

THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

MARCH 2023

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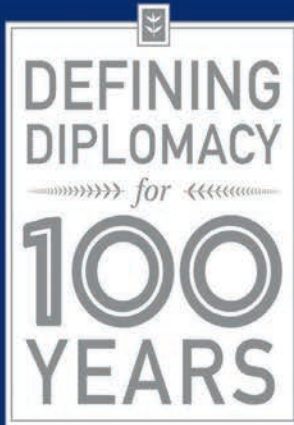
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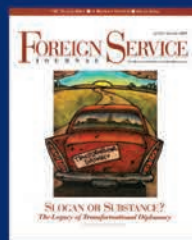
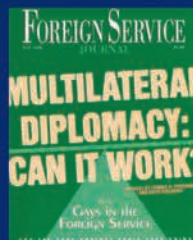
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THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

March 2023 Volume 100, No. 2

Focus on FS Reform: Outlook and Considerations

23

Toward a More Modern Foreign Service: Next Steps

A State Department reform push is now moving into Phase III with a practical vision. Here is an update.

*By Marc Grossman and
Marcie Ries*

27

From Instinct to Evidence in Foreign Policy Decision-Making

An argument for the practice of diplomacy to be more science and less art.

By Dan Spokoyny

31

Learning the Ropes Through Rotations

Entry-level diplomats can gain valuable experience with rotational job opportunities.

By Beatrice Camp

34

Meritocracy at State: Who Deserves What

How do we know who “deserves” to be admitted into the U.S. Foreign Service? An entry-level officer explores the question.

By Marshall Sherrell

37

Why Senior Leaders Cannot Reform the State Department

A close look at aspects of State Department culture that stand in the way of professional development and leadership training.

By John Fer

Feature

41

Mali’s SPEAR Team: Protecting U.S. Diplomats at a Dangerous Post

A special program bolsters security at embassies and consulates in challenging environments. DSS special agents explain SPEAR and how it works in Mali.

By Kyle Andreasen



57

Summer Camps and Programs Supplement

THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

Perspectives

7

President's Views

Back to the Spoils System?

By Eric Rubin

9

Letter from the Editor

Foreign Service Reform Today

By Shawn Dorman

20

Speaking Out

In the Corridors: Where Culture, Reputation, and DEIA Meet

By Tanesha T. Dillard

76

Reflections

The Letter That Saved
a Romanian Diplomat-Spy

By Jonathan B. Rickert

78

Local Lens

Helsinki, Finland

By Ásgeir Sigfússon



Departments

10 Letters

13 Letters-Plus

16 Talking Points

60 In Memory

67 Books

Marketplace

70 Real Estate

74 Classifieds

75 Index to Advertisers

AFSA NEWS

THE OFFICIAL RECORD OF THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

- 45 AFSA Survey Results: The Future of Foreign Service Work
- 45 Pay Equity Victory for CS DETOs
- 46 State VP Voice—AFSA Wins in the New Year
- 47 USAID VP Voice—The Future of the Foreign Service at USAID: More Questions Than Answers
- 48 AFSA on the Hill—Authorizations and Funding Outcomes
- 49 Changes to the Worldwide Availability Requirement: AFSA Statement
- 49 AFSA Urges Fixes to Employee Express
- 49 Meet the Team Working for You!
- 52 AFSA President Talks Diplomacy in California
- 52 AFSA Governing Board Meeting, Dec. 7, 2022
- 52 AFSA Governing Board Meeting, Jan. 18, 2023

- 53 Changes to Domestic Travel Rules
- 53 USAID Framework Negotiations Complete
- 54 AFSA College Scholarships
- 54 AFSA High School Essay Contest
- 54 Memorial Plaques Restoration Completed
- 55 Retiree Group Hears from Amb. Yovanovitch
- 56 AFSA Webinar: Reviewing Your Retirement Plan
- 56 New Oral History Project Highlights Family Members
- 56 Holiday Wreath-Laying Ceremony at State



On the Cover—Illustration by Maria Carluccio/Theispt.

Back to the Spoils System?

BY ERIC RUBIN

In his superb article in the January-February *FSJ*, Ambassador Dennis Jett tracks the history of efforts to professionalize the U.S. Civil Service and U.S. Foreign Service and to insulate both from partisan pressure, corruption, and venal influences.

He salutes the legacy of Presidents Teddy Roosevelt, William Taft, and Grover Cleveland in working to remedy the sordid situation that cost President James Garfield his life. (Garfield was killed by a patronage seeker in 1881.)

Amb. Jett also reminds us of the huge steps forward that came in the form of the 1924 Rogers Act, which created the U.S. Foreign Service, and the 1946 and 1980 acts, which updated it and gave our career service its present shape and structure.

The fact that some elected representatives talk about re-creating former President Donald Trump's ill-fated "Schedule F"—designed to remove protections for certain government employees and allow for even more political hiring—is deeply worrying.

As disturbing are efforts in the House of Representatives to revive the so-called Holman Rule that would allow amendments to appropriations legislation to reduce the salary of, or to fire, specific federal employees at will. This raises serious

questions about the separation of powers as well as political interference.

I have been privileged to work with many talented

political appointees during 38 years in the Foreign Service. Most came to appreciate the value of a professional, experienced, and nonpartisan career service that assisted in carrying out the policies of the president who appointed them.

Many went on to become champions of the Foreign Service in Congress, such as Senators Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska) and Bill Hagerty (R-Tenn.), and Representatives Ann Wagner (R-Mo.) and Andy Kim (D-N.J.). Many others have become ambassadors and senior administration officials after their service in Congress.

Many of us have also known or worked with political appointees who made clear their disdain for and mistrust of the Foreign Service, the Civil Service, and career federal employees in general. Unfortunately, a small number of Secretaries of State and USAID Administrators can be counted in that category.

Sometimes the reasons are ideological, and other times pragmatic: Insecure political appointees may see experienced, knowledgeable, and nonpartisan career employees as a hindrance to carrying out policies and plans that may run afoul of federal law and regulations.

We saw that in ample measure in the investigation of what happened in Ukraine during the first impeachment process against former President Trump. (We also saw that the best defense against corruption in the federal government is transparency, which includes strong Inspectors General, whistleblower protections, and protections against

retaliation. "Because I say so" is never the right answer in our government.)

And then there are the few political leaders who don't appreciate counsel from professional experts whose standing and confidence come from extended, successful careers in the federal service and its century-long job protections.

I continue to believe in the role that America can play in promoting the values that we like to say our country stands for: democracy, human rights, transparency and anti-corruption, and peaceful transfer of power. Like many of you, I have worked on these issues across the world.

But if we abandon the critical lessons of the past century and return to the days when federal jobs were for sale to the highest bidder or top political crony, and when federal employees felt intimidated from following their oath to the U.S. Constitution for fear of losing their livelihoods or worse, we will cease to be a model for any part of the world.

AFSA is and must remain strictly nonpartisan and apolitical. We do not endorse or oppose candidates, and we refrain from taking positions on policy issues and decisions.

But when it comes to defending the principle and practice of having the federal government staffed by career professionals who work for the American people and follow the Constitution as required by their oath of office, we stand firm.

No to politicization. No to bringing back the spoils system and cronyism. No to destroying the structures and rules that make us a nation worthy of emulation. ■



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

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Foreign Service Reform Today

BY SHAWN DORMAN

Foreign Service reform: It is always urgently needed, in progress, yet never fully completed. Ever since the 1924 Rogers Act created the “modern” Foreign Service, reform has been on the agenda. An ever-changing world puts new and shifting demands on the Foreign Service, and it must be so.

At the start of the Biden administration, our January-February 2021 *FSJ* covered many of the proposals for reform being presented to the new team. Some of those recommendations have been adopted (paid internships, for one!).

Secretary of State Antony Blinken laid out his vision and priorities in an October 2021 speech on the modernization of American diplomacy. Today, there are real efforts underway for reform at State, USAID, and the other foreign affairs agencies. This month, our Focus is on the state of reform two years on.

We start by checking in on what happened to the 2020 Harvard Belfer Center report, *A U.S. Diplomatic Service for the 21st Century*. Veteran reformers Ambassadors Marc Grossman and Marcie Ries give us a readout on Phase II of that project in “Toward a More Modern Foreign Service: Next Steps.” They lay out four actionable recommendations from

their *Blueprints for a More Modern U.S. Diplomatic Service*, including proposed legislative language.

Next we hear from former FSO

Dan Spokojny, founder and CEO of the fp21 think tank. In “From Instinct to Evidence in Foreign Policy Decision-Making,” he argues for a new approach to knowledge management, analysis, and learning—all of which, he suggests, should be made measurable.

In “Learning the Ropes Through Rotations,” retired FSO Beatrice Camp makes a strong case for entry-level officers to spend extended time working in different sections of the embassy early in their FS careers, as was the norm for U.S. Information Agency officers back in the day.

In “Meritocracy at State: Who Deserves What,” first-tour officer Marshall Sherrell looks at changes to State’s FS hiring practices and encourages a fresh perspective on whether the Foreign Service Officer Test really is an indispensable first step to finding the “right” candidates.

In “Why Senior Leaders Cannot Reform the State Department,” FSO John Fer suggests that cultural change must come from the ranks.

In this month’s Speaking Out, “In the Corridors: Where Culture, Reputation, and DEIA Meet,” FSO Tanesha Dillard calls for a shift at the State Department away from the sometimes false perceptions of corridor reputation and toward true inclusion.

Perhaps nothing in the Foreign Service needs reform more than the political appointments realm, in particular the “tradition” of giving plum ambassadorial assignments to big-money donors. Here’s hoping a brave administration will finally put a stop to this practice.

Ambassador Eric Rubin makes the case for maintaining an apolitical Foreign Service staffed by career professionals in his President’s Views column, “Back to the Spoils System?”

The FS reform theme runs through 100 years of *Foreign Service Journal* pages. From blue ribbon studies to efforts tried, successful and not, the *FSJ* Digital Archive captures that history. Our recently expanded Special Collection on FS Reform includes dozens of articles on this evergreen topic.

This month’s Feature, “Mali’s SPEAR Team: Protecting U.S. Diplomats at a Dangerous Post,” is an introduction to a unique program established after the 2012 Benghazi attacks. Diplomatic Security Special Agent Kyle Andreasen tells how it works on the ground, and Lee Gitschier covers the program basics.

In Letters-Plus, Frederic Hill offers the back story on diplomatic gaming at State in response to the November 2022 Speaking Out column by Robert Domaigne, “Why the State Department Needs an Office of Diplomatic Gaming,” which generated a great deal of interest. Hill helped establish and lead the Office of Special Programs that conducted policy-planning exercises (gaming) at State for 20 years, from 1986 to 2006.

Frequent contributor Jonathan Rickert tells the fascinating story of “The Letter That Saved a Romanian Diplomat-Spy” in Reflections. And for Local Lens, our own Ásgeir Sigfússon shares an artistic view from Helsinki.

Please keep in touch and let us know what you think of this edition. Write to journal@afsa.org. ■



Shawn Dorman is the editor of *The Foreign Service Journal*.

Resigning in Protest

Thanks for the excellent article about the ethics of dissent and FSO Stephen Walker's difficult but honorable decision to resign in protest ("When Is It Ethical to Resign in Protest?" by Steve Walker, December 2022). His action was especially admirable because as an FS-3, he knew he would be giving up his diplomatic career without having accumulated the financial assets that in another decade would have ensured him and his family a decent pension.

This article reminded me of the many hours I spent with members of my 1979 junior officer class discussing the morality of dissent and the integrity of: remaining silent; dissenting in-house; leaking; requesting a transfer to another part of the world; resigning quietly or making our departure public.

I forgot about those discussions until I returned to Washington, D.C., after serving a tour (2004-2005) in northern Afghanistan with a British infantry unit at Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Mazar-e-Sharif. Although I had many questions about America's long-term goals in that war-torn country, it did appear during the year I was there that we were making incremental progress helping the women and girls of Afghanistan and attempting (although often failing) to root out corruption.

Our faltering efforts at training the Afghan military and police, and our haphazard rebuilding of Afghanistan's crumbling infrastructure to demonstrate "quick wins," were another matter.

As we now know, America's longest war ended in the overnight collapse of everything we had done in that country

over two decades. I'm happy that my interpreter, his family, and several other Afghans with whom I worked made it out of the country safely, but sad knowing that so many more of our Afghan colleagues are now trapped, with their lives in danger and no way out.



Although I had been promoted to the Senior Foreign Service less than a year before I went to Afghanistan and received a Superior Honor Award for my work there, I dreaded returning to the department. No matter what my next assignment might be, as a public diplomacy officer I would be expected to defend what I considered to be America's unjustified invasion and overthrow of the Iraqi government.

Unlike Mr. Walker's, my pension would be more than adequate. I had 27 years of government service as a diplomat to which I could add two years in the Peace Corps and four years as a naval officer. I knew I would be giving up a job I loved, and many colleagues encouraged me to stay, but I couldn't.

Sending thousands of American soldiers into Iraq based on the lies that Saddam Hussein (a Sunni) had weapons of mass destruction, posed a direct threat to the U.S., and was somehow complicit in the 9/11 attacks (carried out by 15 Saudis and four citizens of other Arab nations but not a single Iraqi) was a policy I could neither defend nor ignore.

My continued diplomatic service would have no effect on this indefensible, disastrous (and, in my opinion, illegal) decision by the George W. Bush administration to launch a war that former Federal Reserve Chair Alan Greenspan wrote in his 2007 autobiography was "largely about oil."

Although I did not have the courage of State Department colleagues who have

publicly resigned in protest, we all must weigh our choices, including the impact they may have on our families.

I am at peace with my decision.

Patricia McArdle
Senior FSO, retired
Oceanside, California

The Decision to Resign

Steve Walker's very interesting article in the December 2022 *Journal* ("When Is It Ethical to Resign in Protest?") struck a chord with me over the issue of resigning from the Foreign Service.

I was serving, before a Dissent Channel existed, as an FS-6 political officer in Embassy Pakistan in 1968 when the issue of resuming arms aid to Pakistan came up for discussion and recommendation to the State Department.

State opposed the resumption because Pakistan had used our arms in two wars with India. CIA supported resumption because it would reopen their access to their listening station in Peshawar.

The military was in favor in order to have something to do, overseeing the program, besides the fact that it would bring in money.

The ambassador, a political appointee, opted in favor of resumption. I felt he was enamored of epaulettes and the mystique of intelligence activity.

As a junior officer, I did not play much of a role in the decision-making except weighing in to support the political counselor in his opposition to a resumption. And I was so proud of him when on home leave he took his views to higher levels, and the ambassador's recommendation was denied, although later arms aid resumed.

I don't know if my ultimate decision to resign from the Foreign Service can be called ethical or unethical. But I knew that I could no longer serve and support

the overall foreign policy of the United States. The military and CIA role in the ongoing war in Vietnam, overriding State diplomacy, played a big role in my decision. But the smaller-scale Pakistan arms resumption was the final nail.

Thank you for letting me share my story.

R. Allen Irvine

Former FSO

Plainfield, Massachusetts

As You Train, So Shall You Fight

Cheers to Robert Domaingue for his excellent argument to revisit the establishment of a gaming office at the Foreign Service Institute (“Why the State Department Needs an Office of Diplomatic Gaming,” Speaking Out, November 2022).

I fear use of the word “gaming” might trivialize this important initiative. This is not diplomats gathering to pass the time with chess, the latest version of Monopoly, or (gasp) Dungeons and Dragons.

Rather, gaming is about exercising scenario responses for urgent problem sets. Whether you call it a game or the loftier sounding “exercise,” as the military often does, testing our plans, assumptions, and abilities before crisis ought to generate State Department interest and support.

State is a long way from the military’s prioritization of planning and exercises, but we need not try to emulate the time and resources our Defense Department colleagues expend on these efforts to see significant benefit.

These “games” do not have to be time-intensive or require copious preparation to be useful. A day or even half-day game/exercise can force thinking and expose blind spots in planning before a brewing problem leaves us flat-footed.



I implore leadership to consider the benefits of Mr. Domaingue’s suggestion. Further, I ask them to consider country- and region-specific scenarios linking D.C. and field participants.

I helped organize a table-top exercise for an FSI group a few months before heading out to that country’s embassy. We looped in some key country team members to observe and reality-check via video. Assumptions were challenged, and insights were sharpened to a degree that classroom instruction cannot replicate.

Timing was key, as there was a space for thoughtful discussions well ahead of the chaos that is transfer season, where good intentions regarding overlap and handover notes go to die.

For scenarios that require a robust interagency response, a gaming office could invite interagency players, as the military sometimes does, to its exercises. We ignore, underplay, or fake those interagency aspects to the detriment of future crisis response.

Above all, we should endeavor to “keep it real,” as my martial arts instructor used to say. He insisted we wear shoes and street clothes to practice. “If you get in a fight, no one is going to wait for you to take your shoes off. As you train, so shall you fight.”

Joe Relk

FSO, retired

Burke, Virginia

Greece and the Balkan Storm

FSJ articles over the years frequently suggest policy directions for the U.S. government to take. Such articles when read by serving diplomats abroad and at

home can provide useful food for thought. In that spirit, let me add a relevant note connecting Greece to Denis Rajic and Marko Attila Hoare’s interesting take on Serbia’s closeness to Russia and a coming Balkan storm in the July-August 2022 *FSJ* (“Serbia and Russia and the Coming Balkan Storm”).

Greece and Serbia have a long common history of resisting and eventually overcoming Muslim Turkish colonialism for several centuries in the past. Both countries (along with Montenegro) share the Greek Orthodox religion in a neighborhood of Catholics (Croatia) and Muslims (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Albania, or Turkey). Both remained allies in the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913, first against Turkey and then against Bulgaria (another Slav state with ties to Russia).

Churchill and Stalin agreed at the end of World War II to share the Balkans, with most going to the Russia sphere of influence and Greece to Britain. The Greek civil war that followed—pitting the Communist resistance to the Nazis and Italian Fascists against the anti-Communist resistance eventually supported by the British and Americans—ended when Yugoslavia, dominated by Serbia, closed its borders to fleeing Communist troops and thus helped guarantee a Greek government victory.

Such histories leave memories. Greece, particularly under its present moderate right government, plays a central role in facilitating U.S. assistance to Ukraine through its formerly sleepy port at Alexandroupolis, in northern Greece, neighboring Turkey. It is a reliable NATO ally somewhat different from Turkey—particularly since Turkey invaded Greek-dominated Cyprus in the 1970s.

Authors Rajic and Hoare suggest some sort of U.S. and NATO intervention is necessary today to prevent the current Serbian government from continuing its

rapprochement with Mr. Putin's Russia and sowing chaos in the Balkans. Such an involvement, I suggest, would be more effective if it included cooperation from the Greek government.

Greece remained neutral when the U.S. and NATO intervened in the most recent Balkan wars that penalized Serbia, but it has now probably noted, and is undoubtedly suspicious about, the apparently private Russian investments in the Greek section of Cyprus prior to Mr. Putin's most recent aggression in Ukraine.

George B. Lambrakis
Senior FSO, retired
Paris, France

Yes to a Vehicle Stipend

I recently came across an interesting Speaking Out article about the benefits of a privately owned vehicle (POV) stipend while overseas as an alternative to the POV allowance ("Stop Shipping Your Personal Vehicle!" by Warren Leishman) in the October 2020 FSJ.

This would be a much-needed benefit for me, as a blind FSO, as well as a potential savings for our foreign affairs agencies, as indicated in the article.

I am legally blind and haven't driven in more than five years. I don't have a car, and there's no alternative for people like me to benefit from the POV shipping allowance.

This article poses a win-win solution, and I would appreciate it if AFSA would consider seriously advocating for this.

Eric Baylor
Regional Agricultural Attaché
Embassy Santo Domingo

Research Request

I am a former FSO and current Ph.D. candidate at the Virginia Tech Center for Public Administration and Policy. My dissertation research will examine the effects of outside appointments on Civil Service

employee workplace attitudes through a case study of the State Department, which will include a series of individual and small-group interviews.

I invite current and former department employees from both the Civil and Foreign Services to participate in this research study. Interviews are planned for summer 2023 in person in the D.C. area, as well as virtually via Zoom. All collected data will be anonymized to protect privacy, and the interviews will last 30 to 60 minutes.

To volunteer or learn more, please email me at boyettecl@vt.edu. Many thanks.

Charity L. Boyette
Former FSO
Dublin, Virginia

Postcard Field Trip: Outreach to Illinois Students

I am a school librarian at a tiny school in rural central Illinois. A couple years ago when we were all home on lockdown, I started developing a new curriculum for my students, K-12, to help them see the world.

Even when conditions are ideal, my students do not always have the money or the opportunity to travel much farther than the next town over for groceries or maybe a larger nearby town on rare occasions. I wanted all my students to be able to experience as much of the world as possible, even if we were all in our own homes, and now, when we are back in our school buildings together.

I call this curriculum "Postcard Field Trip." We learn about each state and territory of the United States and each country of the world in alternating years. In 2020 we did states. In 2021 we did countries, and in 2022 we were back to states and territories. I am working on ideas for this year when we return to learning about countries of the world. (Previously I tried

contacting tourism bureaus throughout the world, with very limited success.)

Last summer at the American Library Association conference I was introduced to *The Foreign Service Journal* and discussed this project with Editor Shawn Dorman, who thought that you all might be able to help in some way.

So here goes: Would you be able to send postcards (blank or with notes to the students), bookmarks, or other interesting materials from the country you are stationed in for the students at my small, rural school?

We have about 200 students in the entire district, but any number of items would be welcome. (We'll either save them in the library to share, or if it's enough for a class or two, I'll distribute them to the students.)

Firsthand artifacts and experiences from around the world help my students to learn and grow and be inspired. We have been having so much fun learning about the whole world. If you'd be able to send something from your home state or territory, that would be great, too!

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or to send cool links with more information to nfolkman@hartem.org. If you have physical items to send, you can mail them to Nichole Folkman, Hartsburg-Emden Schools, 400 W. Front Street, Hartsburg IL 62643, USA.

Thank you so much!

Nichole Folkman
District Librarian
Hartsburg-Emden, Illinois ■

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RESPONSE TO NOVEMBER 2022 SPEAKING OUT, “WHY THE STATE DEPARTMENT NEEDS AN OFFICE OF DIPLOMATIC GAMING”

Gaming at State: Needed but Not New

BY FREDERIC B. HILL



would like to endorse, with some reservations, Robert Domaingue’s November 2022 Speaking Out, “Why the State Department Needs an Office of Diplomatic Gaming.”

I had the privilege of helping to establish and then for two decades lead the Office of Special Programs that conducted a wide array of high-level policy planning exercises (aka gaming) for the State Department from 1986 to 2006. I would like to add my voice to the call for the reestablishment of an office of gaming, which I believe the department needs for a number of reasons.

I will address four points: our Office of Special Programs mission and the value of diplomatic games, war games, or, as we called them, policy planning exercises; our approach and selection of challenges and subjects; a brief account of successes and shortcomings; and how to organize such an office at rock-bottom cost.

1. Mission/value. Such exercises or games strengthen the State Department’s role in foreign policy decision-making and encourage senior officers, mid-level desk officers, and intelligence analysts to look ahead more boldly and creatively at potential and unfolding challenges. An office for gaming located in the department, and not relying on the Pentagon,

the war colleges, and intelligence agencies, will allow State to focus on its priorities and goals, and enhance analysis and policy formation. It would improve diplomacy.

By engaging a wide range of participants from the interagency, academic experts, and retired officers with extraordinary experience, a gaming office at State would deepen interagency cooperation that becomes extremely valuable when crises develop.

2. Selection of challenges and subjects. Special Programs had a bare-bones budget and limited staff, so we had to be very select in the foreign policy issues we chose to examine.

By far most of our games were devoted to national security issues—ranging from the growth of nuclear arsenals to transitions in foreign governments to developing conflicts and peacekeeping operations. We also conducted exercises on global, environmental, and economic issues, including the potential for conflict and cooperation on water resources, energy, and health matters.

3. Successes and shortcomings. Due partly to creative, extensively researched, and challenging scenarios, our exercises frequently tackled and identified critical challenges and forces that became reality

months and even years later. These included exercises that highlighted:

- a transition to majority rule in South Africa years before it happened;
- Mikhail Gorbachev’s withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan months before that decision;
- issues on the South China Sea long before China’s major construction of military bases on many islets;
- Iran and North Korea’s expanding nuclear programs;
- the potential for conflict—and cooperation—over water resources (the Nile, Euphrates, Mekong);
- the outlook for success or failure of Gorbachev’s “draft union treaty”—highlighting internal political and economic tensions that, weeks later, led to turmoil and eventually the collapse of the USSR; and
- possible outcomes of an invasion of Iraq six months before that was undertaken. While most participants opposed an invasion, our recommendations urged a broad, international coalition if it went forward and included an underlined assertion: “Do not disband” the Iraqi army.

Our office organized hundreds of roundtable discussions on critical issues and was often called on to pull together senior-level discussions (e.g., North Korean nuclear developments, post 9/11 planning, Middle East crises).



Frederic B. Hill was a foreign correspondent for The Baltimore Sun in Europe and Africa, then foreign affairs director for Senator Charles “Mac” Mathias (R-Md.) in 1985-1986. He then headed State’s Office of Special Programs in charge of gaming exercises on national security and global issues. He is the author or editor of five books on Maine shipbuilding history, maritime adventures, and American politics. He is co-editor of a forthcoming biography of Sen. Mathias.

Among shortcomings, our office did not do enough to focus on health and environmental matters, Latin America, and Africa.

4. Organization and cost. The Office of Special Programs was established in 1986 with the support of then–Under Secretary for Management Ron Spiers and the advice of Lincoln P. Bloomfield from MIT, a recognized proponent of so-called political-military exercises, and Hans Binnendijk, then director of FSI’s Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs.

Based at FSI (a wise choice given the support and relative independence it usually received), the office grew from a single individual to a staff of seven over the 20 years of its existence. That growth came from attracting mid- and senior-level FSOs

Our exercises always included a wide range of officials of various levels from all relevant agencies.

who were between assignments, as well as military officers with gaming experience from the Army War College.

The office budget covered two or three Civil Service positions; salaries of the FSOs and military officers were paid by their respective institutions. The only other substantive costs were for travel and modest honorariums for nongovernmental participants.

My reservations about Mr. Domaingue’s argument mainly concern his organizational proposal. I do not think such an office should be placed under

the Secretary of State, but under the Policy Planning Office (S/P), provided S/P has strong leadership focused on planning and looking over the horizon, such as it had under former directors like William Burns and Richard Haass. Also, State bureaus should not have their own “gaming staff”—such positions would not appeal to career-minded FSOs and would be at odds with a bureau’s responsibilities.



Gaming exercises in the “table-top” fashion of the Office of Special Programs

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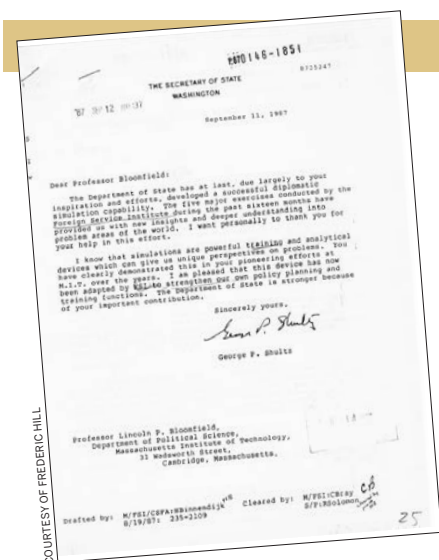
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were designed to confront policymakers and intelligence agents with the tough choices they might face as major threats to U.S. interests, those of our allies, and international stability.

Our scenarios were not aimed at predicting conflicts and crises, but rather on improving understanding of complex challenges. They allowed participants to test policy options, identify warning signs, and anticipate the reactions of allies and adversaries in a no-fault setting.

Our exercises always included a wide range of officials of various levels from all relevant agencies, academic and think-tank experts, and participants from Capitol Hill. Perhaps the most valuable cohort of “outside” participants were former ambassadors and retired military and intelligence leaders. Bloomfield always advised that the depth of experience of FSOs and intelligence officers provided deep talent to “play” the opposing governments in gaming exercises.

Concise, substantive memoranda or reports of the exercises were always circulated throughout the State Department and other agencies, often drawing an encouraging response.

Memos sometimes reached the seventh floor. The late Colin Powell and his deputy Richard Armitage commented on the exercises on occasion. In a 2003 letter to Mr. Bloomfield, Powell wrote: “We’ve had several exceptional political games

In a letter dated Sept. 11, 1987, Secretary of State George Shultz thanks Prof. Lincoln Bloomfield for his help in developing "a successful diplomatic simulation capability" at State.

"I know that simulations are powerful training and analytical devices," Shultz states. "I am pleased that this device has now been adapted by FSI to strengthen our own policy planning and training functions."

at the Foreign Service Institute in the last two years, most notably dealing with the Middle East and the Korean peninsula. Both of these games, as well as others, were enhanced by the strong relationship that exists between (Mr.) Hill and our Policy Planning staff."

My final thought is that, with China's rise, Russia's aggression, climate change, and the pandemic, the challenges faced by the United States today are even more complex and more serious than in recent decades, and cry out for policy planning exercises. Bringing together a dozen or so individuals who have deep experience in gaming, plus key congressional staff members to initiate funding support, would be a smart first step toward reestablishment of an office of diplomatic gaming in the department.

Exactly how that would be organized, and what actions are then needed, would depend on a senior leader at State—a 21st-century Ron Spiers—who appreciates the need to broaden and deepen insights into current and future challenges that an effective gaming capability can supply to an agile, fully resourced diplomacy.

As a general, Dwight D. Eisenhower often cited a soldier's comment about how the planning process in military, diplomatic, and most affairs demands thorough exploration of all options and contingencies, in essence: "Plans are worthless; planning is everything." ■



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TALKING POINTS

Bike Ride Honors Fallen FSO

On Nov. 19, 2022, hundreds of people biked to Capitol Hill to demand from lawmakers safer streets for cyclists and pedestrians across the country.

Organized by FSO Dan Langenkamp, the 10.5-mile “Ride for Your Life” rally was held in honor of his wife, Foreign Service Officer Sarah Debbink Langenkamp, who was killed in August while cycling in her Bethesda, Md., neighborhood. (Her obituary can be found on page 85 of the January-February *FSJ*.)

Speaking to CNN, Dan Langenkamp said that his anger in the wake of his family’s loss has driven him to advocate for changes in bike safety “to reduce the number of crashes that kill moms, colleagues, and friends like Sarah.”

A GoFundMe campaign he created has already raised more than \$300,000 to support local and national cycling safety organizations in their call for safer bike routes.

U.S. to Invest \$55 Billion in Africa

At the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit in Washington, D.C., in December 2022, President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris announced plans to invest at least \$55 billion over the next three years in new initiatives to empower African institutions and citizens.

President Biden also announced his intent to name Ambassador Johnnie Carson, a retired career FSO, for the new role of Special Presidential Representative for U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit Implementation.

Ambassador Carson was formerly the assistant secretary of State for African affairs and served as U.S. ambassador to Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. Learn more at <https://bit.ly/AfricaLeadersSummit>.

Ambassadors and Others Confirmed at Year’s End

As expected, the Senate processed a large number of ambassadorial

nominations prior to the holiday recess in December.

AFSA was pleased to see 17 career members of the U.S. Foreign Service confirmed as ambassadors to Armenia, Estonia, Latvia, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Tajikistan, Cyprus, Tunisia, Botswana, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Mauritius and Seychelles, Suriname, El Salvador, and Uruguay.

Four political appointees were also confirmed, to Tanzania, the Czech Republic, Brazil, and the Organization of American States. Another political appointee was confirmed for the position of Ambassador at Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

At the beginning of 2023, the administration announced a slew of additional nominations. Career FSOs were nominated for ambassadorships in Oman, Jordan, Colombia, Ethiopia, Peru, APEC, and in the role of deputy permanent representative to the U.N.



On Dec. 13, 2022, world leaders participated in the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit’s Peace and Security Governance Forum in Washington, D.C. From left: President of Mozambique Filipe Nyusi; President of Somalia Hassan Sheikh Mohamud; President of Niger Mohamed Bazoum; Former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer; Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III; Secretary of State Antony Blinken; and USAID Administrator Samantha Power.

Finally, political appointee Richard R. Verma was nominated to replace Brian McKeon as Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources (D/MR).

As of this writing in mid-January, AFSA is tracking 29 ambassador vacancies around the world, 12 of which do not yet have a nominee. Among the vacancies are major posts such as Italy, Colombia, Saudi Arabia, and India.

Rule Change for Special Envoys

On Jan. 3, a new rule went into effect requiring candidates for special envoy positions to be confirmed by the Senate.

The rule was intended to close a loophole that allowed administrations to circumvent the confirmation process and quickly select appointees for high-level foreign policy positions. The State Department has more than 50 special envoys including ones for the Arctic, Yemen, the Horn of Africa, and other regions or subject matters that would seem to overlap with the jobs of ambassadors or other senior State Department officials.

The Biden administration pushed to add more special envoys ahead of the deadline, including Hady Amr, new special representative for Palestinian affairs; Kelly Fay Rodríguez, special representative for international labor affairs; and Abby Finkenauer, special envoy for global youth issues. On Jan. 24, President Biden also nominated Julie Turner, the current director of the Office of East Asia and the Pacific in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, to be the first special envoy for human rights in North Korea since 2017.

On Jan. 4, the State Department announced the creation of the Office

Contemporary Quote

No other group has as much in common with our military as the Foreign Service, especially in risking their lives abroad to protect our national interests and citizens abroad.

—Paul Krizek, Virginia House of Delegates member, in a Dec. 22, 2022, message to constituents about his proposed state budget amendment to expand partial retirement income tax exemptions for FSOs.

of the Special Envoy for Critical and Emerging Technology. Former NSC historian Seth Center was selected as deputy envoy; he will report to Ambassador-at-Large for Cyberspace and Digital Policy Nate Fick.

Attention Parents: Special Needs Education Allowance Update

The State Department approved amendments to the Special Needs Education Allowance (SNEA) section of the Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR 270), effective Nov. 20, 2022.

The amendments are intended to increase transparency and to make it easier to calculate the rate of the allowance. The full current DSSR is available on the Office of Allowances' internal and external website, with all recent updates indicated by an asterisk.

The Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) 3280 Special Needs Education Allowance revisions outline SNEA application timelines, documentation requirements, eligible services, and the appeals process.

AFSA inquired about the changes to SNEA implementation and was able to confirm that the changes would not result in less SNEA funding available to Foreign Service members and families. For more, AFSA members can go to the members page on the AFSA website.

Contact AllowancesO@state.gov with general questions; for questions specific to your family situation, contact MED/CFP at MEDCFP@state.gov.

Font Modernization

A January cable from Secretary of State Antony Blinken to the department made headlines with its headline. "The Times (New Roman) Are A-changin'" announced a department-wide change from Times New Roman to 14-point Calibri as the font of choice for all official department communications.

While this change might seem trivial, it is part of an effort to be more inclusive: The change was recommended by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion because Calibri is easier to read for people with disabilities who rely on screen readers and other adaptive technology.

It's a move in the right direction for the department. But will it last? Microsoft announced in April 2021 that it would soon be phasing out Calibri in favor of five new custom fonts, one of which will replace Calibri as the default font. Watch this space for more.

Former Hostages to Receive Congressional Gold Medal

On Dec. 27, 2022, President Joe Biden signed into law H.R. 1179, which provides for the award of a Congressional Gold Medal to the 53 hostages of the Iran



DOD VIA PINGNEWS

On Jan. 27, 1981, recently freed Americans held hostage by Iran disembarked Freedom One, an Air Force aircraft, upon their arrival at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland.

Hostage Crisis (Nov. 4, 1979–Jan. 21, 1981) in recognition of their bravery and endurance throughout their captivity.

The law, introduced in August 2021 by Senator Alex Padilla (D-Calif.), honors the diplomats, servicemembers, and civilians who spent 444 days in captivity after the U.S. embassy was overrun.

According to the text of the act, the recipients of the award “are heroes in every sense of the word. They are role models who wore their pride in the United States with esteem and have allowed for subsequent generations to appreciate the blessing of living in the United States.”

GAO: Embassies at Risk Due to Climate Change

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) informed Congress in October 2022 that numerous embassies are facing extreme risks from climate change.

The letter from GAO to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations states that GAO used data from the Bureau of Overseas Building Operations (OBO) to identify 32 embassies that are at the highest risk of being affected by natural disasters such as coastal flooding, extreme wind and heat, earthquakes, and tsunamis.

According to the report, Embassy

Manila, which has already flooded twice in the last decade, faces the highest risk from climate change–related disasters. Several of the largest embassies top the risk list, including Baghdad, Beijing, Mexico City, and Cairo.

The report was compiled in response to President Biden’s May 2021 executive order for a governmentwide assessment of climate change risks to national security.

Embassy Havana Resumes Visa Services

On Jan. 4, the U.S. embassy in Havana resumed visa services for the first time since 2017, when the embassy was ordered to draw down after a string of unexplained health anomalies, also known as Havana syndrome.

With the embassy closed, thousands of Cubans seeking to come to the United States were forced to travel across the Florida Straits or fly to Central America and travel overland. The number of Cubans detained while trying to cross the border without proper documentation soared.

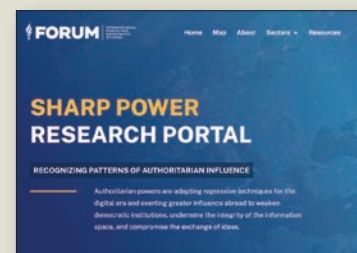
Site of the Month: Sharp Power Research Portal (<https://sharppower.org>)

The Sharp Power Research Portal is a free interactive digital tool that tracks how authoritarian actors in five countries (China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates) use repression techniques abroad. As a resource hub for journalists, researchers, activists, and policymakers, the website illuminates how authoritarian powers influence societies and institutions beyond their borders.

With its searchable database (in five languages) of catalogued research and an interactive world map, this tool is designed to help democratic stakeholders counter the increasing threat of authoritarianism. It features examples and analyses of the scale and impact around the world of authoritarian “sharp power,” or initiatives like monopolizing ideas, limiting free expression, and distorting the political environment.

Recent resources include analysis of Chinese Communist Party influence in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Iran’s growing reach in Latin America.

The portal is run by the National Endowment for Democracy’s International Forum for Democratic Studies.



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

50 Years Ago

Foreign Service Reporting

Reporting is not merely a glamorous, exciting pastime. It is utterly basic to the intelligent formulation of a realistic foreign policy. Without facts, and an understanding of those facts, ... our policy makers are flying blind.

Of course, the Foreign Service officer has many functions other than political reporting: you can name them as well as I. I submit, though, that none is more vital to the country, or more rewarding to the individual, than reporting. It was the best, most satisfying part of my own career.

The reporting officer ... should not be overly tied to a desk. If he is going to be able to travel and succeed in getting

close to people, he may need time, encouragement, and facilities for intensive country specialization and language training—and some assurance that the time committed to gaining such in-depth specialization will not penalize him in the competitive rat-race for promotion. Finally, he needs freedom in his contacts to get beyond the local elites.

—By retired FSO John Service, excerpted from a speech of the same name that he gave at an AFSA luncheon in January 1973 honoring the “old China Hands of the Foreign Service,” and published in the March 1973 FSJ.



On Jan. 8, the Biden administration also announced an online process for Cuban citizens—along with Haitians, Venezuelans, and Nicaraguans—with family members in the United States to apply for the parole program to enter the United States. This program is not coordinated by the embassy in Havana.

Restrictions on tourism to Cuba remain in place.

Zelenskyy Delivers “Masterclass in Diplomacy”

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made a surprise visit to Washington, D.C., in December 2022 and impressed observers with his passionate rhetoric.

A tweet from political scientist Jasmin Mujanovic called Zelenskyy’s visit a “masterclass in diplomacy.” In his first wartime trip outside Ukraine, Zelenskyy met with President Biden

and addressed Congress in English, thanking “every American family which cherishes the warmth of its home.”

He presented a Ukrainian flag that had flown on the front lines to then-Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. And he emphasized the importance of the U.S. contributions to his country’s defense, calling it “an investment in global security and democracy.” Congress was debating the possibility of sending more aid to Ukraine.

The United States has provided more than \$100 billion in aid to Ukraine since the start of the war. was invaded approaches, the Ukrainian government is seeking tanks, more weapons, and aid to continue the fight. ■

This edition of Talking Points was compiled by Donna Scaramastra Gorman and Julia Wohlers.



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In the Corridors: Where Culture, Reputation, and DEIA Meet

BY TANESHA T. DILLARD

“If you don’t get along, you don’t belong.” This is how I summarize the message received during the first weeks into my dream job, the U.S. Foreign Service.

“Corridor reputation” is an unofficial but espoused value of the State Department’s culture, according to Diplopedia. It is described as a person’s character, qualities, and interactions based on *informal observations from colleagues* not detailed in record. It is highly regarded, and for new hires it becomes a fixture in the lexicon of State Department lingo.

The corridor reputation conversation during orientation was uncomfortable. Despite the notion that you can have a positive corridor reputation, my orientation class was mostly warned of the opposite and its impact on one’s career. After the talk, we had a much-needed break that went on longer than the trainers anticipated. One of our trainers, who was the typical successful State Department extrovert, asked me to rally my colleagues back from the break.

Being an introvert and already outside my comfort zone, I failed miserably at this task. I saw the trainer’s annoyance with me, as she stepped in to get the job done. I felt the sting of what could become my corridor reputation immediately.

I internalized her response and my failure as incompetence that others would see, if not believe. Thereafter, whenever I passed this colleague in the corridors of the State Department, she wouldn’t acknowledge me or seemed annoyed by my presence. At least with her, I felt my corridor reputation was sealed and couldn’t be undone.

I passed all the requirements, certifications, tests, interviews, and clearances to be selected for this competitive position. Surely, if I qualified for the Foreign Service, didn’t I deserve to be here? Yet doubt set in as I grappled with corridor reputation and its importance to my onboarding. Later in my career, I realized that corridor reputation is equally, if not more, about perception than reality. This phenomenon exists in every organization, though its importance in personnel decisions may vary. As informal as it may be, the State Department has not only named it, but also embraced it. Not surprisingly, the criteria for assessing “corridor reputation” reflect the predominant values of the institution.

At State, the corridor reputation culture fails to support a genuinely collaborative workforce, and thus burdens members of minority groups, simply because while diversity is increasingly seen as a value, the importance of inclusion is not

yet appreciated. The recent diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) initiatives give us a chance to change this for the better.

Exclusion and Privilege— Don’t Look Up

The State Department has been slow to understand the difference between diversity and inclusion. While diversity exists, it cannot thrive due to the lack of inclusion. Diversity is recruitment. Diversity is having different people in an organization. Diversity doesn’t address the need to make changes to support individuals that belong to marginalized groups. Inclusion is retention and representation in leadership. Inclusion is the acceptance of and continued desire to have a diverse community. And it’s the appreciation of what that diversity brings. It’s an openness to have a culture that reflects a diverse community.

Culture is developed through shared experiences and values over time. At State, the experiences of highly educated white men have set the tone and expectations of our culture for decades. They, therefore, defined what is acceptable in terms of character, qualities, and interactions in assessing one’s corridor reputation. The majority—who may not relate to minority groups based on gender, ethnicity, culture, racial history—set the standard for all, and while diversity is increasingly accepted, inclusion is not yet part of that standard.

Marginalized groups at State already experience the feeling of being under a



Tanesha T. Dillard joined the Foreign Service in 2010. She currently serves in Luanda, where she lives with her daughter. She recently completed the Women’s Leadership Program through Washington University and Brookings Institution and obtained Diversity and Inclusion certification from Cornell University. Dillard is a graduate of Prairie View A&M University.

microscope and the fear of being singled out, for better or worse. Many of us do not feel psychologically safe; our identities feel threatened. We are playing a game we don't have a rulebook for and are constantly questioning and second-guessing our actions. We opt to not fully engage with peers. We lack the support, subsequently the confidence, to be authentic beyond our own social demographic.

Whether a new hire or later in a State Department career, most State employees do not want to go against the grain. Some of us are so busy trying to be seen as acceptable that independent thinking and creativity get lost. Concerns about our corridor reputation reinforce the need to be accepted by others, but at what cost? Whether to call out a wrong is no longer a question of doing the right thing. It's a question of what implication it will have on your career, your corridor reputation. The more different you are, the greater the danger to speak out.

Earlier in my career, I recall several instances when peer assessments were being made casually in both professional and social settings about colleagues. When I attempted to add input, even if in agreement, I would be cut off and shut out. I quickly learned that majority observations were more valuable than mine. Giving that privileged observer greater validation, I hoped not to be identified as the difficult one but rather to be looked upon favorably. But I became keenly aware that I would only be seen as adding value if I supported the negative assessment of a colleague who was different like me.

This privilege can also be seen in meetings and the decision-making process. Though we are in the room or even at the table, some colleagues automatically get extra votes of support to our one. Rarely are there allies ensuring equity for all voices to be heard.

Why should corridor reputation, often based on half-truths and rumors, and holding people against noninclusive standards, be a thing?

Many of us have lost confidence in our leaders, many of whom do not reflect the overall diversity within State. With a sense of powerlessness, there is an expectation that nothing will be done. Most will keep quiet. The others will only speak after reaching professional aspirations or leaving the State Department. And the brave will speak out at their own risk.

The Burden of Proof

Corridor reputation was presented to me as an inward-looking reflection and self-controlled action. It was very black and white. Navigating as a woman of color, I remain inward, and it is debilitating at times. But for colleagues of the majority, I have seen corridor reputation as a tool for empowerment. It's easier for them to be seen as acceptable and to look outwardly to control the narrative for themselves and others.

In my more than 10-year career span, I have experienced up and downs. This includes managing mental health, marriage, divorce, parenthood, and loss of family members. It also includes witnessing successes of family and friends and supporting family members battling cancer. I have experienced COVID, curtailment, medevacs, great supervisors, bad supervisors, rewarding tours, tours I wish to forget, the best and worst of colleagues. This is the beautiful yet common story for all of us. The problem is when only selected parts of you and short encounters are definitive of you and your corridor reputation.

Many of us own our corridor reputa-

tions, based on consistent experiences from different people. But do we question the people, context, or even the presence of bias? Like discrimination, the burden of corridor reputation belongs to everyone. However, it tends to weigh heavier on individuals that make the State Department diverse, who hope to feel included.

Despite receiving tenure and promotion, and being a reliable colleague, I believe my corridor reputation and the biases placed on me provide an opposing, if not incomplete, perspective. Wherever I work, I am often seen through the lenses of race and gender rather than my purpose to serve the American people. If I go into a position where my corridor reputation precedes me, people expect the me of years past. Trying to establish my present self is doubly exhausting and often defeating, especially with a new assignment.

Disenfranchised groups experience so much trauma in the United States. And at the State Department, even with the emergence of DEIA advancement as a priority, we still experience poor treatment. We associate being assigned less optimal opportunities, talked over in meetings, and questioned more than our peers as part of our being ... different. Repeated experiences build up biases and expectations of how people will treat me. Assuming negative biases will be placed on me, I arrive on the job with a chip on my shoulder.

Doing my job seems less like a team effort and more like a daily tryout, trying to prove my value and potential to be on the team. I am forever grateful to the allies

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AFSA's complementary Foreign
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on Thursday, May 4.

and individuals who have championed me and nurtured inclusive environments. I don't know where my career goes from here, but my light within the State Department continues to dim. Despite this, the new DEIA initiatives taken by the State Department give me some hope.

What DEIA Means for Corridor Reputation

The State Department struggles to support colleagues and fails to confront areas for improvement and to problem-solve. Supervisors are let off the hook of accountability, as bad behaviors are excused as character flaws. We avoid dealing with conflict and settle into our biases and comfort zone. Concern over corridor reputation leads to a culture of silence—silence on discrimination, bullying, mental health, bad employees and supervisors, and just about every issue DEIA is meant to address.

As noted in the Foreign Service Institute catalog, the course Mitigating Unconscious Bias “is a prerequisite for all of the mandatory leadership courses for all civil and foreign service employees.” If DEIA is a priority, we shouldn't wait until later in our careers to learn about mitigating unconscious bias—and certainly not when corridor reputation is introduced in orientation.

In the unconscious bias course, we see that the ladder of inference shows how we come to conclusions on limited information, based on previous experiences and knowledge, even if it is not true. Unconsciously, we seek out confirmation of that story we created to validate it.

When we learn about corridor reputation, we aren't advised on how to counter it or how to address possible bias presented in our observations of others and vice versa. Why should corridor reputation, often based on half-truths

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.

and rumors, and holding people against noninclusive standards, be a thing? We should be questioning our observations against reality. Whether unconscious bias is there or not, we should address it.

Let's hold each other accountable for all things, including our biases that are deeply embedded in our personal experiences and State Department culture (Civil Service vs. Foreign Service, officers vs. specialists, locally employed staff vs. direct-hire American, etc.). While we push forward with new DEIA initiatives, it is time to critique, transform, and, if necessary, tear down historical components within the State Department where discrimination lives. The criteria for assessing corridor reputation must include DEIA as a fundamental value.

Corridor reputation should no longer be a priority; it should only be discussed in the context of mitigating unconscious bias. It would be profound to introduce mitigating unconscious bias in orientation as a declaration of the State Department's true commitment to DEIA. It should be essential for new hires to know how to recognize and counteract biases prior to being dispatched into countries with cultural complexities of their own.

It would be powerful to teach and empower future diplomats to ask questions and challenge themselves and their colleagues. If we could do this for each other, imagine how much more effective we could be in American diplomacy and the world. ■

Toward a More Modern Foreign Service Next Steps

A State Department reform push is now moving into Phase III with a practical vision. Here is an update.

BY MARC GROSSMAN AND MARCIE RIES

Just over two years ago, in a discussion moderated by the American Foreign Service Association President Eric Rubin and published in the January/February 2021 *Foreign Service Journal*, we argued that meeting the most serious challenges the United States faces around the globe requires a continuing lead role for America's diplomats.

The return of great power competition, preparation for the next pandemic, climate change, rules



Marc Grossman is a vice chair of The Cohen Group. He was a Foreign Service officer from 1976 to 2005, serving as U.S. ambassador to Turkey and as the under secretary of State for political affairs. He was recalled to the State Department (2011-2012) to be the U.S. special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan.



During 37 years in the Foreign Service, Marcie Ries served as chief of mission in Kosovo, Albania, and Bulgaria. She was also political-military minister counselor in Baghdad (2007-2008), principal deputy assistant secretary for Europe, and senior State Department member of the team that negotiated the New START Treaty. After leaving the State Department, she served as a mentor to ambassadorial classes at the Foreign Service Institute.

We are encouraged that some of the reforms we advocated have been adopted.

for new frontiers such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, space, and the Arctic are among the challenges that must be met by focused and vigorous American diplomacy. U.S. diplomacy and U.S. diplomats played a critical role, for example, in forging the strong and united Western response to Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

We said then, and we repeat today: We are proud of the men and women, Foreign Service and Civil Service, who serve our great country abroad. But America's representatives need more support. We said that our nation's diplomatic service "was facing one of the most profound crises in its long and proud history." It was "underfunded and understaffed and in need of stronger career and non-career leadership." Its record on diversity and inclusion did not match its aspirations. We argued that the Foreign Service needed an honest self-assessment of an internal culture that is often an impediment to individual and organizational success.

The conclusions we shared then were based on work we had done with Nick Burns, now U.S. ambassador to China, for the November 2020 report, *A U.S. Diplomatic Service for the 21st Century*, published by the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs with the participation of the Una Chapman Cox Foundation and individual donors. In that nonpartisan report, we presented 10 actions to reimagine the U.S. Foreign Service. We focused on reform of everything from the Foreign Service mission and mandate to the need for more professional education and training, more modern personnel management, a relentless focus on diversity and inclusion, reexamination of the Foreign Service's culture, a surge capacity in major crises with a reserve corps, and a new name, the United States Diplomatic Service, to reflect more accurately the mission and better connect diplomats to the American people.

As we had hoped, the report sparked plenty of discussion. Many recognized that 40 years after passage of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, which provides the structure of the current

to meet contemporary challenges.

In a speech in October 2021, Secretary of State Antony Blinken outlined his thinking on reform of diplomacy. Groups large and small, including several embassies, the World Affairs Council of America, several bipartisan groups of Hill staff, and AFSA, invited us to discuss our ideas.

We are encouraged that some of the reforms we advocated have been adopted. They include: appointment of a State Department coordinator for diversity and inclusion, a down payment on a training "float" or complement, paid internships that will broaden the socioeconomic base of future applicants, more lead-

ership positions for career officers through incorporating deputy assistant secretary positions in the open assignments process, new parameters for risk management, and plans for career-long education for both the Foreign Service and Civil Service.

Phase II—Not a "Report"

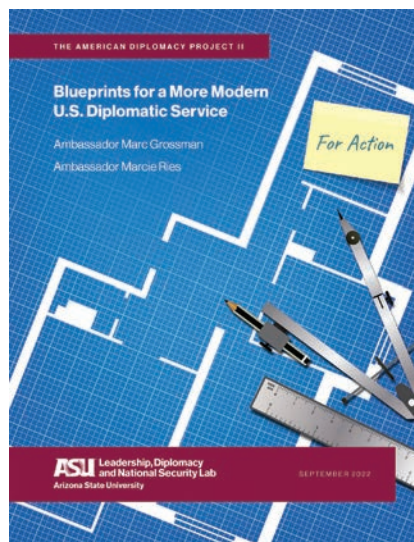
After the positive response to the Belfer report, our conversations with members of the outgoing Trump and incoming Biden administrations, current and retired members of the Foreign Service, important groups like AFSA, and members of Congress and staff, we decided that in a Phase II effort we would focus on four achievable, affordable, urgently needed,

high-impact recommendations.

The Cox Foundation again agreed to participate. Arizona State University's Leadership, Diplomacy and National Security Lab became our institutional home and provided crucial support, as did the American Academy of Diplomacy.

Phase II turned out to be not a "report" at all. Our *Blueprints for a More Modern U.S. Diplomatic Service*, released last September, are detailed plans, drafted by retired ambassadors with decades of experience, ready to be implemented as specific reforms. Each one includes proposed legislative or regulatory language written by an experienced legislative drafter. We appreciate the support AFSA has shown for the *Blueprints* in the *FSJ*.

Foreign Service, it was the right time to identify what about the Foreign Service needed to be upgraded, modernized, or changed



The *Blueprints* cover four areas:

- A revised mission and mandate for the Foreign Service and a new framework for communicating with the American public;
- Expanded professional education and training to deepen our diplomats' expertise as leaders and preeminent experts, and a plan to create sufficient positions to make it possible;
- Modernization of the personnel system to build in more diversity, accountability, flexibility, and accommodation of the needs of accompanying families and partners at home and overseas; and
- A plan for a diplomatic reserve corps to provide surge capacity in geopolitical crises and natural disasters.

Why Mission and Mandate

A topic that came up frequently was chief of mission authority. Since 9/11, the role and authority of U.S. ambassadors have at times been challenged or overridden, leading to confusion and a lack of cohesiveness in some embassies. The process of nominating and confirming ambassadors is unpredictable and slow, leaving many embassies without an ambassador for months or even years.

In Blueprint 1, we propose a new updated draft presidential letter to ambassadors as the clearest way to reaffirm ambassadors' responsibilities and authorities to direct U.S. government personnel and resources abroad, as well as adding new areas of responsibility and emphasis. The new draft highlights diversity and inclusion in our embassies as a presidential priority and a chief of mission responsibility. Another passage directs ambassadors to take responsibility for risk management and to prioritize the safety of their missions while also conducting critical business, even in crisis situations.

Another proposal gives the State Department chairmanship of interagency groups addressing foreign policy at the assistant secretary level, putting to best use the knowledge that the Foreign Service brings to those deliberations.

A companion study to our *Blueprints* published by the Rand Corporation in 2022, *The Foreign Service and American Public Opinion*, concludes that while Americans have a generally favorable view of their diplomatic service, they know very little about it. The Mission and Mandate Blueprint has a cost-effective plan to get the Foreign Service out to speak to American audiences by

The goal of our blueprint format, including legislative and regulatory language, is to show that these reforms are achievable and affordable.

combining it with home leave, paying expenses, and including family members.

The Case for More Professional Education and Training

Blueprint 2 begins: "State Department leadership of American diplomacy in an increasingly complex and dangerous world depends on several factors, crucially having personnel with the right skills, knowledge, and experience in the right places at the right time to advance national security interests."

But the Foreign Service today is underfunded by about 300 positions needed to support even existing education and training. These represent largely overseas positions left vacant until training is finished. The consequence is that supervisors are reluctant to authorize staff training, and the Foreign Service culture has it that going off to training does not help—and may even hinder—promotions.

We believe there are two keys to getting this right: First, we propose that Congress fund a training and education complement (positions set aside by law for professional education and training) equal to 8 percent of the direct hire workforce. (The department is currently looking at how to do something similar for the Civil Service.) Additional funding for the Foreign Service Institute to support longer or additional courses would also be part of a budget request.

The aim is to create conditions for career-long education and training at regular intervals, directed at developing more sophisticated leadership and management skills, as well as strategic perspective, greater area knowledge, and more advanced language skills.

Second, the Foreign Service culture must change. The cultural biases against professional education and training will be hard to overcome, but they must be for the Service to earn its way back into the center of foreign policy creation and execution. We suggest that a full commitment to long-term training requires a more rigorous approach to evaluating performance in classes, changing promotion precepts to include educational achievement and giving consideration to relevant educational achievement in assignments.

The cultural biases against professional education and training will be hard to overcome, but they must be.

A More Modern and Flexible Approach to Personnel Management

The ability of the State Department to hire and retain the highest-quality personnel who best represent the country's diversity is the foundation of American diplomacy. Yet the State Department has devoted only modest resources to recruitment, largely through the Diplomats in Residence program and fellowships, and has taken only a few steps aimed at retention.

In Blueprint 3, we recognize that diversity in the Foreign Service is linked to recruitment. We propose more resources for hiring a recruitment staff to provide information on the Foreign Service to younger potential FS candidates across a wider geographic area.

One aspect of retention is the prospect for career officers of a reasonable timetable for merit promotion and the realistic possibility of competing for top-level positions.

In the military, you can't become a general if you haven't been a colonel first. Yet many deputy assistant secretary positions, an important first policy-level position, are "reserved" for political appointees. Our blueprint suggests giving diplomats leadership and management experience to prepare for higher-level positions by making more opportunities to serve as deputy assistant secretaries and making the process of selection more transparent. Putting these positions into the open assignments process is a good first step.

In the same spirit, we would reserve some assistant secretary positions and several at the under secretary level, including the Director General and the under secretaries for political affairs and management, for career officers.

Finally, in acknowledgment of the needs of family members and partners, both professional and personal, we propose ways to expand their opportunities to work in Washington, D.C., and abroad.

Time for a Diplomatic Reserve Corps

When a crisis is coming or raging, today's State Department must cobble together resources from existing requirements, seeking the support of retirees, deploying a limited range of temporary employment authorities, or turning to expensive

contractors. We admire the courageous and hard work people have done to meet these emergencies, but ad hoc is not the answer.

Unlike the military, which has the Reserves and the

National Guard, the State Department has no institutional backstop to deploy in an emergency.

Blueprint 4 proposes (and provides 77 pages of legislation to establish) a 1,000-person Reserve Corps that could be fully staffed via recruitment of 250 people during each of four years. Individuals would be recruited for their skills based on regional assistant secretaries' best projection of what would be needed in a crisis.

They would train like the National Guard and Reserves and could be called up at any time.

We are delighted that this blueprint has generated interest. A requirement that the State Department prepare a report on "a reserve" appears in the recent National Defense Authorization Act, which includes the State Department Authorization Act. We are encouraged by this indication of openness to change and call on the State Department to respond positively.

What Next?

The goal of our blueprint format, including legislative and regulatory language, is to show that these reforms are achievable and affordable if there is the will to go forward.

Our next goal (Phase III) is to get them implemented. We are honored that the Una Chapman Cox Foundation and Arizona State University are again participants in this quest. The American Academy of Diplomacy will act as the executive agent for the effort.

We remain committed to full transparency with the State Department, interested congressional members and staff, and the larger foreign affairs community, very much including AFSA.

Our nation faces serious global challenges. We believe that Americans recognize that most of these challenges can be successfully overcome only if they are met with the world's best diplomacy.

The United States needs a thoroughly modern U.S. diplomatic service to effectively promote and protect American interests in today's dangerous world. The four blueprints are designed to help provide the American people with the high-functioning service they should demand and that they deserve. To achieve this goal, we will need the active support of AFSA and its members. ■



From Instinct to Evidence in Foreign Policy Decision-Making

An argument for the practice of diplomacy to be more science and less art.

BY DAN SPOKOJNY

“We have a window before us to make historic, lasting change,” began Secretary of State Antony Blinken in announcing

his Modernizing Diplomacy Initiative at the Foreign Service Institute on Oct. 27, 2022. Blinken’s track record on implementing his vision is admirable and should earn him a place on the list of Secretaries of State who have left the institution better than they found it.



Dan Spokojny (@DanSpoko on Twitter) is the founder and CEO of fp21, a think tank dedicated to studying foreign policy reform. He served in government for more than a decade as a U.S. Foreign Service officer and a legislative staffer in Congress. He also served on the governing board of the American Foreign Service Association. He is finishing his Ph.D. in political science at the University of California, Berkeley, focusing on the role of expertise in foreign policy.

But let’s turn our sights toward the necessities and opportunities for deeper reform at Foggy Bottom. Achieving President Joe Biden’s stated goal of elevating diplomacy to the lead role in U.S. foreign policy remains a distant dream. Deep, structural challenges to the effectiveness of the State Department remain unaddressed: The clearance process continues to produce least-common-denominator consensus rather than maximize impact; promotion procedures incentivize staffing up and risk aversion; a cultural distaste for training and learning hobbles the organization’s ability to advance; and the decision-making process relies too heavily on instincts and opinions at the expense of the best available evidence.

These problems have been identified in depth in a series of reports over the past two years: *Revitalizing the State Department and American Diplomacy* (Council on Foreign Relations Special Report No. 89), *A U.S. Diplomatic Service for the 21st Century* (Harvard Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs), *Less Art, More Science: Transforming Foreign Policy through Evidence, Integrity, and Innovation* (fp21), and others.

Do any of us believe the State Department is performing at its potential?

This topic is personal for me. I joined the Foreign Service because I wanted to have an impact. But the bromides I heard

In today's State Department, tacit knowledge reigns supreme.

along the way about what it took to be a great diplomat left me skeptical. Effective diplomacy was (and still is) consistently described in highly ambiguous terms—as more an art than a science, requiring innate talent and gut instincts. But is the field of diplomacy really that subjective? I think not. Even art requires mastery of the fundamentals.

Let's face it. Merit does not thrive in an environment that lacks clear standards of success. Unclear standards may help explain why presidents continue to stuff Foggy Bottom full of outsiders despite the Foreign Service's insistence that careerists are best suited for the job. The solutions are straightforward but far from simple. The State Department must propagate a new vision of expertise grounded in evidence.

A New Culture of Decision-Making

Reforming the State Department and building a more modern policymaking process will take small but meaningful interventions at every stage of the decision process. Let's examine four stages: knowledge management, analysis and decision-making, tools for learning, and curriculum for vital skills.

Knowledge Management. First, knowledge for foreign policy needs to be made more explicit. Explicit knowledge is captured and written down, in contrast to tacit knowledge, which is more like “street smarts” and “common sense.” In today's State Department, tacit knowledge reigns supreme. State's overreliance on tacit knowledge explains the absence of handover procedures for its constantly rotating officials, the lack of prescribed doctrine to delineate best practices, and meager investment in research or training. Our current system of cables and policy memos does not cut it: Contributing to the flood of information, they are ephemeral, flashing bright before disappearing into the archives. Too much of the extraordinary knowledge gathered in our foreign missions is never used by policymakers.

An improved system of knowledge management would continually fortify a foundation of shareable, widely accessible knowledge for policymakers. It would allow knowledge to be easily organized, trained, evaluated, and replicated. It is the infrastructure on which policy success will be constructed.

Analysis and Decision-Making. Second, we can improve the analytical and decision-making prowess of the department. The methods policymakers use today to conduct analysis are

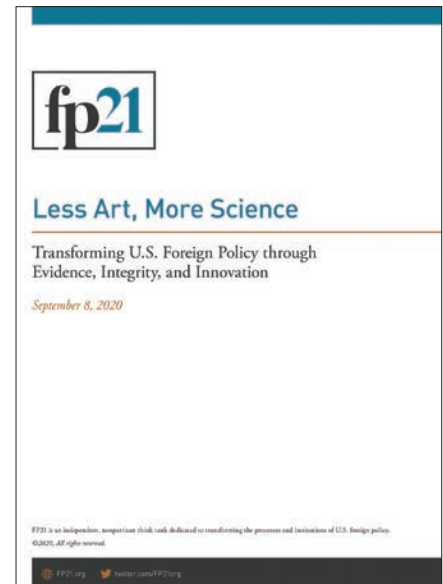
ad hoc and subjective. Decades of research on decision science and cognitive psychology offer opportunities to greatly improve the effectiveness of our decision-making.

The U.S. intelligence community has standards for good analysis that are codified and trained, while the State Department has none. Improved analytical standards and rigorous training at State will help distinguish today's diplomat from the arm-chair prognosticator. Some of this is already taking root at State, especially in the Center for Analytics, though its placement within the Office of the Under Secretary for Management rather than Political Affairs was an unfortunate choice. It suggests analysis is a service provided to decision-makers rather than a fundamental part of the policy process.

State should also implement a new clearance process that rewards analysis with the strongest evidentiary basis. Policy debates must be won not merely by the force of one's conviction or one's position in the hierarchy, but by the quality of one's evidence. An updated decision-making system can be an antidote to turf battles and risk aversion, and it can arrest the slide into politicization of the bureaucracy.

Research conducted on forecasting tournaments offers one exciting and research-backed approach for surfacing the people and methods with the best analytical accuracy. In a four-year study hosted in collaboration with the Director of National Intelligence, a team of trained forecasters outperformed professional intelligence analysts by 25 to 30 percent and beat the control group by 60 percent. Decisions in foreign policy are often built on assumptions about the future, and formalizing these forecasts may help test these assumptions and learn from the outcomes.

Tools for Learning. Third, diplomats need to design new systems for learning. Uncertainty is unavoidable, and one can never



be sure exactly how a policy will affect events on the ground—nobody expects perfection. But when the State Department neglects to examine a policy’s effectiveness, bureaucratic inertia will sustain a misguided approach for far too long.

Strong organizations learn from today’s successes and failures to improve the likelihood of success tomorrow. Fortunately, there are well-developed and tested tools to build a culture of learning. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, which are already ubiquitous in the programming space, are a good starting point. The U.S. military leans heavily on after-action reviews, and most government foreign assistance programs already incorporate M&E tools. Yet, strategic-level policymakers rarely use M&E systems to track the impact of their policies. The relentless pursuit of policy success—and an honest accounting of inevitable failures—can help restore trust between the Department of State, White House, and Congress.

The Department of State’s new “Learning Agenda” offers an exciting opportunity. Mandated by the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018, it is a systematic plan

to answer a set of policy-relevant questions critical to achieving the department’s strategic objectives. Atop the agenda is studying the effectiveness of senior-level diplomacy. Can you imagine how much the State Department would change if it were discovered the circumstances under which senior-level visits were and were not impactful? Can you imagine how much time, money, and resources would be suddenly made available?

The State Department should set a goal to become the most highly trained decision-makers in the U.S. government. Diplomacy’s competitive advantage in the interagency cannot derive from the number of its tanks or the size of its political constituency.

Curriculum for Vital Skills. Fourth, any improvement of the foreign policy process must begin and end with our most valuable resource: the officials who staff the organizations every day. But the skills associated with foreign policy expertise are ambiguous.

Take Ambassadors William Burns’ and Linda Thomas-Greenfield’s description of diplomacy’s “fundamentals,” for instance,







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The Department of State's new "Learning Agenda" offers an exciting opportunity.

in their 2020 article, "The Transformation of Diplomacy: How to Save the State Department." In their words, diplomats require "smart policy judgment" and a "feel for foreign countries." They must possess a "nuanced grasp of history and culture, a hard-nosed facility in negotiations, and the capacity to translate U.S. interests." Certainly this is all generally true, but Burns and Thomas-Greenfield (like the Department of State's promotion process) offer little guidance on what good judgment actually looks like. There's simply no framework for identifying real expertise.

This casts doubt on the efficacy of State's promotion process. While the Foreign Service's promotion precepts include categories such as substantive knowledge and intellectual ability, these qualities are rhetorically admirable but difficult to evaluate. Virtually no training or feedback is offered to improve one's substantive knowledge or intellectual abilities. The resulting evaluations are largely subjective, and there is little ability to compare between officers. In the absence of clear understanding of merit, it's predictable that diversity suffers as the system selects people who look and think in a homogenous way.

The Foreign Service Institute boasts an impressive array of class offerings, ranging from language training and area studies to consular procedures. But a core curriculum of vital skills necessary for success for diplomats remains absent. These skills deficits have contributed to State's marginalization in the policy process and an overreliance on military instruments of power.

For better or worse, Congress is getting involved. In the State Authorization Act signed into law in December 2022, Congress required new oversight and study of the training curriculum at the Foreign Service Institute, and "a comprehensive review of the policies, personnel, organization, and processes related to promotions within the Department [of State]" from the independent comptroller's office. The State Department's impulse will be to say, "Our current systems are perfect!"—but I hope it will take the opportunity to set a bolder vision for the future.

A more scientific foreign policy will demand new standards for hiring, promotion, and training. State should conduct longitudinal studies to identify the skills and competencies most associated with policy success. It should also develop more objective, comparable criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of our diplomats. Official and informal promotion procedures create powerful

incentives for how work gets done in an organization. New standards must help State promote the most effective staff, train personnel on today's most

effective skills, and recruit a diverse pool of talent.

More Science, Less Art

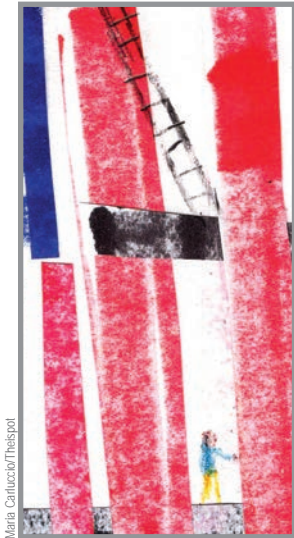
In recent years, experienced U.S. diplomats have warned of a "crisis" inside the State Department: "a reluctance to speak truth to power, a lack of individual accountability ... [and] an aversion to professional education and training." Two senior Biden administration officials argued in a Council on Foreign Relations study that a "decades-long failure to implement essential reforms" has produced a "policy environment that has, in some priority areas, evolved beyond the core competencies of most Foreign and Civil Service officers."

The modernization of the State Department and the return of diplomacy to its rightful place in the U.S. national security infrastructure—on top—will require more than small tweaks at the margins. Blinken's modernization initiative is commendable, but more is required.

A new organizational culture must relentlessly pursue policy success. Achieving this will require the practice of diplomacy to be a little more science, and a little less art. To be clear, science is not about producing magical right answers. Instead, science is merely a method of carefully accumulating knowledge. Features of a scientific process include an emphasis on testing theories rather than asserting them without evidence, establishing clear parameters of success, committing to methodological transparency, and continually learning from successes and failures. All of these features are largely absent from today's State Department, which relies too heavily on intuition rather than accumulated knowledge.

The good news is that State can implement most of these changes internally without any help from Congress or the president. That is more desirable than the alternative in which reform efforts are thrust upon it from the outside—sometimes inexpertly designed and often facing much internal opposition.

As this country's first executive agency, the State Department helped design a stable and secure world order. It houses an impressive array of public servants whose hard-earned expertise is born from years of experience, study, and training. American diplomats know a great deal about the world. Yet as the world grows more competitive and complex, the State Department must evolve apace. ■



Learning the Ropes Through Rotations

Entry-level diplomats can gain valuable experience with rotational job opportunities.

BY BEATRICE CAMP

The American Diplomacy Project (Phase II) released *Blueprints for a More Modern U.S. Diplomatic Service* in September 2022 designed to produce significant changes in the lives and careers of our diplomats and in the ways the United States executes its diplomacy. The project combines specific recommendations to support the creation of a more modern U.S. diplomacy with the legislative and regulatory language required to turn these ideas into realities.

The second of the four “blueprints” focuses on State Department professional education and training, with Ambassadors Joyce Barr and Daniel Smith as team leaders and principal authors. While there are many parts to this section, I was caught by one suggestion: “Overseas, there should also be more rotational job opportunities to enable all entry-level Foreign Service Generalists to spend extended periods of time in different sections of a mission.”



Beatrice Camp’s Foreign Service career took her to China, Thailand, Sweden, and Hungary, in addition to Washington, D.C., assignments at USIA, the State Department, and the Smithsonian Institution.

A Practical Proposal

The introduction, which argues for a training complement, aka training float, reads:

State Department leadership of American diplomacy in an increasingly complex and dangerous world depends on several factors, crucially including having personnel with the right skills, knowledge, and experience in the right places at the right time to advance American national security interests. This Blueprint makes specific proposals to enable the Department to make strategic and operationally relevant long-term investments in its people. This is essential if the Department expects to secure its role as the foreign policy lead for the U.S. Government.

- *While there may be a need to augment entry-level training, including with additional leadership training that FSI has identified, we believe the most constructive use of a training complement in this area would be to also provide greater opportunities for rotational assignments early in a career, whether Foreign Service or Civil Service.*

- *Domestically, this should include short-term assignments for Foreign Service personnel in various Department bureaus, especially functional bureaus, prior to their first overseas assignments. In addition, new Civil Service personnel need opportunities to spend time in other parts of the Department outside of their hiring bureau.*

The rotational proposal echoes a practice that those of us who were part of the now-defunct U.S. Information Agency benefited from.

• *Overseas, there should also be more rotational job opportunities to enable all entry-level Foreign Service Generalists to spend extended periods of time in different sections of a mission. Determining how this would work at each post should be part of the “right people in the right places” program covered in Blueprint #3. The Presidential Management Fellows program is an excellent model that builds a training continuum and a rotational opportunity or development assignment into a two-year program.*

This rotational proposal makes eminent sense, and echoes a practice that those of us who were part of the now-defunct U.S. Information Agency benefited from. After joining USIA in 1983 and being assigned to Beijing as a junior officer trainee (JOT), I was fortunate to have rotations that took me to the commercial, economic, and consular sections. I also profited from a stint in Shanghai, where I returned 25 years later as consul general.

Proven Benefits

In their oral histories recorded and catalogued by the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, retirees Don Bishop and Brian Carlson testify to the benefits of their rotations.

As Don Bishop states: “USIA had its own sequencing for the training of new Foreign Service Officers, different than State’s. New USIA FSOs were sent for one year to a training post, usually at one of our larger embassies. This was so the new officer could be exposed to all the different parts of Public Diplomacy, both on the ‘information’ and the ‘cultural affairs’ side. The year at the first post also included some months of rotation through State sections and the Foreign Commercial Service.

“Afterward, a new officer went on to a second post in a junior officer position, usually as an assistant information officer or assistant cultural affairs officer. Generally, I found that new State officers were jealous of the USIA system.”

Brian Carlson relates his experience thus: “I departed to

an assignment as a so-called ‘junior officer trainee’ in the American Embassy in Caracas. In those days a junior officer training assignment was for 12 months. It was ‘over complement’—meaning that you did not occupy an existing position

on the organization chart. It was intended to be a rotation among various jobs in the mission—both in USIA work (the cultural work, exchanges, the press side, and the binational center), as well as in different embassy sections (political, economic, administrative). In each section, a younger officer was assigned to be my ‘supervisor,’ and I was given some kind of assignment or project to work on.

“I always thought the JOT program of USIA was a good introduction, and I often thought more State Department junior officer positions suffered sometimes because they didn’t have the opportunity that USIA’s JOT had to move around and get different experience, to get a different experience, get a real insight into all aspects of the service.”

Other alums agree. In her oral history, Judith Bryan remarks: “My rotation in Tokyo included many embassy sections, which truly gave me insight into how an embassy works. Also subsections if a large USIS operation. Invaluable part of my training.”

Martin Quinn has this to say on the subject: “The former JO rotation policy was a very good one. I served 1984-1985 for two months each in Management, Consular, POL, Commercial and Econ sections in Riyadh, a well-run embassy, before returning to USIS. The perspective was absolutely invaluable.”

And Mary Ellen Gilroy echoes the sentiment: “My JOT rotation in Port-au-Prince was excellent preparation for future assignments as PAO and DCM. I spent a month in all the embassy sections, including USAID and MLO.”

Despite Occasional Roadblocks

Of course the rotational experience, which sometimes included a Washington, D.C., component, faced occasional roadblocks. Susan Clyde, who was head of Foreign Service Personnel for USIA before the 1999 merger, observed that the program depended on the goodwill of the people involved at the post, including a PAO willing to let a junior officer spend time in another section instead of doing public diplomacy work.



Maria Carlucci/TheSpot

“At the same time, many State heads of section saw no reason to waste their time, as they saw it, training an officer who was only going to be in their section for a couple of months, and likely would never do that kind of work again,” she explains in her

oral history. “It helped a lot if the DCM [deputy chief of mission] was on board and made sure it happened.”

When USIA was consolidated into the State Department in 1999, the department promised that it would carefully study USIA’s personnel practices and adopt its “best practices.” In the end, however, State did not opt to take on any of the USIA best practices identified by the transition team.

While the American Diplomacy Project blueprint makes clear that any expansion of training depends on a “training complement,” the USIA rotational experience is worth consideration.

Although participation was sometimes stymied by factors at post, USIA retirees universally cite the rotational program as a vital element in their early experiences as diplomats.

Although participation was sometimes stymied by factors at post, USIA retirees universally cite the rotational program as a vital element in their early experiences as diplomats.

As Gilroy notes: “In spite of technology, diplomacy is still a craft. We spend years learning how to cultivate contacts, report, and do outreach. We invest in years of training (language, tradecraft). It would be very helpful to the Foreign Service if we allowed our entry-level officers the chance to spend a year or two learning with practical hands-on work how our embassies function.” ■



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Meritocracy at State

Who Deserves What

How do we know who “deserves” to be admitted into the U.S. Foreign Service? An entry-level officer explores the question.

BY MARSHALL SHERRELL

did not pass the Foreign Service Officer Test (FSOT). Yet I am serving on my first overseas tour as a bright-eyed and bushy-tailed new Foreign Service officer in Israel. I came into this career as a growing number of diplomats at every level had before me: through the fellowship programs. Revered by some and disdained by others, these programs represent the primary “other” way of getting into the Foreign Service.

Fear of being ostracized or marginalized at the workplace has led countless Pickering and Rangel Fellows to go many years into their careers while keeping their status as fellows “in the closet.” The recent restructuring of the Foreign Service’s recruitment process with regard to the FSOT has brought to light a similar controversy.

Although the decision to restructure the testing and recruitment process of the Foreign Service was not made purely for reasons associated with diversity, equity, inclusion, and accountability (DEIA), recent changes in how the FSOT is weighed have drawn ire from some of the old guard who fear that these changes are more political than strategic, and will serve to undermine the fundamental goal of the recruitment process: bringing in the best

people for the job. In pursuit of this goal, they say, passing the FSOT is an indispensable first step.

They argue that the selection process for a job as vital as diplomacy needs to rise above quibbling over accessibility and instead focus on weeding out the unqualified to the benefit of our entire country. Putting aside the question of whether the FSOT helps to achieve this objective, I would like to interrogate the efficacy of the so-called meritocratic system we’re dealing with. How do we know who is legitimately qualified to be in the Foreign Service; who “merits” being chosen?

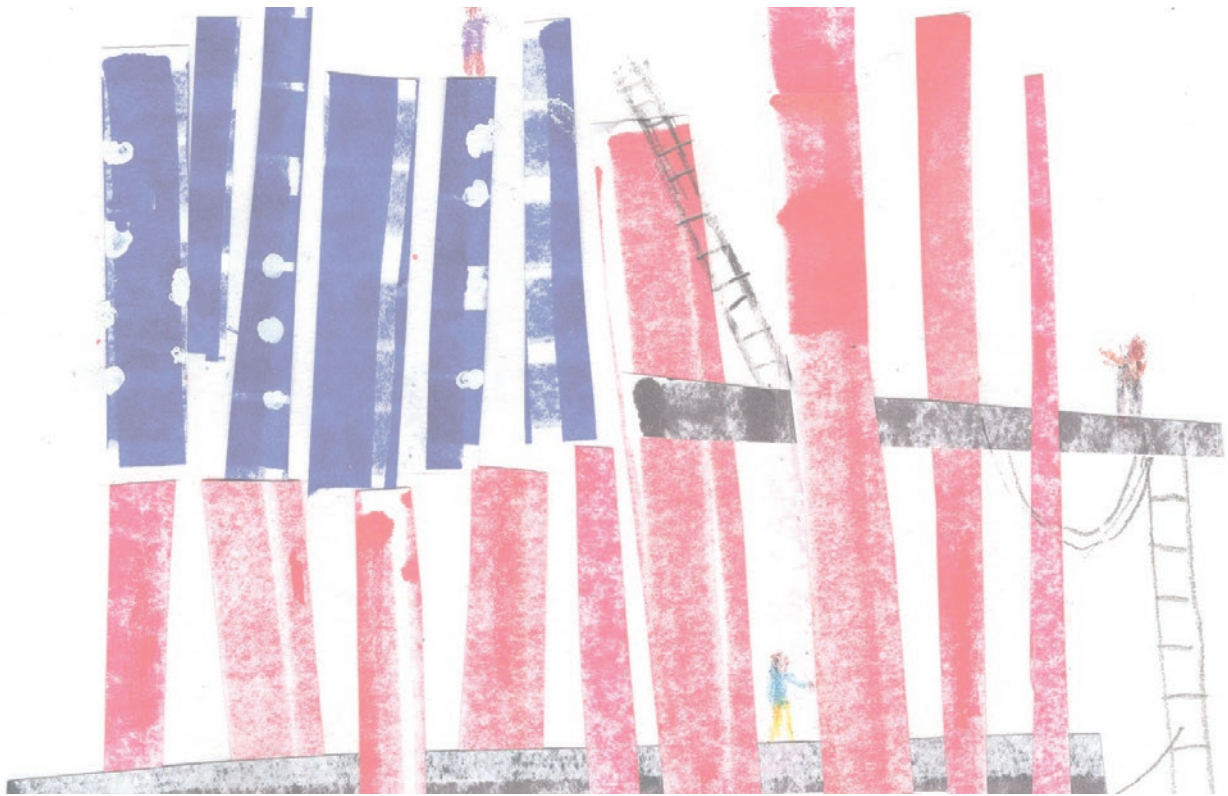
Testing and Recruitment Over Time

Look into the history of the Foreign Service’s testing and recruitment process, and you’ll find that it has changed dramatically over the years. In 1953 the Foreign Service Officer Assessment (FSOA) was an hour-long interview. Were the people who passed that version of the assessment (and are now either our bosses, or retired) less qualified than those who came after? Or perhaps those who passed the longer FSOA are actually more qualified? What about the days-long FSOT testing process that existed in the 1950s, as compared to the three-hour test most of us are familiar with? What of the “mustangs” who transitioned to the Foreign Service from the Civil Service without having to take the FSOT?

The Foreign Service has evolved and adapted its recruitment processes several times over the years. Just as some of those who are reading this might scoff at the notion of trivializing an applicant’s FSOT results, so you can also be sure that the generation



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before them had their share of scoffers decrying the then-new system they functioned in. It isn't hard to understand why: It's human nature to believe that one's own achievements are more remarkable than the achievements of others. If a system benefits us, we are likely to extol its virtues and to fight to retain that system because it's a part of our personal success story and therefore linked to our egos.

Whether or not the FSOT can be trusted as objective, it is only one step among many in the hiring process, the majority of which are more subjective. In the Qualifications Evaluation Panel (QEP) review (a step that was only established in 2007), candidates are first evaluated by a computer program, then by human beings who ultimately decide if they are compelled by what you wrote, or not. The FSOA also involves a panel of humans—notoriously biased as a species—evaluating you and your peers' responses in real time. Even security and suitability clearances can hinge on just how much scrutiny individual investigators might think your past misconduct merits. In short, *the recruitment process has never been purely meritocratic.*

What can we glean from an applicant's ability to perform well on a multiple-choice exam such as the FSOT? Certainly not any real knowledge of traits such as cultural adaptability, initiative and leadership, or working with others—some of the 13 dimensions the Foreign Service looks for. If the FSOT assessed candidates' prospects as well as intended, State wouldn't have created the QEP at all. Clearly, for all of the work that goes into getting the best people for the job, the recruitment process is still in need of fine-tuning.

Vetting Never Stops

As for who deserves to be here, I certainly don't know the answer. I can tell you that pathway programs such as the Pickering, Rangel, or Payne Fellowships are extremely competitive. I can tell you that they are open to most of the same applicants who came into the Service via the traditional route. I can tell you that I know FSOs who failed to pass the recruitment process for the fellowships, then found success by going through the traditional recruitment process, and vice versa. But none of that really determines who *deserves* to be here. That will be determined on the job.

I don't yet know whether I will ultimately succeed in this career. But in that regard, I'm no different than any other entry-level officer (ELO). If I succeed in this career, or if I fail, I will be in the company of many others who came before me, whether through the new FSOT, the old one, or neither. *The vetting process never really stops.*

The fact that tenure can only be achieved after ELOs have seen years of real-world experience as FSOs further illustrates this point. The State Department never believed that their own initial testing methods were sufficient to judge a candidate's potential. Some of you are on, or can remember being on, "language probation," the prospect of passing your next language evaluation looming as yet another test standing between you and the continued pursuit of your career. Even after tenure, the up-or-out promotion system is an ongoing test FSOs must pass, and then at some point compete for entrance into the Senior Foreign Service.

Finding truly qualified candidates and creating truly capable diplomats is an exceedingly difficult task precisely because

This emphasis on diversity is not merely to promote a moral imperative of wider inclusion: It's a strategic decision to better serve the interests of the State Department.

ours is a life and career for which there is no blueprint. If only it were as simple as passing a multiple-choice test; the department could save untold millions on recruitment, retention, and promotion simply by taking the highest-scoring candidates. Unfortunately, vetting the best candidates and creating the best diplomats are not so simple tasks.

As with all systems of stratification, those who benefited under the FSOT method of culling sometimes tend to advocate for the system that rewarded them. This does not, of course, mean that another system is inferior. I've already discussed how the FSOT has changed over the years in pursuit of something better. Unfortunately, change itself is often viewed with suspicion; even early automobiles once drew mockery from those who were used to a horse and carriage. Yet uncomfortable change is essential for development.

With A-100 relatively fresh in my memory, I can recall what one mentor said to my class: "The Foreign Service is aspirational." That is, the work we do is nearly impossible to quantify, and it is even more difficult to judge its efficacy. It adapts to new developments at home and abroad, looking for opportunities and striving toward new possibilities. At best, our work embodies the projection of hope onto a world that can look hopeless. How would one define the net value of wars that were never fought? Or of criminals turned away at visa lines?

I'm not going to try to define *effective* diplomacy because I think it's a loaded term. But I do know that doing the same things the same way produces the same results; and I do know that as an aspirational organization, the State Department will (hopefully) never cease to progress and innovate, even if sometimes at a snail's pace.

The Importance of Diversity

Part of that laborious innovation involves a push for wider inclusion. Rather than hyper-focusing on standardized tests to produce standardized diplomats, the State Department has increasingly sought a variety of experiences from its applicants

(in stark contrast to much of the rest of the world, where careers in diplomacy are still reserved for the well-connected). Where else but America could a 30-something former janitor like me take his hopes and his creative writing degree, and be given a chance to change both his own life and (aspirationally)

the wider world through this career?

This emphasis on diversity is not merely to promote a moral imperative of wider inclusion: It's a strategic decision to better serve the interests of the State Department in navigating through complex problems on the global stage ... because two heads are better than one only if they don't think the same things. This is why phrases like "strength in diversity" are more than inspirational quips.

We have a radically different brand of diplomacy because we are a radically different kind of country. No, our diplomacy is not standard. It's far from conventional. But convention has never been good enough for the greatest nation on earth. We seek, adapt, innovate, improvise, and lead. In this sense, U.S. diplomacy mirrors U.S. industry. In another sense, diplomacy is also representational; hence, the government doesn't hire FSOs on H1B visas to take our jobs (although many H1B visa holders would likely outperform us on the FSOT!).

Individual merit and wider representation have always been coexistent factors in FSO selection. The difference today is that the State Department has recently begun to see how much more varied talent is available to them if they remove a few of the rigid fixtures that historically led a very specific "type" into Foreign Service work.

Seeking a wider scope of knowledge and experience led State to recruit former Shakespearean actors, orphans adopted from Kazakhstan (both being among my personal friends and colleagues), and even me. It's not that Georgetown grads with degrees in Foreign Service are no longer needed, or that either pathway to this career is better than the other. Rather it is precisely because our disparate paths, experiences, and bodies of knowledge add great breadth and depth to U.S. diplomacy.

But suppose that I'm wrong. If the State Department made a mistake in hiring any one of us, they will have ample opportunity to rectify it. Conversely, if we prove our merit in the field, that is the greatest and perhaps only real proof that any of us deserve to be here. ■



Maria Carluccio/TheSpot

Why Senior Leaders Cannot Reform the State Department

A close look at aspects of State Department culture that stand in the way of professional development and leadership training.

BY JOHN FER

Ten years ago, Kori Schake, a former political appointee deputy director for policy planning at the State Department, wrote *State of Disrepair*, a critical look aimed at improving our organization. While coverage of the book was sparse, those who did react (including one review in the October 2012 *FSJ*) acknowledged that the book hit on some important points, yet disagreed with Schake's central claim that operating more like the military would solve most of State's problems.

In the decade since its publication, not much in the State Department has changed. Schake's assessments seemed well intentioned, written by someone who cares about how the United States projects power, both militarily and diplomatically. In fact, most State employees would likely agree with her top recommendations: invest in professional development and advocate for the organization by building better relationships with Congress and its constituents.



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However, the reason nothing has changed since Schake wrote the book can be explained in a syllogism that she herself sets in motion:

- The State Department is dominated by political appointees.
- Political appointees focus on policy over professional development.
- Therefore, State cannot be changed for the better by political appointees or by high-ranking career officers who seek to please them.

Though Schake does not say it explicitly, a political appointee could not possibly understand State's culture enough to change it; nor could senior-ranking officers who embrace the "policy over professional development" ethic. In this piece, I will try to argue why it's up to us—those in mid-level positions (both Civil Service and Foreign Service) and locally employed (LE) staff—to make State a more effective organization and a better place to work.

How Appointees See State

In *State of Disrepair*, Schake describes career State employees as thin-skinned and inert, as smart, but content to *not* challenge or develop our intelligence or skill sets. She frames us with a quote from former Secretary of State Dean Acheson: "[The State Department] never did find its place. My memory (perhaps an unfair or incomplete one) is of a department without direction, composed of a lot of busy people working hard and usefully but as a whole not functioning as a foreign office."

She sharpens the point, noting: "Fully half of the ambassadors at U.S. missions are political appointees. They are selected because of their commitment to the current president's program, not their ability to conform to the standards of the Foreign Service. And overwhelmingly, politically appointed diplomats view the career Foreign Service as impediments to the president's agenda, not allies in its advancement."

These appointees include the Secretary of State and hundreds of appointed staffers, whom Schake also indicts: "Typically, secretaries of state invest little in the professionalization of the department. Instead, they spend all their time on policies rather than the functioning of the institution."

She notes the noble efforts of Secretaries Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, and Hillary Clinton (Diplomatic Readiness Initiative, Transformational Diplomacy, and Diplomacy 3.0), but adds: "What none of them proved successful at has been substantially affecting the culture of the State Department such that it responded to their priorities."

But what is the culture of the State Department? Schake takes a stab: "The people who are successful in the State Department are

people who can be thrown in the deep end of the swimming pool and not drown; but the department never teaches them how to swim, and the successful ones even come to discredit the value of swimming lessons, because they succeeded without them."

Here is the limit of Schake's analysis, by her own admission as a political appointee herself. It is where we, as State's career employees, should pick up the torch and take ownership.

Reframing and Reforming State Culture

While the Director General (DG) and under secretary for management (M) are charged with instituting and improving professional development in the department, most State employees could not likely identify any organizationwide effects of their efforts. This may be because the DG and M do not see that there are glaring problems with State's culture of leadership; and this may be due to the fact that they are surrounded by staff who tell them that they are doing an amazing job. This predicament is a good illustration of State's culture.

The first step is to understand the prevailing ethos in our culture, "managing up," and then to discourage its most toxic mutations. Political appointees could spend multiple terms in State and still not understand how department employees apply "managing up" to their daily work and career advancement. A Harvard Business School article gives this definition of the concept: "Perhaps the most important skill to master is figuring out how to be a genuine source of help—because managing up doesn't mean sucking up. It means being the most effective employee you can be, creating value for your boss and your company. That's why the best path to a healthy relationship begins and ends with doing your job and doing it well."

That's fine in organizations that have clearly defined missions and core values (the Department of Defense and successful businesses, for example); but at State, where we are regularly reoriented according to the latest agenda of political appointees, the most ambitious of us (in an organization full of ambitious types) fall back on the baser impulses of what it means to manage up. This metastasizes into hypercompetitive behavior, overreliance on "staffer skills," and, at its worst, the practice of "kiss up, kick down."

One need only look at our evaluation processes and results to see that instilling a hypercompetitive, "walk-on-water" culture is damaging to the organization. It incentivizes us to groom word-smiths who model their evaluations (rather than their behavior) to the promotion precepts. Some of the worst officers I know in this organization are some of its better writers when it comes to articulating the precepts boards key on.

In an explanatory anecdote, when President Donald Trump

was pushing for a wall on our southern border, a Border Patrol agent gave an interview, saying: “The minute you build a 12-foot wall, there’s going to be a sale on the other side of 13-foot ladders.” Similarly at State, no matter how we change the precepts to include “leadership” or “institution building,” it may simply encourage greater wordsmithing to convince the promotion boards, regardless of veracity, that this is happening.

Another indicator of the perversion of managing up is the dominance of “staffer” career tracks, ones in which senior leaders arrive at the pinnacles of their careers not by leading and managing others, but by jumping from staff job to staff job, chasing the highest-profile principals to get better jobs and be promoted. In many cases, this results in a corps of high-ranking career State people who have no idea (in the sense of leadership forged in battle) how they became in charge. (They can explain their career progression eloquently in writing, but their behavior on the ground when faced with leadership challenges often tells a very different story.)

This lack of experience comes at the expense of the people in the organization. A staffer who rises to the top without being

tempered by leadership training and experience will seek other staffers to get the job done, perpetuating a cycle of subservient, please-thy-boss-at-all-cost behavior that is, again, damaging to the organization.

Pleasing one’s boss is important, but not when it comes at the expense of those at the working level. At State, where the consequences of our actions (outside consular work) rarely result in immediate loss of life or declining revenue, this behavior is tolerated at best, embraced in the worst cases. It makes our organization one that cultivates selfishness.

We frequently hear at every level, “No one is advocating for you. Only you can take care of your EER, your career.” This ethos also intrudes into our hiring practices. How often do managers go beyond cherry-picked 360-degree evaluations to actually investigate who is angling for which jobs and how those candidates could affect the missions to which they will be assigned? Even one’s résumé and personal statement can be tailored to the “no one is looking out for you” credo. Think of the implications if a significant number of State’s most successful officers believe that

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The first step is to understand the prevailing ethos in our culture, “managing up,” and then to discourage its most toxic mutations.

neither the organization nor their fellow officers are looking out for them, that they got where they are because of looking out for number one.

In an organization in which one can become a deputy chief of mission or ambassador after only three weeks of mandatory leadership training in a career, how could we possibly develop, unless by accident, into effective leaders? When we don’t give hiring managers the time and resources to really look into who will be selected, when we allow high-ranking leaders to deliver favors in the way of plum jobs to staffers, we again encourage this damaging culture that dominates our ranks.

Schake says we should be more like the military, which is also an organization that is (usually) led by politically appointed civilians. However, military servicemembers, from the top general to an entry-level enlistee, understand, usually embrace, and hone their commitment to the culture of leadership. Consider the contrast: Foreign Service officers are commissioned after a few weeks of orientation, whereas military officers go through rigorous training that continues their entire careers.

In the military, where the average person spends close to a third of their career in training, you are taught that you are *always* in a position of leadership, at any level, because you can lead by example. You can lead your peers, and you can demonstrate to the communities surrounding your installation that you are a leader. What is second nature in soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, is an afterthought for most diplomats.

How Do We Change It? Don’t Start at the Top

Good organizations focus on professional development. State does not focus on professional development. Finish the syllogism. These are not new observations. Similarly, the excuses for our professional failings are trite and worn out: no time for a training float? Of course, there’s no time when you focus on policy over professional development. That’s why our current senior leadership cannot be expected to enact meaningful change in this regard.

Those who have risen the ranks in a faulty system may be reluctant to say there was anything wrong with it. I’m not saying that those at the top are bad leaders; however, because they rose through a system that did not didactically test their leadership

abilities, their current success could disincentivize them to point out flaws and make improvements.

In April 2021, I and 49 other Foreign Service and Civil Service officers graduated from

the inaugural cohort of the Secretary’s Leadership Seminar. We presented our capstone projects to a group of senior ambassadors, one of whom remarked that it was *amazing* that FS-2s and GS-14s were thinking so actively and creatively about how to change the department for the better. Many of us laughed about it later, saying, “This is an average Tuesday” in the mid-level of the State Department; we are *always* thinking about things like these.

State’s lack of leadership culture blunts our abilities and blights our better impulses. This is not the fault of the current or past leaders, but they cannot be counted on to be the ones to change it. We have to be humble enough to empower mid-level officers and LE staff, and they should be given the time and top cover to do it.

I close with one recommendation: Empower a corps of mid-level Civil Service and Foreign Service officers and LE staff, selected by their peers (this core group can add others at various ranks if they desire), with the mandate and authority to improve our culture of leadership in the department by chewing on problems most of us agree on, such as:

- How can we institute a career-long focus on training and development while also accomplishing State’s vital missions?
- How can we better value (and utilize) the backbone (70 percent) of State’s workforce, LE staff?
- How should we assess and promote those who show good leadership skills instead of good staffer skills?
- How can we use “manage up” to bring out the best in everyone in the organization?

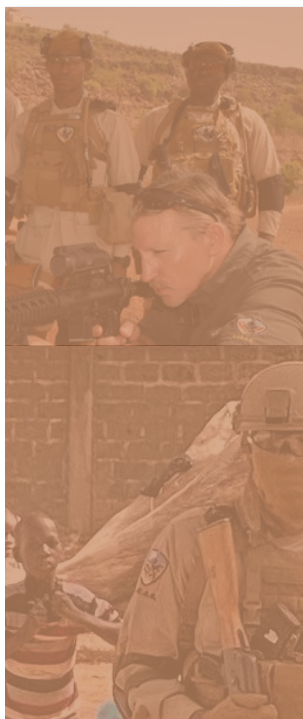
The State Department has no shortage of working groups, which produce a surplus of takeaways, do-outs, and deliverables. (I’m sure there are currently three such groups working on every problem I identify in this article.) What we are lacking is the will to change for the better and a tipping-point-style action to put changes into effect. This new group needs S-level top cover to be able to recommend sweeping changes that the Secretary can approve and fast track. By empowering a group of leadership change agents, State’s current political leadership could leave a legacy just as significant as the good policies they are pursuing; they could be the architects of a new culture of leadership, making State a better and more effective place to work. ■

Mali's SPEAR Team

Protecting U.S. Diplomats at a Dangerous Post

A special program bolsters security at embassies and consulates in challenging environments. DSS special agents explain SPEAR and how it works in Mali.

BY KYLE ANDREASEN



Mali lies on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert, a crossroads of ancient transit routes as well as modern-day extremist groups. The region has long been divided by clashing factions, but violence over the past decade has escalated. Since 2019, the West African country has experienced social unrest, a military coup, a reconsolidation of military power, and ongoing terrorist threats—making Bamako among the most dangerous posts in the State Department. The size of the U.S. diplomatic presence has varied in recent years given the nation's pervasive instability.

When Ambassador Dennis B. Hankins first took his post in Mali in January 2019, he began attending international gatherings with U.S. Embassy Bamako's sizable security entourage. Some diplomats from other nations, he noted in an interview, would roll their eyes and say something along the lines of, "Here comes the ugly American with all his security."

But, by early 2022, half a dozen diplomats of other countries had assured Ambassador Hankins that it would not be safe to attend international gatherings *without* the professional, reassuring presence of his U.S. embassy security teams. This security presence relies on the Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) Special Program for Embassy Augmentation and Response (SPEAR),



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which establishes dedicated 24/7 forces of host nation law enforcement officers to help prevent and counter attacks on U.S. diplomatic facilities.

Basics of the Program

In 2014 DSS created the SPEAR program as a response to the 2012 attacks on the U.S. Special Mission in Benghazi, Libya. The program is managed by the DSS Office of Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA), which also implements a range of programs to provide ongoing training and equipment for foreign law enforcement personnel. (See the sidebar for more detail.)

The SPEAR program's goal is to identify and train specialized law enforcement units in partner nations to protect U.S. diplomatic personnel, often serving as a quick-reaction force. These units augment U.S. Marine Security Guards and other embassy security personnel. During an emergency, each team has its own respective charges; SPEAR's role is to respond from outside the embassy or consulate walls. Accordingly, SPEAR teams participate in relevant drills and exercises to develop a high degree of interoperability with other security elements. Regional Security Office (RSO) SPEAR mentors handpick the specially trained local host country law enforcement officers who make them up.

Ambassador Hankins has seen firsthand the benefits of the SPEAR program. "There are parts of our mission that couldn't function without SPEAR," he observed as he prepared to attend a quiet gathering in May 2022 to honor two SPEAR officers who had been killed in host nation combat operations two months earlier. (The two fallen officers were not on embassy protection duties at the time of their deaths but instead had been activated by their parent National Guard unit to serve a combat rotation.)

Bamako is among three State Department posts that experience the highest risk levels for crime, political



The ATA mentor assigned to the Mali SPEAR team demonstrates marksmanship on a shooting range in May 2022.

violence, and terrorist threats. The other posts are Baghdad and Mogadishu, both of which have a notably higher Department of Defense presence and more robust security resources than does Bamako, as noted by Regional Security Officer David Howell.

SPEAR in Mali: Baptism by Fire

Created in 2015, the SPEAR team in Bamako has been one of the program's most important successes. The team's 62 officers are drawn from Mali's National Guard, but also have law

enforcement authority and serve as professional role models within the Malian community. Mali's SPEAR team conducts regular security drills and frequent walk-throughs of potential target locations, actions that let the Malian community see SPEAR's professionalism firsthand. Local police have noted that crime rates are reduced in areas regularly patrolled by SPEAR.

The Mali SPEAR team underwent a baptism by fire shortly after its creation. In November 2015, terrorists attacked the Radisson Blu hotel, a major focal point for Bamako's international community. An American development worker was killed in the initial assault. The SPEAR team and DSS special agents with the U.S. Embassy Regional Security Office, along with Department of Defense personnel, worked side by side to rescue more than a dozen Americans, including embassy staff, trapped in their rooms by terrorists.



Children follow SPEAR officers on patrol in Bamako, Mali, in May 2022.

SPEAR: The Nuts and Bolts

BY LEE GITSCHIER

The Special Program for Embassy Augmentation and Response (SPEAR), managed by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Diplomatic Security Service, Office of Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA), was established following the 2012 attacks against U.S. facilities in Benghazi, Libya. The program creates dedicated 24/7 quick reaction forces of host nation law enforcement officers to prevent and counter attacks against U.S. diplomatic facilities and personnel in high-risk environments. These local quick-response forces can react within minutes to emergencies and threats to U.S. consulates and embassies and provide additional security support for these facilities.

Today, SPEAR is a critical security element at more than a dozen U.S. embassies and growing, providing regional security officers a force multiplier capable of rapid emergency response, day-to-day protection of personnel, and an essential conduit between the embassy and host nation law enforcement.

How It Works

ATA trains, equips, and mentors the host nation officers who make up the SPEAR team. Prior to starting a SPEAR program, ATA conducts a thorough assessment of host nation capacity, unique embassy security needs, and the broader threat environment. SPEAR team members are handpicked from elite host nation law enforcement units. Selected officers undergo extensive training in advanced techniques to enable them to respond to wide-ranging crises, from terrorist attacks to basic medical emergencies. Their training provides the tactical and soft skills to resolve incidents while respecting human rights and employing the appropriate use of force to preserve life. Because of this, SPEAR members often are viewed by their fellow citizens as being among the most capable, most respected security professionals in their home countries.

All SPEAR units have an embedded ATA mentor, an American citizen with extensive tactical experience who provides day-to-day training, subject matter expertise, and oversight. These mentors live and train alongside SPEAR units in a strictly advisory capacity to deepen bilateral ties and increase interoperability. ATA equips SPEAR units with a wide range of specialized equipment from individual and team tactical gear to vehicles and special facilities where teams stage and coordinate crisis response.

To ensure maximum readiness and interoperability, SPEAR units train regularly with embassy security forces and other host nation first responders. At most embassies, SPEAR

teams conduct regular day-to-day patrols and provide a visible security presence for U.S. diplomatic activities. SPEAR teams also participate in large-scale exercises based on real-world scenarios, to further hone skills under pressure and promote interoperability with key counterparts. Joint readiness exercises, for example, practice attack responses alongside embassy security and other host nation first responders.

Throughout and after their tours of duty with SPEAR, officers regularly share their newly acquired knowledge and skills with their host nation units. Within each team, select members are trained as instructors to administer training to host nation police agencies. Cycling SPEAR team members through the program and back into their home units strengthens the host nation's capability to respond to crises and deepens its relationship and interoperability with the United States.

A Powerful Platform

SPEAR's approach of pairing knowledge, training, equipment, and mentorship with integration into host nation law enforcement provides a powerful platform to enhance embassy security and strengthen host nation capability to respond to crises. Since its inception, SPEAR has trained more than 700 police officers in participating countries. This number continues to grow as new partner countries are identified to participate in the program.

SPEAR teams support U.S. diplomatic missions in Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Benin.

SPEAR teams have successfully responded to terrorist attacks, stopped crimes in progress near diplomatic residences, and helped save lives in numerous countries. Beyond keeping U.S. diplomatic facilities open during civil and political unrest, SPEAR teams routinely accompany U.S. diplomatic convoys to unstable regions, provide security during election monitoring, and enhance security for major diplomatic events.

Working together, the United States and its host nation partners are committed to countering the threat of terrorism, advancing U.S. objectives, and protecting civilians.



Lee Gitschier is a Diplomatic Security Service supervisory special agent and SPEAR branch chief.



DSS/ATA

U.S. Ambassador to Mali Dennis Hankins speaks with family members and SPEAR officers during a memorial service May 12, 2022, for two U.S. embassy SPEAR officers who were killed in a terrorist attack while on a Mali National Guard rotation.



DSS/ATA

Two Malian SPEAR officers hug after the May 12, 2022, memorial service for their fellow officers killed in the line of duty.

The team continued to be tested. In June and July 2020, growing numbers of protestors began demonstrating against the Malian government over myriad security and economic issues. Political violence led to several civilians being killed by security forces in one Bamako neighborhood. In August 2020, a group of military officers overthrew the Malian government. In October 2020, that group ceded power to a transition government, after which another former officer consolidated power in 2021. Hopes for speedy elections to return to civilian governance were dashed, but in June 2022, the transition authorities announced plans to hold elections no later than March 2024.

Within 24 hours of the 2020 coup, the U.S. Embassy Regional Security Office was in contact with SPEAR members who confirmed their dedication to continuing their embassy protection mission. The embassy soon was in direct contact with coup leaders, who assured that SPEAR members would remain impartial and focused on their mission to protect the U.S. diplomatic community. Significantly, when SPEAR unit members remained loyal

to their mission of protecting Americans, their actions helped avoid the need for an ordered departure and allowed diplomats to continue their work.

Due to the increasingly challenging threat environment in Bamako, marked by an attack directly outside the city on July 22, 2022, traveling outside the capital requires extensive preparation and almost always includes a SPEAR team escort. According to a DSS special agent on the RSO staff, “They [SPEAR] enable us to conduct diplomacy in a pretty grim environment.”

Advantages and Challenges

The SPEAR program has several advantages over deploying U.S. personnel to high-risk locations. First, under international law, host nations have the primary responsibility for protecting foreign diplomats. Second, local law enforcement officers have a deep cultural and legal understanding of their domestic communities. These officers can reduce local tensions and threats, whereas the temporary deployment of outside security forces can heighten them.

The reputation of SPEAR also generates confidence back in Washington, D.C., because it alleviates concerns about evacuating mission members during frequent changes in the threat level.

SPEAR exists to serve the security interests of U.S. diplomatic missions in higher risk environments, where host nations benefit from increased support to respond to crisis events. Implementing and maintaining the programs requires strong cooperation between the respective embassy or consulate and host nation authorities. Terms of the partnership are agreed to in a nonbinding memorandum of understanding executed between the two governments.

SPEAR programs are cost and labor intensive. They are not appropriate for every post; but for the posts that require them, SPEAR provides an unparalleled resource to augment embassy security programs. ■

AFSA SURVEY RESULTS

The Future of Foreign Service Work

AFSA's Survey on the Future of Foreign Service Work (FFSW), which took place in September, received almost 2,000 responses, the most of any recent AFSA survey.

The FFSW asked questions related to telework and remote work; the future composition of the Foreign Service; career expectations; diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility; mission orientation; leadership accountability; and the role of technology.

Telework/Remote Work. Members generally supported more telework, and many who were currently not permitted to telework voiced a wish to do so. Sixty-six percent of respondents chose flexibility as the chief benefit of telework; efficiency gains was the next most important benefit, cited

by 29 percent of respondents.

Two-thirds of respondents complained that the current available technology is not reliable, capable, or nimble enough to maximize the benefits of telework. Multiple members also noted that today's offices (especially overseas) are not set up for hybrid work; many cited having to exit classified space to take video calls.

On disadvantages, respondents most often cited a perceived loss of esprit de corps and less access to decision-makers. Some lamented the loss of ad hoc problem-solving sessions. Newer Foreign Service members said the possible loss of situational

Continued on page 50

Pay Equity Victory for CS DETOs

On Dec. 23, 2022, in a significant milestone for Foreign Service–Civil Service tandem couples, President Joe Biden signed legislation that fixes the pay disparity for federal employees working under domestic employee telework overseas (DETO) agreements.

As part of the bipartisan National Defense Authorization Act, the Civil Service Federal Employee Serving Overseas Pay Equity Act ensures that covered employees will receive locality pay, benefiting hundreds of military and Foreign Service families with spouses teleworking for the federal government from abroad.

AFSA, in conjunction with employee organizations Balancing Act and Working in Tandem, advocated for this crucial change as DETO

agreements became more common during the pandemic and is pleased to see it codified.

Domestic federal Civil Service employees previously earned a base salary with a locality pay adjustment based on the cost of living of the location where they are serving. The adjustment begins at 16.2 percent for civil servants living in the lowest cost-of-living areas in the United States and can reach up to 42.74 percent for those living in the most expensive areas of the country.

However, civil servants working abroad under DETO arrangements—often military or Foreign Service spouses who receive permission to telework abroad when their spouse is stationed overseas—could not receive

locality pay, regardless of the cost of living in their telework location.

The strength of the DETO program has a significant impact on the ability of the Civil and Foreign Service to retain mid-career workers. The sizable pay cuts faced by civil servants who move abroad can push them to leave federal service for the private sector or leave the workforce altogether.

The Civil Service Federal Employee Serving Overseas Pay Equity Act requires members of the Civil Service under a DETO agreement to be paid the locality pay that is the lower of either what they would have been paid in the United States or what a member of the Foreign Service at an equivalent level serving overseas is paid. ■

CALENDAR

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

March 3
Deadline for members to be in good standing to be eligible to vote in AFSA Governing Board election

March 13
Deadline: AFSA Scholarship Applications

March 15
12-2 p.m.
AFSA Governing Board Meeting

March 29
12-1 p.m.
Virtual AFSA Governing Board Election Town Hall

April 3
Deadline: High School Essay Contest Submissions

April 3
AFSA Board Election Ballots Mailed

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

April 19
12-2 p.m.
AFSA Governing Board Meeting

April TBD
Diplomats at Work

May 4
AFSA Foreign Service Day Events

May 5
Foreign Service Day



AFSA Wins in the New Year

AFSA was happy to see that some of our priority initiatives were acted on, or at least showed serious progress, at the end of 2022 and into the new year.

First, in early January 2023, as we had hoped, **the department approved our proposal for an additional full-time AFSA elected position that will deal primarily with the issues and concerns of specialists, for a two-year monitoring period.** (Please see my column in the January-February 2023 *Foreign Service Journal* for more.)

As of this writing in mid-January, we have included this position in our call for elections for the 2023-2025 AFSA election period. We hope there will be a strong and diverse group of candidates who choose to run.

Second, as one of his last official actions before departing office at the end of December, outgoing **Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources (D-MR) Brian McKeon approved the establishment of a new Office of Bullying and Harassment Intervention within GTM.**

This is something that AFSA has championed for a long time. As I have written in the past, the department needs an office that is devoted exclusively to stopping bullying behavior and toxic work environments. Only in that way can we

Retroactive commissioning of those who receive tenure but have had that held will also resume.

change a work culture that has often turned a blind eye and encouraged waiting for an offender to move on.

Third, **the State Department informed AFSA in early January that the White House had approved the resumption of retroactive promotions.** This is a welcome and long overdue decision.

Beginning in January 2017, the White House ceased the long-standing practice of awarding retroactive promotions to members of the Senior Foreign Service whose promotion had been delayed due to an administrative error or open investigation or discipline case.

On Jan. 4 we learned that the White House has approved resumption of retroactive Foreign Service promotions. Retroactive commissioning of those who receive tenure but have had that held will also resume.

Tenuring and promotion across the senior threshold require White House involvement in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee attestation and confirmation process. Note that retroactive promotions for other grades were not affected.

This is great news for those who have had tenure or

SFS promotions held in abeyance for a variety of reasons, including pending investigations, which sometimes take years to conclude.

AFSA still has questions about how the decision will be implemented, however. Will those affected between 2017 and 2023 be automatically included in the process, or will they need to request consideration? Will retroactive promotions just resume going forward? AFSA has pushed strongly for the department to include all those affected. To do otherwise would miss an opportunity to truly right this injustice.

Fourth, **as a result of our advocacy, the department is now in the process of putting funding for emergency back-up care (EBUC) on a more permanent footing.** AFSA knows that our members rely on EBUC, which provides temporary help with dependent care, including for oneself.

For a number of years, domestically assigned direct hire Foreign and Civil Service employees and their eligible family members have been able to access EBUC services for dependents through the Work Life For You (WL4Y) program. The department managed

to scrape together funds from other sources to keep this critical program going, but hadn't had a designated funding mechanism.

In Fiscal Year 2021, GTM secured additional funding due to the COVID-19 pandemic and was able to increase the EBUC available for dependent care from 5 days to 10 days through the end of that fiscal year. It then reduced that number to 5 days in 2022.

Concurrently, there had been discussions within State about whether appropriated funds could be used at all to provide these services. The fact that the WL4Y contractor had increased prices over the years further complicated the funding issue.

GTM has temporarily suspended all EBUC services so it can implement any necessary changes to meet legal requirements and ensure that the department can continue providing EBUC services in the future. (Please see 22 STATE 137860.)

By the time this column is published, the department will have announced these changes. AFSA fully expects that EBUC will continue to provide support to our members and all employees in need.

Please let us know what you think about these issues by writing us at member@afsa.org. ■



The Future of the Foreign Service at USAID: More Questions Than Answers

I have written quite a few pieces on the “quantitative” challenges related to USAID’s Foreign Service, e.g., the relatively small size of the FS cadre, the dearth of senior FS positions at the assistant administrator, deputy assistant administrator, “senior adviser” level, and other Washington-based positions.

These are not new challenges. And to its credit, the agency is seeking to increase hiring of career FSOs, engaging in robust outreach to traditionally underrepresented communities.

But for this column, I want to move away from the numbers and share a few thoughts and questions on more “qualitative” aspects of USAID’s Foreign Service. Please share your feedback, insights, and ideas with me.

Through the Foreign Service Act of 1980 (still my favorite act so far), Congress provides some clarity on the “why” of the Foreign Service: “The scope and complexity of the foreign affairs of the Nation have heightened the need for a professional foreign service that will serve the foreign affairs interests of the United States in an integrated fashion and that can provide a resource of qualified personnel for the President, the Secretary of State, and the agencies concerned with foreign affairs.”

Congress further affirms that the Foreign Service “must be preserved, strengthened, and improved in order to carry out its mission effectively in response to the complex challenges of modern diplomacy and international relations.”

(A quick aside: On his second day in office, President Joe Biden declared: “It is the policy of the United States to protect, empower, and rebuild the career Federal workforce.” So, Congress in 1980: “Preserve, strengthen, and improve.” President Biden in 2021: “Protect, empower, and rebuild.”)

USAID’s career site says this: “Our Foreign Service Officers address global challenges in our overseas offices and in Washington, D.C. Foreign Service Officers apply their technical knowledge, program design, management, and evaluation expertise to promote and demonstrate democratic values abroad, and advance a free, peaceful, and prosperous world.”

That sounds pretty good. But it is extremely broad; USAID has never had the luxury to prioritize, making defining FSO roles and career pathways challenging.

What are the “best” roles for FSOs compared to other USAID colleagues, implementing partners, interagency colleagues, and other local and international stakeholders?

How will increased localization change these roles, including for FSOs?

These are good, necessary, and, in many cases, decades-old questions that do not have a fixed, single answer—and that is okay. We work in complex, ever-changing environments both at home and in the field, and as development experts, we are often change leaders.

Currently, the agency is highlighting a “progress beyond programs” theme, as in Administrator Samantha Power’s May 2022 speech (see www.bit.ly/PowerSpeech522). Within the context of AFSA’s role as the principal advocate for the long-term institutional well-being of the professional career Foreign Service, I was struck by a remark by Power: “Instead of working hand-in-hand with partners, communities, and governments, building the relationships that are so crucial to driving progress, our teams these days are more often tied to their desks, robbed of the opportunity to leave their offices and do what they joined this field to do.”

This sounds all too familiar to FSOs.

So how do we get “out there,” or at least away from our desks? How do we move away from a USAID where too many FS policies, procedures, and operations are designed around an assumption

of shortages—shortages of career FSOs; operating expense (OE) funds; training slots and details; and professional growth opportunities?

Are we having meaningful discussions about the role of USAID FSOs? Should we be hiring FSOs for their technical expertise in health, governance, climate, education, etc., only to require many to serve as contracting officer and agreement officer representatives (CORs/AORs)?

Should USAID be represented in countries by contractors, or should we name more FS senior development advisers to serve as “development diplomats”?

Do we have robust succession planning capacity as part of our nascent strategic workforce planning? Do we have too many backstops? Not enough?

Does the USAID Foreign Service need to be “pyramidal-shaped” in terms of ranks, or does it not matter given our operating model?

With a USAID seat at the National Security Council and an ever-expanding role, are we recruiting, training, and developing the right skillsets in FSOs to meet development challenges? Are we sufficiently supporting FSOs and their families as they carry out their duties?

Whether with answers or simply more questions, I look forward to hearing from you. ■



Authorizations and Funding Outcomes

For the second year in a row, Congress was able to pass a comprehensive State Department Authorization Act by attaching it to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which followed nearly 20 years without passing one. AFSA reported the notable State Authorization provisions in our December 2022 advocacy update, found at www.bit.ly/Dec22Advocacy (members only link), including AFSA's legislative wins.

Since the passage of the Foreign Service Families Act in late 2021, AFSA has sought to build on its previous wins and advocated a new set of priorities to meet the congressional focus on modernization. In early 2022, AFSA's Governing Board crafted Foreign Service reform priorities (see www.bit.ly/FSreform), which serve as goals for our modernization-based advocacy.

The 2022 State Department Authorization Act was a vehicle for provisions related to AFSA's reform priorities and easing hardships stemming from life in the Foreign Service. The themes of professional training and leadership accountability for the Foreign Service, both AFSA priorities, were highlighted in the act.

For example, a provision encouraging those seeking entry into the Senior Foreign Service to participate in professional development outside the department for

six or more months was included in this year's bill.

An example of leadership accountability is a provision prescribing an annual, voluntary, and fully anonymous survey offered to all staff assigned to a post who are U.S. citizens (excluding the chief of mission) to assess the management and leadership of that post by the chief of mission, the deputy chief of mission, and/or the chargé d'affaires.

AFSA's top advocacy items related to easing Foreign Service life hardships included in the 2022 State Department Authorization Act were the following:

- A provision that establishes a mechanism for third parties to verify the employment of, and the validity of permanent change of station (PCS) orders received by, members of the Foreign Service, in a manner that protects sensitive employee information. This verification is meant to ease implementation of the Foreign Service Families Act, which extended the benefits of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to the Foreign Service (e.g., breaking leases without incurring financial penalties when given orders to serve overseas).

- A provision that provides members of the Civil Service on domestic employee teleworking overseas (DETO) agreements locality pay or overseas

comparability pay (OCP), whichever is less. OCP is two-thirds of D.C. locality pay and is equivalent to the locality pay that members of the Foreign Service receive on DETO agreements. AFSA advocated for equitable pay among federal employees on DETO agreements, or those physically overseas often due to their spouses' employment.

Congress was also able to pass a Fiscal Year 2023 final appropriations package, which included \$61.66 billion for the International Affairs Budget (IAB) that funds diplomacy and development activities. Even though Congress proposed providing a nearly 15 percent increase for the IAB in its individual FY23 appropriations bills, the final funding package fell well short of the original proposed increases.

The final bill provided around a 6 percent increase for the IAB, not including emergency funding for Ukraine. This is the largest IAB increase in six years, which should be celebrated. AFSA is glad to see these significant increases go into effect.

For example, the State Department's Human Resources account, which includes funding for U.S. direct hires, increased by more than \$200 million in FY23. Operational accounts, often called salaries and expenses, for the smaller

foreign affairs agencies also received increases.

Finally, the appropriations package included \$18 million for State Department paid internships, a significant increase from the previous fiscal year.

At AFSA's urging, the explanatory statement for the final State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPS) appropriations bill included the following language: "The agreement includes funding for additional Foreign Service Officers and Civil Service positions for the Department of State in Fiscal Year 2023."

The explanatory statement also included the submission of quarterly reports to Congress detailing the onboard personnel levels, hiring, and attrition of the Civil Service, Foreign Service, eligible family members, and the locally employed staff workforce of the Department of State.

Together, the explanatory statement texts indicate Congress' desire for more Foreign Service positions, an emphasis on hiring and retention, and a general call for more data transparency—all goals supported by AFSA.

In the 118th Congress, AFSA will continue to push for regular authorizations of foreign affairs agencies and urge appropriators to provide a robust FY24 International Affairs Budget. ■

Changes to the Worldwide Availability Requirement: AFSA Statement

The State Department has briefed the AFSA Governing Board on the recent settlement of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission class action complaint that challenged the department's Worldwide Availability requirement for career Foreign Service applicants.

AFSA is strongly in favor of the department being more inclusive, more representative, and providing greater opportunities for applicants with disabilities to enter the Foreign Service.

We understand this settlement comes after many years of litigation and represents a serious effort to bring equity to those individuals with disabilities who were denied the opportunity for a career in the Foreign Service under the State Department's current

application process, which requires that applicants be "worldwide available."

AFSA wants to ensure that this new policy does not unfairly affect current members of the Foreign Service by putting greater pressure on them to serve more frequently at hardship and hard-to-fill posts.

While all applicants currently must possess a Class I worldwide availability clearance, the new policy creates a minimum threshold that requires applicants to be medically cleared to serve only at the designated Regional Medical Evacuation Centers, which are currently Bangkok, London, Pretoria, and Singapore.

AFSA has been assured by the department that this new medical threshold is just a

minimum, and that it expects that persons with disabilities will be able to serve successfully at a wide variety of overseas posts, including hardship and hard-to-fill posts.

Given the magnitude of this change, AFSA urges the department to conduct an annual review of this new policy during the five-year trial period to determine if there have been any negative consequences or if the change affects the department's ability to meet our nation's national security needs by staffing hardship and hard-to-fill posts.

AFSA also calls on the department to further define the medical clearance process and the role of the Bureau of Medical Services regarding these individuals once they are on board.

We have been advised that this new policy will only affect applicants, not those who have already entered the Foreign Service. But it is unclear how the medical clearance process will function once an applicant has entered on duty.

Finally, AFSA encourages the department to brief and coordinate as appropriate with other foreign affairs agencies that may be affected by this change.

Working with the department, AFSA looks forward to making certain this new policy is implemented in a way that provides greater transparency and opportunity for applicants with disabilities while also ensuring that the State Department continues to meet the needs and requirements of the Foreign Service. ■

NEWS BRIEF

AFSA Urges Fixes to Employee Express

In response to complaints from many members concerning access to Employee Express at overseas posts, AFSA sent a letter to Kiran Ahuja, director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), on Dec. 28, 2022.

Signed by AFSA President Eric Rubin, the letter requests that the system be made "readily accessible to government employees," particularly the nearly 9,000 Foreign Service members serving at embassies and consulates overseas. It also asks OPM to designate "a responsive point of contact" that FS members can turn to for help when encountering access problems. AFSA will keep members posted on progress. ■

Meet the Team Working for You!

The American Foreign Service Association has 28 staff members based at headquarters and an additional 11 attorneys and counselors working out of the AFSA Labor Management Office inside the State Department. These 39 employees bring a wealth of expertise and experience to bear in support of AFSA members every day.

To ensure that members can easily determine where to turn for specific assistance from the association, AFSA recently published an updated and expanded page on its website featuring a comprehensive staff list, including photos, job descriptions, and brief biographies.

Learn more about AFSA's professional staff and how to them reach by visiting www.afsa.org/staff. ■

AFSA Survey Results
Continued from page 45

mentoring opportunities during telework was an important concern.

Just under half of respondents (46 percent) were satisfied with telework decisions. Many highlighted inconsistencies in the application of telework policy among posts and between overseas and Washington offices; many thought leaders at all levels were applying telework policy according to their personal preferences rather than in reference to guidelines.

For supervisors, responses mirrored general answers.

Forty-six percent were satisfied with the amount and distribution of telework. The majority of supervisors who were not satisfied expressed the wish to be able to provide *more* teleworking to their teams.

Future Composition of the Foreign Service. Currently, 70 percent of sitting ambassadors are Foreign Service career appointees; roughly 30 percent are political appointees, conforming to recent historical trends.

When asked the appropriate percentage of Foreign Service political appointee ambassadors, 66 percent of respondents preferred a lower percentage, and most of them suggested a limit of 20 percent. One-fifth of respondents did not pick a percentage, and instead chose “Numbers don’t matter—quality matters more than quantity.”

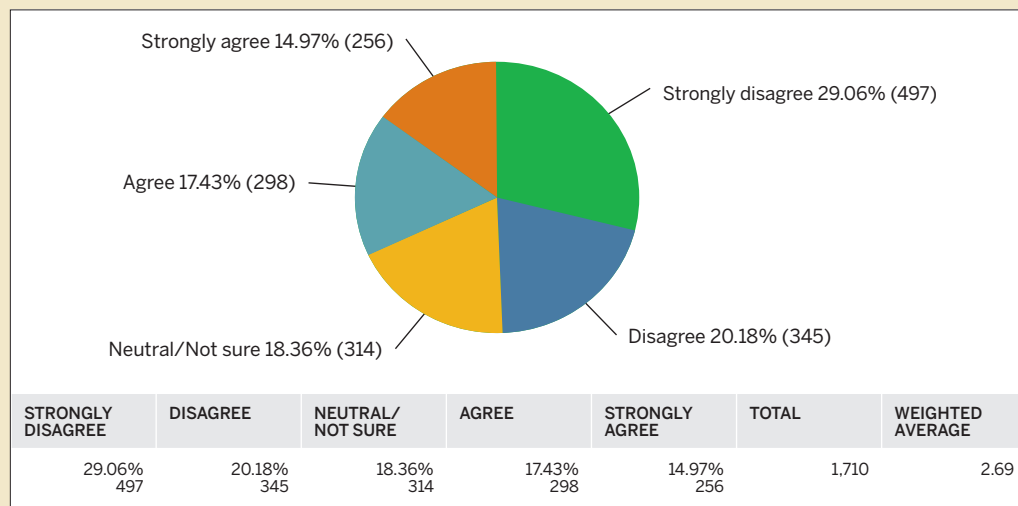
When asked whether the use of Foreign Service Limited (FSL) appointments should be “strictly limited,” a majority said yes. When filtered for USAID respondents only, 69 percent agreed.

Regarding Consular Fellows, 56 percent of all respondents (59 percent of State respondents) agreed that fellows should have a path to convert to either FS officer/generalist or specialist. Many who agreed thought fellows should take the Foreign Service Oral Assessment or go through a similar testing process.

For the 23 percent of those at State who disagreed with the proposal, the number one concern was whether Consular Fellows have sufficiently broad skills.

Career Expectations. Respondents considered it unlikely that they would resign before retirement eligibility. Eighteen percent answered yes; 65 percent said it was unlikely; the rest were neutral. However, of the 669 unsolicited written comments we received on this question, about 10 percent indicated that they

Please rate the following statement: My ambition is to be an ambassador, a mission director, deputy chief of mission, or principal officer.



plan to or are likely to retire as soon as they are eligible.

When asked whether respondents aspired to become ambassador, deputy chief of mission, mission director, or principal officer, 32 percent agreed or strongly agreed (39 percent of FSOs; 10 percent of FS specialists), 18 percent were neutral, and just under half (49 percent) disagreed.

Many who disagreed cited the difficulty of reaching senior positions, “crowding out” of career members in favor of political appointees, the unpredictable vetting process, slow promotions, inability to reach senior levels due to specialty limitations, and a desire for work/life balance. Second career respondents noted a lack of time to reach senior levels.

The proposal to allow Foreign Service members to leave the Service for up to five years and return at the same level was popular. (This proposal assumed a demonstrated deficit in the reentrant’s cone/specialty would not be required for reentry.)

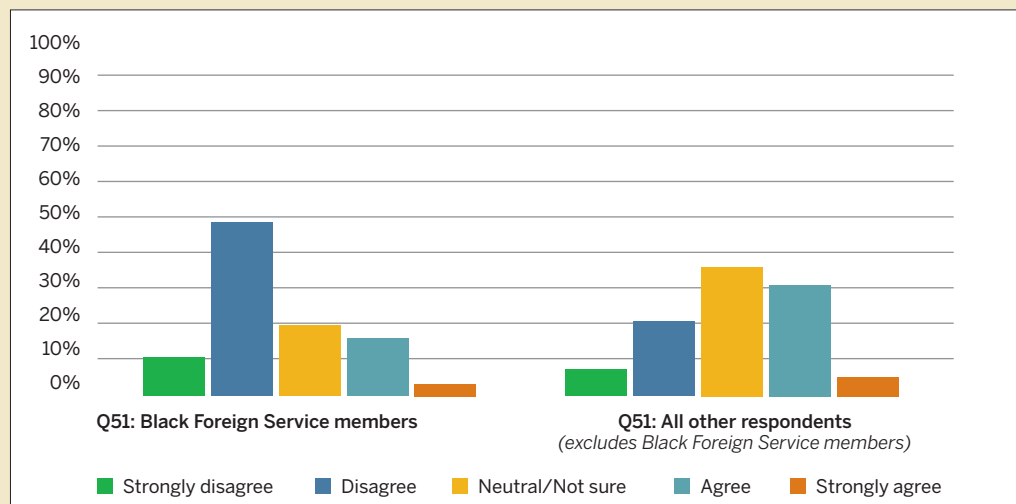
Sixty-six percent of respondents favored the proposal, citing retention and skill-building; several thought up to three or four years would be better; and many disagreed with giving step increases for outside experience gained.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility. Respondents gave fairly high marks for adherence to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) principles. However, many pointed to discrepancies between policy and practical implementation. Accessibility was rated lower than the other DEIA components of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Overseas respondents frequently mentioned that locally employed (LE) staff were subject to treatment that is not consonant with DEIA principles.

Those who disagreed were concerned that the language could exclude certain applicants with disabilities or could

Please rate this statement: I believe Foreign Service agency reforms to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility will be sustained.



create a two-tier system that would necessitate those without restrictions to take more hardship assignments.

Respondents were less sanguine on the staying power of DEIA reforms. Thirty-five percent agreed or strongly agreed the reforms would be sustained; 28 percent said they would not; and a significant percentage, 36 percent, were neutral or had no opinion. Black Foreign Service members gave even lower marks: 60 percent disagreed; 20 percent agreed; and 20 percent were neutral.

Mission Orientation. Respondents indicated they were generally willing to face hardship, danger, discrimination, and family dislocation to accomplish the Foreign Service mission.

Written responses reflected expectations that those members who experienced discrimination overseas could rely on their agencies to provide adequate support. Multiple respondents pointedly noted they faced discrimination from their own colleagues.

In addition, several respondents said they were willing to put up with discrimination when they were representing the United States overseas but drew the line at their families being subjected to the same treatment.

Leadership Accountability. Almost three-quarters of respondents favored expanding the use of 360-degree reviews in Foreign Service agencies, with caveats. Several USAID respondents characterized the newly introduced multisource reviews (MSRs), a type of 360-review, as supervisor “popularity contests.”

Some cautioned that 360s should mainly be used as leadership development tools, not for evaluations. Anonymity in small posts was another challenge mentioned with the use of the 360s.

Regarding creating a non-legal channel for reporting harassment, bullying, or discrimination, 69 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal.

The Role of Technology.

When asked to choose the best use of technology, 30 percent said improved technology could be used to make agency decision-making more efficient. Twenty-five percent thought artificial intelligence could be used to shorten administrative process times.

Generations differed as to the other category of uses:

Baby Boomers wanted mobile technology that could handle classified information; Millennials and Gen Xers favored more data for decision-making.

Respondents offered suggestions for improvement and indicated they need systems that function efficiently and effectively at a basic level; systems should use fewer platforms and be interagency-compatible.

Many recommended that Foreign Service entrants receive laptops and phones upon joining and keep agency-provided equipment throughout their careers.

Many respondents noted the heavy administrative burden placed on Foreign Service employees, in particular in relation to permanent change of station (PCS)—like travel arrangements and voucher processing—but also basic functions like payroll and leave. Improved technology could help.

Respondents highlighted the need for updated consular systems. Overseas respondents observed that some technology like headsets could be made available to allow personnel in controlled access areas (CAA) to participate in Teams calls. Finally, several respondents cautioned against bias in using artificial intelligence.

More Information. The PowerPoint document with all agency responses is available at www.bit.ly/FFSWresults. For results broken down by agency, visit:

- www.bit.ly/FFSW-State
- www.bit.ly/FFSW-USAID
- www.bit.ly/FFSW-FAS
- www.bit.ly/FFSW-FCS

Questions can be directed to AFSA's Director of Professional Policy Issues Julie Nutter at nutter@afsa.org or Policy Analyst Sean O'Gorman at ogorman@afsa.org. ■

AFSA President Talks Diplomacy in California

In November 2022, AFSA President Eric Rubin traveled to the Golden State for a series of events and speaking engagements centered on the Foreign Service and diplomacy.

At his first stop, the University of California, Berkeley campus, Ambassador Rubin spoke to students about a career in the Foreign Service. He revisited this topic with students at the University of California, Davis.

He also met with international policy master's degree candidates (including two

Pickering Fellows) from Stanford University's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, where he led a talk titled "The State and Future of the Foreign Service."

Attendees were offered complimentary copies of recent issues of *The Foreign Service Journal* as well as *Inside a U.S. Embassy* (FS Books, 2011).

As the featured guest at the World Affairs Council's "Fireside Chat" event in San Francisco, Amb. Rubin further discussed the state of diplomacy and the future



World Affairs Council President Philip Yun (left) interviews AFSA President Eric Rubin about the future of the Foreign Service at a Nov. 17 event in San Francisco, Calif.

of the U.S. Foreign Service in conversation with the forum's president, Philip Yun.

During the exchange, Amb. Rubin said he believes FS members feel frustrated by limited resources and inadequate staffing, as government funding for foreign affairs and assistance has been reduced drastically since the end of the Cold War.

"We have to get our best people out there, and we need to earn the leadership role [in the world] to be ready for the 21st century's challenges," he told the audience.

A recording of the event can be found at www.bit.ly/WAFiresideChat.

Other highlights from the trip included spending an afternoon with members of the retiree group Foreign Service Association of Northern California to discuss issues pertinent to retired FS members, and meeting with high school

students from the Global Citizenship Certificate Program.

Hailing from underserved schools in the San Francisco Bay area, these students showed a passion for foreign affairs and interest in the Foreign Service that was particularly inspiring.

Finally, satellite events arranged throughout the trip allowed Amb. Rubin to meet with others in the foreign affairs community, including Rose Gottemoeller, former NATO deputy secretary general; Amb. Mike McFaul, director of the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies; Amb. Steven Pifer, former U.S. chief of mission in Ukraine; Amb. Scot Marciel, former U.S. chief of mission in Myanmar and Indonesia; and Amb. Sheila Gwaltney, former U.S. chief of mission in Kyrgyzstan. ■



AFSA Governing Board Meeting, December 7, 2022

The board met in person at AFSA headquarters.

Associate Member: The Governing Board approved the application of one new associate member. ■



AFSA Governing Board Meeting, January 18, 2023

The board met in person at AFSA headquarters.

The board authorized the retiree vice president to support the creation of an additional Foreign Service Grievance Board position and agreed to allow for a vote by email.

The board approved the "AFSA 118th Congress Advocacy List" with one item excluded.

The Board approved the "AFSA-Supported Bills for the 118th Congress" as presented.

Associate Member: The Governing Board approved the application of one new associate member. ■

Changes to Domestic Travel Rules

Beginning May 7, 2025, every air traveler 18 years of age and older will need a Real ID-compliant driver's license, state-issued enhanced driver's license, or another form of identification accepted by the Transportation Security Administration, such as a passport or a permanent residency card, to board a domestic flight within the United States.

This requirement also applies to TSA PreCheck passengers. Children under the age of 18 traveling domestically with an adult, however, are exempt.

To find out if your identifi-

cation is Real ID-compliant, check the card for the seal. Usually in gold or black, it features a star in the center and indicates that the bearer of the card has been screened and approved according to a standard set by the federal government, not only by the state issuing the license.

State-issued enhanced driver's licenses, which will also be accepted at airport security checkpoints, are marked with a flag.

Real ID-compliant licenses and TSA-accepted identification cards are now being issued in all 50 states, as well as in the District of

Columbia and the majority of U.S. territories.

To obtain a Real ID, check your state's requirements online. In most cases, you can get one by visiting your local Department of Motor Vehicles, either as part of a standard license renewal or by filling out a special application.

Applicants will be asked to provide a Social Security number, proof of address through documents like a utility bill or bank statement, and identity verification through additional documents such as a birth certificate or passport.

This change has been in the making since the passage of

the Real ID Act in 2005, which mandated a recommendation from the 9/11 Commission to establish better identification standards. That panel found that nearly all of the Sept. 11 hijackers were carrying U.S. driver's licenses and state IDs, and that most of these documents had been obtained fraudulently.

Rules for identification when traveling internationally will not be affected.

Learn more about the new guidelines at www.tsa.gov/real-id. For information by state, visit www.dhs.gov/real-id, and click your state on the map. ■

USAID Framework Negotiations Complete

In late October, AFSA and USAID concluded the renegotiation of their Framework Agreement (aka Collective Bargaining Agreement). AFSA and USAID negotiating teams signed the agreement on Dec. 7, 2022, sending it for a final USAID agency head review.

On Jan. 4, 2023, USAID Deputy Administrator for Management and Resources Paloma Adams-Allen also signed, putting the agreement into effect.

Developed over the course of negotiations begun in June 2022, the new agreement provides a broad framework for AFSA-USAID relations, covering areas



On Dec. 7, 2022, USAID and AFSA met at USAID headquarters to sign the renegotiated Framework Agreement. From left: USAID Senior Employee and Labor Relations Specialist Krista Grimm, USAID Employee and Labor Relations Specialist James Truong, USAID Office of the General Counsel's Attorney Adviser Kenny Bledsoe, USAID Deputy Director of Employee and Labor Relations Joseph Laster, USAID Director of Employee and Labor Relations Nick Gottlieb, AFSA USAID VP Jason Singer, AFSA General Counsel Sharon Papp, USAID Labor Management Adviser Sue Bremner, and AFSA Attorney Adviser Briana Odom.

such as union rights and representation; management rights and responsibilities; and negotiation procedures.

It replaces an agreement signed in 1993 and slightly updated in 2008.

The new Framework

Agreement can be found on the AFSA website under the USAID vice president's page at www.afsa.org/USAID. ■

Memorial Plaques Restoration Completed

In late December, the final stage of a yearlong expansion and rehabilitation project for the AFSA Memorial Plaques was completed.

Craftspeople from R.S. Kinnaird Memorials repainted the faded inscriptions on the 50-year-old center panel of the AFSA Memorial Plaques on the east wall of the Department of State's C Street lobby. The project restored 917 faded letters and dates using a special paint containing gold dust imported from the United Kingdom.

Installed in the late 1960s, the plaque was first inscribed in 1972. It bears the names of 76 colleagues who died between 1967 and 1988 in circumstances distinctive to overseas service.



The AFSA Memorial Plaques restoration project was completed in December 2022.

More than one-third were killed in Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia. AFSA suspended inscribing names between 1963 and 1972; existing records do not explain why.

Writing in *The Foreign Service Journal* in October 1999, retired Senior FSO David T. Jones observed: "The extended delay engendered suspicions among FSOs that the department was attempting to conceal the extent of its losses from a rank and file (and a larger public) increasingly skeptical of the purpose and value of the war effort."

As the caretaker of the AFSA Memorial Plaques since 1933, AFSA is proud to honor our fallen colleagues. Their names and details of their service can be viewed at www.afsa.org/plaques.

AFSA College Scholarships

Applications are now open for nearly \$400,000 in college aid to children of AFSA members.

Financial Aid. In 2023, AFSA will award \$263,000 in need-based financial aid to incoming or current college undergraduates. Last year, 60 students were awarded scholarships ranging from \$2,000 to \$6,000.

Merit Aid. In 2023, AFSA will award \$143,500 in merit aid to high school seniors. Last year, 146 students applied, and 38 received grants. Most scholarships amount to \$3,500 and will be given in four categories: academic merit, art merit, community service, and best essay.

Due to difficulties surrounding COVID-19, AFSA will not require students to have taken either the SAT or ACT test.

The AFSA Scholarship Program is made possible through generous donations from our partners at BlueCross BlueShield, DACOR, and numerous donations from individuals. No AFSA membership dues are used in the AFSA Scholarship Program.

The application deadline is midnight on March 13, 2023. For full details, visit www.afsa.org/scholar.

AFSA High School Essay Contest

AFSA is now accepting applications for its annual national high school essay contest.

Eligibility. Students whose parents are not in the Foreign Service are eligible to participate if they are in grades nine through 12 anywhere in the United States or U.S. territories, or if they are U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents attending high school overseas. Entries from home-schooled students are also accepted. Previous first-place winners and immediate relatives of directors or staff of AFSA, the U.S. Institute of Peace, Semester at Sea, and National Student Leadership Conference are not eligible to participate. Previous honorable mention designees may enter.

Prizes. \$2,500 to the writer of the winning essay, in addition to a paid trip to the nation's capital from anywhere in the United States for the writer and parents, and an all-expense-paid educational voyage courtesy of Semester at Sea.

The runner-up receives \$1,250 and a full tuition scholarship to attend a summer session of the National Student Leadership Conference's International Diplomacy program.

The application deadline is midnight on April 3, 2023. Learn more about the contest, including the essay topic, at www.afsa.org/essay-contest.

Retiree Group Hears from Amb. Yovanovitch



FARNOVA coordinator John Naland (left) interviewed Amb. Marie Yovanovitch about her book on Nov. 17, 2022.

Ambassador Marie “Masha” Yovanovitch was the guest speaker at the November luncheon of the Foreign Affairs Retirees of Northern Virginia (FARNOVA).

Her A-100 classmate John Naland, who coordinates the group and also serves as AFSA's vice president for retirees, interviewed her in front of a capacity crowd of more than 100 Foreign Service retirees and spouses.

During the talk, Amb. Yovanovitch updated attendees on the situation in Ukraine and signed copies of her best-selling book, *Lessons from the Edge: A Memoir*. (Find AFSA President Eric Rubin's book review in the April 2022 FSJ, and coverage of her Book Notes event, hosted by AFSA, in the June 2022 issue.)

FARNOVA meets five times a year at a Fairfax County restaurant. Area retirees interested in joining can learn more by emailing nalandfamily@yahoo.com.

To find a retiree association near you, visit www.afsa.org/retiree-associations. ■

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AFSA Webinar

Reviewing Your Retirement Plan

In the last webinar of 2022 in AFSA's federal benefits series, held on Dec. 1, 2022, Retiree Vice President John Naland led members through a range of issues that may affect retirement planning.

Topics covered included: reviewing and updating your annuity records, keeping beneficiary designations current, what your survivors need to know, the importance of reviewing your Thrift Savings Plan allocations, when to take Social Security, whether to sign up for Medicare Part B, federal reemployment rules, and other pertinent issues.

Naland reminded members to review their retirement plan every couple of years and to conduct thorough due diligence.

"In retirement benefits, what you don't know can hurt you," he told the audience. "It's a good idea to review your retirement plan every few years because things do change."

Naland also encouraged retirees to keep up their AFSA membership, not only to remain connected to other members, but also to stay abreast of changes affecting their retirement and to benefit from AFSA's advocacy efforts to protect Foreign Service retiree pensions.

"After the new Congress takes office in January, some lawmakers may start filing bills to cut retirement benefits," Naland pointed out. "These benefits can be a target for cutbacks, as the federal government pays for two thirds of our Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) premiums. Having that contribution reduced would impact [retirement] planning."

Members can view the video recording at www.afsa.org/videos; or visit AFSA's one-stop shop for retirement at www.afsa.org/retirement-services, which offers extensive resources for retirees. ■

New Oral History Project Highlights Family Members

Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW) has developed a new project, FS Clips, to capture oral histories of those best acquainted with the Foreign Service lifestyle: family members.

Launched in December 2022 with the support of the Una Chapman Cox Foundation, FS Clips records and shares the worldwide experiences of this central segment of the Foreign Service community.

The interviews, published at www.aafsw.org/fs-clips, touch on topics such as foreign-born spouses, Third Culture Kids, eligible family member (EFM) careers, LGBTQI issues, and singles in the Foreign Service.

The collection stands out as an important complement to the Foreign Affairs Oral History Program of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST), which tends to highlight the work of foreign affairs practitioners themselves, rather than the struggles and triumphs of the family members who accompany them across the globe.

With this new series, AAFSW hopes to offer personal and professional insights from the broader Foreign Service community.

As Third Culture Kid Layla Murphy says in her FS Clips interview, "To be able to connect to other people over this lifestyle that is sometimes really isolating—that's important. I would encourage people to seek out others who've had similar experiences." ■



Holiday Wreath-Laying Ceremony at State

On Dec. 12, 2022, Under Secretary for Management John Bass (left) hosted an informal wreath-laying ceremony at the memorial plaques in the C Street lobby of the State Department. The plaques contain the names of those members of the Foreign Service who died in the line of duty. AFSA President Eric Rubin (right) and members of the AFSA Governing Board were honored to attend and pay their respects.

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

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EXCERPT FROM THE MARCH 2022 FSJ SUMMER CAMP SUPPLEMENT

Why Summer Camp for FS Kids

BY TIBOR NAGY

Beyond describing how summer camps can mitigate some of the special challenges FS kids face, I'd like to offer a brief overview of America's current camp scene and how interested parents can find an appropriate camp.

Types of Camps

Today's parents have an incredible variety of choices among camps, including whether they are co-ed, or gender specific, age grouped, etc. These include:

- Day Camps: with a full range of activities but no overnight stay.
- Traditional Camps: periods of one or multiple weeks with a wide range of activities ...
- Sports Camps: specializing in just about every sport imaginable ...
- Religious Camps: religiously affiliated or denomination-specific.
- Camps affiliated with well-known organizations: scouting, YMCA, etc.
- Arts Camps: drama, music, cooking, film, etc.
- Education Camps: STEM, debate, reading, writing, math, poetry, computer skills, robotics and A/I, etc.
- Special Needs Camps: kids with diabetes, the visually or hearing impaired and those with other disabilities, children who are mourning, etc. ...

Things to Consider

Costs. In general, parents can expect to pay between \$300 and \$1,000 per week for a traditional overnight camp. Specialized camp costs may be higher, depending on staffing, needs, etc. [Editor's Note: For 2023, average weekly costs are more than \$2,000.]

When Are Kids Ready? With some camps, age 7 would be the youngest age, but 8 is more common. From my experience as a counselor and staff member, the greatest determining factor is when kids want to go. ...

Transition to Staff. For traditional overnight camps, 16 is the usual age limit for campers. From that point, they would move up to counselor in training (CIT) and counselor. Salaries today are quite competitive, and it's a super job while attending college. ...

Accreditation. Accreditation by the American Camp Association signifies that the camp's operations have been thoroughly peer-reviewed, including such critical elements as adequacy of staff training, the quality of the facility, staff emergency preparedness, etc. ... Check out www.acacamps.org.

How to Find a Camp? Today, an internet search can take you to any and every accredited camp. The choices can be overwhelming, but here are a few helpful sites:

- <https://www.find.acacamps.org/>
- <https://www.campchannel.com/>
- <https://www.camppage.com/> ...

I recommend that every Foreign Service family with kids consider a U.S. summer camp as a highly positive tool to help their children develop and nurture essential life skills, self-confidence, lifelong friendships and a sense of being "American."

Tibor Nagy retired from the U.S. Foreign Service in 2003 after a long career, which included 22 years in Africa at eight postings, with two ambassadorships and three stints as deputy chief of mission. He now teaches for Texas Tech. The complete article appeared in the March 2022 FSJ.



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■ **Bilha Levy Bryant**, 88, wife of the late retired Foreign Service Officer Edward “Ted” W.M. Bryant, passed away peacefully after a short illness on Nov. 16, 2022, in Washington, D.C., surrounded by her family.

Born Billi Mosheva in Dupnitsa, Bulgaria, in 1934, she and her family survived the systematic persecution of the Jews in German-allied Bulgaria and narrowly avoided being sent to the Nazi concentration camps during World War II. They immigrated to Israel in 1948 once the Communist Party took power in Bulgaria, traveling by cattle car across land and by cargo ship to Haifa from the port of Rijeka in the former Yugoslavia.

Never having spoken Hebrew in Bulgaria, she learned it for the first time on a kibbutz, worked her way through high school, and served in the Israeli Army with the Mixed Armistice Commission. There she worked with General Moshe Dayan, David Ben Gurion, and others instrumental in the founding of Israel. She went on to become an Israeli Foreign Service officer.

Her first posting took her to The Hague in 1960, where she met and fell in love with Ted Bryant, a U.S. Foreign Service officer from Massachusetts. Despite great differences in their backgrounds, Ms. Bryant moved to the U.S., and the two were married in 1963 in Washington, D.C.

They had three daughters, and went on to serve in Mozambique, Ethiopia, Korea, Pakistan, and India. They also traveled extensively through Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East.

After her husband’s retirement in 1981, Ms. Bryant started her second career in the U.S. Foreign Service, working in Soviet and Eastern European Affairs as a public affairs officer. She earned the State Department’s Meritorious Service Award before retiring in 1994.

Her life after retirement was filled with travel, classical music concerts, bridge games, friends, and summers in beautiful Rockport, Mass. She adored her grandchildren and treasured her visits with them as well as with her family in Israel.

In 2018, 50 years after the historic rescue of the Bulgarian Jews, she was honored by the Embassy of Bulgaria in Washington, D.C., as a survivor of the Holocaust. She had the opportunity to return to her home country with her family in 2019, a trip that she relished. Reliving her childhood memories there and receiving recognition from the Bulgarian Foreign Office as well as local Jewish organizations was one of the highlights of her life.

She will be remembered for her grace, intelligence, charm, and ability to light up any room. She loved animals, took a lively interest in politics and current events, and self-published a memoir, titled *Magic Life* (2021).

Ms. Bryant was preceded in death by her husband in 2006 and brother Moshe Levy in 2006.

She is survived by her daughters, Penelope Bryant Catterall, Deborah Bryant Keeley (and husband Greg), and Alexandra Bryant Whitaker (and husband Jeff), as well as five grandchildren (Philip, James, Sophia, Anna, and Jack), her family in Israel, and numerous nieces and nephews.

■ **Robert A. Cattell**, 91, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on Oct. 17, 2022, of natural causes.

Known as “Bob” or “Roscoe” to his friends, Mr. Cattell was born in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 16, 1931, to Roscoe and Ruth Cattell. He grew up in Shepherd Park and graduated from Calvin Coolidge High School in 1949.

He attended college at William and

Mary, where he developed an interest in foreign affairs, and then joined the U.S. Army reserves in 1952. After graduating in 1953, he volunteered for active duty and served with the Strategic Intelligence Detachment, supporting the U.S. Army Intelligence Command with a focus on the Middle East and Africa.

He completed additional academic work in the African studies program at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

In August 1958, Mr. Cattell married Brenda Korns in Washington, D.C. He was discharged from the Army in 1960 and joined the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) where he made his career as a Foreign Service officer.

During the next 12 years, he facilitated USIA programs while at post in the Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, Senegal, Lesotho, Swaziland (now Eswatini), and Botswana. During a Washington assignment, he was posted to the office of the agency’s assistant director for Africa. He also served at USIA posts in Frankfurt, Bern, and Madrid.

Following retirement from federal service in 1992, Mr. Cattell worked as a staff aide to the chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. He went on to work for the Environmental Protection Agency as a senior executive employee, where he supported agency efforts to institute policies maximizing safe reuse of land at remediated pollution locations and to design the regulatory regime for reporting releases of hazardous substances into the environment.

Mr. Cattell was predeceased by Brenda Cattell, his wife of more than 60 years, and his sister and brother-in-law, Betty Ruth Williams and William H. Williams.

He leaves behind his son and daughter-in-law, Marc and Katie Cattell, of Burke, Va., and their children, Grace

and Charlie; his daughter, Maria Cattell, of Longmont, Colo., and her children, Stian and Bjorn; as well as nieces and nephews, Bill and Cissie Williams, Sarah and Charles Holtman, Matthew and Jodie Williams, Stephen Williams, and their children.

■ **Jeannette John**, 91, a retired Foreign Service officer, passed away on Dec. 8, 2021.

She was the daughter of the late Angele Magarian, who survived the Armenian genocide between 1915 and 1922. The family eventually immigrated to the U.S. and settled in Boston's South End, where Ms. John grew up.

At the urging of her mother and sister, she joined the Foreign Service and served as a diplomat for 23 years, receiving recognition many times for service contributions. Her first assignment was to Jordan, where she was taken under the wing of the small Armenian community there—an experience she always treasured.

Subsequent postings included Washington, D.C., Colombia, Vietnam, Italy, and Syria. In addition to Armenian, she spoke Greek, Spanish, Vietnamese, Italian, Arabic, and French.

Ms. John retired in 1983 and moved to Watertown, Mass., where she pursued a passion to document her Armenian heritage. Her genealogy captured seven generations of her family in Armenia and features many photographs and documents chronicling their history and movements. A copy is currently housed in the Library of Congress.

Never one to sit still, Ms. John filled her retirement with caring for children, substitute teaching, volunteering with the elderly and assisting with tax returns, working with the visually impaired, and serving in the Armenian church, as her faith guided her life.

She volunteered for a year in Armenia teaching English to orphans. She also maintained an active role in Armenian causes and provided financial support to organizations devoted to identifying, locating, and preserving Armenian culture. Those who knew her recall how proud she was of her heritage.

Ms. John is survived by three nephews, two great-nephews, a great-niece, and seven great-great nieces and nephews.

■ **Marilyn Priscilla Johnson**, 100, a retired Senior Foreign Service officer and former ambassador, died on Sept. 19, 2022, at home in the 1790s farmhouse on Lewis Hill Road in Bethlehem, N.H., that her family had purchased in the 1850s.

Ms. Johnson was born in Boston in 1922 to Sarah (née Allen) Johnson, who had come to the United States from Wales as a child. Sarah Johnson was an enterprising woman who bought and fixed up houses to rent out. "She was advanced for her time. She was one of the first women to have her hair bobbed ... and drove a car," Ms. Johnson said in her 1986 oral history for the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training.

Her father was Curtis Clark Johnson, whose family came to America before the Revolutionary War. The son and grandson of stagecoach owners and drivers, Johnson became an electrician and the first man in Boston licensed to operate a motion picture projector, then the latest technology.

Ms. Johnson grew up in the suburbs of Boston and was a tomboy. Her parents and sister, Persis, who was 12 years older, stressed the need for her to get a good education. She attended the Woodward School and, at Persis' insistence, went on to Radcliffe, the first in her immediate family to attend college. She graduated with honors in 1944.

Joining the Navy WAVES, Ms. Johnson was part of a special group, known as "code girls," who worked to break the Japanese code. After the war, she used the G.I. Bill to pursue her education and traveled in Europe. Returning to the U.S., she earned an M.A. in French from Middlebury College.

In 1960 she received a U.S. State Department grant to teach English to French-speaking students in Guinea. It was the first of many assignments in Africa, where her adventures included taking a Land Rover through the Sahara to visit Timbuktu.

Her work in Africa led her to join the U.S. Foreign Service with the U.S. Information Agency. She served overseas as a cultural affairs officer in Bamako, Tunis, Niamey, Islamabad, and Moscow.

She also served in a number of assignments in Washington, D.C., including as deputy assistant director of the Information Centers Program from 1971 to 1974.

Her assignment to Moscow, from 1976 to 1978, broke a Foreign Service barrier for single women. Until then, the State Department had refused to assign single women to Moscow, on the theory that they were likely to be easily compromised by KGB lotharios.

Ms. Johnson objected, and because she was so well respected, the policy was changed. Decades later, Foreign Service women she had never met would say how her breakthrough allowed their careers to advance.

In 1978 President Jimmy Carter nominated Ms. Johnson ambassador to Togo, where she served until July 1981.

Following her retirement from the Foreign Service, Ms. Johnson moved back to Bethlehem in 1987. There she was active in civic affairs, chairing the conservation commission, volunteering at the Colonial

Theatre, and being among the first donors to contribute to its restoration. She also funded the M. Persis Johnson Reference and New Hampshire Room at the Bethlehem Public Library in memory of her older sister.

In her oral history for the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Ms. Johnson told how much she loved her career and the chance to serve her country. Friends and family members recall her generosity and her tough Yankee spirit—she remained active well into her 90s, even bushwhacking at the age of 99.

The family appreciates the North Country Home Health and Hospice Agency, and the invaluable, gracious care provided by a private group: Mo Ingerson, Angela Bernaiche, and Theresa Girouard.

Ms. Johnson's sister, Persis, who had contracted polio at age 14 and was partially paralyzed, predeceased her in 1996. Persis guided Ms. Johnson throughout her life and accompanied her to many posts.

Ms. Johnson is survived by members of the Jensen family, as well as Ann Walker Clark, Patricia Clark, John Clark, Steve Clark, Susan Clark Ashton, Mary Lou Dewar, and hundreds of friends and admirers. She insisted that there not be any memorial ceremony.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be sent to either the hospice agency or the Colonial Theatre.

■ **Stephen Leavitt Reid**, 67, a retired USAID Foreign Service officer, and his wife **Djeswende “Wendy” Pasgo Reid**, 66, died tragically on April 18, 2022.

Stephen Reid was born in 1955 in Concord, N.H., the second of five children born to William and Peggy-Ann (Leavitt) Reid.

Djeswende Reid, affectionally known as Wendy, was the eldest daughter of nine

children, born in Benin in 1956 to Bila and Poco Pasgo.

Mr. Reid grew up in a lively and loving home. An avid athlete, he played defensive back for the Concord High School football team and made three interceptions in a single game, which, up until that time, had never been done at CHS. He graduated in 1973.

Mr. Reid went on to attend the University of Notre Dame where he graduated in 1978 with highest honors in English. After receiving full scholarships to several law schools, he decided to pursue a career in public service and began by joining the Peace Corps.

In 1979 Mr. Reid's first overseas assignment took him to the small town of Madaoua in Niger, West Africa, where he taught English. In 1982 he returned to the U.S. to take a position at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C., as a liaison to several West African countries. There, in Washington, he met the love of his life, Djeswende (Wendy).

Although Ms. Reid was raised in Togo, her parents and extended family hailed from Burkina Faso. As the daughter of a prominent pastor in the Assemblies of God Church, she was raised with, and maintained, a deep-rooted faith.

Departing from tradition, Bila Pasgo nurtured and supported his daughter's love of basketball and encouraged her to achieve an early international career. Ms. Reid traveled the world with the Togolese national basketball team, participating in international competitions in Lagos, Cairo, Paris, Beijing, Nanjing, Shanghai, Buenos Aires, Bamako, Kinshasa, and Brazzaville—and winning medals in Tunis, Dakar, Nairobi, Mexico City, and Yamoussoukro.

Ms. Reid earned scholarships to attend college in the United States. While an undergraduate in Washington, D.C., she

was introduced to Mr. Reid through a mutual friend who told her that he knew an American who spoke Hausa, a West African language, and Parisian French well enough to meet her conversational standards.

Initially skeptical, Ms. Reid was impressed upon meeting him. It took several invitations to play tennis from the timid Steve Reid, as well as a hint from Ms. Reid's college roommate, for her to understand his romantic intentions.

Together, they made a dynamic pair who complemented and brought out the best in each other. From both sides of the Atlantic, the Pasgo and Reid families recognized the two's genuine love for each other and blessed their 1984 marriage in Senegal. However, the couple ensured their children were born in Mr. Reid's native Concord, N.H. In 1986 their first child, Lindsay Wenkouni Reid, arrived, followed in 1990 by the birth of their second child, Brian Daniel Reid.

The Reids provided their two children with abundant multicultural childhood experiences and instilled in them a sense of global community and a love of humanity and diversity in all its forms, hard work, courage, and integrity.

A promotion in 1983 to associate director of the Peace Corps in Senegal had Mr. Reid leading numerous projects addressing issues such as reforestation, water supply, community development, and intercultural language training.

He left the Peace Corps in 1987 to attend Syracuse University, where he obtained a master's degree in public administration while Ms. Reid worked to support their growing family.

In 1989 Mr. Reid was recruited by USAID to work with a local nongovernmental organization headquartered in Burkina Faso dedicated to addressing the interrelated issues of climate change and

food security in West Africa. At the U.S. embassy there, Ms. Reid worked first as a personnel assistant and later as a community liaison officer.

Mr. Reid excelled in the field of international development and became a career chief of party, directing USAID-funded projects in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Niger, Senegal, and Haiti for Tetra Tech (formerly Associates in Rural Development) and the Mitchell Group. Always respectful of local people and cultures, Mr. Reid was an exceptional leader of multicultural teams. Soft-spoken and down-to-earth, he easily gained the respect, admiration, and trust of those he served, thanks to his humility, compassion, and hard work.

Throughout his long career, Mr. Reid was able to count on the love and support of his wife, who was instrumental to his success, often accompanying him on field visits, organizing logistics, and translating and copyediting reports in French and English.

In 2003 Ms. Reid completed the degree she had been pursuing before marrying and raising two children. She graduated from Suffolk University (Dakar, Senegal campus) magna cum laude with a bachelor of science in business administration. She went on to serve as an admissions counselor for the university, recruiting and supporting the enrollment of students from French-speaking West African countries.

Later the family moved to Burlington, Vt., where Mr. Reid served as a senior associate for democracy and governance at ARD Inc. (now Tetra Tech ARD) and Ms. Reid served as a program coordinator at Vermont Refugee Resettlement, a field office of the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI).

In 2009 the couple accepted an assignment in Haiti, where Mr. Reid worked on

a USAID-funded local governance project to increase transparency and improve collaboration among municipalities.

They were in Port-au-Prince during the devastating earthquake of 2010, but instead of evacuating the country as most foreigners did, they chose to stay. Mr. Reid helped shore up the municipalities most affected by the earthquake and Ms. Reid supported efforts to protect internally displaced persons as an administrative coordinator and interim program manager, again for USCRI.

After retiring in 2019 from Niger, the Reids finally returned to Concord with the intention of spending the rest of their lives with family and old friends. After a hiatus of several decades, Mr. Reid returned to playing tennis and enjoyed the challenges and camaraderie of doubles competitions. Spurred on by the pandemic's emphasis on outdoor activities, the couple enjoyed hiking together on Concord's vast trail system.

Although not a publicly affectionate man, Mr. Reid left a trove of romantic letters written to his wife. Forming a remarkable team throughout their married and professional lives, Steve and Wendy Reid lived and died next to each other, united for better or worse, when their lives were cruelly taken in an unprovoked shooting in April 2022 on a hiking trail in Concord.

This exceptional couple will be remembered for their lifelong contributions to making the world a better place. They left an indelible mark on the lives of people around the world, their children, and all who knew them.

The Reids were predeceased by his parents, William and Peggy-Ann (Leavitt) Reid, and her parents, Bila and Poco Pasgo.

They are survived by their daughter, Lindsay Wenkouni Reid (and her husband, Nathan Reynolds) of Vt.; their son,

Brian Reid (and his wife, Jackelina) of Fla.; their respective brothers: Peter Reid (and his wife, Barbara) of Concord, Vt., Mark Reid (and his wife, Isabel) of Miami, Fla., Scott Reid (and his wife, Marion) of Warner, N.H., Jacob Pasgo (and his wife, Happy Pasgo) of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, and Benjamin Pasgo (and his wife, Delphine) of Lomé, Togo; their respective sisters: Susan Forey (and her husband, Rod Forey) of Concord, Vt., Marie Pasgo of Lomé, Togo, and Elise Pasgo of Lomé, Togo; and many beloved nieces, nephews, and cousins.

■ **Glenn Alvin Smith**, 73, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on Nov. 9, 2022, in Battlement Mesa, Colo., with his loving wife, Patsy, and daughter, Samantha, by his side.

Born on Sept. 11, 1949, Mr. Smith grew up in Golden and Glenwood Springs, Colo. As a young man, he held an impressive variety of jobs: He sold donuts door-to-door, had numerous paper routes, worked in a grocery store as a sacker and stocker, cleaned irrigation ditches as a ranch hand, and worked as a service station attendant and auto mechanic.

After graduating from high school in 1967, Mr. Smith followed several friends and enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps, claiming it was the best thing he could have done, since otherwise, he was surely headed for jail. As a Marine, he worked as an airframes mechanic and an aviation metal smith.

After four years in the Marine Corps and opting not to complete his college degree, he joined the U.S. Army for a seven-year stint. There he worked as a code breaker, signals analyst, and technical writer.

Upon leaving the military, he applied for and was finally appointed to a general services officer position in the Foreign

Service in 1991 and married Patsy, the love of his life, who traveled the world with him.

He retired in 2005 after 24 years of U.S. government service and assignments in nine countries around the world: Pakistan, Germany, Tanzania, Seychelles, Ethiopia, Taiwan, Fiji, Ghana, and Sierra Leone.

After retiring, Mr. Smith started a small business called Smittys Willys, Inc., specialized in the restoration of early Willys Jeeps, or U.S. Army trucks. He and his wife also purchased and ran a seasonal tourism business in Marble, Colo., where they spent their summers.

He eventually completed a bachelor's degree in liberal sciences with concentrations in political science and communications, often joking that the "B.S." part of it fit him well. He was a member of Mensa from 1979 to 2000.

Mr. Smith touched and changed many lives during his lifetime.

He was preceded in death by his parents, George and Lolita, brother Randy, and nephew Nick.

He is survived by his wife, Patsy; daughter, Samantha (and her husband, Dustin); grandchildren, Sapphire and Jeremy; a brother, Kenneth; a sister, Marilyn; and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and in-laws.

■ **Richard "Dick" Davis Harding**, 85, a former Foreign Service officer, passed away on Dec. 10, 2022, in Potomac Falls, Va., after a brief battle with pneumonia.

Mr. Harding was born in Detroit and graduated from the University of Michigan in 1959. He also received master's degrees from Yale University in 1960 and Harvard University in 1972.

He met his wife, Carolyn Gough, at a mutual friend's dinner party in Washington, D.C. They were married in March 1963, and promptly moved to Uruguay,

Mr. Harding's first Foreign Service posting. In Montevideo, Mr. Harding first worked in the consular section and then in the economic section of the U.S. embassy.

After a second assignment, in Canada, the couple returned to the U.S. in 1967 and started a family.

Mr. Harding then left the State Department and continued his career as an economist for the U.S. Commerce Department, with a focus primarily on South Asia. Toward the end of his career, he had a memorable assignment as an adviser to Senator Byron Dorgan of North Dakota.

If there is one word to describe Mr. Harding, friends and family recall, it is "enthusiast." He was passionate about art, politics, history, food, world cultures, music, tea, and gardening.

If there is a second word to describe him, it is "conversationalist." He could weave his wide-ranging interests into conversations with anybody and enjoyed engaging with friends and neighbors, frequently followed by sharing newspaper articles on the topic they just discussed.

His passion for learning continued after his retirement as he took a number of classes at George Mason University. He was also active at DACOR, an organization of foreign affairs professionals. He volunteered to curate and organize information about DACOR's art collection and contributed regularly to the organization's newsletter.

The Hardings loved to travel, especially to visit historical sites and museums and to enjoy local cuisine. They frequently attended concerts and plays in the D.C. area, and never missed their grandchildren's performances in school concerts in Baltimore. First and foremost, Mr. Harding loved his family.

He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Carolyn Gough Harding; his sons, Nicholas and Jamie (and his wife, Loretta); two

grandchildren, Cary and Sonya; and many beloved nieces and nephews.

■ **Marten H.A. van Heuven**, 90, a retired U.S. Foreign Service officer, died peacefully at home in Washington, D.C., on the evening of Dec. 25, 2022, after celebrating Christmas with his family.

Born in Utrecht, the Netherlands, on Nov. 25, 1932, Mr. van Heuven grew up in occupied Holland, an experience that would later prompt him to dedicate his professional career to working toward peace in Europe.

He moved to the United States with his parents when he was 15, shortly after the end of World War II, and attended the Hopkins Grammar School in New Haven, Conn. He went on to graduate from Yale College in 1953 and Yale Law School in 1956, also earning a master's degree in international affairs from Columbia University in 1957.

Later that year, he began his career in the State Department's Office of the Legal Adviser. From 1958 to 1962, he served on the U.S. delegations to the United Nations General Assembly.

In 1963 he became legal adviser at the U.S. embassy in Berlin, followed by tours at the U.S. Mission to NATO, the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and in the Office of Eastern European Affairs at the State Department.

In May 1964, *The New York Times* announced his engagement to Ruth Held, herself a Foreign Service officer who had recently returned from an assignment in Rome.

After a year at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Mr. van Heuven served as counselor for political affairs at The Hague and then in Bonn, and thereafter as deputy chief of mission at the United Nations in Geneva.

Later, he was the director of the Office of Western European Affairs at the State Department.

In 1987 Mr. van Heuven joined the National Intelligence Council as national intelligence officer for Europe. He held this position during the ensuing four years, which marked fundamental changes in Europe.

He led the preparation of the National Intelligence Estimate anticipating the breakup of Yugoslavia, for which he was awarded the Intelligence Medal of Merit from the Central Intelligence Agency. He also received the State Department's John Jacob Rogers Award.

After leaving government in 1991, Mr. van Heuven joined the RAND Corporation as a senior consultant. He was a distinguished lecturer at the George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center, and also served on the Board of Directors of the Atlantic Council. He published widely on European and transatlantic affairs and was a frequent lecturer in the United States and in Europe.

Mr. van Heuven was an active sportsman who enjoyed tennis, golf, and skiing. Riding, however, was his greatest passion. For many years, he was an active member of the Sugarbush Polo Club in Vermont. He was also an avid fox hunter, and a field master of the Green Mountain Hounds.

Mr. van Heuven is survived by his wife, Ruth Held van Heuven, of Washington, D.C.; two daughters, Anne Marie and Catherine Margot, both of Denver, Colo.; their spouses, Tracy Anne Davis and John Anthony Carney, both of Denver, Colo.; a granddaughter, Madeleine Rose Carney of Denver, Colo.; and a brother, Dr. Wichard Anne Jelle van Heuven of Vero Beach, Fla.

■ **Helen Weinland**, 80, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on Dec. 2, 2021,

at her home at Parker Ridge in Blue Hill, Maine, after a brief bout with liver cancer.

The daughter of Richard and Virginia Weinland, Ms. Weinland was born in New York City and raised in Chappaqua, N.Y. She attended Dana Hall, Mount Holyoke College (class of 1963), and Indiana University, majoring in history.

After several years of teaching history at Ohio State University, Ms. Weinland joined the U.S. Foreign Service in 1974 and served in the State Department for 20 years.

Her overseas postings included Switzerland, Nigeria, Czechoslovakia, Rwanda, and Berlin, where she was present as the Berlin Wall came down.

Of special note was her 1984 appointment as deputy chief of mission (DCM) in Rwanda, one of only three women DCMs at the time. She was also particularly proud of her 1991 appointment as consul general in her final posting, to Kaduna, Nigeria.

Ms. Weinland's interest in travel and foreign countries was sparked by growing up in a family that had foreign visitors and exchange students as frequent dinner table guests. She had forged lifelong relationships with friends from France, England, Pakistan, and Somalia long before joining the Foreign Service.

Ms. Weinland's Nigerian postings led her to sponsor a Nigerian teenager for a college education in the United States, subsequently adopting her. Kekuut and her extended family are now a significant part of Ms. Weinland's extended family.

Ms. Weinland regaled friends and family with stories of her experiences all over the world, during her career and her post-retirement travels. In 2003 she self-published an account of her career: *Living Abroad with Uncle Sam: Foreign Service Days*.

Her commitment to family was unwavering. She researched family history and

donated land for a nature preserve dedicated to her parents in Penobscot, Maine. Friends and family members recall her as an indefatigable organizer, well known for planning gatherings and reunions among friends, college classmates, and family.

Ms. Weinland's strong faith and social commitment led to her long involvement in Partakers, a prison ministry, when she lived in Boston. She loved the Red Sox, the Metropolitan Opera, and her cat companions. Family and friends remember her as having led a lively and meaningful life.

Ms. Weinland is survived by two siblings, Thomas Weinland (and his spouse, Mary Ginn) and Margaret Weinland; a daughter, Kekuut Hoomkwap (and her spouse, Ejio Emorhokpor); three grandchildren, Kathryn, Isabel, and Sophia-Marie Emorhokpor; three nephews, Richard, Christopher, and Jay Weinland; and a loving extended family, as well as many friends, around the world.

■ **David E. Zweifel**, 87, a retired Foreign Service officer and former ambassador, passed away on Jan. 1, 2022, from complications of cancer, with his family by his side.

He was born in Denver, Colo., on Sept. 13, 1934, to Henry Sebastian Zweifel and Frieda Theresa Zweifel (née Pieper). He grew up on the Great Plains, where through reading an old family atlas, he began to dream of seeing the world.

After graduating from Oregon State University, he joined the U.S. Navy to fulfill his Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC) obligations aboard the USS *Gearing*. He served three years at sea and two years on the faculty of Princeton University where he taught naval warfare.

With his obligations fulfilled, he at last took the Foreign Service exam and

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joined the State Department with the class of 1962.

His first assignment took him to Rio de Janeiro, with subsequent postings to Beirut for Arabic language training, to Amman during the Jordanian civil war, and then to Mexico City, where he served as political officer. He shared his love of singing with the local community there, helping found the “Convivium Musicum,” which performed in various churches as well as the Chapultepec Castle.

In 1974 Mr. Zweifel became the first-ever deputy chief of mission at Embassy Muscat before spending a year at the National War College. He went on to work in the Office of Egyptian Affairs during the Camp David Accords process that culminated in the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty.

He then returned to Amman as deputy chief of mission and long-term chargé d'affaires, and was appointed ambassador to Yemen in 1981.

Upon returning to Washington, D.C., Ambassador Zweifel worked as director of North African affairs during the U.S. bombing of Tripoli in 1986 in response to a terrorist incident in Germany attributed to Libya. He also served as director of Caribbean affairs (1987-1989) in the aftermath of the ouster of Baby Doc Duvalier, and as director of senior officer assignments in Washington (1992-1993).

His final assignment was as consul general to his dream post, Rio de Janeiro, where he had met and married Denise Costa Oliveira as a young officer many years earlier.

The couple acquired an extensive collection of recordings, spanning chamber music, opera, and symphonies as well as Brazilian folk music and bossa nova, which his wife would also perform on guitar.

In 1995 he retired from the Foreign Service after 33 years. He continued to work as a Portuguese language interpreter for

the State Department's Office of Language Services and completed several projects with the Office of Inspector General, covering reemployed annuitant contract inspections and Iraq and Afghanistan issues in the early 2000s.

Amb. Zweifel loved his life of public service from the time he started as a naval officer to when he was an FSO working on peace treaties, hostage negotiations, and securing embassies during wartime. He immersed himself in the cultures of the countries in which he served, becoming fluent in Portuguese, Spanish, and Arabic.

In Washington, D.C., he joined the Paul Hill Chorale, which performed at the Kennedy Center's Christmas concerts. With an encyclopedic knowledge of classical music, he could readily identify the composer, conductor, and performing artist of any classical piece.

In his final years, Amb. Zweifel pursued his avocation and talent for writing, publishing a series of books and memoirs that he generously shared with friends and family.

Long after he retired, he continued to enjoy the friendship and respect of those with whom he had worked. A man of devout faith, he also served actively in his church.

He is survived by his wife, Denise; son Mark E. Zweifel; daughter Daphne L. Zweifel; and two beloved granddaughters, Julia Lauren Berger and Elsa Denise Barakos-Zweifel. ■



If you would like us to include an obituary in In Memory, please send text to journal@afsa.org.

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

Lessons from a Scholar-Diplomat

George Kennan for Our Time

Lee Congdon, Northern Illinois University Press, 2022, \$19.95/paperback, e-book available, 232 pages.

REVIEWED BY JOSEPH L. NOVAK

Lee Congdon's *George Kennan for Our Time* surveys the life and works of George F. Kennan, the legendary American diplomat and historian (1904-2005). In this compact book, the author places a spotlight on Kennan's belief in the power of diplomacy, his realist approach to international relations, and his advocacy of the principle of nonintervention.

A specialist on Eastern Europe and professor emeritus at James Madison University, Congdon has written numerous books, including *Kennan: A Writing Life* (2008) and *Solzhenitsyn: The Historical-Spiritual Destinies of Russia and the West* (2021).

The narrative begins by sketching the contours of Kennan's life story. Raised in an accomplished family in Milwaukee, he developed an interest in international affairs in part due to the influence of a distant relative who was an expert on Imperial Russia. The Kennan Institute at the Wilson Center in Washington, D.C., is named in honor of this member of the family, who is known as George Kennan "the Elder."

The young Kennan passed the required tests and joined the newly formed U.S. Foreign Service in 1926. Seeing the chance to follow his relative's path, he subsequently opted for extended Russian-language training.

In 1946, while posted at the U.S. embassy in Moscow, Kennan displayed his vast knowledge of the Soviet system in

his "Long Telegram." He followed this up a year later with "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," an article published anonymously in *Foreign Affairs* magazine. It soon emerged that Kennan was "X," the writer of the acclaimed piece.

The two essays proved decisive in convincing Washington to adopt containment of the Soviet Union as a strategy at the dawn of the Cold War. They also cemented Kennan's position as a top geopolitical strategist. As cited in *George Kennan for Our Time*, Kennan would later observe: "My reputation was made. My voice now carried."

In 1947 Kennan became the first Director of Policy Planning at the State Department, where he played a key role in

statecraft and grand strategy. John Lewis Gaddis' *Kennan: An American Life* (2011) details his dual roles as a diplomat and scholar, providing a magisterial portrait of Kennan's long life.

Congdon distills several principles from Kennan's works related to diplomacy. For instance, Kennan promoted a "trained and experienced" corps of diplomats taking the lead on international affairs. He also counseled that diplomatic channels of communication among nations should be kept open and utilized to the fullest extent possible. His views in these areas largely parallel those voiced by Ambassador William J. Burns, the current CIA director, in *The Back Channel: A Memoir of American Diplomacy and*



Congdon goes on to quote vintage Kennan, who posited: "We Americans must realize that we cannot be the keepers and moral guardians of all the peoples in this world."

establishment of the Marshall Plan. Somewhat paradoxically in light of his image as the consummate diplomat, Kennan would go on to serve abbreviated and unsuccessful stints as U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Kennan's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Memoirs: 1925-1950* (1967) contains an in-depth account of his years in the Foreign Service.

Kennan's second act was as distinguished as the first. Enconced for nearly five decades at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, Kennan composed numerous well-received books and articles. In the process, he became a preeminent commentator on

the Case for Its Renewal (2019).

The author highlights that Kennan examined international topics through a lens favorable to balance of power and stability. In its opposition to legalistic-moralistic perspectives, Kennan's approach aligned with that of Hans Morgenthau, whose realist treatise *Politics Among Nations* (1948) was widely read in the postwar era.

Kennan also rejected the "crusader impulse" in American foreign policy that could be "traced back to Woodrow Wilson's dream of a world made safe for democracy." Concerned about America's tendency to overreach when its national

interests were not at stake, Kennan opposed U.S. military interventions in Vietnam, Iraq, and elsewhere. Never backing away from a cerebral dust-up, Kennan clashed with neoconservative thinkers, who actively favored intervention as a policy option.

At the same time, Kennan was at odds with Wilsonian liberals in opposing America's increasing emphasis on human rights in conducting its foreign affairs. To Kennan, "moralistic posing" regarding the domestic affairs of other countries often led to misunderstanding and blowback. Congdon goes on to quote vintage Kennan, who posited: "We Americans must realize that we cannot be the keepers and moral guardians of all the peoples in this world."

Kennan also opposed NATO enlargement, perceiving it as a provocation to Russia. In discussing this subject, the author claims that U.S. negotiators agreed in 1990 that NATO would not move "one inch to the east." That assertion, which is also advanced by Putin's Russia, is not accurate.

Peter Baker and Susan Glasser minutely analyzed this issue in their 2020 book, *The Man Who Ran Washington: The Life and Times of James Baker III* (see the June 2021 *FSJ* review). The 1990 talks on Germany's unification covered many areas, and there was much give and take. That said, Moscow freely assented to the expansion of NATO's jurisdiction into eastern Germany. Moreover, the United States never made any commitment to Russia not to expand NATO into Eastern Europe and the Baltic states.

A penetrating work, *George Kennan for Our Time* performs a service in recalling Kennan's luminous contributions as a diplomat and historian. Although he could be polemical at

times, his espousal of the principle of nonintervention has proven analytically resilient, especially given the variety of setbacks faced by the United States in recent decades. Simultaneously, Kennan's respect for long-term planning and professionalism, including linguistic competence, continues to be worth

emulating by today's Foreign Service.

Joseph L. Novak is a writer based in Washington, D.C. He is a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in London and a retiree member of the American Foreign Service Association. A former lawyer, he served as a Foreign Service officer for 30 years.

China on the Offensive

Beijing's Global Media Offensive: China's Uneven Campaign to Influence Asia and the World

Joshua Kurlantzick, Oxford University Press, 2022, \$29.95/hardcover, e-book available, 560 pages.

REVIEWED BY JOSH GLAZEROFF

In the latest incarnation of the "Black Panther" franchise, "Wakanda Forever," the director of the CIA (played by Julia Louis-Dreyfus with purple-tinged hair) dreams of a scenario whereby the United States is the only country with access to "vibranium," an element of vast power.

In the real world, China, too, dreams of tools that would take it to the top of the global leaderboard. Just as the prospect of the United States having unlimited power should lead one to rethink policy goals, so too giving China limitless access to every country's internal workings gives one pause.

Joshua Kurlantzick's new book, *Beijing's Global Media Offensive* warns us that China has already made significant inroads to just such power—and opens

up the question: What can we as policy-makers do about it?

Kurlantzick is a well-traveled observer of China's efforts to inform and influence other nations. He is a long-experienced activist when it comes to highlighting U.S. weaknesses in countering such efforts. As foreign policy practitioners, we need to pay attention, whether it's addressing immediate events or the long-term consequences of these public diplomacy workings. What is our response?

Kurlantzick opens with the notion: "Beijing's time has come." China "increasingly and openly wants to reshape the world in its image and is using its influence and information efforts to promote this brand of ... authoritarianism." With a combination of soft and "sharp" power, China is winning over countries big and small, both in Asia and in places (Europe) you wouldn't expect.

Using a strategy on the time scale of decades and investing billions in new information tools, the Chinese government has a game plan for success on a global front. They are using tools that the West no longer focuses on (like journalists on the ground in foreign locations). They are using the latest in social media (even if not permitted in China itself). They are working within the West's own political system to bring change organically, but not necessarily in those countries' interest. "Beijing uses a wide



range of information strategies and has developed plans to wield influence over all aspects of the global information supply chain,” writes Kurlantzick.

China’s soft power growth is formidable. Chinese state outlet CGTN “has more Facebook followers than any English-language news outlet ... except the BBC.” Don’t forget the Xinhua news agency—it’s a real global force. Even Hollywood is self-censoring to try to capture Chinese film audiences.

China’s “sharp” power, defined as efforts to manipulate and distract other countries, is also growing, with China in some cases following Russia’s lead. Huawei is already building the information “pipes” for many countries, and at what cost? As Kurlantzick notes, China’s United Front Work Department globally

has “covert and coercive efforts to influence opinion leaders in foreign countries.” Many of us have heard of China’s Confucius Institutes, now facing much greater scrutiny, across the United States and beyond, but are not aware of the outright purchase of Chinese-language media outlets around the world.

Kurlantzick sends us a wake-up call, but he acknowledges that not all is going perfectly in these plans. There are elements that have failed for China. There are things countries can do to push back.

Among Kurlantzick’s prescriptions: building a broader, deeper base of knowledge on China’s information, media, and influence campaigns; assessing which of Beijing’s tools are effective (or not) and trying to predict ways success will come

in the future; improving efforts to counter disinformation in advance; and bolstering defenses against Chinese information and influence.

As a final thought, Kurlantzick reminds us that all is not perfect for us—our own Freedom House scores for democracy in the United States have fallen, and “the world is becoming more authoritarian.” As we seek to continue our own country’s global influence “forever,” we must be careful not to lose sight of our true (internal) strengths.

Josh Glazeroﬀ is a consular-coned member of the Senior Foreign Service with 25 years of experience. He is currently serving as the executive director in the Bureau of Consular Affairs. ■

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From Sue Richey, Richey Property Management CEO



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AFSA Awards Nominations / Inside Front Cover
Apply for an AFSA Scholarship / 14
Foreign Service Day / 22
Watch for the FSJ Retirement Section / 69

CLASSIFIED LISTINGS

Classifieds / 74, 75

FINANCIAL PLANNING & TAX SERVICES

David Mortimer, CPA / 55
Windecker Financial Planning LLC / 55

INSURANCE

AFSPA – Ancillary Programs / 33
CIGNA / 29
Clements Worldwide / 3
FEDS Protection / 15

MISCELLANEOUS

AFSA Retiree Membership / 69
FSJ Digital Archive / 66
FSJ Gift Subscription / 4
FSJ Marketplace / 19
Fund for American Diplomacy / Inside Back Cover
St. Stephen's School / 39

REAL ESTATE & PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Chambers Theory Property Management / 71
Corporate Apartment Specialists / 73
FSJ Guide to Property Management / 73
McEneaney & Associates / 71
Peake Property Management / Back Cover
ProMax Management / 73
Property Specialists, Inc. / 72
Richey Property Management / 70
Washington Management Services / 71
WJD Management / 72

SUMMER CAMPS & PROGRAMS

Camp Soles / 59
Forman Summer / 57
Global Community Liaison Office / 57
Gow Summer Programs / 57
New England Innovation Academy / 58
Summer at Woodstock / 59

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The Letter That Saved a Romanian Diplomat-Spy

BY JONATHAN B. RICKERT

I first met Romanian diplomat and expert on U.S. relations Mircea Raceanu sometime around 1982, while I was the State Department desk officer for Romania. With his extensive service in the United States and in the North America Division of the Foreign Ministry, Mircea was well known to many of us who had dealt with his country.

He and I got on well from the onset and have been friends ever since. What I never knew, however, until after his arrest in Bucharest by the Romanian authorities early in 1989, was that he had been providing information to the CIA for many years. In other words, in an attempt to bring democracy to Romania, he was spying against his own government, led by communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu.

After his arrest, Mircea was charged with treason, interrogated at length, tried by a military tribunal, found guilty, and sentenced to death. He has described this whole experience vividly in his Romanian-language book, *Infern '89: Povestea unui condamnat la moarte* (*Inferno '89: The Story of One Condemned to Death*), originally published in 2000.

This pivotal letter, in the original English and as translated into Romanian (the Romanian-language copy bears a stamp from the archives of the Political Executive Committee of the Communist Party's Central Committee), was included in the second edition of Mircea Raceanu's book, published in 2009.

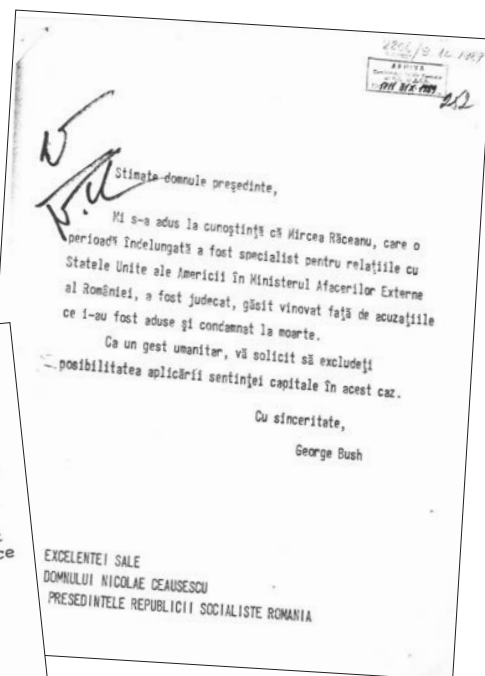
Dear Mr. President:

It has come to my attention that Mircea Raceanu, a longtime specialist in the Romanian Foreign Ministry on relations with the United States, has been tried, found guilty of the allegations against him, and sentenced to death. As a humanitarian gesture, I urge that you exclude the possibility of a death sentence in this case.

Sincerely,

/s/ George Bush

His Excellency
Nicolae Ceausescu,
President of the Socialist Republic
of Romania.



One of the book's most interesting parts explains how his death sentence was commuted to 20 years' imprisonment. (Mircea was freed from prison in connection with the December 1989 revolution but was forced by the new Romanian authorities to leave the country—he settled in the United States with his family not long thereafter.) Here's how it happened.

On Sept. 10, 1989, the U.S. chargé d'affaires ad interim in Bucharest, Larry Napper, met with President Ceausescu to deliver a short letter from President George H.W. Bush. Deputy Secretary Lawrence Eagleburger had prepared the way for the meeting by reaching out to



Retired Senior Foreign Service Officer Jonathan B. Rickert spent the majority of his 35-year career in or dealing with Central and Eastern Europe. His final two overseas posts were as deputy chief of mission in Sofia and then Bucharest. He is a frequent contributor to the FSJ.

Deputy Prime Minister Stefan Andrei for assistance in setting it up.

The letter urged Ceausescu to “exclude the possibility of applying the death sentence” in Raceanu’s case. It appeared to take the Romanian dictator completely by surprise—he may have been expecting a response to an earlier letter that he had sent to Bush and otherwise might not have deigned to meet with a “mere” chargé.

Though Ceausescu brusquely terminated his session with Napper as soon as he learned why he had come, the letter had the desired effect, since Mircea’s death sentence was commuted shortly thereafter.

Mircea himself knew nothing about how these events all had happened until after the revolution, when the interpreter at the Ceausescu-Napper meeting, Gheorghe Petricu, told him the story. Mircea described that meeting in his manuscript, based on what Petricu had related. Nevertheless, like a responsible journalist, he wanted to obtain corroboration of the incident, rather than relying on only one source. The only person present at the meeting other than Ceausescu and his interpreter was Larry Napper.

As it happened, I was working for Larry at the State Department immediately after my 1998 retirement. When Mircea learned of this connection, he asked if I would set up a meeting for him with Larry to discuss the matter of the letter. He gave me the relevant text from his draft, about three pages, which I translated into English. Larry readily agreed to see him, and they met on Feb. 9, 1999.

After an exchange of pleasantries (the two knew each other from their time together in Bucharest before Mircea’s arrest), Mircea asked Larry if his description of the Ceausescu meeting was accurate. Larry replied that he could not say

anything official about the details of that session. However, he added unofficially that he saw no reason for Mircea to make any changes to the text, as written. And that is the way it appeared in the printed book.

Mircea remains intrigued by the origins of the letter that almost certainly saved his life. What led President Bush to send the letter? Who else was involved in the process?

Mircea remains intrigued by the origins of the letter that almost certainly saved his life.

Why Mircea, when many others were in similar positions? Although Bush and Mircea had met when the former was CIA director and the latter served as interpreter for visiting Romanian officials, it would be a stretch to say they knew each other. His extensive efforts to find answers to these and related questions have led nowhere.

Mircea has discovered, however, no other case in which a U.S. president has intervened directly and personally with a foreign head of state or government on behalf of a foreign national who had been spying for the U.S. If that is correct, it makes Mircea’s situation unique.

There is a curious footnote to this story. Mircea somehow got hold of a copy of the Bush-Ceausescu letter, in the original English and as translated into Romanian (the Romanian-language copy bears a stamp from the archives of the Political Executive Committee of the Communist Party’s Central Committee), and included it in the second edition of his book, published in 2009.

When I mentioned this to Larry, by



In 2001 Mircea was awarded the National Order for Merit by the Romanian government.

then retired and working as professor of the practice at the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University, he was interested in seeing it. He had tried to gain access

to a copy of the letter at the adjacent George H.W. Bush Presidential Library

and Museum at College Station but had been denied, based on some sort of bureaucratic or security grounds.

Consider that for a moment. The American official who had delivered a letter in person to the late Romanian dictator was not authorized to see that letter! How ridiculous can classification and security restrictions get? With Mircea’s permission, I mailed Larry copies of the letter. The irony was lost on none of us.

Justice finally prevailed, to a degree, in Mircea’s case. In 2000 the Romanian Supreme Court annulled his conviction and sentence, given by the Ceausescu regime. Though friends of Mircea’s had lobbied on his behalf in Bucharest to remove the conviction, he never asked for such interventions, and he himself refused to seek any sort of pardon or clemency, since doing so would be, or could be, construed as an admission of guilt.

In 2001, the Romanian government awarded Mircea the National Order for Merit, with the rank of commander, for his efforts to bring democracy to the country. ■



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On a beautiful June day in Helsinki, I crawled underneath the Sibelius Monument to get a somewhat unusual view of this very beautiful sculpture by Finnish artist Eila Hiltunen. Unveiled in 1967, this sound wave-like work weighs 24 tons and comprises more than 600 hollow steel pipes welded together, the tallest reaching 27 feet in the air. The landmark is dedicated to Finnish composer Jean Sibelius (1865-1957), whose bust appears by its side. ■

Ásgeir Sigfússon is the executive director of the American Foreign Service Association. He loves to travel the world and always tastes each country's national dish, even when it includes tripe. He took this photo in 2022 using an iPhone 13 Pro.

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