tenure or promotion list, or getting a decision from the FSGB ruling in AFSA's favor when an agency violated an agreement.**

*—Sharon L. Papp*

significant victories for Foreign Service members and established positive precedent. In one case, the court ruled that the Secretary of State could not overrule a decision of the FSGB finding that the department had not established cause to separate a Foreign Service employee. In a second case, the court ruled that a consul general was acting within the scope of his employment when he was involved in a car accident overseas and therefore

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**Sharon Papp is greeted by Secretary of State John Kerry at the State Department in June 2014.**

could not be sued individually in the United States by someone injured in the accident.

During her tenure, Ms. Papp has advised 15 different AFSA governing boards on policy issues. Her nuanced approach to explaining complex legal issues has assisted those boards in responding to threats to the Foreign Service.

During the 1990s, Ms. Papp worked to end discrimination in the foreign affairs agencies based on sexual orientation by providing legal support to lesbian and gay members on a variety of issues. In recognition of her work, she was awarded the 2014 Equality Award by Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies (known as glifaa) at a ceremony where Secretary of State John Kerry also lauded her.

In a 1999 case that the entire AFSA membership followed closely, Ms. Papp secured a ruling from the FSGB that the State Department had violated a collective bargaining agreement with AFSA in appointing a Civil Service employee as a deputy chief of mission, compelling Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to curtail the assignment.

Finally, in 2019 under highly politicized circumstances, Ms. Papp worked with one of the department's ethics lawyers to ensure that 12 AFSA members called to testify in the impeachment of President Donald Trump could have their attorneys' fees reimbursed without running afoul of the ethics rules prohibiting acceptance of gifts. She advised AFSA's Legal Defense Fund Committee as it paid more than \$450,000 in non-reimbursable

attorney fees to save FS colleagues from the severe financial hardship they would have suffered had they been forced to pay out of pocket for their own representation.

Ms. Papp says she has always been an ardent believer in due process and justice, and she finds fulfillment in working to ensure these rights for Foreign Service members: "Few things make me prouder than seeing the name of an employee I helped out of a potentially career-ending situation on a tenure or promotion list, or getting a decision from the FSGB ruling in AFSA's favor when an agency violated an agreement. Not all lawyers can say they love what they do; I am very fortunate to be one of those who can!"

Sharon L. Papp joined AFSA in 1992, after five years as an associate attorney with a Washington, D.C., law firm specializing in plaintiff-side employment and EEO law.

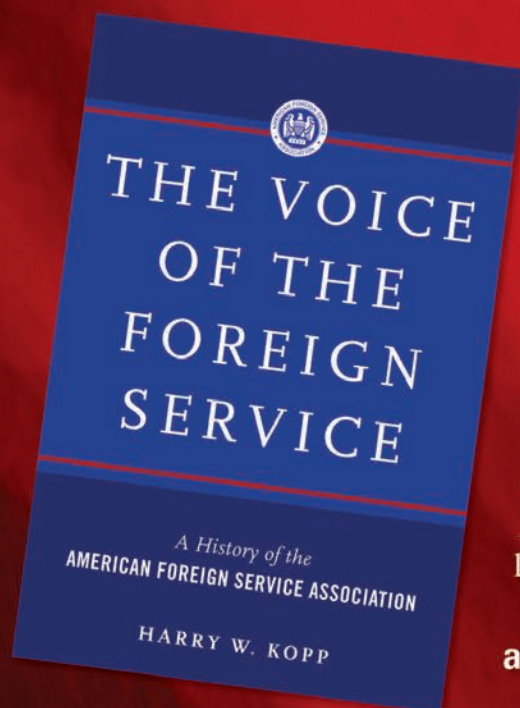
She holds a bachelor's degree in English and psychology from Vanderbilt University and a Juris Doctor from The George Washington University Law School. She is a member of the District of Columbia and Virginia Bars and the recipient of the Gay and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies' Equity Award and the Society of Federal Labor and Employee Relations Professionals' Lifetime Achievement award.

Ms. Papp grew up in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, where her parents worked for the Arabian American Oil Company for 18 years. She is married to Rick Philbin and has two grown daughters, Andrea and Nicole Philbin. ■



# Spread a little understanding in the New Year!

*-Best wishes from FS Books*



## A History of the American Foreign Service Association

*By Harry W. Kopp for the American Foreign Service Association*

The U.S. Foreign Service and the American Foreign Service Association were born together in 1924. In this first-ever book about the association's more than 90-year history, author and former diplomat Harry Kopp chronicles the evolution of the Foreign Service and the events that shaped AFSA into what it is today—the professional association and labor union of the United States Foreign Service.

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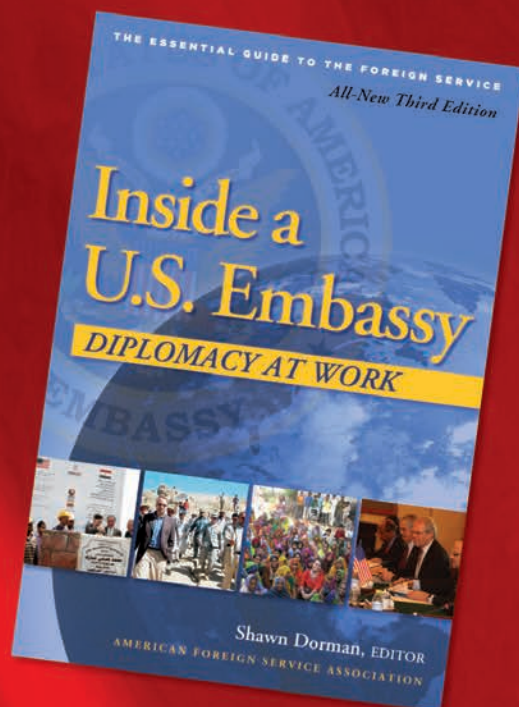


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*Edited by Shawn Dorman*

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# When Is It ETHICAL to Resign in Protest?

Using a case study from the Bosnia War, a Senior FSO discusses the ethics of resignation over policy.

BY STEVE WALKER



ISTOCK / GRINVALDS

State Department employees are professionally obligated to publicly support the policies of the administration they serve. But policy disagreements can become moral quandaries. At what point should an employee who disagrees with U.S. policy resign?

This article, drawing on the case of Stephen Walker [no relation to the author!], a Foreign Service officer who resigned his position in 1993 to protest the Clinton administration's policy on the war in Bosnia, argues that resignation should be an ethical act—that disagreeing with policy may not be adequate justification.



*Steve Walker, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and no relation to the Stephen Walker discussed here, is a senior diplomatic fellow at the Wilson Center. The opinions expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of State or the U.S. government.*

## The Bosnia War and U.S. Policy

Yugoslavia imploded in a violent frenzy of nationalism, ethnic clashes, and historical score-settling when the Soviet Union fell in 1991. Macedonia, Croatia, and Slovenia declared independence in 1991, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992. Serbia and Montenegro formed the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia but became separate countries in 2006. Kosovo, previously a part of Serbia, became independent in 2008.

In Muslim-majority Bosnia and Herzegovina, the minority Serbs declared an independent “republic” and, with support from neighboring Serbia, launched a brutal war of territorial expansion. Bosnian Serb militias fired on civilians; committed sexual violence; engaged in prolonged, indiscriminate shelling of innocents in Sarajevo and other cities; tortured prisoners in detention camps; and refused to allow humanitarian assistance to sick and starving civilians. Anyone who lived through the period remembers the horrifying photographs. “Ethnic cleansing” entered the international lexicon as Bosnian Serb forces destroyed entire Muslim villages and engaged in mass killing.

United Nations actions—an arms embargo on all parties, deployment of peacekeepers, sanctions, declaration of a no-fly

zone over Bosnia, and establishment of “safe areas” for Bosnian Muslims—did not stop the horrific violence. NATO forces, including the U.S. Air Force, enforced the no-fly zone and agreed to intervene to protect U.N. peacekeepers if they were attacked but refused to engage in offensive combat operations.

For the Clinton administration, Bosnia was a wicked foreign policy problem exacerbated by a lack of consensus on how to deal with it. Europe and NATO were divided on whether to intervene in Bosnia. European public opinion was hesitant about becoming militarily involved in the Balkans. There was humanitarian intervention versus let’s-avoid-a-quagmire disagreement in the U.S. interagency. Americans, exposed almost daily to images of the war broadcast by CNN and other international media, were ambivalent, believing on the one hand that the United States was morally obligated to do more to stop the humanitarian disaster in the Balkans and, on the other, reluctant for Washington to be the world’s policeman in the emerging post-Cold War era.

U.S. policy supported imposing economic sanctions on Serbia, enforcing the no-fly zone, providing humanitarian aid, and establishing a U.N. war crimes tribunal, but was based on a strategic assessment that an imposed solution would fail. “We believe the quickest, best, and most sustainable way to stop the bloodshed in the former Yugoslavia,” Secretary of State Warren Christopher said in February 1993, “is to help create an environment in which all parties see it in their own self-interest to negotiate a political settlement.” In other words, the United States would use diplomatic and economic carrots and sticks to encourage the Serbs to negotiate, but would not use force to stop them.

## Discontent at Foggy Bottom

In April 1993, 12 Foreign Service officers sent a joint Dissent Channel message to Secretary Christopher asking that the administration make good on its campaign promise to support the besieged Bosnian Muslims. Christopher met with the dissenters, but U.S. policy did not change. The humanitarian plight

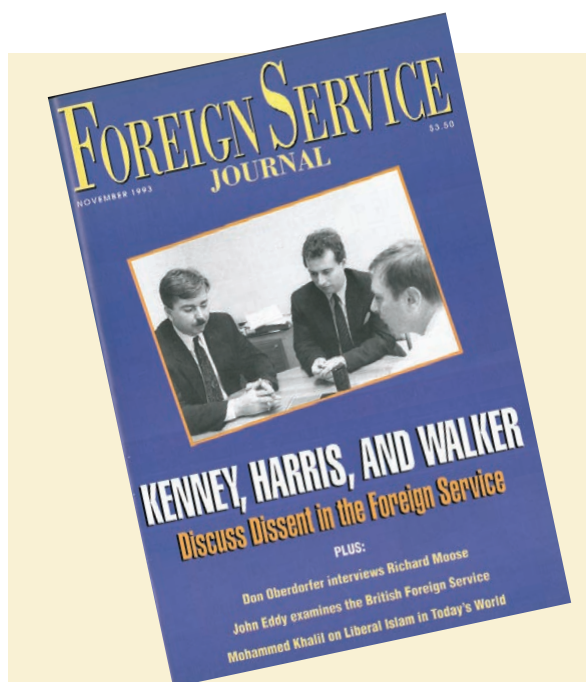
of the Bosnian Muslims got even worse. In June, flagrantly defying U.N. and international opinion, and with a viciousness that would make the atrocity a metaphor for the war, the Bosnian Serbs attacked Srebrenica, allegedly a U.N.-protected “safe area.” In July, they intensified their siege of the capital, Sarajevo; its fall appeared imminent.

The administration’s noninterventionist policy on Bosnia had by this time led to considerable dismay and frustration among career diplomats, especially those working on the Balkans at the State Department. In July, the administration’s decision to embrace an ethnically based partition plan proposed by Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic deepened their dismay. For Bosnia desk officer Marshall Harris, intelligence analyst Jon Western, and Croatia desk officer Stephen Walker, Secretary Christopher’s repeated public statements that the United States was doing all it could in Bosnia consistent with its national interest made it worse. The United States government, they believed, had moved from tolerating what they thought should have been recognized as genocide to being complicit in it. In their view, U.S. policy was in violation

of international law: The U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide requires signatories to prevent, stop, and punish genocide.

Harris resigned on Aug. 4, Western on Aug. 5, and Walker on Aug. 23, 1993.

It is critical to appreciate how psychologically difficult it was for all three officers to sustain their support for U.S. policy as



**The November 1993 edition of *The Foreign Service Journal* put a spotlight on FSO resignations over Bosnia policy, featuring a discussion with three resignees. The cover photo by Liz Allan shows, from left, Stephen Walker, Marshall Harris, and George Kenney during an FSJ interview. Kenney was the first to resign, in 1992, when he was serving as acting Yugoslavia desk officer. Walker and Harris, Croatia and Bosnia desk officers respectively, resigned a year later, in 1993. The three met with FSO Brandon Grove, then chair of the FSJ Editorial Board, to discuss their resignations. The transcript of that discussion, “The Agony of Dissent,” appears on page 36 of the November 1993 FSJ.**



they worked on the Bosnia War, and the emotional pressure they felt as they battled with their consciences to try to change the policy from within. Western recounted for *The Washington Post* the psychological toll exacted by spending day after day looking at thousands of photographs and videotapes depicting “human beings who look like they’ve been through meat grinders.” It was clear to him that the Bosnia War “isn’t a civil war. It’s the systematic slaughter of civilians.” Concurring, Harris told *The Post*: “What we were doing was not only wrong. It was something I couldn’t participate in.”

Walker told me in an interview that he had trouble sleeping and was increasingly depressed and withdrawn at home. “Genocide felt different to me than just another issue I might have disagreed with,” he explained. “The issue wasn’t so much that we weren’t intervening; it was that we were de facto intervening on the perpetrator’s side.”

## The Ethics of Resignation

At some point in their careers, most State Department employees have disagreed with policy. Not a few have had to defend and support these policies in public or with foreign interlocutors. Faced with such a dilemma, they know resignation is an option, but most would only make such a personally and professionally significant decision after serious consideration. How does one know if resigning is the right choice?

In his insightful meditation *Public Integrity*, the ethicist J. Patrick Dobel suggests a set of criteria—a “triangle of judgment”—to guide such a decision. Dobel argues that professional integrity is the product of the harmonious interplay of three sets of “ethics”—*legal-institutional*, *personal responsibility*, and *effectiveness*—that interact synergistically and dynamically.

Legal-institutional and personal responsibility ethics are straightforward: U.S. government officials must not violate the law and should act in accordance with their moral beliefs. Effectiveness ethics consist of two elements: Officials must be personally and materially able to do their jobs, and—this is the interesting part—they must “prudently” seek to achieve their mission even in ethically complex situations. To act “prudently” for Dobel is to use discerning judgment, to be politically savvy, to make small compromises to accomplish larger goals, and to be bureaucratically skillful—all the while maintaining a moral compass.

It is an art, not a science, and requires constant vigilance lest “prudence” become an excuse for ethical laxity. In essence, Dobel is insisting that, ethically, it is incumbent on government officials to operate and be effective in the real world, which is

often morally ambiguous. Refusing to do so—and (my elaboration) to hastily resign simply because one disagrees with policy—to preserve one’s moral purity is no virtue.

When does personal conscience take priority over professional obligations? When does “working within the system” become complicity? How do you know when it’s time to resign? A closer look at the decision-making process FS-3 Croatia desk officer Stephen Walker went through provides some answers to these questions.

*Legal-Institutional.* While Walker does not believe the administration broke U.S. domestic law or engaged in unambiguously illegal conduct with regard to Bosnia, he contends that by the summer of 1993, senior officials were at best dissembling and at worst misleading Congress and the American people on both the situation in Bosnia and the government’s policy. For example, Secretary Christopher’s frequent public statements that both sides had committed atrocities were technically accurate, but masked the fact that the vast majority of atrocities were perpetrated by the Bosnian Serbs and their proxies, whose genocide was systematic.

Christopher’s formulation implied a moral equivalency on both sides. It became apparent to Walker that the real goal of the administration’s Bosnia policy was to keep the war out of the headlines so that there would be less pressure on the president to do something about it. In Walker’s view, the State Department, including by extension himself, was compromising its public mission to advance the administration’s political needs, and in a way that violated U.S. values and international law.

*Personal responsibility.* As described above, Walker believed that the Clinton administration’s inaction was a tacit acceptance of genocide. This violated his moral principles. Yet his commitment to the Foreign Service outweighed his moral disagreement, even after Harris and Western had resigned. “Foreign Service officers are told from Day One when they join that during their careers they will be called on, and should be prepared, to defend policy with which they disagree,” he explained. The nation’s diplomats may express their dissent as policy is being formulated, but “once a decision is made, they are professionally bound to publicly support and advance it.” Despite his considerable reservations, Walker was still prepared to publicly support the Bosnia policy as he prudently sought to change it from within.

The “final nail in the coffin,” he recounted, came on the evening of Friday, Aug. 20, when a senior official in Walker’s chain of command informed him of an evolution in policy that

## In essence, Dobel is insisting that, ethically, it is incumbent on government officials to operate and be effective in the real world, which is often morally ambiguous.

he would be expected to support and help execute: The United States would privately pressure the Bosnian Muslims to give up and sign a Milosevic-drafted partition plan and, once the agreement was finalized, arrange for the U.S. military to implement it. Walker was horrified by the plan, which in his view ratified the Serbs' ethnic cleansing.

"At this point the United States was not simply preventing the Bosnian Muslims from defending themselves (by not acting to lift the U.N. arms embargo)," Walker explained to me. "It was now contemplating putting the full weight of American diplomacy behind an ethnic partition plan and, in essence, put a gun to their head to get them to give up. This was morally abhorrent and counter to American values and interests." Walker left the meeting knowing he would return on Monday with his letter of resignation.

*Effectiveness.* Dobel argues that morally conflicted officials should remain in government as long as they are still able to fight the good fight and correct what they believe to be wrong. But, he says, "if individuals have no power to act or speak and are ignored, then all their good intentions and tortured integrity will accomplish little good and probably abet harm," and they should leave.

This is the position in which Walker found himself in the days leading up to his resignation. As he told me: "On the one hand, we felt a sense of disillusionment and that the Dissent Channel mechanism had failed. It was clear to me that the policymakers understood our reservations and concerns but were determined not to change policy. Twelve people had already formally dissented to no avail. If that didn't change their minds, why would a dissent from me do it? Also, by the time I resigned, [the Bureau of European Affairs'] Balkan Conflict Group had been frozen out of the policymaking process because they sus-

pected we were the source of leaks. There was a sense of: they know what we think, and they've made it clear that they don't care or trust us."

Continuing, Walker described what he perceived to be his possible dissent options: "Leaking wasn't an option because I took my oath about protecting classified information and the process very seriously. From an integrity point of view, that was not an option for me. I didn't formally convey my concerns to my chain of command because I didn't feel I needed to: these were abundantly clear from conversations we had with the Front Office every day. Everyone knew what we thought. One thing we could do, and did do, at the working level to act on our dissent was to prepare and send forward accurate daily press guidance. Our drafts would inevitably get changed by the time it got to the Spokesman, who would reiterate the administration's 'moral equivalency' line at the noon briefing. But the guidance we sent up was honest. After consulting with our embassies, press reports, and intel analyses, we would truthfully state what happened and suggest text for what the department should say publicly about it."

As the end of August neared, the choice was clear to Walker: "Suck it up and go along, or resign." It felt "black and white," Walker recalled. "I felt I couldn't be effective trying to change the policy from inside the organization ... we were frozen out, distrusted, and I was just a mid-level FSO. And the policy was starting to go in an even more cynical direction. I had to get out."

### Exhilarating Clarity

Stephen Walker vehemently disagreed with the Clinton administration's Bosnia policy, but this was, in his mind, insufficient justification to resign. What tipped the balance for him was his determination that he could no longer be effective: His "disloyal" office was frozen out of policymaking, and formal dissent had failed. He had acted "prudently"—as a good Foreign Service officer, he had tried to navigate a morally complex environment, publicly supporting established policy while seeking to change and challenge it from within, but eventually reached a tipping point where he could no longer do this.

Looking back, Walker, who now teaches high school in New York, vividly remembers the liberating "clarity" he had when he quit. "I knew I was taking a stand and doing the morally correct thing," he said. "It was frustrating and hard, but it was a rare opportunity to make a little bit of difference." The exhilarating clarity Stephen Walker experienced following his resignation is what professional integrity feels like. ■



# PROMOTING *Democracy* IN TUMULTUOUS TIMES

**How do we advance democracy in a world where autocracy is on the rise and challenges to democratic principles abound in our own nation?**

BY BILL WANLUND

Moths never reach the moon, but they navigate by it; we humans may never reach democracy ... but we navigate by its ideals.

—Author Rebecca Solnit, *praise for Democracy May Not Exist, but We'll Miss It When It's Gone*, by Astra Taylor

Retired USAID FSO José Garzón's Speaking Out column in the September *FSJ*, "Democracy as a Vocation," was thoughtful and timely testimony to the need to promote America's signature value. It carries wisdom born of the long, practical experience of a true believer. It might be useful to survey the uneasy environment in which the Foreign Service is carrying out its democracy mandate today.

President Joe Biden clearly shares the view that democracy must be cultivated. It was a major issue in his presidential campaign in 2020, and he backed it up by holding a virtual Summit for Democracy in December 2021. That meeting was launched with relatively little fanfare and a low bar for expectations. Something of a pre-summit summit, the meeting's "deliverables"—the agreements, treaties, and other tangible results that typically emerge from summits—weren't likely to cause much of a stir. Nor were they necessarily meant to.

Rather, Biden intended the event to focus the attention of the 100-plus participating world leaders and to harvest pledges from them to strengthen democracy at home and promote it abroad. It was to serve as the "kick-off of a year of action," as the president put it, to culminate in a second, in-person summit about a year later (no date has yet been announced).



Retired FSO Bill Wanlund served for 26 years with the United States Information Agency and the State Department in Sierra Leone, the Philippines, Germany, Venezuela, and Austria, as well as in Washington, D.C. Following retirement he took several assignments as a reemployed annuitant before working as a freelance journalist for CQ Researcher.

## A December 2021 Pew Research Center poll found that only 25 percent of Americans believe promoting democracy should be a priority for U.S. foreign policy.

The pledges generated by the summit varied widely in specificity and scope. New Zealand, for example, pledged \$1 million NZD “to support anti-corruption within the Pacific region.” Meanwhile, the Democratic Republic of the Congo simply promised it would “[organize its] elections within constitutional deadlines.”

### Mixed Reviews

Like any Washington policy initiative, the summit got mixed reviews at home. “I don’t think [the summit] amounted to much, substantively,” Colin Dueck, a foreign policy professor at George Mason University, told the author in a January 2022 interview. “One reason was the format. Hundreds of NGO leaders, private sector individuals, and heads of state are unlikely to hammer out a practical or workable agenda in a virtual setting. And they didn’t.”

Others gave a more positive, if tentative, assessment. Retired Ambassador Norman Eisen, who served as chief of mission in the Czech Republic from 2011 to 2014, and two colleagues from the Brookings Institution write that the summit “laid a robust groundwork for success. ... The summit has already resulted in some initial measurable commitments to advance democracy in the U.S. and abroad, establishing specific, concrete steps to fulfill them.” However, they also note that any real success would require vigorous follow-through.

Ambassador Cameron Munter, chief of mission in Serbia from 2007 to 2009 and in Pakistan from 2010 to 2012, believes some of the terminology surrounding the summit and the vagueness of its objectives served to muddy its intent. “The term ‘global democratic revival’ presents a bit of a warning,” he said in an early 2022 interview with the author, because “there’s always a temptation to try to re-create ‘the way it was before,’ a kind of idealized, pre-populist time in which, somehow, democracy will flourish again. But this is unlikely. In my opinion, this is why the virtual democracy summit got mixed reviews. We know what we don’t like, and we

have notions of what we used to have, but the question remains: What do we look forward to?”

What, indeed. Last February, just two months after the virtual summit, Russian President Vladimir Putin—who had not been invited—offered one possible future scenario when he ordered his military to invade Ukraine. Freedom House president Michael Abramowitz told *The New York Times* on Feb. 27, 2022, that the invasion provided “a taste of what a world without checks on anti-democratic behavior would look like.”

If there is a silver lining to the grisly story unfolding in Ukraine, it’s that it “made political leaders and thinkers sit up and realize that the threat to democracy is real and very concrete: [They think,] ‘Right now, it’s Ukraine, but it could be us next,’” said Staffan Lindberg, founding director of the Varieties of Democracy Institute at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, in a live-streamed Carnegie Endowment event on April 8, 2022. “Hopefully [Ukraine has] galvanized democracies in both the global North and South to act more coherently together and stand up and support one another going forward.”

### Democracy and Foreign Policy

It’s an article of faith that promoting democracy makes good foreign policy. In an interview with the author, Ambassador Brian Carlson, who was chief of mission in Latvia from 2001 to 2004, explained his belief that “the United States is defined by, and centers its foreign policy on, democracy. And we Americans believe that democracy depends on honoring the basic political rights of the individual.”

Kori Schake, deputy director of policy planning at the State Department from 2007 to 2008 and now director of foreign and defense policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute, says it’s important to keep promoting democracy abroad. In an interview earlier this year, she told the author: “Democracies don’t go to war against each other, and they don’t commit atrocities, and they abide by rules internationally because it’s the natural outgrowth of abiding by rules domestically.”

The American public, however, doesn’t share the administration’s eagerness to promote democracy—in fact, most think we needn’t bother. A December 2021 Pew Research Center poll found that only 25 percent of Americans believe promoting democracy should be a priority for U.S. foreign policy. Atlantic Council senior fellow Emma Ashford spoke for many when she said the United States needs to clean its own house first. “Ambitious foreign-policy goals are completely out of step with the realities of the country’s domestic political and economic dysfunction,” she wrote in *Foreign Policy* last year. “How can the United States spread democ-



racy or act as an example for others if it barely has a functioning democracy at home?”

Ashford may have a point. Pew found that 85 percent of Americans see the need for “major changes” in our political system, and nearly half of those believe the system needs to be “completely reformed.” American pollster John Zogby found that 46 percent of us believe we might be headed for a civil war. Citing a decade of increased voting restrictions, racial injustice, the outsized influence of special interest groups, and partisan polarization, Freedom House (which receives most of its funding from U.S. government agencies) reports that American democracy has reached a state of “acute crisis.” An October 2022 *New York Times*/Siena College poll found that 71 percent of American voters agree that American democracy is endangered—but only 7 percent think it’s the most important problem of the day.

### America as Role Model

Many blame America’s democracy dip on former President Donald Trump, whose actions and statements while in office often upended tradition and legal precedent, and who continues to stoke discontent among his supporters. Schake said in our interview: “American credibility has unquestionably been diminished by the election of a populist who doesn’t respect the institutional and legal and normative restraints of democracy. President Trump and his enablers undertook actions to corrode democracy and prevent the peaceful transition of power that is essential in democracies. Foreigners are right to be aghast that these things could happen even in so established a democracy as ours.”

However, she continued, “the legal and institutional framework of American democracy is holding fast. American journalists have been vociferous [in challenging Trump’s false claims]; courts—even those with Trump-appointed judges—have been unflinching in upholding the law; state election officials, including Republicans, have refused to falsify vote counts. And the American people did not return Trump to the presidency.”

In its “Freedom in the World 2022” report, Freedom House points to some longer-term, underlying issues: “The weakening of American democracy did not start with President Trump’s direct pressure on democratic institutions and rights, and his departure from the White House has not ended the crisis. Disturbing problems that predated his administration—legislative dysfunction, partisan gerrymandering, the excessive influence of special interests in politics, ongoing racial discrimination, and the spread of polarization and disinformation in the media environment—remain unaddressed.”

## Although the United States has long been the standard by which other democracies are judged, our role model status is up for debate.

So, although the United States has long been the standard by which other democracies are judged, our role model status is up for debate. America’s chaotic pullout from Afghanistan in August 2021 left even staunch allies wondering whether the United States still had the spirit to fight for democracy. The violent Jan. 6 storming of the Capitol by disgruntled Trump supporters—and their persistent denial of his defeat—present to many outsiders the image of a frail, failing democracy. The perilous state in which we find ourselves was laid bare for the world to see during the House of Representatives public hearings into the Jan. 6 attack (though the very fact that the hearings were held was in itself a sign that democracy is still with us).

Meanwhile, however, ongoing race- and gender-based injustice and economic inequalities, and harsh new voting restrictions enacted in some states, demonstrate that America still has far to go to achieve the democratic ideal: A 2021 Pew Global Survey of advanced economies found that only 17 percent of respondents believe the U.S. provides a good model of democracy.

### Our Diplomatic Dilemma

How do we advance democracy in a world where democracy seems to be falling out of favor, while our own nation’s commitment to it looks uncertain?

Ambassador Munter cautions that changing times have made the job harder. “In the past, we assumed our power was supported by our domestic example,” he said in our interview. “We might be hypocritical, we might be naive, but we proudly owned up to our shortcomings because the evidence of our success at home was compelling. That’s a lot harder to achieve right now. Social polarization and a host of other factors will make it hard for us to overcome the problems at home that hinder our strength as a beacon of democracy abroad.”

From overseas, Anar Bata, coordinator for the U.S. and Americas Programme at the London think tank Chatham House,

## How do we advance democracy in a world where democracy seems to be falling out of favor?

comes to a similar conclusion. “Although the U.S. is the only state with the resources to be a global democratic leader, heightened partisanship will make it harder for the Biden administration to increase protections at home,” she told the author in an interview in January 2022. Bata noted that the U.S. has long struggled with issues of voting rights and racial equality, and worked to correct these problems “by listening to criticism and allowing for input from civil society.” Nevertheless, she added: “the U.S. must do more at home to be credible when it says it values democracy and equality for all.”

Thomas Carothers and Frances Z. Brown, co-directors of the democracy program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, agree that the U.S. needs serious political reform and that our democratic standing and diplomatic negotiating position have been damaged. However, they argue in a March 10, 2021, post for *American Purpose*, this isn’t the time to hold back: “The global condition of democracy is too dire for that.” Rather, the Biden administration should “move forward with an active democracy support policy”—but back away from America’s “almost reflexive” role as the natural leader and exporter of global democracy. Show some humility, they wrote, and “acknowledge our missteps as evidence that ‘democracy requires constant tending and self-correction, both at home and overseas.’”

The Biden administration reflects a similar attitude. *The New York Times* reported in September that the administration is committed to the reinforcement of democracy as a foreign policy priority—although, the *Times* noted, the emphasis now is more on the “resilience” of democracies rather than democracy promotion. Aides to Secretary of State Antony Blinken told the newspaper their approach would be to strengthen democracies and encourage cooperation among them rather than work to change political systems.

As the White House’s planned in-person democracy summit approaches, veteran diplomats cite the need for open and honest analysis and acknowledgment of our own history. “Our own struggles in recent years make it clear that no democracy

is perfect, and that it’s always a work in progress, but the key to credibility is sincerity,” Ambassador Carlson said. “Humans are very adept at recognizing someone who is sincere in their beliefs, honest about their motives, and open to questions and merited criticism. If American support of democracy and human rights is sincere, it will have the necessary credibility.”

### A Work in Progress

Former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Shannon Jr. suggests taking a look at our not-too-distant history. “Remember, when the U.S. was fighting a war to keep the world safe for democracy, Americans were being lynched. Jim Crow laws were in place. Political intimidation was being used, not only against minorities but against political outliers,” Shannon pointed out during a Nov. 3, 2021, *American Purpose* event. “All democracies have had times when we were promoting bigger visions of ourselves that didn’t necessarily correspond to the reality of the moment.”

It’s also worth recalling that not everyone shares our definition of democracy, says Robert Cekuta, U.S. ambassador to Azerbaijan from 2015 to 2018. In a February 2022 interview with the author, Ambassador Cekuta noted: “Each society has its own history. We might say a country isn’t democratic, but the people in that country say, ‘OK, but this is what we want.’ Should we be imposing democracy on them? At what point are we helping, and at what point are we meddling?”

One Senior FSO still in service agrees that a one-size-fits-all message about democracy won’t work. “Talking about democracy overseas now is going to be different than before,” the diplomat says. “Whether in established democracies that might have trust issues with us or with developing democracies, our approach will need some reshaping and tailoring in each country in order to be effective.”

Ambassador Munter notes that we’re in tumultuous times, and the present global democracy crisis doesn’t exist in a vacuum; it’s been helped along by economic and other cyclical factors. “We should avoid apocalyptic hand-wringing” about democracy’s current decline, he counseled; the pendulum can swing back.

But that doesn’t absolve us of looking after our own democracy, Munter adds. “I hope that an honest reckoning with our difficulties, carried out by people of good will, is not impossible,” he said. “But without such a reckoning, it will be hard for America’s message to have the power and coherence we would like. It will be awfully tough for us to continue to claim the mantle of ‘leader of the free world’ without it.” ■

## AFSA Awards Honor Foreign Service Excellence and Constructive Dissent

For 54 years, AFSA has been proud to highlight achievement, courage, and sacrifice within the Foreign Service community through its awards program. This year, and for the first time since 2019, AFSA was delighted to host its annual awards ceremony in person on Oct. 19 in the State Department's Dean Acheson Auditorium.

Approximately 100 guests gathered to recognize the winners of the 2022 awards for outstanding performance and constructive dissent and the inaugural recipients of AFSA's newly created Foreign Service Champions Award, and to honor this year's recipient of the Award for Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy.

AFSA presented 18 awards in all; profiles of the winners begin on page 32.

AFSA President Eric Rubin served as master of ceremonies before a distinguished audience that featured



Constructive dissent award recipients (from left) Benjamin Dille, Steven May, Michael White, and Elisabeth Zentos with AFSA President Eric Rubin (center).

four former recipients of AFSA's Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award: Ambassadors John Negroponte, Ruth Davis, Tom Boyatt, and Ronald Neumann. Family members and colleagues of the 2022 recipients and senior officials from the State Department were also in attendance.

"This is the first time that we have been able to hold the awards ceremony in person since the start of the pandemic," Ambassador Rubin said in his opening remarks. "The resilience and strength our community has shown over the past two and a half years has been an inspiration. It is with great admiration, and no small measure of joy, that I stand before you today to honor the momentous achievements of this year's awardees."

Award winners traveled to the ceremony from all over the

world. They each gave brief remarks as they accepted their awards. The ceremony was followed by a reception in the National Museum of American Diplomacy. AFSA congratulates all the 2022 award recipients!

### Lifetime Contributions

Amb. Rubin presented the 2022 **Award for Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy to Anne W. Patterson** for her commitment to excellence and leadership throughout her career and beyond, despite the challenging contexts in which much of her work was done.

In accepting the award, Ambassador Patterson reflected on her decades of State Department service and lauded today's diplomats for their skill and commitment.

"I was in the Foreign Service for 43 years and I was privileged to represent the



Ambassador Anne W. Patterson received the 2022 Award for Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy on Oct. 19.

## CALENDAR

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

December 1  
**AFSA Scholarship Applications Available**

December 1  
12-1 p.m.  
**Webinar: Reviewing Your Retirement Plan**

December 7  
12-2 p.m.  
**AFSA Governing Board Meeting**

December 12  
**Federal Health Benefits Open Season Ends**

December 26  
**Christmas Day Observed AFSA Offices Closed**

January 2  
**New Year's Day Observed AFSA Offices Closed**

January 16  
**Governing Board Election Cycle for 2023-2025 Board Begins**

January 16  
**Martin Luther King Day AFSA Offices Closed**

United States at the height of American power," she said. "The American framework allowed democracy, however fragile, to arise in countries in which it had never even been thought possible. Did we make mistakes? Yes, of course. But it is still quite a record by any historical standard. Now our world has changed, and American diplomacy needs to adjust, and I am convinced the Foreign Service will be able to."





AFSA President Eric Rubin and Amb. Anne W. Patterson (center) with exemplary performance award recipients (from left) Christine Peterson, Sharon Papp, Susan Johnson, and RaeJean Stokes.

She continued: "Our younger and mid-grade officers are incredibly able. They know that what sets the Foreign Service apart is our knowledge about foreign countries. They know their job is fundamentally to establish relationships, so that you can get in the door when it is really important to do so and make the pitch for the American point of view."

See the *Journal's* interview with Amb. Patterson on page 24.

## Foreign Service Champions

Launched for the first time in 2022, the **Foreign Service Champions Award** recognizes a member of Congress, the military, or another influential non-career member of the foreign affairs community who has made meaningful contributions to the Foreign Service

and the diplomatic profession.

The inaugural winners of this award are Senator **Dan Sullivan** (R-Alaska) and Representative **Joaquin Castro** (D-Texas) for their demonstrable support on Capitol Hill of FS members and U.S. diplomacy.

Although neither was able to attend the awards ceremony, both submitted pre-recorded videos of their remarks, shown at the event, to thank AFSA for the recognition and to reiterate their commitment to championing the work of the American Foreign Service and the well-being of its members.

## Constructive Dissent

AFSA's four constructive dissent awards are unique within the U.S. government. Every year for nearly a half-century, AFSA has given these awards to Foreign Service

officers and specialists who demonstrated the courage to dissent within the system, to question the status quo, and to take a stand.

This year, the **Christian A. Herter Award for Constructive Dissent** by a Senior Foreign Service officer was given to **Benjamin Dille**, management counselor at U.S. Embassy Kabul, for his commitment to protecting the mission community during the pandemic and his advocacy for effective solutions during evacuation planning.

When accepting the award, Dr. Dille was quick to thank his colleagues: "Most efforts highlighted in this award came from the larger Kabul management team, so I must give them all credit for their ideas, support, and willingness to work through the most difficult challenges I have witnessed in my career."

Ambassador Charles Rivkin presented the **William R. Rivkin Award for Constructive Dissent** by a mid-level officer, named after his late father, who served as U.S. ambassador to Luxembourg, Senegal, and Gambia.

The 2022 award went to three Foreign Service officers. **Jennifer Davis** was selected for her courage in outlining flaws within the State Department's investigation and discipline processes and offering recommendations for their improvement; and **Elisabeth Zentos** and **Anton Cooper** were recognized for their foresight in laying out critical concerns regarding the deteriorating security situation in Kabul and concrete policy proposals to mitigate harm.

As Mr. Cooper was unable to attend the ceremony, Ms. Zentos spoke for both when accepting the award: "I would like to express the hope that the existence of this award encourages State Department leaders to not only recognize dissent after the fact. I hope we all remember the importance of including diverse voices in discussions, carefully considering dissenting views, and respecting suggestions of working-level experts."

The **F. Allen "Tex" Harris Award for Constructive Dissent** by a Foreign Service specialist was presented to **Steven May**, a special agent with the Diplomatic Security Service who fought to improve the department's policies on the implementation of Inter-

national Megan's Law and better protect children around the world from the threat of sexual exploitation.

In his acceptance remarks, Mr. May urged the Foreign Service community to continue to press for action on this issue: "I ask that all of you keep talking about this. We have an obligation to protect children, if feasible; it is the right thing to do. Join me in making our voices heard about what our priorities are. How many thousands of children could we have saved from horrific experiences if we had acted on this five years ago?"

The **W. Averell Harriman Award for Constructive Dissent** by an entry-level officer went to **Michael White**, who displayed immense integrity as a first-tour FSO by highlighting the inconsistencies and vulnerabilities within Mission Mexico's TN visa policy and adjudication standards for Canadian and Mexican professionals under the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement.

Mr. White shared his observations on the experience: "If it were not for the winners that have come before me and their inspiring stories and work to create this culture of constructive dissent, I might not have been able to keep going. That is why this recognition is so important, that by standing here today, we might inspire another Foreign Service officer to be bold."

## Exemplary Performance

AFSA offers six awards in recognition of exemplary performance and extraordinary contributions to effectiveness, professionalism, morale, and the advancement of democracy.

The **Avis Bohlen Award** honors the accomplishments of a Foreign Service family member whose relations with the American and foreign communities at post have done the most to advance the interests of the United States.

Ambassador Avis Bohlen presented the award named after her late mother, in whose honor the recognition was established by Ambassador W. Averell Harriman in 1982. Highlighting the award's significance, Amb. Bohlen said: "The contributions of family members are so important to the life of a mission and so often overlooked."

This year, Foreign Service family member **Virginia Carlson** was recognized for her creativity in organizing activities that boosted morale across U.S. Embassy Kingston and for her efforts to give back to the local community by organizing a highly successful book drive for Jamaican schools and libraries.

The **Nelson B. Delavan Award** is conferred on a Foreign Service office management specialist (OMS) who has made a significant contribution in post or office effectiveness and morale beyond the framework of his or her job responsibilities. The award was presented by Mark



Amb. Charles Rivkin (right) presents Jennifer Davis with the William R. Rivkin Award for constructive dissent at the Oct. 19 awards ceremony.

Delavan Harrop, whose grandmother created the Nelson B. Delavan Foundation in honor of her late husband.

**Denis Rajic** is this year's Delavan recipient for his exceptional problem-solving skills to ensure the welfare and safety of both Americans and local staff during Shanghai's largest COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown since the start of the pandemic.

**Judit Kaczor**, who was pulled from her section to serve as OMS in the front office in Colombo, and also volunteered to assist with Afghanistan evacuation efforts from Doha, was the 2022 runner-up.

The **M. Juanita Guess Award**, presented by Jon Clements in honor of his late

mother, for whom the award is named, recognizes the work of a community liaison office coordinator (CLO) who has demonstrated outstanding leadership, dedication, initiative, or imagination in assisting the families of Americans serving at an overseas post.

**Christine Peterson** received this year's Guess Award for her tireless service to the U.S. Embassy Kabul community and her advocacy for locally employed colleagues in the midst of unprecedented challenges during evacuation.

In her moving acceptance remarks, Ms. Peterson thanked her colleagues from State and USAID for their steadfast support of the mission community. "Their



Dr. Sushma Palmer (right) presents RaeJean Stokes with the Mark Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy at the awards ceremony.

dedication to duty and life continues to inspire me to this day," she said. "A huge thank you to each and every one of them. I am so proud of everything we accomplished and still heartsick for everything we could not."

The **Mark Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy** is open to all Foreign Service members from any of the foreign affairs agencies, especially early- to mid-career level, who promoted American policies focused on advancing democracy, freedom, and governance through bold, exemplary, imaginative, and effective efforts.

The award was presented by Dr. Sushma Palmer in

honor of her late husband, Ambassador Mark Palmer, and his lifelong passion for promoting democracy and human rights.

Two recipients were selected this year: **RaeJean Stokes**, then working as the Belarus desk officer, for her creative diplomatic engagement with that nation's fledgling democracy movement; and **Jacob Surface**, whose tenacious reporting, advocacy, and coalition building as political officer in Baghdad contributed to the success of Iraq's October 2021 federal elections.

"The people of Belarus will no doubt continue their struggle for freedom for years to come," Ms. Stokes said

when receiving her award. "But I know that our support to the political opposition and exiled members of civil society is having an important impact on the country's future, particularly as they work to solve the crisis of Belarus' enablement of Russia's war in Ukraine."

The **AFSA Post Representative of the Year Award** is presented to an exemplary post rep who has demonstrated sustained and successful engagement with AFSA membership at post and post management to advance the strategic priorities of the association.

The 2022 award was presented to **Jeff Osweiler**, in recognition of his successful efforts to secure the COVID-19 booster shot for the mission community in Kingston.

The **AFSA Achievement and Contributions to the Association Award** recognizes an active-duty or retired AFSA member from any of the foreign affairs agencies who has made a significant (nonmonetary) contribution to the association in its role as either a professional association or a labor union.

**Susan Johnson** received this year's award for her service as AFSA president for two terms (2009-2013). During that time, she worked to elevate the importance of professionalism and ethics in the Foreign Service, leaving a lasting mark on both the institution and AFSA.

In accepting the award, Ms. Johnson recounted her lifelong affiliation with the

Foreign Service: "I have experienced the Foreign Service and diplomacy from multiple angles—as a child and family member, as an FSO, as the spouse of a foreign diplomat, and as an 'insider on the outside' through leave without pay and assignments with nongovernmental organizations. This has deepened my appreciation of the value of the Foreign Service as a professional career diplomatic service.

"Today, the times call for more active engagement in institutional stewardship and direct involvement in adapting the FS to meet the opportunities and demands of the 21st century in which effective diplomacy is so needed. The 'voice of the Foreign Service' is more important than ever," she concluded.

Finally, the **AFSA Special Achievement Award** was given to AFSA General Counsel **Sharon Papp** for her innumerable contributions to AFSA, its constituencies, thousands of FS members, and the whole of the Foreign Service community during her 30 years with the association.

In her acceptance remarks, Ms. Papp said that she strives to ensure justice for AFSA members. "When an agency takes an action that is unwarranted or unfair, such as an agency's substantiation of an allegation that is not true or a proposal for discipline that is overly harsh or inconsistent with past disciplinary action, I will do my best to fight it," she said. ■





## 2022: A Year of Engagement and Progress

In the December 2021 *FSJ*, I titled my column “2021: A Year of Unrealized Potential” because of the lack of confirmed high-level department officials. Now that we have in place a Director General of the Foreign Service and an under secretary for management with whom we engage constructively, I would characterize 2022 as a year in which AFSA has been able to achieve progress on a host of issues.

**Foreign Service reform agenda.** For the reasons discussed in my November column, I believe we have a way forward to realize important points of this agenda, which is based in part on the recommendations outlined in “The American Diplomacy Project (ADP)—Phase II.”

AFSA engaged with ADP leaders in 2021 to provide input for this set of blueprints, including sharing our principal reform priorities and the results of our periodic surveys on what matters most to our members.

Now the focus has shifted to Congress to amend the Foreign Service Act and other legislation to incorporate these reforms. AFSA, along with the American Academy of Diplomacy and others, is advocating on Capitol Hill for these changes.

At the same time, AFSA will begin to look at more profound reforms—such as those involving the assignments and evaluation pro-

cesses—which we know our members would like to see addressed.

**New hires.** At events we host for new Foreign Service hires—which have resumed in person at AFSA headquarters—I have heard many express concern about two issues: equity and health benefits.

AFSA was proud that in 2022, with department support, language providing equity for local hires was included, for the first time ever, in the House version of the FY23 State Department Authorization (SDA) bill. The new language would ensure that new hires, regardless of where they are hired, are treated the same.

This language does not appear in the Senate version of the bill, although there is still a chance the House version will be included when the two chambers (hopefully) meet to attach the SDA to a larger legislative vehicle, the FY23 National Defense Authorization Act.

In 2022, AFSA also pushed the State Department to advocate with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to make health benefits available immediately for new hires, rather than four to six weeks after they are hired.

We learned in October that OPM has agreed to change this practice, which has apparently existed since the 1960s, and that no

legislation is required. The not-so-good news is that OPM estimates it will take 18 months for the change to go into effect. The department has told us that it will urge OPM to shorten this timeframe.

**Bullying and toxic work environments.** We know from AFSA surveys that eliminating bullying in the workplace is a top priority for members. In the past year, and at AFSA's prodding, department leaders have begun to address this insidious issue. As of this writing, AFSA understands that new Foreign Affairs Manual regulations on bullying are being drafted and should be disseminated by the end of the year.

AFSA has also learned that a new office, appropriately staffed and resourced, will be established in the Bureau of Global Talent Management (GTM) that deals specifically with bullying behavior and toxic work environments. (It will also be firewalled from other GTM offices, particularly those with disciplinary responsibility, and will have its own deputy assistant secretary.)

For this office to be fully effective, it must compel both sides of a workplace conflict to engage, and it must have investigatory authority. Only in this way can we begin to change a workplace culture that has often turned a blind eye to toxic behavior.

**Anomalous health incidents (AHIs).** In June the department published its interim rule in the Federal Register implementing the HAVANA Act, which provides benefits to those who have experienced AHIs and suffered traumatic brain injuries.

AFSA noticed that the rule was too narrow and would have excluded most claimants, because it relied on diagnoses and treatment only from doctors with an obscure accreditation. We raised this issue immediately with department officials and submitted our concerns during the comment period. As a result, the department expanded the terms of the requirement to include doctors who have diagnosed and treated AHI patients in State Department–recommended facilities.

As of late October, AFSA is aware of several claims that have already been approved for payment and has asked for statistics on how claims have been processed. This is good news, but more needs to be done, including pushing back the date of eligibility and making the claims process easier and more transparent.

Please let us know what you think of these issues at [member@afsa.org](mailto:member@afsa.org). Thanks for being an AFSA member, and happy holidays! ■



## Getting This Reorg Right

Over the past months, USAID colleagues and stakeholders have shared with me their comments, concerns, and critiques on (another) agency reorganization.

Their thoughts include:

(1) What, *another* one?!; (2) Well, we all know the Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation (DDI) is too big; (3) When can I just focus on my job?; (4) Do they understand that reorganizing is, in fact, a burden?; and (5) Sigh, OK.

Please reach out to me with your own thoughts, suggestions, and concerns.

Reorganization can yield improvements, to be sure. As FS development practitioners, we are used to change—in fact, we are often change agents. We recognize the possibility of strengthening the agency, improving operations, and addressing challenges; we want a more effective USAID.

But reorganizations should be entered into thoughtfully, based on data, consultations, objective assessments, and long-term strategic planning. Their planning, implementation, and consequences (intended and otherwise!) distract employees and can disrupt operations long after administrations change.

I hope the agency will pause, reflect, and address the following areas.

**Modeling Transparency and Two-Way Communication.** The previous administration's "transformation" was

the largest agency reorganization in 30-plus years. After a rocky start, the agency embarked on a robust communications, consultations, and outreach campaign: A dedicated secretariat published "business principles" guiding the process, and filled webpages with congressional notifications, vision and functional statements for new bureaus, fact sheets, timelines, milestones, updates, etc.

Some may feel there was too much material generated; change-management is a tricky balancing act. But I appreciated the efforts of so many colleagues.

Unfortunately, current efforts have not yet generated much transparency or two-way dialogue; just corridor chatter, bureau-level briefings, and a couple of "insider" articles in the development media.

The agency needs to increase communications, transparency, and active listening in the spirit called for by President Joe Biden in his "Memorandum on Revitalizing America's Foreign Policy and National Security Workforce, Institutions, and Partnerships." He says: "The revitalization of our national security and foreign policy workforce requires a recommitment to the highest standards of transparency."

**Building the Capacity for Strategic Workforce Planning & Budget Unity.** Astoundingly, neither the

previous nor current efforts directly address strategic workforce planning and its budgetary implications.

As recently as May 2022, the inspector general (IG) observed: "For nearly 30 years, USAID has worked to improve the efficiency and efficacy of its strategic workforce planning, yet despite these attempts, human capital management has remained one of the Agency's top challenges." That's half of USAID's 60 years!

Part of the challenge is that the Office of Human Capital and Talent Management (HCTM) does not manage the majority of decisions related to program-funded personal services contractor (PSC) and institutional support contractor (ISC) positions—which the IG puts at some 3,540 individuals, or 29 percent of USAID's workforce.

Current reorganization plans do not appear to unify the program and operating expense budgets or create any entity with the capacity, authority, and resources to resolve this 30-year-old problem.

Kicking it down the road is not advisable; the current reorganization should be centered around the workforce and address this issue head-on, in the spirit of President Biden's commitment to "protect, empower, and rebuild the career Federal workforce."

**Reforming and Empowering HCTM.** I regularly engage with the fantastic and dedicated professionals in HCTM. Unfortunately, the

office lacks the resources and authorities to manage USAID's entire workforce; and HCTM colleagues are regularly overworked (and underappreciated) while pulled in conflicting directions.

The statutory chief human capital officer (CHCO) role has been further weakened—and politicized—by the creation of an appointed HCTM Assistant to the Administrator. Meanwhile, USAID has recently advertised for a CHCO and deputy CHCO—emblematic of ongoing organizational challenges.

No one would deny the urgent need for major HCTM investment and reform, and agency leadership should put HCTM front and center in reorganization and reform efforts.

### Now or Probably Never.

This is a unique window for the agency to apply the president's call for "the highest standards of transparency" to workforce concerns, the operating expenses—program budget divide, the urgent care needed for HCTM, and revitalization of USAID to be a Foreign Service agency. The president has not only opened this window; he is pushing his executive leadership through it!

But if USAID does not use this opportunity, energy, and momentum now, under this president, to at least try and address these well-known systemic flaws, the window will close and may be boarded up for years to come.

We are USAID—we can do this. ■



## The Need to Reauthorize Foreign Affairs Agencies

For the first time in nearly two decades, Congress successfully drafted and passed a comprehensive State Department Authorization Act in 2021. In that authorization, which became law last December, AFSA supported crucial personnel provisions that both boosted morale and improved the lives of members of the Foreign Service.

One such provision, included in the bill, mandated that assignment restriction appeals be resolved within 60 days.

Among other things, authorization bills for U.S. government agencies provide a legislative vehicle for smaller provisions, which have a much lower chance of becoming law as stand-alone bills. For example, the Department of State Student Internship Program Act continues to be included in State Department authorization bills. Rarely do we see short, small bills like this one considered in the full Senate by themselves.

However, last year's State Department authorization bill was also attached to a larger initiative for final passage. The behemoth bill known as the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) served as a legislative vehicle for the State Department Authorization Act, a pattern expected to continue if the authorization is to become law.

The hope is that with

more frequent authorizations signed into law, these bills can be considered by Congress individually and not need larger legislative vehicles like the NDAA to keep them alive.

Rather than wait another 20 years, Congress has demonstrated its desire to pass another State Department Authorization Act this year. Both House and Senate have introduced their own versions of a 2022 State Department Authorization Act. There are some overlapping provisions, but the bills do differ. It is a good sign to see each chamber produce its own bill with the hope that they will strive to reconcile the differences between the two versions.

Congressional jurisdiction remains a challenge—the State Department, USAID, and the U.S. Agency for Global Media all fall under the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Subcommittee (SFOPS) for their appropriations, while the remaining foreign affairs agencies fall under other subcommittees.

With authorizers and appropriators coordinating often, implementation of authorized provisions that require funding and affect the agencies *not* under the jurisdiction of SFOPS appropriations can be a source of confusion. Thus, provisions affecting the entire Foreign Service need to ensure there

**One of AFSA's advocacy priorities is to achieve Foreign Service parity with other federal government employees, especially the military, and seeing our authorization bills treated as equally important by Congress would be a step in the right direction.**

is enough funding from other appropriations—Commerce and Agriculture—for implementation.

Further, recent State Department Authorization Acts do not yet incorporate some of the key features of true authorization bills, such as providing a topline spending number for agencies, as the NDAA does for the various agencies of the Defense Department.

One of AFSA's advocacy priorities is to achieve Foreign Service parity with other federal government employees, especially the military, and seeing our authorization bills treated as equally important by Congress would be a step in the right direction.

Most of the provisions contained in the proposed State Department Authorization Acts do not have large price tags. Addressing specific spending amounts with congressional directives is the next step authorizers should take to create meaningful reform at foreign affairs agencies.

Authorizers should also consider regular authorizations for the other foreign

affairs agencies, not just the State Department. Although AFSA always advocates for provisions in the present State Department Authorization Act to include all members of the Foreign Service when appropriate, the smaller agencies are often initially overlooked. AFSA continues to educate Congress on the nuances of the various foreign affairs agencies that fall under the Foreign Service Act to prevent such oversights in the future.

Congress has frequently discussed the need to reform the Foreign Service Act of 1980, but only recently has it tackled reauthorizing the largest agency for Foreign Service employees. More regular authorizations could eventually lead to legislation on institutional reform.

AFSA hopes that Congress considers more frequent authorization bills for foreign affairs agencies, as this presents the opportunity to pass meaningful legislation for the Foreign Service. ■



## Diplomats at Work Evacuating Afghanistan

Diplomatic Security Service Special Agent Nico Figueroa was AFSA's guest at a Diplomats at Work event, held virtually on Sept. 22. In a moving interview, he recounted his role in the 2021 Kabul airlift, where he was part of a team that helped to evacuate more than 120,000 people in the largest air evacuation in history.

Figueroa began by describing the work of the Diplomatic Security Service (DSS), which serves as the federal law enforcement arm of the State Department and is present at more than 270 U.S. missions worldwide. DSS protects the integrity of U.S. travel documents, conducts international investigations, and plays a central role in evacuating and closing missions in times of emergency.

As Figueroa put it: "We secure the mission of doing diplomacy. I'm a diplomat first and a DSS agent second, and that differentiates us from other federal law enforcement."

He landed in Kabul at the end of July 2021 to manage the regional security officer (RSO) logistics and budget portfolio. The U.S. military was planning to depart the country on Aug. 31, and the prevailing assumption was that the diplomatic footprint would remain in Kabul for an additional six to 12 months.

But on Thursday, Aug. 12, that timeline was abruptly compressed when the RSO

team was told to evacuate the entire U.S. mission by Sunday.

Figueroa and two DSS colleagues (Supervisory Special Agents Bill Wommack and Tony Ramirez) were sent to Doha to prepare for incoming U.S. embassy staff. "It was complete chaos, and it only got worse," he recalled. He remained in Doha for more than three months, working many jobs in the midst of what came to be a humanitarian crisis and assisting with the establishment of the Afghan Affairs Unit, which continues to operate in Doha as Mission Afghanistan Forward.

The Al Udeid Air Base and As Sayliyah Army Base in Doha were set up to receive and process about 8,000 people. "We ended up with 60,000 to 70,000 people," Figueroa said, "and those numbers overcame our ability to maintain order and humanitarian conditions."

Hangars in Doha that were meant to hold aircraft began sheltering people from the blistering heat—up to 125 degrees Fahrenheit—while limited bathrooms and inadequate food and water supply and air conditioning capacity further contributed to the chaos.

Watching children and the elderly endure these conditions, Figueroa said, "was heartbreaking. As a diplomat, you want to present the best of what the U.S. is, and we couldn't do that because we



Afghan evacuees fill an aircraft hangar in Doha in August, 2021. "These folks had it better than most," Figueroa said. "They had cots."

C/O NICO FIGUEROA

were overwhelmed. I didn't sleep the first three days I was on the ground. [My team] had hotel rooms at the Ritz-Carlton downtown, but I took one look at the bed and thought, 'I can't sleep here,' knowing the conditions people were in. So we went back to work."

Temporary duty (TDY) personnel soon arrived from across the U.S. government agencies to assist with processing evacuees, and others offered their support, as well. "Afghans stayed behind," Figueroa said. "They let their families go ahead, and they insisted on staying to assist with translation and anything they could because they saw the dire need."

In reflecting on the experience, Figueroa said he is a firm believer in not only hoping for the best, but also preparing for the worst in actionable ways—a philosophy he carries with him to new assignments.

Nico Figueroa is currently the assistant RSO at the U.S. embassy in Abuja, Nigeria. Earlier he served Secretary of State Antony Blinken and

former Secretary Michael Pompeo as a member of the Secretary of State's Protective Division and was a special agent at the Los Angeles field office. He joined DSS in 2017.

In May 2022, Figueroa received the State Department's Superior Honor Award for his contributions to the evacuation of Embassy Kabul and to Operation Allies

Refuge in Doha. His military service awards include the Joint Service Commendation Medal, four Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals, Navy Expeditionary Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, and Global War on Terrorism Medal. He holds an M.A. in international relations and conflict resolution from American Military University and a B.A. in communications from the University of Colorado.

Diplomats at Work is a virtual speaker series that tells the stories of the Foreign Service, introducing the work of diplomats to new audiences as part of AFSA's outreach. A recording of this event is available at <https://bit.ly/EvacAfgh>. ■



Diplomatic Security Service Special Agent Nico Figueroa.

## Next Stage

## Building a Digital Brand

How can you best use digital networking tools to leverage your foreign policy expertise into new opportunities after leaving the Foreign Service? To help retirees answer this question, AFSA hosted a Sept. 29 webinar, “Building a Digital Brand in Foreign Affairs and Beyond,” led by co-presenters Dani Charles and Jared Kleinstein.

Charles, a guest lecturer at the State Department’s Job Search/Transition Program, and Kleinstein, a digital branding subject matter expert and founder of both Fresh Tape Media and Gondola, presented an overview of web platforms and best practices for establishing a personal brand in today’s digital environment.

Kleinstein explained that digital branding allows users to advance their professional goals using tools that, once mastered, can be fun rather than daunting. He pointed out that using social media has become standard practice for those seeking new opportunities: “If you’re not doing it, you’re setting yourself back among your peers.”

Charles added that everyone has a brand of expertise, and digital tools provide a platform for a visible extension of that identity and know-how. “Digital branding is about positioning yourself and your expertise so others know that you’re the person they should go to on a par-

ticular topic,” he said. “That’s especially relevant for this audience, because we have a lot of experts here.”

He advised foreign affairs practitioners to consult classification guidelines before selecting content to share publicly. When it comes to content that falls outside clear-cut regulations, Charles offered this rule of thumb: “If you hesitate when asking yourself, ‘Should I post this?’ then the answer should typically be no.”

**Digital branding is about positioning yourself and your expertise so others know that you’re the person they should go to on a particular topic.**

podcasts (an increasingly popular medium for sharing episodic audio content).

Using case studies, analytics, and personal experience, they offered best practices for maximizing each tool and developing a distinct voice across all platforms. For example, Kleinstein empha-

ment, which, in turn, can lead to more opportunities.

Charles reminded the audience that using a high-resolution, well-posed headshot as a profile photo projects a professional image. He also emphasized that each platform operates differently, and not all content is well suited for all platforms. “They have different modus operandi; don’t treat them all the same,” he advised.

A Q&A session followed the presentation. In response to an audience member’s question about how to convey multiple areas of expertise stemming from a long Foreign Service career, Charles suggested maintaining a brand identity that combines multiple areas of know-how.

“You want to be able to comment on topics and add value without siloing yourself into one particular area,” he said. “Try to keep it as broad as possible so you’re not restricted to individual topics; you have a broader expertise.”

This webinar is the fifth in AFSA’s “Next Stage” series of programs, which are designed for those considering their transition plans post-Foreign Service. See the complete presentation at <https://bit.ly/DigitalBrandFA>. ■



In a virtual presentation on Sept. 29, Dani Charles and Jared Kleinstein reviewed digital tools and platforms for users seeking to position themselves as foreign affairs subject matter experts.

The presenters provided brief overviews of today’s most relevant social media platforms for showcasing topical expertise and curating a digital brand: Twitter (for opinion-based microblogging and social networking), LinkedIn (for professional networking, career development, and job seeking), Substack (for publishing newsletters), and

sized the importance of getting acquainted with each platform and engaging with other subject matter experts before publishing content.

When users are ready to begin posting, he said, they should keep in mind that the best content provides a unique perspective that adds value to the conversation. This enables users to grow their audience and engage-

## AFSA Welcomes Incoming Classes

At a series of recruitment lunches in September and October, AFSA met with the Foreign Service's newest hires to introduce them to the benefits of association membership.

To welcome the FS Orientation 166-212 class, a large group numbering almost 200 generalists and specialists, AFSA hosted three lunches at its headquarters.

The class is made up of 16 Pickering Fellows, two Rangel Fellows, nine former Consular Fellows, eight Foreign Affairs IT (FAIT) Fellows, one Fulbright Fellow, one American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Science & Technology Policy Fellow, and one English

Language Fellow. Forty-three class members are Diplomatic Security special agents, and 16 are information management specialists.

More than one quarter of the class has previous State Department experience as employees, contractors, or eligible family members (EFM), and more than half have previous U.S. government experience gained outside the department.

Class members speak the "big six" languages of the United Nations as well as Albanian, Amharic, Armenian, Bulgarian, Cantonese, Czech, Dari, German, Greek, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Malay, Mongolian,



AFSA's USAID Vice President Jason Singer (front right) answers questions from members of the USAID C3-33 class over lunch on Oct. 27.

Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Serbo-Croatian, Swahili, Swedish, Tamil, Tajiki, Turkish, Ukrainian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese. Members also have proficiency in Bambara, Fulani, Malinké, Quechua, Uyghur, Wolof, and Zulu.

On Oct. 27, AFSA was pleased to meet with new officers from the USAID C3-33 class in the first in-person recruitment event with the agency in more than two years.

The class is made up of 21 officers across nine different specialties, or backstops. Eight have previous USAID experience, and 11 join the agency with a professional background in nonprofits and humanitarian organizations. In total, they speak 16 different languages and have worked and studied in 64 countries.

Finally, the 22nd class of limited noncareer appointment (LNA) hires met with

AFSA leadership on Oct. 31. Of the group's 57 members, 37 are Consular fellows, 16 are Civil Service LNAs, and six are Appointment EFM.

The class includes 25 former State Department employees, contractors, EFMs, and interns or fellows, and an additional 13 have prior U.S. government experience outside of the State Department. Some have worked for the Peace Corps, in counterintelligence, and as refugee resettlement coordinators.

AFSA is continuing to welcome incoming classes at in-person lunches in Washington, D.C.

For any new employees who have not had a chance to sign up for AFSA membership, please join us! Write to [member@afsa.org](mailto:member@afsa.org) for more on how to become a member. ■



### AFSA Governing Board Meeting, October 19, 2022

The board met in person at AFSA headquarters.

**Awards:** At the recommendation of the Awards and Plaques Committee, the Governing Board approved the selection of nine individuals to receive AFSA's 2022 Matilda W. Sinclair Language Award for outstanding success in learning a Category III or IV language.

**Associate Member:** The board approved the application of one new associate member.

**AFSA Memorial Plaque:** The board approved the addition of one name to the virtual memorial plaque on AFSA's website (<https://afsa.org/virtual-afsa-memorial-plaque>).

**Support for Podcast:** The Governing Board voted to continue to support the American Diplomat podcast. ■



## Diplomats Engage Road Scholars in D.C. and NYC

As AFSA celebrates its 26th year of collaboration with the Road Scholar lifelong learning organization (formerly known as Elderhostel), the association led two programs to educate participants about the work of the Foreign Service.

On Sept. 11-15, five AFSA members gave presentations at “Inside American Diplomacy: Stories of the U.S. Foreign Service,” a collaboration with Road Scholar designed to provide an introduction to the work of the Foreign Service.

This third program of the year, held in Washington, D.C., was well received by its 36 participants. In addition to lectures from AFSA’s subject matter experts, the program took participants to the U.S. Institute of Peace, the Foreign Service Institute, and the DACOR Bacon House.

Participants said the program helped them gain a greater understanding of the

Foreign Service. One participant noted that he was “so impressed by the professionalism and the deep expertise of our FSO speakers, and I feel much better about our government.”

Now on pause through the winter, the “Inside American Diplomacy” program will resume in March 2023.

On Sept. 25-29, AFSA President Eric Rubin and five other AFSA members (shown at right) visited Chautauqua, New York, to lead adult students through AFSA’s long-standing program offering, “Foreign Policy in Chautauqua with the American Foreign Service.”

The presentations drew on the diplomatic careers of Ambassadors Rubin, James Zumwalt, and Jimmy Kolker, retired USAID FSO James Bever, retired State Department FSO Mark Fitzpatrick, and AFSA Governing Board Retiree Representative and

retired Foreign Agricultural Service FSO Philip Shull.

More than 130 participants attended from all over the country for lively engagement with the speakers. During 10 lectures across five days, they covered topics including: NATO and Ukraine, Iran as a nuclear threat, global health diplomacy, how advances in agricultural science help feed the world, U.S.-Japan relations, how embassies respond to major crises, national security strategy, and the impact of foreign aid.

The next Road Scholar program in Chautauqua will be held in June 2023. It continues to be a highly successful outreach and constituency-creating vehicle. For more on AFSA’s programs and course offerings through Road Scholar, see [www.afsa.org/road-scholar](http://www.afsa.org/road-scholar). ■



AFSA/NADIA RUIZ/CA

AFSA members traveled to Chautauqua, New York, to present U.S. foreign policy topics to the Road Scholar program Sept. 25-29.

## New Executive Assistant Joins AFSA

AFSA is pleased to welcome Maria Benincasa as the new executive assistant to AFSA President Eric Rubin.

While studying international affairs at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Va., Maria developed an interest in economic development and human rights. During her sophomore year, she worked as an advocacy intern for The

Borgen Project, a nonprofit organization that lobbies for global anti-poverty legislation, and stayed with them subsequently as a regional director.

She also served on the executive board of Delta Phi Epsilon, a professional fraternity for students engaged in international affairs, where she learned about and became more deeply

interested in the U.S. Foreign Service.

During her senior year, Maria joined the American Academy of Diplomacy as a program intern, working closely with Ambassador Ronald Neumann and several other distinguished academy members. She received her bachelor’s degree from James Madison University in May 2022.



Maria Benincasa.

Originally from Fairfax, Va., Maria is now a Washington, D.C., local. She has two cats named Gibbs and Scar. ■

## AFSA Honored for Excellence in Diplomacy

At an awards ceremony on Oct. 20, the Diplomacy Center Foundation (DCF) recognized AFSA's work in support of American diplomacy and presented AFSA President Eric Rubin with the 2022 Excellence in Diplomacy award.

During the event, which took place at DACOR Bacon House, DCF President Ambassador Roman Popadiuk thanked the association for its service to the foreign affairs agencies it represents.

"Throughout the decades, AFSA has represented our foreign affairs community

and supported their work both abroad and at home," he said. "AFSA has also been at the forefront in educating the public about the importance of American diplomacy in furthering our nation's security and economic prosperity. Tonight's event is aimed at bringing to public attention the dedicated work of AFSA and highlighting the importance of careers in diplomacy."

Foreign Service Director General and Director of Global Talent Marcia Bernicat also offered remarks and thanked Ambassador Rubin for his leadership.



DCF President Roman Popadiuk (left), AFSA President Eric Rubin, and DACOR President James Dandridge II pose at the Oct. 20 awards ceremony.

DIPLOMACY CENTER FOUNDATION

The Diplomacy Center Foundation, which partnered with the State Department in building the National Museum of American Diplo-

macy, launched this award in 2019 to honor an individual or group with distinguished service to American diplomacy. ■

## Thank You, Ambassador Sullivan!

AFSA extends its sincere gratitude to John Sullivan as he retires from public service after serving under five American presidents, including as Deputy Secretary of State from 2017 to 2019 and then as ambassador to the Russian Federation from 2020 to 2022. In this role, he managed the U.S. mission through its most difficult period in decades.

Senior FSO Bart Gorman, former deputy chief of mission in Moscow, highlighted Ambassador Sullivan's steady guidance in the face of historic challenges: "We endured recurring adversity—

COVID-19 lockdowns, the forced termination of all local staff, waves of large-scale expulsions, a diplomatic visa war, a compound in increasing disrepair, and the invasion of Ukraine—because of the ambassador's unwavering leadership.

"What truly inspired our community was that inside the embassy, Ambassador Sullivan stood on little to no pretense. He was approachable, down-to-earth, and his humor was infectious. His timely use of pop culture quotes made all of us laugh and work even harder. He is among the very few people I call mentor and

friend. All of us who served at Embassy Moscow and Mission Russia for the past three years consider ourselves fortunate to have had Ambassador Sullivan as our leader."

AFSA President Ambassador Eric Rubin hailed Amb. Sullivan's staunch support of career employees and the Foreign Service: "During his time as Deputy Secretary of State as well as his tenure as U.S. ambassador to Russia, John Sullivan went to bat to defend our colleagues on multiple occasions. His patriotism and support for our career federal employees deserve our deepest respect and appreciation."



John Sullivan.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

In November, John Sullivan became a distinguished fellow at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, affiliated with the Center for Eurasian, Russian, and East European Studies. ■

## AFSA Connects with Job Search/Transition Program Participants

On Oct. 12, AFSA President Eric Rubin, Retiree Vice President John Naland, and Counselor for Retirees Dolores Brown joined FSI's Job Search/Transition Program virtually to discuss what the association can offer Foreign Service members as they transition into the next phase of their personal and professional lives.

After congratulating the class and thanking them for their years of service, Ambassador Rubin highlighted 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 on critical issues. They'll also stay abreast of the diplomacy and development matters in which they've invested their careers.

Naland reminded the class that a wealth of retirement-related resources can be found on the Retirement Services page of the AFSA website at <https://afsa.org/retirement-services>.

Switching from active-duty to retiree membership is not an automatic process; those approaching retirement should contact Member Ser-

**By remaining a part of AFSA, members stay connected to their unique community, support the association's advocacy work, and ensure that their voices are heard on critical issues.**

vices ([member@afsa.org](mailto:member@afsa.org)) to let AFSA know of their retirement and to secure all the benefits of being an AFSA member.

The October 2022 JSTP class consisted of 84 participants: 88 percent from the State Department, 7 percent from USAID, 4 percent from the Foreign Commercial Service, and 1 percent from the Foreign Agricultural Service.

The majority of those enrolled hailed from the Foreign Service, with 11 percent from the Civil Service. ■

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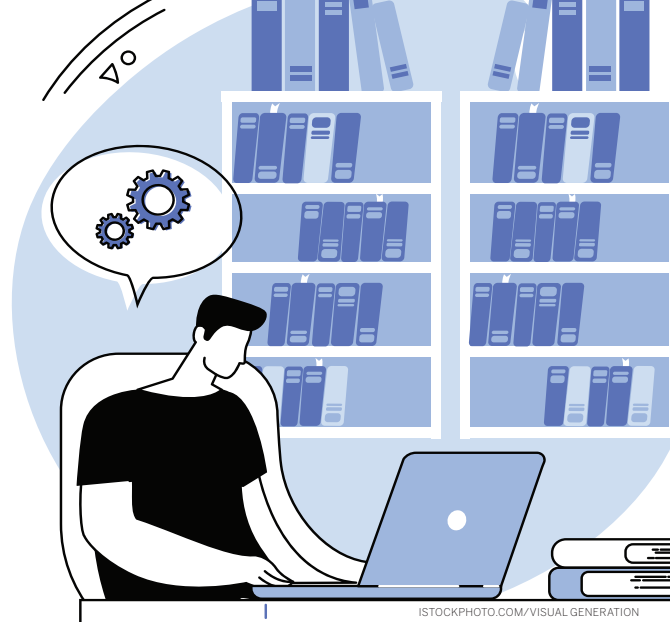
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# Transition to College

## Supporting Third Culture Kids' Mental Health

**A cosmopolitan perspective and resilience notwithstanding, Foreign Service young people face challenges that can be daunting in the transition to college.**

BY MEGAN NORTON



**S**arah, the daughter of a Foreign Service officer, attended international schools her entire upbringing and returned to her passport country—the United States—for university studies. During her first residence hall fire drill, she dropped to take cover for what she thought was an air raid warning. Her roommate laughed and dragged her outside. She experienced similar confusion later when her professor marked her down for turning in an assignment a little past midnight on the due date. She had lost track of time talking to a friend in a different time zone, halfway across the world.

Sarah continued to have cultural mishaps and felt out of place, even though she used to pride herself on her adaptability. Misunderstood by peers and sometimes professors, she began to lose her sense of belonging and purpose for being in college. She needed support.

Many factors can contribute to anxiety, depression, stress, and related mental health issues among students during their freshman year of college. From managing new academic

workloads to socializing in different student clubs and organizations, and from pulling all-nighters to handling their personal finances, students should be equipped to know how to approach these life changes and responsibilities *before* they step foot on campus.

For third culture kids (TCKs) like Sarah, returning to their passport country (or “home” country) for college, the transition can be even more complex than for their peers who are moving to campus from another county or state. It is useful to look ahead to what expectations and realities a TCK will face freshman year as supplemental challenges may make them particularly susceptible to mental health issues. Prepare your teen for mental health and transition challenges before they enroll.

### Openly Discuss Mental Health with Your Teen

Parents, caregivers, mentors, and counselors all play vital roles in safeguarding teens’ mental health. To connect with your teen on mental health, begin to build trust and safety around the conversation by modeling emotion management. Use descriptive emotion words to describe how you feel in different situations and demonstrate helpful ways to process strong emotions.

One way to value feelings is to acknowledge the truth of a current emotion and then to state what action to take to move through it:

- Even though I feel devastated and I need a do-over with you, we’ll continue to communicate and figure out how to move through this together.



*Megan Norton is a third culture kid (TCK) author, consultant, and researcher focused on supporting cross-cultural individuals. Growing up as a U.S. diplomat dependent, she lived in six countries and has lived in four more as an adult TCK. Megan is the podcast host of A Culture Story, co-founder of a nonprofit for TCKs, and a writer at [www.adulththirdculturekid.com](http://www.adulththirdculturekid.com).*

## Approach the topic of mental health as a conversation rather than a lecture to start a dialogue.

- This is tough for me, and I know that I have people supporting me to help.
- Even though I really feel like I messed up, I know that I can say sorry and ask for forgiveness.

Encourage family members to acknowledge and comfort one another. Allow for all emotions to be expressed in the home. Create safe spaces for this, and also be open to conversation.

Approach the topic of mental health as a conversation rather than a lecture

to start a dialogue about what concerns and stressors are present in your teen's academic, social, and cultural spheres. Model and practice that there is no shame in asking for and seeking help and support.

At home, look for your teen's emotional cues and validate their emotions. It is important for them to feel safe in sharing their feelings about the upcoming life transitions. If your teen minimizes or downplays their emotions in conversa-

tion, give them explicit and consistent invitations and permission to process them in other ways. For example, encourage them to take a run, do a puzzle, or create an art piece to release how they feel about upcoming transitions.

Encourage healthy self-care habits. Help your teen to establish sleep routines, meal management, and consistent physical activity that they enjoy. These life skills can help them to cope with increased stress and freedom while in college.

Remind teens that their stress in transitions won't last forever, and that it is normal to feel anxious about upcoming life transitions. Reinforce the value of practicing self-care routines that make them feel better. Finally, openly discuss the possibility of talking with counselors



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## Recognize TCK Factors in Transition

Some anxiety-provoking situations that may occur in the university transition happen months before the semester starts.

Changes in country, community, and cultural norms can spike anxiety, stress, and depression for TCKs who do not take the time to have closure with people they are connected to and with places they lived. Suggest your teen host and attend farewell parties, write thank-you letters to teachers and other significant community members who have been influential in their lives, and be intentional about revisiting important local landmarks.

Work with your teen to define what will make them feel ready to move on to university.

The first days after arrival on campus bring many moments of transition shock. A TCK can ask to attend pre-university programs designed for international students such as orientation and move-in mixers. At these, your teen can learn about the community and cultural norms as they begin to understand their new environment. Some universities, such as Cornerstone University in Grand Rapids, Michigan, have dedicated orientation sessions for TCK students to process their experiences living and settling into a new country and culture.

When meeting new people, TCKs sometimes struggle to find a succinct way to say where they are from. This can be disorienting for them and also for their new peers at university who want to find connections and commonalities based on location. Keeping in mind cultural context and who is asking the question, it can be helpful for TCKs to have a concise answer like, "I have lived most of my life



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The advertisement features an aerial view of the Christchurch School campus, which includes several large red brick buildings with blue roofs, surrounded by green lawns and trees. A body of water is visible in the background.

abroad; I just moved from [insert country here]" or "I was born in the U.S., but have lived in many countries."

Preparing answers to these simple but complex questions can open the conversation up for additional follow-up questions and can also help create context for non-TCKs to appreciate the complexity of the "where are you from" question. If the conversation continues, third culture kid teens should be ready to ask questions that encourage others to elaborate on their background.

Perhaps the TCKs will have the most "exotic" backgrounds in terms of countries lived, languages spoken, and cultures experienced, but they need to exercise the same level of curiosity and respect for others' stories as well.

TCKs can also intentionally seek out safe spaces. In their article, "Where Are You From? Raising Awareness of Third Culture Students in Higher Education," published on the University of Edinburgh Teaching Matters blog, Dr. Laura Cariola and Tamara Lai suggest that TCKs network with students with similar multicultural experiences who value and appreciate diversity.

Finding a community of others with a similar upbringing can provide space to tell stories and relate without fearing that they are "bragging" or being misunderstood by monocultural peers.

Recommend that your TCK research what student organizations and clubs are active on campus that may focus on multicultural students' experiences and

skills. Universities such as Lewis and Clark in Portland and Texas A&M have social clubs specifically for TCK students. MuKappa International is a network of TCK student clubs at several Christian faith-based institutions. Even though your TCK may not want to be involved with these communities, it's helpful to know that they exist and can provide support.

High school counselors and teen mentors can encourage TCK teens to introduce themselves to their resident advisers, counseling staff, and future roommates before starting the academic semester. These steps will help them develop a community and a practice for reaching out to people who can help when university life seems overwhelming.



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## Research Mental Health Resources at the University

In general, teens can benefit from additional guidance and strategies on how to deal with time management, emotion management, and relationship management at university. Encourage teens to connect with campus resources and organizations before arrival.

On-campus resources can include individual and group counseling services, support groups, and academic accommodations. Seeking treatment outside the university context is also an option. Many university counseling centers are set up to deal primarily with crisis interventions and will direct students to seek private providers after a set number of appointments.

Telehealth services have become more widely used and available since 2020. Insurance and licensing regulations vary, so research what could be the best fit for your teen. Check the *Psychology Today* database and the International Therapist Directory for potential providers. Both have filters to search with to consider place and insurance coverage.

If possible, encourage your rising college student to connect with mental health counseling now that they can continue the relationship on campus. Teach them about medical billing and insurance, two practical skills they'll need once they no longer live at home. Keep in mind that the HIPPA and privacy laws on U.S. campuses prevent the sharing of

both patient information by providers and of updates on student performance by the school.

Encourage your TCK to know how to advocate for themselves and explain their upbringing as it relates to their mental health. Most providers will have no knowledge of this kind of life, so your TCK should be prepared to share information about their background.

Sometimes TCKs are misdiagnosed with multiple personality disorder or depression because therapists aren't aware of the challenges in cultural adaptation, identity formation, and sense of belonging in transition. *Belonging Everywhere and Nowhere*, by Lois Bushong, is a good resource for them.

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## Mental Health Lifelines

In case of emergencies when university students may feel overwhelmed, unsafe, or capable of harming themselves or others, many campuses post widely about a national suicide prevention hotline that they can text 988 or call (800) 273-8255. For other mental health resources, visit Mental Health America, Life on Campus (<https://bit.ly/LifeonCampus-MHA>), and National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI), Mental Health in College (<https://bit.ly/College-NAMI>).

## Establish and Agree on Action Plans

Ask your teen about their worries for college and that transition. Brainstorm an approach plan together about how to deal with the anxieties college life can cause.

One of the most intimidating parts of the college transition for TCKs is the need to build a new support system. Help your teen to identify and connect with safe adults they can turn to—either on campus or nearby. If there is a weather emergency that requires campus evacuation or a reason for residence hall closures, your teen will have a person to call and stay with in the local community.

Further, it's important to discuss where your teen will go during semester holiday breaks such as Thanksgiving break or spring break, especially if



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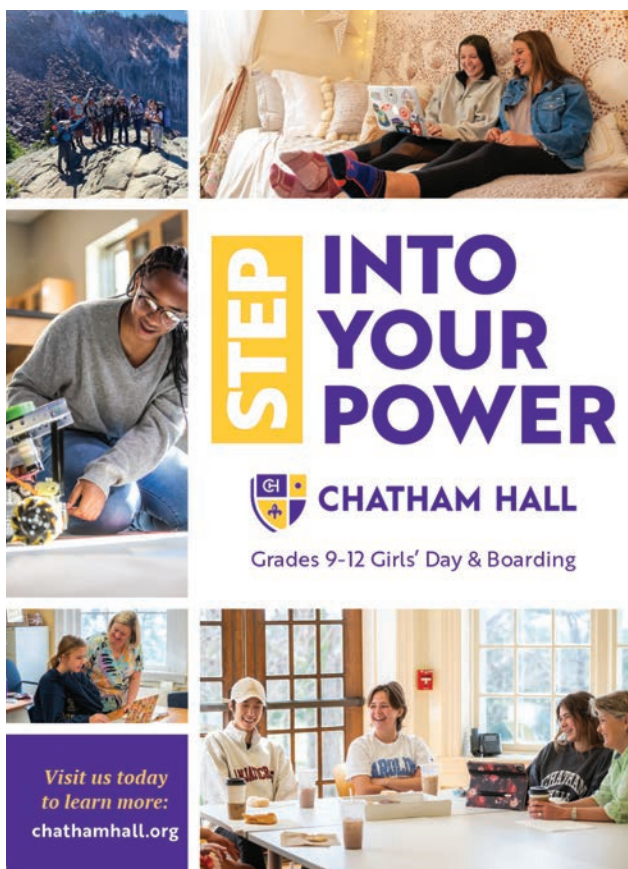
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residence halls are closed. Having an initial travel plan will ease anxiety about finding a friend to host them, especially in the first year.

Having emergency contact information is also needed. Agree on whether you can contact their roommate or friend if you haven't heard from them and are worried. Provide emergency contact information to your teen if they can't get hold of you at your current post.

Your teen is one of many who will face new challenges completely on their own in college. Many secondary international schools already have fantastic programs in place to support the socioemotional TCK transition realities.

## Organizations for Transition Support

If schools are looking to improve their transition support, they can contact several organizations such as Safe Passages Across Networks, Intercultural Transitions, Foreign Service Youth Foundation, and TCK Training that all facilitate workshops and programs among families and students. See also TCK Connect groups: MuKappa International and Interaction International.

Third culture kids have a unique background of cultural adaptation, resilience, resourcefulness, flexibility, and creativity that should make them particularly adept at "adulthood" when heading off to college. Usually, TCKs have had a range of experiences that make them mature, articulate, and poised, traits that help other adults feel like TCKs have it under control.

Of course, this worldly perspective and perceived maturity can also mask the mental health challenges that are occurring in a TCK's transition process. Ensure that your teen knows where and how to reach out for help when they feel overwhelmed. ■

*For resources on supporting TCKs' transition to college, see page 88.*

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## Resources

### Articles

- "Adulthood While Transitioning: TCKs Alone at University," Megan Norton (<https://bit.ly/Adulthood-Norton>)
- "Anxiety in College: What We Know and How to Cope," Nicole J. LeBlanc and Luana Marques (<https://bit.ly/AnxietyCollege>)
- "How to ease the transition to college when mental health is a concern," Fran Kritz (<https://wapo.st/3SFul64>)
- "Overwhelmed? Steps to unwind and find your way through," Brianna White (<https://bit.ly/Overwhelmed-White>)
- "What About Our Kids?," Kim Deblauw (January-February 2016 FSJ, <https://bit.ly/Kids-Deblauw>)
- "Where are you from? Raising awareness of Third Culture Students in Higher Education," Laura Cariola and Tamara Lai (<https://bit.ly/Whereareyoufrom-Cariola>)

### Books

- *Belonging Beyond Borders*, Megan Norton (2022)
- *Belonging Everywhere and Nowhere: Insights into Counseling the Globally Mobile*, Lois Bushong (2013)
- *Raising Global Teens: A Practical Handbook for Parenting in the 21st Century*, Anisha Abraham (2020)
- *Safe Passages: How mobility affects people & what international schools should do about it*, Douglas W. Ota (2021)
- *The Global Nomad's Guide to University Transition, 2nd Edition*, Tina L. Quick (2022)

### Course

- Foreign Service Institute—Encouraging Resilience in the Foreign Service Child (MQ500)

### Therapy and Coaching\*

Here are some of the TCK therapists and coaches we know of who have worked with FS kids:

- Aleka Bilen Consulting
- Brianna White, Intrepid Counseling, LLC
- Eleni Vardaki
- Jamey Lewis, Courage Life Coaching
- KC360 Admissions Academy
- Lauren Steed, Nomad Educational Services
- Megan Norton (author), Intercultural Transitions
- Michael Pollock, Daraja
- Rachel Cason, Life Story Therapies
- Sa-Eun Park, The Asian Alien

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School	Page Number	Enrollment	Gender Distribution M/F	Percent Boarding	Percent Int'l.	Levels Offered	AP/IB*	TABS common application	Accept ADD/LD**	Miles to Int'l. Airport	International Students Orientation	Holiday Break Coverage***	Annual Tuition, Room & Board (US \$)
■ ELEMENTARY													
Concord Hill School	82	106	57/43	NA	22	PK-3	N	N	Limited	8	N	N	18,250-32,750
■ ELEMENTARY/JUNIOR/SENIOR HIGH													
Fairfax Christian School	95	330	50/50	15	20	PK-12	AP	N	Limited	3	Y	Y	60,100-68,150 <sup>abdeg</sup>
Jakarta Intercultural School	91	2074	48/52	NA	76	PK-12	AP/IB	N/A	Limited	19.6	Y	NA	17,000-46,000 <sup>c</sup>
Rochambeau French International School	97	1160	45/55	NA	30	PK-12	AP/IB	N	Limited	15	Y	Limited	23,640-28,580 <sup>b</sup>
■ JUNIOR HIGH/SENIOR HIGH													
Chaminade College Preparatory School	87	825	All Male	15	6	6-12	AP	N	Limited	8	Y	Limited	49,000 <sup>bdef</sup>
New England Innovation Academy	96	75	60/40	24	NA	6-12	NA	N	Y	35	Y	Y	44,625 <sup>bdef</sup>
Orme School, The	89	120	50/50	100	50	8-12, PG	AP	Y	Y	60	Y	Limited	49,500
Thomas Jefferson School	95	81	58/42	31	23	7-12	Y	Y	Y	14	Y	N	62,600 <sup>b</sup>
■ SENIOR HIGH													
Besant Hill School of Happy Valley	94	100	50/50	90	30	9-12, PG	AP	Y	Y	90	Y	N	61,215-68,000 <sup>bde</sup>
Chatham Hall	85	118	All Girls	92	29	9-12	NA	N	Y	75	N	Limited	61,425 <sup>defg</sup>
Christchurch School	79	230	60/40	70	25	9-12	AP	Y	Y	50	Y	Y	57,200 <sup>d</sup>
EF Academy New York	80	350	45/55	98	95	9-12	IB	N	Y	40.5	Y	N	42,000-66,500 <sup>a</sup>
EF Academy Pasadena	80	150	40/60	75	75	9-11	AP	N	Limited	32	Y	N	42,000-69,500
Fountain Valley School	95	245	50/50	70	32	9-12	AP	Y	Limited	60	Y	Limited	68,000 <sup>b</sup>
Marvelwood School	84	120	50/50	80	15	9-12	AP/IB	N	Y	55	Y	Limited	62,000 <sup>abce</sup>
Miss Hall's School	IFC	180	All Girls	73	40	9-12, PG	AP	Y	Y	136	y	N	66,400 <sup>abde</sup>
Oak Hill Academy	81	140	60/40	100	10	8-12	AP	Y	Y	90	Y	N	36,900 <sup>ab</sup>
Peddie School, The	81	530	50/50	61	20	9-PG	AP	Y	NA	35	Y	Limited	67,900 <sup>def</sup>
St. Mark's School	83	380	52/48	75	27	9-12	NA	Y	NA	29	NA	Limited	69,690 <sup>bf</sup>
St. Timothy's School	85	175	All Girls	70	36	9-12, PG	IB	Y	Limited	20	Y	Limited	36,500-64,400 <sup>bde</sup>
■ OVERSEAS													
American Overseas School Rome	79	575	50/50	NA	70	PK-12	AP/IB	N	Y	20	Y	Y	11,800-28,000 <sup>bc</sup>
Berlin Brandenburg International School	88	720	50/50	10	70	K-12	IB	N	Y	22	Y	N	48,000 <sup>c</sup>
Carlucci American International School of Lisbon	86	689	48/52	NA	78	PK-12	IB	N	Limited	18	Y	N	10,490-22,232 <sup>abc</sup>

\*Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate \*\*Attention Deficit Disorder/Learning Disabilities \*\*\*Dec. 25-Jan. 1 NA, Not applicable  
 IBC, Inside Back Cover <sup>a</sup>Sibling discount <sup>b</sup>Financial aid available <sup>c</sup>Dollar value subject to exchange rate  
<sup>d</sup>Aid for federal employees <sup>e</sup>Gap year <sup>f</sup>Need-blind admissions; will meet full financial need <sup>g</sup>Host families



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School	Page Number	Enrollment	Gender Distribution M/F	Percent Boarding	Percent Int'l.	Levels Offered	AP/IB*	TABS common application	Accept ADD/LD**	Miles to Int'l. Airport	International Students Orientation	Holiday Break Coverage***	Annual Tuition, Room & Board (US \$)
■ OVERSEAS (CONTINUED)													
Frankfurt International School	97	1800	50/50	NA	80	K-12	IB	N	Limited	12	Y	N	11,744-29,608 <sup>bc</sup>
Leysin American School in Switzerland	87	300	50/50	100	85	7-12, PG	AP/IB	N	Limited	75	Y	N	109,000 <sup>abd</sup>
Ridley College	89	764	55/45	49	29	K-12, PG	IB	N	Y	41	Y	Y	55,564 <sup>abdef</sup>
St. Stephen's School - Rome	91	300	47/53	20	64	9-12, PG	IB	N	N	12	Y	N	46,180 <sup>b</sup>
TASIS The American School in England	85	630	50/50	30	41	PrePK-12	AP/IB	N	Limited	8	Y	N	68,000 <sup>bcd</sup>
■ SPECIAL NEEDS													
Alpine Academy Therapeutic Schools	78	90	20/70	100	5	7-12	NA	N	Y	20	N	Y	162,000 <sup>f</sup>
Gow School, The	89	125	80/20	95	10	6-12, PG	NA	N	Y	25	N	Limited	77,500 <sup>b</sup>
LAB School of Washington, The	76	375	59/41	NA	1	1-12	NA	N	Y	26	Y	N	54,000 <sup>b</sup>
■ DISTANCE LEARNING													
Dwight Global Online School	4	347	43/57	NA	16	6-12	AP/IB	N	Y	NA	Y	NA	39,900 <sup>abde</sup>
LAB School of Washington, The	76	375	59/41	NA	1	1-12	NA	N	Y	26	Y	N	54,000 <sup>b</sup>
TTU-K-12 (Texas Tech)	83	2,257	49/51	NA	39	K-12	AP	N	Limited	NA	N	N/A	3,000-4,600
■ OTHER													
AAFSW	97	Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide: Publisher of Raising Kids in the Foreign Service. A volunteer organization that supports Foreign Service employees, spouses, partners and members of household. Visit <a href="http://www.aafsw.org">www.aafsw.org</a> ; FSHub.org.											
DACOR	95	DACOR Bacon House Foundation offers Dreyfus Scholarships to children and grandchildren of FSOs attending Yale or Hotchkiss. Contact <a href="mailto:dacor@dacorbacon.org">dacor@dacorbacon.org</a> or go to <a href="http://www.dacorbacon.org/scholarships_fellowships">www.dacorbacon.org/scholarships_fellowships</a>											
GCLO	89	Global Community Liaison Office: Information and resources for Foreign Service families. Contact <a href="mailto:GCLOAskEducation@state.gov">GCLOAskEducation@state.gov</a> .											
FSYF	97	Foreign Service Youth Foundation: A support network for U.S. Foreign Service youth worldwide. Go to <a href="http://www.fsyf.org">www.fsyf.org</a> .											

\*Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate \*\*Attention Deficit Disorder/Learning Disabilities \*\*\*Dec. 25-Jan. 1 NA, Not applicable  
 IBC, Inside Back Cover <sup>a</sup>Sibling discount <sup>b</sup>Financial aid available <sup>c</sup>Dollar value subject to exchange rate  
<sup>d</sup>Aid for federal employees <sup>e</sup>Gap year <sup>f</sup>Need-blind admissions; will meet full financial need <sup>g</sup>Host families



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# What You Need to Know



## Returning to U.S. Public Schools with Special Education Needs

**Are you returning to the U.S. with a child who has an IEP or 504 Plan? GCLO can help you navigate—and advocate—for the best outcome.**

BY CHARLOTTE LARSEN AND REBECCA MCPHERSON

**R**eturning to the U.S. after being overseas with a child who has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 Plan can be a challenge. Finding the right services and schools to meet the needs of your child will take time to research and understand. As



*Charlotte Larsen has been a Foreign Service family member at six overseas posts over the last 26 years. She joined the Global Community Liaison Office as education and youth program officer in 2020.*

*She served previously as a global employment and a community liaison office coordinator in Asia and Europe. Prior to joining the State Department, she taught in international and Department of Defense schools.*



*Rebecca McPherson has been a Foreign Service family member for eight years, serving both overseas and domestically. She joined the Global Community Liaison Office in January 2020, first as the crisis management and support services specialist and,*

*in September 2021, as the education and youth program specialist. She was a biometrics facilitator and a community liaison office coordinator in Asia and Africa. Prior to joining the State Department, she was in the ministry both in South Africa and New York, and a real estate agent and property manager in Maryland.*

every child is different, many factors will go into this decision process. It is important to research the school districts and programs you are considering and evaluate whether the education they have received overseas will align with the different types of public school systems in the U.S. Starting early, asking questions, and connecting with the right resources will be crucial to making the transition easier.

As a Foreign Service parent, you may face the reality that the IEP or 504 Plan from your children's international school is no longer valid once they come home, nor is any educational assessment completed by an outside provider. If a child receives an IEP/504 from an international school overseas, including a State Department-assisted school, it will not be accepted by a U.S. public school. (For an overview of the differences between an IEP and a 504, see the article at Understood: <https://u.org/3MxanZc>.) The Global Community Liaison Office (GCLO) wants to help you understand how to navigate and advocate for the best outcome for your child in these situations.

### Where do we go for resources?

You may find that each school district in the D.C./Maryland/Virginia (DMV) area has a different process to enroll students with special needs and assign services for the child. Most DMV schools have a parent resource center (PRC) or central registra-



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tion contact that operates under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to ensure that all eligible children receive the services they need.

According to a parent resource manager from Fairfax County Public Schools in Northern Virginia: "The parent resource centers would be a better first point of contact for a family that has a child with special needs, rather than the registrar's office, because we can help them with the appropriate paperwork. Staff in this center can also identify who the family needs to meet with in the school, as well as who can help schedule a registration appointment. This way they are fully prepared when they walk into a registration appointment.

"Parents should also be aware that every state has a federally funded program called the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center [PEATC], which provides support for families of students who have special needs."

Knowing who to contact can save time and can contribute to a successful transition back to the U.S. You can visit the Global Community Liaison Office's (GCLO) Special Needs and the Foreign Service Child web page for PRCs in the DMV school districts and to connect with the PEATCs in the state where you choose to live.

The Office of Overseas Schools resource page and the booklet "Transitioning to and from a Foreign Assignment with a Child with Special Learning Needs" suggest parents establish an electronic portfolio of all the documents a school will require including your child's report cards, records of parent/teacher conferences, the IEP, and current examples of the child's work. Give your child's current teachers and school professionals time to provide a summary or profile letter about your child and their progress through the year.

## Does my child need a new educational evaluation?

You can start communicating with the school in the U.S. as soon as you know you are returning. Starting early allows you to understand the process for the school where you are hoping to enroll your child. Under the U.S. education law and IDEA 2004, an educational evaluation must be performed every three years. The purpose of this "triennial" is to determine if the child still meets IDEA's definition of a child with a disability and what their specific educational needs are. The evaluation must assess every area that relates to the child's disability.

The results are then used to determine both the eligibility for special education and related services, as well as the educational program that is appropriate for the child. If conditions warrant or a parent or teacher requests it, the child could be reevaluated before the triennial period has expired. If parents do not agree with the evaluation, they have the right to request an independent educational evaluation (IEE) and can ask the school system to cover the cost; however, the request is not guaranteed, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

It is important to note the timeline for when the receiving school requires the evaluation to be completed, options for when and where to schedule it, and if a local qualified evaluator is available. It is also important to confirm when the evaluation is expiring, because it may happen while a family is still overseas. Families may want to consider scheduling the testing during rest and recuperation (R&R) or home leave, if possible.

The Bureau of Medical Services (MED)'s Child and Family Program (CFP) encourages families to contact [MEDCFP@state.gov](mailto:MEDCFP@state.gov) before scheduling an assessment and choosing an evaluator.

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CFP specialists can answer questions, discuss concerns, and provide recommendations for services that the schools can consider, as well as confirm whether an evaluator and the assessment meet the qualifications for Special Needs Education Allowance (SNEA) eligibility.

### What about my child's prior IEP/504?

If your child has an IEP/504 from the U.S. public school they previously attended, their eligibility has previously been established, which can help guide the receiving school. Even if the international school's IEP/504 is the most current, parents should share the U.S. public school's previous IEP/504 with the receiving school as early as possible so the school has an idea of what services the child will require. Although the receiving U.S. public school will require retesting to determine the services needed, having previous IEP/504s can help expedite the process.

According to a Fairfax County Public School administrator we spoke with, "Parents are encouraged to collect all documentation regarding evaluations of their child, their special education services, current IEP if available and accommodations, and share with the school. This will help establish the family and school partnership in supporting their child's transition."

Although other schools cannot guarantee this, the FCPS administrator continued, "If we recognize that a student was receiving special education services and accommodations and a new evaluation is not needed, a new IEP will be written within 30 days of the child being enrolled in FCPS. If a new evaluation is needed, we will do our best to provide similar services for the child until the new evaluation is completed."

### What happens if I move to a different state?

When a family decides to transfer schools and move to another state, MED/CFP follows the guidance of the IDEA 2004. It requires that "in the case of a child with a disability who transfers school districts within the same academic year, who enrolls in a new school, and who had an IEP that was in effect in another state, the school district shall provide such child with a free appropriate public education, including services comparable to those described in the previous IEP, in consultation with the child's parents, until such time as the district conducts an evaluation, if determined to be necessary, and develops a new IEP, if appropriate, that is consistent with Federal and State law."

For SNEA requests, MED/CFP will accept an equivalent IEP/504 to allow some flexibility in meeting the needs of the student. Note, in this type of situation, the new state may have different requirements from the state where the original IEP/504 was issued, but it will remain in place until the new evaluation is completed (for more information, see: <https://u.org/3CoiCBS>).

While overseas international schools may be U.S. accredited with U.S.-accredited teachers, they do not operate under the U.S. laws that support IEPs or 504s. To ensure a smooth transition for acquiring special needs services in a U.S. public school, your best option is to start as soon as you know you are returning to the U.S. to understand the process and the timeline.

Armed with this knowledge, and the support of the Department of State, GCLO, MED/CFP, and the Office of Overseas Schools, parents will be in the best position to make informed decisions for their child's transition back to a public school in the U.S. For more information, email [GCLOAskEducation@state.gov](mailto:GCLOAskEducation@state.gov). ■



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## Benghazi's Lingering Effects

### **Benghazi! A New History of the Fiasco That Pushed America and Its World to the Brink**

*Ethan Chorin, 2022, Hachette Books, \$30/hardcover, e-book available, 432 pages.*

REVIEWED BY CHARLES O. CECIL

Anyone with a serious interest in Libya, or anyone looking for examples of how partisan politics has affected our conduct of foreign relations in the current century, will find Ethan Chorin's *Benghazi!* an excellent case study.

This book is not just a recounting of events preceding the tragic deaths of four U.S. officials—including U.S. Ambassador to Libya Christopher Stevens—in Benghazi Sept. 11, 2012, and of the attack itself, but also of the subsequent metamorphosis of the event into a domestic political issue in the U.S. In Chorin's words, "Benghazi" became "shorthand for any kind of event that can be blown up for partisan advantage"—a tool for domestic political warfare.

Chorin is well qualified to undertake this evaluation. He was in Benghazi the night of the attack on the U.S. mission, neither his first nor his last visit to that city.

Already near-fluent in Arabic, he had an earlier two-year assignment as economic-commercial officer at our embassy in Tripoli (2004-2006) that allowed him to acquire an in-depth knowledge of Libya and its political and social environment—knowledge he has cultivated by producing a variety of publications since leaving the Foreign Service.

He has written a very personal account, but in the process has identi-

fied several issues of interest to anyone dealing with our nation's foreign affairs who is concerned with our reputation and influence in the world.

Chorin builds a strong case that the U.S. government failed to understand the interrelationships of various Islamist organizations, in particular the Muslim Brotherhood, the Ansar al-Sharia, and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group.

This, combined with Washington's failure to take seriously Ambassador Chris Stevens' requests for enhanced security in both Tripoli and Benghazi, largely accounts for the lack of prepara-

**Chorin is well qualified to undertake this evaluation. He was in Benghazi the night of the attack on the U.S. mission.**

tion for what happened in Benghazi the night of Sept. 11, 2012.

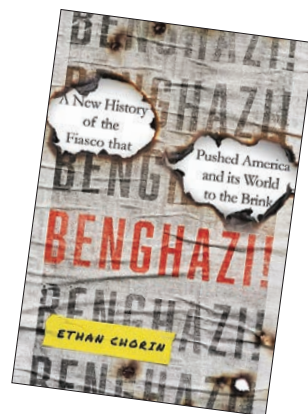
Chorin's account illustrates the value of full language competency (4/4 or better) and why one-year, even two-year assignments rarely result in solid understanding of the cultures and political environments we are tasked to interpret.

The book gives a condensed but sufficient account of the attack itself and its precursors, explaining also the initial incorrect linking of the Benghazi attack with popular demonstrations in other Arab countries (beginning in Cairo on Sept. 11) in protest against an anti-Muslim video that had been posted on YouTube in Arabic on Sept. 4. (There

was no such demonstration in Benghazi; the attack was preplanned. The Obama administration's initial talking points conflated these events.)

Endnotes direct interested readers to the more complete accounts contained in the State Department's Accountability Review Board report and in the reports of multiple House and Senate committees.

The final third of the book deals with the domestic partisan efforts to turn the Benghazi deaths into an attack on the Obama administration and on Hillary Clinton personally as she positioned herself to run for the presidency in 2016.



Ten congressional committees held hearings to review the Benghazi events and their precursors.

Further, partisan media exaggerated and distorted accounts of the attack, insinuating or inventing bad judgments made by responsible officials. Fox News alleged that Clinton and senior Washington officials denied requests for military assistance during the attack (the "stand-down" controversy). Neither the committees nor hearings investigating the Benghazi events found any evidence to support such claims.

In Chorin's words: "Partisanship was reconfiguring American bureaucracies to fight domestic political battles rather

## Until today's partisan divide is somehow overcome, it seems likely that risk aversion will remain the dominant force in our foreign policy.

than protect the United States from its adversaries." The administration's risk aversion produced reluctance to engage in future foreign, complex issues (Syria); visions of a failed state (Iraq) strengthened hesitancy. Difficulties in Afghanistan multiplied these doubts.

Chorin concludes by discussing the enduring influence of Benghazi on American policy formulation. As recently as August 2021, Senator Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) referred to the chaotic American withdrawal from Afghanistan as Benghazi 2.0. *The Week*, on Aug. 19, 2021, published "Are Democrats Going to Benghazi Biden?," noting that four Democrat-controlled congressional committees were opening hearings on the withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The eagerness of politicians to criticize policies, while well placed to avoid bearing responsibility for their implementation, gives strength to Chorin's analysis of Benghazi's lingering effects. Policy recommendations by experts, if considered at all, are often overridden by less-informed political appointees or elected officials.

How many of us have sent in recommendations for action only to be told Washington sees the bigger picture? Usually this means that domestic political considerations weigh more heavily in the calculus than do concerns for achieving objectives abroad.

And it's easy to see that administrations of both parties have a strong aversion to testifying before another con-

gressional committee to explain another American official's death abroad. The bipartisan reactions following the terrorist attacks on our embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, against the USS *Cole* in Aden, and those of Sept. 11, 2001, all seem buried in the distant past.

Until today's partisan divide is somehow overcome, it seems likely that risk aversion will remain the dominant force in our foreign policy. This is not likely to strengthen our reputation for reliability and constancy in carrying out our commitments abroad.

Chorin gives us much to think about. His analysis calls to mind Philip Gordon's *Losing the Long Game: The False Promise of Regime Change in the Middle East* (2020) and Andrew Bacevich's *After the Apocalypse: America's Role in a World Transformed* (2021), both discussing the implications of our reduced influence in the world.

Maps, a list of principal characters, and a timeline at the front help the reader keep track of events and personalities. An extensive bibliography and endnotes at the rear help those wanting more details. Written in a light, readable style, the chapters are short, allowing you to put it down whenever you need to do something else. This is a book worth reading. ■

---

*Charles O. Cecil is a retired Foreign Service officer. His 10 overseas assignments included six in the Arab world. He served as U.S. ambassador to Niger (1996-1999) and as chargé d'affaires in Libya (2006-2007).*



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# The Enduring Value of International Exchange

BY ZACH PRZYSTUP

When it comes to international exchange, I'm a bit biased: It wouldn't be a stretch to say that I owe my very life to it.

Some 50 years ago, my father, James Przystup, met my mother, Ayako Miyazawa, while studying for his Ph.D. at Keio University in Japan. For my grandparents, who raised my dad in a blue-collar Polish neighborhood in Detroit, Japan might as well have been the moon. Indeed, when he informed them of his plans to travel across the world to learn Japanese, my bewildered grandmother asked simply: "What's wrong with Polish?"

But to the land of the rising sun he went, and the rest is history. Now I eat pierogi, kielbasa, and break *oplatek* on Christmas Eve; then a few nights later, I eat a traditional Japanese New Year's meal of *gyoza* and *toshikoshi soba*. Existential and culinary benefits aside, we would do well to remember the many benefits of international exchanges as they continue to rebound from a pandemic-induced slump.

First, international exchange provides the essential scaffolding for diplomacy and problem-solving. I first learned this 10 years ago while teaching English in Akitsu, a small fishing village in Hiroshima-ken, Japan. Every morning on my way into work at Toyota High School, I walked by a massive, kanji-engraved stone by the school's entrance. One day I asked an

English teacher what the characters meant. He paused for a moment, then said: "If you are brilliant, hide it."

As I attempted to imagine an American school with the motto "Hide Your Brilliance," I had some important realizations about the value of international exchange. On a small scale, I now understood why I couldn't get my best students to raise their hands and speak, no matter how much I implored them (encouragement, I had discovered, has an inverse relationship to participation in Japanese classrooms).

But the larger lesson was this: If you don't understand the cultural frameworks in which you operate, many actions and practices simply won't make sense. What was an important lesson for a 25-year-old assistant language teacher surely goes double for scholars and policymakers wading through history and culture to tackle complex international problems.

Second, my time in the classroom drove home the point that while international exchanges *may* make you bilingual, they *certainly* make you bicultural. You will be able to tell your family, friends, and community back home about what really makes your host country tick, and vice versa.

In this way, you can begin to serve as a bridge between cultures. That bridge is always built on personal relationships, and it may be the best antidote to the misinformation and misperceptions that can plague our frenzied discourse.

Third, international exchanges remind us of our shared humanity, simultaneously making the world a bigger and smaller place. Bigger, because you forge real connections to people and places previously unknown. Smaller, because in making these expansive connections, you realize that at their core, people are pretty much the same the world over: we treasure our families and friends, gather to mark life's milestones, have hobbies, and hold fast to our hopes and dreams.

We like the same things; we just do them in different ways. And exploring the fascinating ways in which we do the same things differently is the very best of international exchange.

Though virtual platforms now supplement many exchange activities, you can't Zoom these lessons. As Edward Murrow famously noted: "The real crucial link in international exchange is the last three feet, which is bridged by personal contact, one person talking to another."

Currently, I oversee State's Fulbright Program in Poland (among other countries). My grandmother would be pleased to see how things have come full circle. That's the magic of international exchange. When I graduated from college, I didn't even know Fulbright was an option. I imagine this holds true for many students today.

As international affairs professionals, we can spread the word about Fulbright and other opportunities, encouraging students and young professionals to bridge "the last three feet" and experience the transformative power of international exchange. The world will be a better place for it. ■



*Zach Przystup is a program officer for the Fulbright Program in the Bureau of European Affairs. Previously, he was acting director for the Office of Executive Education at the Fletcher School, Tufts University. His writing has appeared in The Wall Street Journal, Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, The National Interest, and The Diplomat.*





**T**his photo was taken in October on a cold, rainy day in the Silk Road city of Samarkand, Uzbekistan. Pictured here, a beekeeper selling honey and beeswax at the Siab Bazaar, which is next door to the 14th-century Bibi Khanym Mosque. The mosque was built on the orders of Timur (Tamerlane) in honor of his “senior” wife, whose nickname was Bibi Khanym. The bazaar was full of spices, nuts, tea, vegetables, fruit, and beautiful textiles. ■

*Foreign Service Officer Maryum Saiffee has served in Cairo, Baghdad, Erbil, and Lahore. Before joining the State Department, she served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Jordan and an AmeriCorps volunteer in Seattle, Washington. She is currently a senior adviser in the Secretary's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. This photo was taken with an iPhone 12.*

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