

THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

DECEMBER 2023



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The Foreign Service Journal has been addressing these changes and challenges on its pages since becoming the flagship publication of the American Foreign Service Association in 1924.

Today, to honor the centennial—and AFSA’s role as the “Voice of the Foreign Service”—the *Journal* extends a special invitation to you to voice your own thoughts on the future of the Foreign Service by way of a writing competition. **The topic is:**

Looking ahead to the next century, describe the ideal Foreign Service— as an institution and a profession.

Possible areas to consider when writing your essay: diplomatic practice; FS reform and modernization; international development and foreign assistance; civilian-military relations; recruitment, hiring, and retention; and diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

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The winning essay will be published in the May 2024 edition of *The Foreign Service Journal*. Second- and third-place essays will be published in later editions. All winning essays will be edited for style.

REQUIREMENTS

- You are a member (but not an AFSA board member). We especially want to hear from those newer to one of the foreign affairs agencies (entry- and mid-level), but welcome submissions from any active-duty or retired current AFSA members.
- One entry maximum per person.
- Your entry is 800 to 1,000 words. It has not been submitted to or published in any print or online publications.
- You have not included any AI-generated content.
- Essays will be attributed. Please include full name, current and previous postings, and agency/position as part of a one- to two-sentence bio note.
- Authors are responsible for getting any necessary clearances before submission.

**Please send your submission to journal@afsa.org by December 15, 2023,
subject line: FSJ Writing Competition + Your Last Name.**

We look forward to hearing from you!
—The Foreign Service Journal Team



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On the Cover—Illustration by Robert Neubecker.

Constructive Dissent Is Vital

BY TOM YAZDGERDI

This issue of the *Journal* focuses on dissent in the Foreign Service—one of the most important things we can do to ensure policymakers have alternative views on foreign policy and personnel issues. AFSA gives awards for constructive dissent within the system each year to an entry-, mid-, and senior-level FSO, and an FS specialist. These awards are unique in the U.S. government, and we are proud to honor our colleagues in this way.

Use of the Dissent Channel, which AFSA has also strongly supported over the decades, must be protected. But *how* any FS member uses it is incredibly important. As AFSA has said in the past, constructive dissent within the system can thrive and be successful only if it remains confidential and confined to internal discussion within the executive branch.

Failure to protect the confidentiality of constructive dissent can lead to a fear of disclosure or retaliation that may dissuade career employees from offering their best professional advice. We have seen instances of Dissent Channel messages leaked to the press—creating a lack of trust between the administration and

the career Foreign Service.

As I write this column in late October, we are all still processing the horrific attacks by

Hamas against Israeli and other civilians and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Many of our members have strong views about these developments—no one can be unmoved by the terrible images.

At such a fraught time—facing what is arguably one of the most intractable problems in the world, that of bringing durable peace, security, prosperity, and justice to both Israelis and Palestinians—the Dissent Channel is more important than ever.

AFSA has reminded our members that while free speech and expression are guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, there are limitations on what actions you can take as a Foreign Service member, especially on official government time.

Most folks think dissent must involve an earthshaking foreign policy issue, and sometimes it does. But it does not have to. This year's AFSA dissent award recipients each argued for policies that improve the way the State Department handles personnel.

This included getting State to provide benefits to same-sex partners of locally employed (LE) staff; improve an embassy's emergency response procedures; and effect systemic change to bring greater support to FS dependents with disabilities.

These efforts made an impact and provided relief to our members, their dependents, and LE staff colleagues. Congratulations to them for their courage and initiative!

There are various ways to dissent, as the AFSA dissent award winners show.

You can express your views through the normal supervisory chain, or through the Policy Ideas Channel and the newly invigorated Secretary's Open Forum. But it is gratifying to know there is a time-honored institutionalized channel for dissent and that all those messages are read by the Secretary of State.

There may be times though when a member of the Foreign Service feels so strongly guided by the dictates of their conscience that they are compelled to resign.

I saw this in 1991 as a Presidential Management Intern in what was then the Office of Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia. My main task was to help prepare daily press guidance on the deteriorating situation in Yugoslavia. It was a depressing job, trying to put the best spin on a bad situation getting worse by the day. An FSO on the team felt so demoralized by what he saw as a lack of action by the administration that he resigned.

If you resign, you can go to the press and speak publicly. That's your right. But where possible, I would argue that it's best to stay in and try to change policy from within.

We should all take great satisfaction that Foreign Service agencies guarantee the right to express—internally—dissenting policy views, which is unknown in other parts of the U.S. government.

Please let me know what you think at yazdgerdi@afsa.org or member@afsa.org.

Wishing you and your family a joyous holiday season! ■



Tom Yazdgerdi is the president of the American Foreign Service Association.

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Recognizing Achievement, Looking Ahead

BY SHAWN DORMAN

Each December *The Foreign Service Journal* honors the recipients of the annual AFSA awards for constructive dissent, outstanding performance, and lifetime achievement. We also include a story on dissent more broadly as a way to remind FS members that internal debate on policy is a valued tradition in the Foreign Service.

All Dissent Channel messages go to the Secretary of State through the Policy Planning Staff (S/P). The story of this unique vehicle for critical thinking is told in our Cover Story, “The State Department Dissent Channel: History and Impact,” by historian Sara Berndt and FSO Holly Holzer (who recently served as S/P deputy director). It is particularly timely given the current discord in the foreign affairs agencies over the U.S. response to the Israel-Hamas war and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

As Tom Yazdgerdi highlights in President’s Views, “Constructive Dissent Is Vital,” AFSA offers annual dissent awards to FS members who speak out—through the Dissent Channel or any other vehicle for internal debate—about a policy they believe is misguided or wrong.



This year’s constructive dissent award recipients are Mark Evans (Herter Award for a senior FSO), Alexander Douglas

(Rivkin Award for a mid-level FSO), and Christophe Triplett (Harriman Award for an entry-level FSO). We profile each beginning on page 42.

Ambassador John Tefft received the 2023 Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award. It was my great pleasure to connect with him for our interview, “Meeting Post-Cold War Challenges.” He reflects on decades of experience in Russian and Eurasian affairs from a unique vantage point having served as ambassador to Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Lithuania.

The 2023 Awards for Exemplary Performance were bestowed on the following members of the Foreign Service community: Katie Leis (Delavan Award for an office management specialist), Marina Grayson (Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy), David Burnstein (Palmer Award), Erin Cederlind (Guess Award for a community liaison office coordinator), David Baugh (Bohlen Award for an FS family member, honorable mention), Felix Peng and Paige Puntso (AFSA Post Representatives of the Year), and Ken Kero-Mentz (AFSA Achievement and Contributions to the Association Award).

Last, but by no means least, the Foreign Service Champions Award went to the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition.

The Speaking Out from USAID FSO Yikee Adje, “Promotion Unicorns and the Case for Humility,” offers lessons on leadership gained from her survey of suc-

Writing for the Centennial

Looking ahead to the centennial year for AFSA and the Foreign Service, please consider how you might lend your voice to the discussions about the future of diplomacy, development, and the U.S. Foreign Service. One way is to submit an essay for our **Centennial Writing Competition**. Entries are due Dec. 15, so get out your pens! The top prize is \$5,000. Find details at <https://bit.ly/FSJ-writing-competition>.

Write for the *Journal* in 2024. We are always looking for great ideas and submissions on any topic relating to the Foreign Service, from current challenges (Speaking Out) to diplomatic history (FS Heritage) and everything in between (Features, Reflections, FS Know-How, Family Member Matters, Book Reviews, Letters to the Editor, and photos for Off Road and Local Lens).

We welcome your pitch for a Focus section article (themes listed at afsa.org/fsj-editorial-calendar). We accept submissions on a rolling basis. Go to afsa.org/fsj and click on Author Guidelines for more.

cessful FSOs. In the Feature, “Operation Nica Welcome,” FSO Kate Applegate tells the story of the 2023 flight that brought 200 political prisoners from Nicaragua to start new lives in the United States.

In the Education Supplement, Dr. Chad Nelson updates his 2013 *FSJ* article, “A Parent’s Guide to Psychoeducational Evaluations,” that has been a popular resource for FS families. FS teen Natalie Aucoin asks in Family Member Matters if we’ve “Ever Heard of the U.S. Naval Sea Cadets?” And in Local Lens, FCS Officer Martin Claessens offers a winter scene from Ontario.

Write us at journal@afsa.org. We look forward to hearing from you! ■

Shawn Dorman is the editor of The Foreign Service Journal.

Remembering 1998

I very much appreciated your look back at the 1998 East Africa embassy bombings in the July/August *Foreign Service Journal*. The retrospective was informative and very moving.

At the time, I was stationed at Ramstein Air Base, which was the jumping-off point for the entire range of emergency response and support. Nearby Landstuhl Regional Medical Center was the receiving point for the casualties.

The selfless people I met during the response to that tragedy were perhaps some of the finest people I have encountered—and inspired me to join the State Department.

Thumbs-up to the editorial staff for the piece and all your excellent articles.

Karl Duckworth

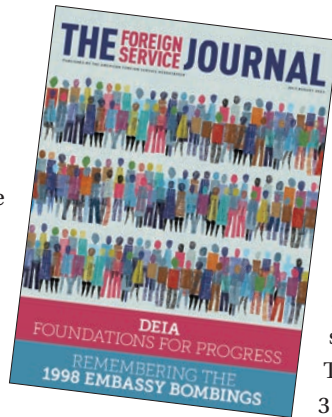
FSO, Minister Counselor for Public Affairs

U.S. Embassy Moscow

A Rude Awakening

I read with interest Louis Sell's gripping article about the October 1993 crisis at the Russian White House (October 2023 *Foreign Service Journal*). It brought back memories. I was serving at the time at our embassy in Bucharest, where we followed the unfolding and alarming situation in Moscow as best we could. Developments there were even more unsettling for our local friends, many of whom strongly believed that whenever Moscow sneezed, Romania caught a cold, or worse.

One minor aspect of the article that caught my attention, however, was the prevalence of intruders at



the embassy compound at that time. It reminded me of a similar incident at Spaso House in 1967, where I was living as staff aide to Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson. At about 3 a.m. on Jan. 27, the Spaso House major-domo, Clemente Pandin, burst into my ground-floor apartment, wide-eyed and breathless, woke me up, and said that a Soviet soldier in uniform had entered the building.

He told me that since he had already spoken with the young man and, unsuccessfully, urged him to leave, the situation was mine to deal with. Together we left my apartment and met the soldier, who appeared to me to be mentally unbalanced, high on drugs, or drunk. He was unarmed, however, and seemed to be neither aggressive nor threatening.

In questioning the soldier, we learned that he had climbed over the back garden wall and entered the building through an unlocked basement door

(although a Soviet militia guard was posted at the front entrance to the residence, he could not see the whole garden). The intruder said calmly that he simply wanted to meet the recently arrived U.S. ambassador.

We told him (untruthfully) that the ambas-

sador was not present and eventually convinced him to leave,



escorting him to the main entrance. When the young trooper walked down the driveway and reached the front gate, he indubitably was grabbed by the guard and quickly carted off to an uncertain but certainly unpleasant fate. Ambassador Thompson, whose bedroom was on the second floor, heard nothing and did not know what had happened until we told him later that morning.

Had I been thinking more clearly, I would have urged the seemingly harmless, if befuddled, soldier to exit out the back and leave the premises over the same wall that he had scaled to gain entry. That might have spared him untold difficulties. However, clarity of thought, regrettably, is often in short supply when one has been rudely awakened from a deep sleep at 3 a.m.

Jonathan B. Rickert

Senior FSO, retired

Bainbridge Island, Washington ■



**Share your thoughts
about this month's issue.**

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



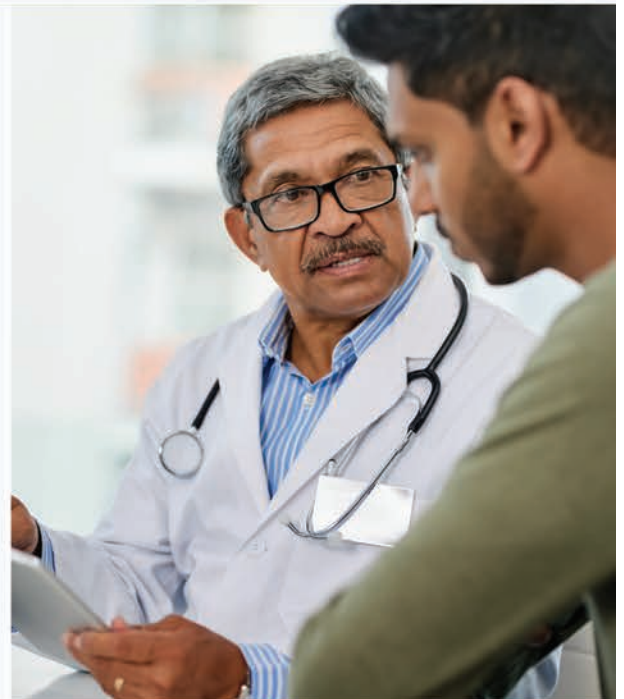
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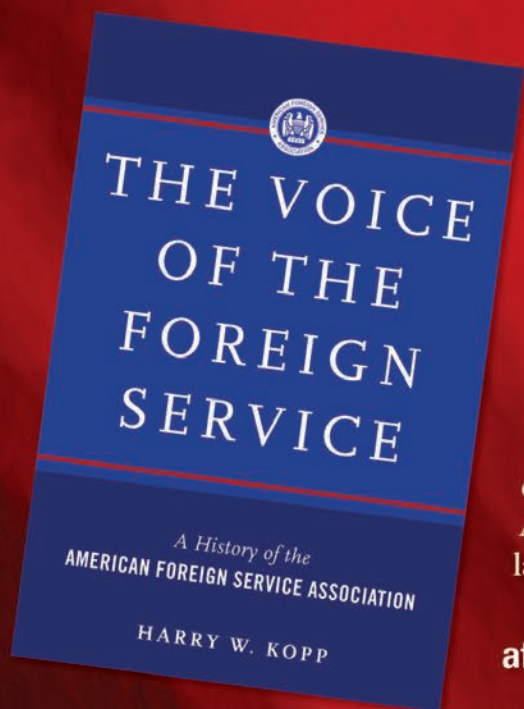


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Spread a little understanding in the New Year!

-Best wishes from FS Books



A History of the American Foreign Service Association

By Harry W. Kopp for the American Foreign Service Association

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

afsa.org/voice

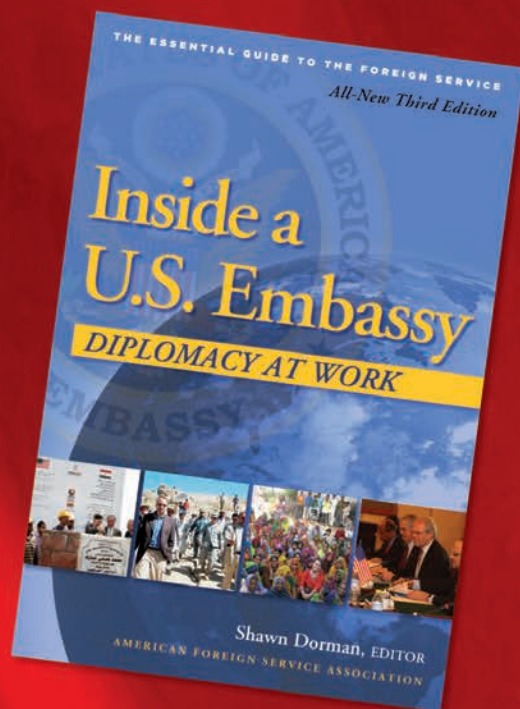


The Essential Guide to the United States Foreign Service

Edited by Shawn Dorman

- Essential reading for anyone considering a Foreign Service career.
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- A valuable guide for tourists and business travelers who may interact with a U.S. mission overseas.
- A primer for military personnel and contractors assigned overseas.

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Dissent Over Response to Hamas Attack

Across the foreign affairs community, as of Nov. 7 when this edition was being finalized, there was ongoing debate and disagreement over the best way for the U.S. to respond to fighting in Israel and Gaza. Dissent over the administration's policy was being expressed internally as well as publicly by some employees who were speaking to the press.

State Department Civil Service employee Josh Paul, director of congressional and public affairs in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs resigned Oct. 18 in protest of U.S. policy of expanded military aid to Israel. Paul wrote on LinkedIn that he feared "rushing arms to one side of the conflict" would lead to "ethnic cleansing" in Gaza. He wrote a follow-up a week later in *The Washington Post*.

On Oct. 19, after Secretary Blinken returned from a trip to the Middle East—the war prompted the Secretary to push up a scheduled visit to Israel and Jordan and add a half dozen additional stops, including the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Qatar—he sent a note to the entire department, acknowledging the personal and professional difficulties many State Department employees were experiencing as the war got underway.

"While we fully support Israel's right to defend itself, how it does so matters," he wrote. "That means acting in a way that respects the rule of law and international humanitarian standards, and taking every possible precaution to protect civilian life."

The Secretary continued: "The United States has the most dedicated and capable diplomatic corps in the world. ... Rather than stand on the sidelines when challenges seem daunting, you wade into the fray ... you try to make things

Contemporary Quote

ee Americans don't understand foreign aid. Instead of relying on misinformed citizens, we should demand better answers from national leaders who want to cut aid to our friends and allies and imperil American security. ...

Let's review some important realities.

First, foreign aid is about 1 percent of the U.S. budget, roughly \$60 billion. ...

That's a lot of money. To put it in perspective, however, Americans forked over about \$181 billion annually on snacks, and \$115 billion for beer last year. ...

We need to stop asking people in diners about foreign aid. (Populists who demand that we rely on guidance from The People should remember that most Americans think foreign aid should be about 10 percent of the budget—a percentage those voters think would be a reduction but would actually be a massive increase.) Instead, put our national leaders on the spot to explain what they think foreign aid is, where it goes, and what it does, and then call them out, every time, when they spin fantasies about it. ”

—Tom Nichols, *The Atlantic Daily*, Oct. 30, 2023.

better." He then called on employees "to sustain and expand the space for debate and dissent that makes our policies and our institution better."

But the memo did little to calm the dissenters. On Nov. 1, *Foreign Policy's* Robbie Gramer reported that more than a dozen current and former officials described "mounting objections" to the administration's current policy, saying U.S. diplomats were "privately angered, shocked, and despondent by what they perceived as a de facto blank check from Washington for Israel."

On Nov. 3, *Foreign Policy* reported that "hundreds" of USAID employees had signed onto a letter calling on the Biden administration to demand an "immediate ceasefire" and to uphold international law, which "includes ending Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories and settle-

ments on occupied land." On Nov. 6, Politico's Nahal Toosi reported on one Dissent Channel message leaked to the press. The Dissent Channel is meant for internal debate, not as a way to reach the public.

Meanwhile, the conflict triggered the authorized departure of nonemergency embassy staff in the region, with Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Beirut moving to evacuate family members and others.

The attack on Israel also brought into focus the dearth of U.S. ambassadors and other senior officials in the region. On Oct. 7, there was no confirmed U.S. ambassador to Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, Kuwait, or Oman—only seven of Biden's 78 ambassadorial nominees worldwide had been confirmed by the Senate. On Oct. 18, the Senate confirmed career diplomats as ambassadors to Kuwait (Karen Sasahara) and Oman (Ana

Escrogima); the nominee for ambassador to Egypt, career diplomat Herro Mustafa Garg, was confirmed on Nov. 4.

Jack Lew, the nominee for ambassador to Israel whose confirmation had been held up due to objections from some in Congress because of Lew's work on the Iran nuclear agreement during the Obama administration, was confirmed on Oct. 31 and arrived in Israel on Nov. 5.

"We have diplomats for a reason," Farah Pandith, an adjunct senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, told NPR. "American foreign policy starts in Washington, but the leadership on the ground helps to see it through."

Meanwhile, Secretary Blinken has made several trips to the region, including another visit to Israel, a stop in the West Bank, and meetings in Baghdad. On Oct. 15, the administration announced the appointment of Ambassador David M. Satterfield as special envoy for Middle East humanitarian issues.

Russia Detains Another U.S. Journalist

Russian authorities have arrested another American journalist. On Oct. 19, Alsu Kurmasheva, an American-Russian dual citizen who works for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, was detained in the Russian city of Kazan on charges of failure to register as a foreign agent. If convicted, she faces five years in prison.

Kurmasheva is the second U.S. journalist to be arrested this year in Russia. In March 2023, *Wall Street Journal* correspondent Evan Gershkovich was arrested in Moscow on espionage charges. He remains in prison in Moscow, where he awaits trial.

Kurmasheva traveled from her home in Prague to Kazan in May because of a family emergency. When she attempted to return home two weeks later, she was temporarily detained and her U.S. and Russian passports confiscated.

Other Americans currently in prison

in Russia include Paul Whelan and former Anglo-American School of Moscow teacher Marc Fogel. U.S. Ambassador to Russia Lynne Tracy visited both Whelan and Gershkovich in prison earlier this year.

Also imprisoned in Russia is Robert Shonov, a longtime former locally employed staff member at the U.S. consulate in Vladivostok.

Update on State's "Modernization Agenda"

On Sept. 26, Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources Richard Verma sent a State Department-wide email updating staff on the successes of the department's Modernization Agenda, which was first implemented in 2021.

According to Verma's email, recent successes include the launch of the new Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy in August 2023; the recent rollout of a mid-level core curriculum

Podcast of the Month: *Available Worldwide* (<https://availableworldwide.net>)

Lauren Steed and Stephanie Anderson are longtime Foreign Service family members, both of whom started their own businesses before joining forces to create "Available Worldwide," a podcast that explores issues of interest to FS family members (EFMs) and works to build a global community for them. Steed and Anderson talk to other diplomatic spouses about how they've built professional identities and managed their roles as parents through multiple overseas moves.

Anderson, who is on her fourth overseas assignment with her information resources management (IRM) specialist spouse, is the owner of Global Nomad English, an online tutoring business that provides support to locally employed staff members as they learn business English. Steed is a college coach and founder of Nomad Educa-

tional Services who has served with her economic officer spouse at five posts.



Guests have included Jessica Hayden, a lawyer, mom, and EFM who has written for the *Journal* in the past. Hayden talks about evacuating Kyiv ahead of the war and sustaining a law career while single parenting through an unaccompanied assignment. Another recent episode focuses on EFM Sarah Buckley, a nurse-turned-food-blogger who explains how she made that profes-

sional transition. Other EFM guests include entrepreneurs, teachers, and aid workers who share their experiences, offer packout advice, and discuss the realities of spouse employment overseas.

To apply to appear on the show, or to nominate someone else, go to <https://availableworldwide.net/contact/>.

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along with the department's first-ever Learning Policy; and the 2022 decision to pay department interns.

Also among successes are the launch of ORION, a unified technology platform that facilitates information sharing to improve crisis response by the Operations Center; and the development of the "Tech for Life" program that will allow employees to take devices with them when they transfer to new posts and assignments.

Verma also promised changes to training, workforce retention, and locally employed staff compensation "in the coming months."

Verma's email offered thanks "not only to the teams who have been working tirelessly to tackle critical missions, support a resilient and inclusive workforce, and promote a culture of thoughtful risk management, but also to those of you who have incorporated the themes of this agenda—agility, equity, and innovation—into your everyday work."

Former Ambassador Sentenced for Illicit Lobbying

On Sept. 15, career Senior Foreign Service Officer Richard G. Olson Jr., a former U.S. ambassador to Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates, was sentenced to three years' probation and fined \$93,350 for violating federal lobbying and ethics laws.

Olson, who served in the department for 34 years, admitted that in 2015, while he was ambassador to Pakistan, he failed to disclose that he received an \$18,000 first-class ticket to fly to London for a job interview. He also confessed to lobbying U.S. officials on behalf of the government of Qatar in 2017, violating a federal "cooling-off" period that prohibits such activity.



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It Doesn't Make Sense

When I say to people in New Hampshire, "One person can hold up all of those [nominations]," they say, "You guys are crazy, why do you allow that to happen?" And I can't explain that. It doesn't make sense.

—Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.) speaking to Andrew Desiderio at Punchbowl News on Oct. 18.

No Substitute for an Ambassador

The urgency to confirm this highly qualified nominee [Jack Lew] has never been greater. Israel is at war, and the United States needs an experienced, Senate-confirmed ambassador on the ground working hand in hand with our Israeli partners. The U.S. team at Mission Israel is the best in the field, but there is no substitute for a Senate-confirmed ambassador.

—Senator Ben Cardin (D-Md.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in a statement at the SFRC hearing on Oct. 25.

Olson also confessed that during his tenure as the U.S. consul general in Dubai, he did not report that the emir of Dubai had gifted his mother-in-law \$60,000 of jewelry.

And he told FBI agents that while serving in Pakistan, he asked a Pakistani American businessman to pay \$25,000 to his mistress, whom he later married, so she could attend graduate school in New York.

In court Olson said of his illegal activities: "I did step over the line. It was a mistake."

Campbell Is New Pick for Deputy Job

On Nov. 1, President Biden announced his nomination of Kurt M. Campbell for the post of Deputy Secretary of State.

Campbell currently serves as White House coordinator for Indo-Pacific affairs at the National Security Council. During the Obama administration, he was assistant secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific affairs from 2009 to 2013, where

he was considered the author of the president's "pivot to Asia" strategy.

He is chairman and CEO of The Asia Group, which he founded in 2013, and a co-founder of the Center for a New American Security, a think tank launched in 2007. If confirmed, he will replace Victoria Nuland, who has been Acting Deputy Secretary since the retirement of Wendy Sherman in July 2023.

Nonemergency Personnel Leave Iraq

On Oct. 20, the State Department ordered all nonemergency personnel and family members to depart from the embassy in Baghdad and the consulate in Erbil. The Iraq Travel Advisory was updated to reflect this status, stating: "Do not travel to Iraq due to terrorism, kidnapping, armed conflict, civil unrest, and Mission Iraq's limited capacity to provide support to U.S. citizens."

The change was made after multiple drone attacks on U.S. military forces in Iraq and Syria on Oct. 18 injured at least 20 U.S. servicemembers. An American

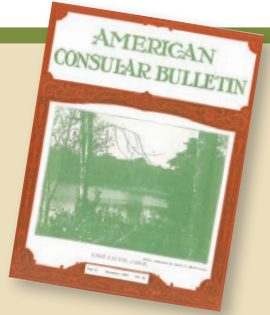
100 Years Ago

Vice Consul Escapes Collapsed Building

Sam Wardell, Vice Consul at Yokohama, has been an interesting visitor at the Department relating his dexterous escape from the consular building which collapsed upon him, and then burned, during the earthquake which destroyed Yokohama and part of Tokyo on September 1, 1923. Mr. Wardell, after making a safe exit from the toppling structure into the street, was thrown to the ground three times by the billowy undulations of the earth but managed to rise and reach the shelter of a large park where, with the compact mass of refugees, he suffered from dust, smoke, cinders, heat and thirst.

Mr. Wardell has gone to his home on a vacation to recover from the nervous shock and replenish his wardrobe, as he lost everything except the clothes on his back, before proceeding to his new post at Harbin.

—From “Reports and Trade Letters” in the American Consular Bulletin (precursor to the FSJ) December 1923.



contractor died “due to a cardiac incident during a shelter-in-place order,” according to NBC.

Pentagon Press Secretary Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder said on Oct. 24 that between Oct. 17 and 24, “U.S. and coalition forces have been attacked at least 10 separate times in Iraq and three separate times in Syria via a mix of one way attack drones and rockets.”

CNN reports a senior defense official as saying: “The U.S. believes that the proxies are being funded, armed, equipped and trained by Iran.”

Despite the ordered departure, State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Oct. 23 that “the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and the Consul-



The U.S. embassy in Baghdad, Iraq, circa 2014.

ate General in Erbil remain open. We remain committed to our longstanding strategic partnership with Iraq, and we’ll continue to work through our embassy and our consulate there to strengthen that partnership.” ■

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



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Promotion Unicorns and the Case for Humility

BY YIKEE ADJE

Every year stress levels of Foreign Service employees are at an all-time high when they need to prepare their promotion materials. To play the game, we must look for ways to make accomplishments appear bigger and more far-reaching. We search for that powerful verb or adjective to make results stand out from the rest.

Many take credit for as much as they can, even when it defies what is possible for one person to achieve in a government bureaucracy—let’s just put it all in and hope the promotion boards will buy it! Those who supervise an office may commit the unsavory but all too common act of taking credit for everything their unit accomplished and making it their own.

Too many of us accept this as what we “have to do” to get promoted. Is it really? No, it is not. That is the surprising conclusion of the independent research I conducted recently on the topic of Foreign Service promotions.

The Case for Humility

Admittedly, the supercharged, high-stakes, competitive Foreign Service career doesn’t naturally cultivate humility; in fact, it has a way of pushing everyone to become obsessed with the climb

The supercharged, high-stakes, competitive Foreign Service career doesn’t naturally cultivate humility; in fact, it has a way of pushing everyone to become obsessed with the climb to the top.

to the top. Yet there are countless studies highlighting the critical importance of humility in leaders.

For instance, Jim Collins—the researcher, leadership teacher, management guru, and author of *Good to Great* (2001)—found humility to be one of the two common traits found in CEOs of companies that transitioned from average to superior market performance.

My research brought me to a similar conclusion on its importance for advancement in the Foreign Service. I interviewed 14 “promotion unicorns” at USAID—FSOs who had flown up the ranks (from an FS-6 to an FS-1 in 11 years or less) from different support and technical backstops and are now serving in varying levels of senior leadership. While they noted myriad factors that led to their fast rise, I was surprised by one, in particular, that I observed with my own eyes—humility.

I saw humility when interviewees openly admitted mistakes they made early on in their careers—or for some, more recently—and recounted the steps they took to change themselves. They acknowledged that the way they had done things was suboptimal; they heard the feedback given to them; and they pivoted away from doing things in the way that was most comfortable to them.

Instead, they adopted a new way of working that pushed them outside their comfort zone. And they were willing to stay in that uncomfortable place for as long as needed to ensure that the necessary change happened. They did this for the benefit of their subordinates, peers, and the agency.

I was floored by these revelations. A cynical part of me had gone into the interviews expecting to meet proud, possibly narcissistic, individuals who would flaunt how they had gamed the promotion system. That was not at all what I encountered. The unicorns shared with me their constant desire to be better and to learn from those around them.

One explained that when he started every new post, he would convene a



Yikee Adje is a USAID Foreign Service officer and executive coach who is passionate about helping members of the Foreign Service build strategic relationships for career advancement and working with teams to streamline their internal work processes to overcome the government bureaucracy for greater productivity. She is the author of DIPLOMATICALLY: A Guide for

Creating Work-Life Balance in the Foreign Service (2023). Connect with her at [linkedin.com/in/yikeeadje](https://www.linkedin.com/in/yikeeadje).

meeting and tell his new team that the local country team members would always be more experienced than he was, and he relied on them to guide him in his daily work.

I was speechless when I heard this. I found myself wondering, Is this guy for real? While most of us start a new job trying to prove ourselves to those who don't know us, this guy comes in doing the complete opposite! Yet, clearly, doing so has worked in his favor.

Constructive Feedback and Corridor Reputation

Many interviewees expressed gratitude to past supervisors who gave them constructive feedback. They acknowledged they had blind spots and were grateful to supervisors who had been willing to point them out so they could change.

Getting constructive criticism, I believe, played a role in keeping the unicorns humble. If all an officer ever heard was that they were perfect and great, wouldn't that get to the person's head sooner or later?

I suspect constructive feedback is harder to come by nowadays. In the Foreign Service, an officer's "corridor reputation" is everything. What people say and think about you matters and may determine whether you get the plum assignment you want or not. As a result, some officers are afraid to give honest, direct feedback because they are afraid it will be used against them.

The Foreign Service world is an unpredictable roller-coaster ride. Your subordinate today could be your boss tomorrow. When dealing with difficult colleagues, it may feel easier to just put up with them until one of you changes assignments than to confront them head-on.

Take your ego out of the workplace and refocus on the needs and objectives of your team and agency.

On top of this, in recent years USAID has implemented multisource ratings (MSR); everyone from your subordinates and peers to higher-ups gets to rate you—anonymously. People are surprisingly brave and honest in their feedback under the veil of anonymity.

MSRs are an integral part of the package that the promotion boards see. I would be surprised if there were any supervisors who didn't think about their own MSR ratings just for a hot second before they moved forward with giving a subordinate some constructive feedback. Let's be real about that.

If we can all start from a place of accepting that none of us is perfect, that we can all find something to improve on, and that feedback is a gift, we can create a culture where it's easier to give and receive feedback. Let's encourage humility so we remain open to improving our performance and becoming the kind of leader our agency needs.

Promotion as a Goal?

Another big discovery is that the majority of promotion unicorns had no "approach" for getting promoted quickly, because promotion was never their goal to begin with. They were motivated by intrinsic factors, though they did acknowledge some external factors that helped them succeed. These are as follows:

- *Lifelong learning.* The individuals I interviewed love continuously learning, on the job and outside the job.
- *Diverse professional experiences.*

Unicorns think outside the box when looking for professional opportunities; they are not afraid of trying new things or changing backstops.

- *Mentoring.* Unicorns credit good mentors among past supervisors and front office individuals with guiding them toward success.

- *Writing skills.* Unicorns feel confident they know how to write about their skills and accomplishments in a compelling way.

- *Ability to link everyday work to U.S. government policy.* Unicorns are confident in their ability to convey the impact of their work to Congress and the interagency.

- *Hardship service.* Unicorns often serve at hardship posts where there were more stretch opportunities to have greater responsibilities.

All of these factors contribute to fast promotions.

One Disturbing Trend

While conducting the interviews, I did uncover one disturbing trend that is the antithesis of humility: I heard complaints about egotism among new officers from several unicorns and USAID staff with roles supporting FSOs who had cited the importance of humility in their success.

Some of the more recent recruits, they observed, want to be ambassadors and mission directors yesterday. They are in such a hurry to climb up the career ladder, they risk destroying the ladder itself in their haste.

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.

These junior officers ignore the host country national staff, who have the knowledge and institutional memory of the mission; and in doing so, they miss out on one of the great learning opportunities offered to them.

They only want to engage with higher-ups, to be more visible, and to garner favor they hope will translate into better assignments and faster promotions. They take on additional tasks only after assessing whether the task is promotion-worthy and will say yes only if it is something they can write about in their promotion package.

By operating in this way, these junior officers are doing a disservice to themselves in the long run. Take note, new officers!

From the moment you say hello, your corridor reputation starts being developed. If you treat locally employed staff poorly, brown-nose to higher-ups, cherry-pick only the tasks that will get you promoted—what do you think people are going to say about you?

When a potential supervisor at a desired post does an informal background check on you, asking around, beyond the references you provided, what are those people going to say about you? Will what they say help your chances of getting that job?

This is what you need to think about every time you have the opportunity to interact with anyone and every time you are asked to do something. I urge you to show some humility.

In this day and age, humility is the gold standard for a leader. Start admitting what you don't know. Welcome others who know more to join in the brainstorming session. Do not be afraid to admit mistakes and course-correct. Take your ego out of the workplace and refocus on the needs and objectives of your team and agency.

Why did you join the Foreign Service in the first place? Remember your "why" and cultivate and display humility along the journey toward achieving your purpose in the Foreign Service. ■

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The State Department DISSENT CHANNEL

History and Impact

The Dissent Channel institutionalized dissent at the State Department a half century ago, but it is by no means the only way to register disagreement or propose policy alternatives.

BY SARA BERNDT AND HOLLY HOLZER

For more than 52 years, the Dissent Channel has endured as a mechanism for the workforce to express dissenting views in a privileged and confidential way to senior leadership at the State Department without fear of retaliation or exposure. The channel has become a cherished institution, serving as the primary example of the value that Secretaries of State have placed on dissent as a critical part of creating and implementing U.S. foreign policy. Upon learning about the Dissent Channel, other foreign ministries often express

shock that the State Department has a formal way for its employees to disagree with the department's policies and senior leaders. Some have minimized the Dissent Channel as lacking influence and rarely affecting foreign policy, or as a public relations tool for senior department officials to tout their open-mindedness.

The success of the Dissent Channel lies in its longevity and continued use, the dedication of the foreign policy community to its preservation and importance, and its broad influence on the policy process. Understanding the channel's history, and seeing the kinds of messages received in the channel, affords us a chance to see why it matters and what makes for a strong dissent message.



Sara Berndt is a historian at the U.S. State Department Office of the Historian. She has provided historical research for posts and domestic bureaus, interviewed foreign policy officials for oral history projects, developed course modules for the Foreign Service Institute, and compiled and edited documents on U.S.–Latin American relations for inclusion in the 150-year-old Foreign Relations of the United States series. Her volume on U.S. policy in South America during the Jimmy Carter administration was published in 2018.



Foreign Service Officer Holly Holzer is the senior U.S. coordinator for lawful migration in the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, and leads the U.S. Lawful Migration Task Force. Most recently she served as deputy director of the Secretary of State's Policy Planning Staff (S/P), where she oversaw the Dissent Channel.

A Short History

The Dissent Channel is an outgrowth of both the tumultuous politics of the Vietnam War and a period of institutional modernization. As protests against the Vietnam War grew across the U.S., newer officers—including those in the State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Information Agency, and the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency—saw the impact that the war had on their generation. Under Secretary for Political Affairs George Ball's views opposing U.S. involvement and escalation in Vietnam were the worst-kept secret in the State Department. Between 1965 and 1975, 39 Foreign Service officers were killed in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Inevitably, these generational experiences shaped younger officers' views on U.S. policy toward Vietnam and built the demand

for a process for department personnel to express alternative and dissenting positions.

Simultaneously, the State Department was undergoing a larger reform effort. In 1967, as part of his efforts to modernize, Secretary of State Dean Rusk formalized the Open Forum, a volunteer association of younger officers whose mandate was to bring new or alternative views into the policy debate. And in January 1970, Under Secretary for Administration William Macomber launched a massive reform effort called "Diplomacy for the 70's: A Program of Management Reform for the Department of State."

Thirteen task forces staffed by more than 50 foreign policy professionals worked for more than five months. They produced more than 500 recommendations that were compiled in a 610-page volume delivered to Secretary of State William P. Rogers on Nov. 20, 1970. One of those recommendations was that the State Department "establish as a general principle [that officers] are free to submit a dissenting statement." This opened the door for the creation of a formal mechanism for dissent.

Meanwhile, dissent bubbled. In November 1970, more than 50 Foreign Service officers signed a letter to Secretary Rogers outlining their opposition to the invasion of Cambodia. As the letter was circulated for additional signatures, it was leaked to the press. Incensed, President Richard Nixon called Under Secretary for Political Affairs U. Alexis Johnson in the middle of the night, demanding that the signers be fired immediately. They were not, but the pressure to silence them was intense.

As a result of the space created by reform efforts and the courage of the dissenters of the time, the State Department established the right of foreign affairs officials to dissent in February 1971. A new section of the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM), section 101, was called "Policy of Openness in Post Management." According to Management Reform Bulletin No. 9 of Feb. 23, 1971: "Officers who may conclude, after carefully weighing all views, that they cannot concur in a report or recommendation are free to submit a dissenting statement without fear of pressure or penalty." Although this bulletin has been seen as establishing the Dissent Channel, the term was not used. The new FAM section did not establish guidelines for who could dissent, to whom

dissents should be communicated, or how the policy process should react to each "dissenting statement."

In April 1971, Archer Blood, who was the consul in Dhaka (then in East Pakistan and now the capital of Bangladesh), was the first to test this new openness to dissent. Blood authorized the use of the consulate's telegraph machine for seven staff at the consulate to send what is often called the first Dissent Channel message. The "Blood Telegram," as it came to be known, appealed to the Nixon administration to intervene to stop the Pakistani military's violence in East Pakistan. The dissent did not lead to U.S. policy change but did bring attention to what the dissenters called "genocide" in East Pakistan, generated support for their interpretation inside the State Department, and helped to create the Dissent Channel.

In late 1971 and early 1972, the Dissent Channel began to take shape as a formal mechanism. On Nov. 4, 1971, State Department cable No. 201473 laid out the first set of instructions for submitting dissenting opinions, emphasizing "that all expressions of dissent

UNCLASSIFIED U.S. Department of State Case No. F-2016-07743 Doc No. C06431370 Date: 11/13/2017

AIRGRAM

TO : DEPT OF STATE
Dept pass USIA, Mr. Kenneth Towery (IOP)
E.O. 11652: N/A

FROM : PINT, IT
AMEMBASSY, ROME

SUBJECT: Dissent Message, American Policy and Italy -
A Critique
11 FAM 243
STATE 209583

DATE: February 3, 1976

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SUMMARY: HOW WE GOT WHERE WE ARE. ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING THE THREE PILLARS OF US POST-WAR POLICY TOWARD ITALY, I.E. ANTI-COMMUNISM, SUPPORT FOR CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, AND NATO SEEN AS HAVING NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES. IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING MORE POSITIVE POLICY WITH OVERT ENCOURAGEMENT OF DEVELOPING FORCES OF DEMOCRATIC SPECTRUM. THE NEED FOR GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY, NEW MODUS OPERANDI BETWEEN TRADITIONAL DIPLOMATS AND CIA EMPLOYEES OVERSEAS, WITH SHARPER GUIDELINES AND PROTECTION FOR LATTER. OPPORTUNITY TO RESTORE CONFIDENCE IN US AS AN ALLY AND BOLSTER OUR SAGGING ALLIES. NEED TO REPUDIATE TYPE OF ACTIONS ATTRIBUTED TO AMBASSADOR MARTIN AND REAFFIRM THE CORRECTNESS OF HIS SUCCESSOR IN PUTTING A STOP TO THEM. THE ERROR OF GLOBALIST POLICIES IN TAKING INSUFFICIENT ACCOUNT OF INTERNAL DYNAMICS IN KEY COUNTRIES. SOME MODEST PROPOSALS FOR SPECIFIC INITIATIVES.

A. HOW WE GOT WHERE WE ARE, 1945-75:

Since 1945, American policy towards Italy has been based on two main pillars, anti-communism and support for the conservative Christian Democrats (DC). Both overt and covert activities were often justified by the potential they had of advancing these two causes, which indeed complemented one another.

When Italy joined NATO in 1949, it became the linchpin of the

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Doing Dissent at State

All of us at the State Department have had a moment or moments in which we have said to ourselves, this policy is ineffective, is incorrect, or even likely to fail to achieve our goals. In those moments, many of us have asked ourselves how we should, or if we should, voice our position.

Philosophers have debated the meaning of dissent for centuries, often describing dissent as disagreeing with the sentiment of the majority. In the U.S., most Americans are familiar with the “dissenting opinions” written by Supreme Court justices. At the State Department, dissent can be understood as the act of putting forward a policy position that differs from current policy on an issue, country, or region. More than just a different opinion, it is the intentional presentation of an alternative or opposing approach to current or proposed policy that the dissenter determines will result in a better outcome for our foreign policy and national interest.

At State, the Dissent Channel is often put forward as *the* way to dissent. In reality, the Dissent Channel is only *one* of many ways to dissent at State, the one reserved for when other options have not succeeded or, in certain circumstances, where timing is of the essence. Dissent is and should continue to be part of our day-to-day work. U.S. foreign policy and programs are better and stronger if we are considering and examining the options, risks, and alternatives. Sometimes dissenting is easy, when it is part of an ongoing discussion where we are thinking through options. At other times it takes courage to put forward a position that contradicts or differs from current policy.

And when we dissent, it is important to consider why we are dissenting, when to dissent, and how to effectively dissent.

Why Dissent?

People are driven to dissent for multiple reasons—by personal conscience, a call to service, or a commitment to our institution and our mission. As public servants, we serve our nation and work to promote and protect the principles of democracy around the world. In this role, we

have the responsibility to ensure our leadership and decision-makers have all of the information and context they need to make informed decisions. They rely on each of us to make sure that the consequences, risks, and impact of policy choices are debated and understood.

The presence of diverse voices and perspectives in a decision-making process is vitally important. Research has shown that a dissenting voice from the majority or popular position increases the intelligence of the group and improves the outcome. As a result of dissent, our institution and our policy are stronger and smarter.

When to Dissent?

When thinking about dissent, it is valuable to consider the issue, our values and mission, the other stakeholders or interest groups, and the risks you are willing to take. What is driving you—your integrity, the issue itself, the best interests of the United States? Personal integrity is a key motivator for dissent, but there is a fine line between acting out of personal integrity and being self-righteous

and self-absorbed. You have to determine the risks and costs: Does the benefit of speaking out outweigh the cost of saying nothing?

To successfully dissent, you may need to expend your

social capital and accept that initially your positions may be rejected. Ask yourself: Do you care more about the issue in this moment than you do about your own psychological welfare? Can you live with yourself if you say nothing? While dissenters often immediately experience rejection and negativity, in the long run others appreciate and are grateful for the dissent. Psychologist and George Mason Professor Todd Kashdan calls this the “sleeper effect” of dissent.

How to Dissent

Effective dissent is a combination of art and science. Timing, opportunity, precision, and persistence are key to it. Offer alternatives in meetings and policy discussions, question the “why” of a policy, look for the unintended consequences and raise those. Be specific, know your issue, present data and trends, put forward historical lessons. What is

Dissent is and should continue to be part of our day-to-day work.

the impact of your proposal? How will it achieve our policy goals? What will it cost, and how long will it take?

Put your ideas out there through meetings and discussions or through the Policy Ideas Channel or the Open Forum. Build a community of the like-minded—make *your* proposal *our* proposal. Be ready for the opportunity when it is presented. Theories of change all consider the “windows of opportunity”—be on the lookout for your window.

You may not convince people during the first discussion, but if you assess it is important, find other opportunities to discuss it and keep refining your position and building allies. After you dissent and put your position up for a final decision, be willing to accept that you may not succeed. If you don't, be prepared to implement a policy with which you disagree or choose other paths. State Department history is full of dissenters who implemented policies they fought against, as well as dissenters who found other portfolios to work on and dissenters who, when they could not implement, resigned.

Enabling Dissent

Each of us, no matter our rank in the State Department, will at some point lead a team or a process. Creating an environment where team members have the “courageous space” to come forward with differing perspectives and ideas results in better policy. To do this, we need to engage our team members and be curious about what they are thinking or how they are approaching an issue and, importantly, express our appreciation for their perspective when they do share. Some people will easily speak out in a meeting; you may need to approach others and ask one-on-one what they think about an issue.

As the leader, ask your team's perspective first before sharing your own when discussing an issue. Ask the team what the consequences of a policy are, what the risks are, and what will and won't be accomplished. Ask the team how bilateral and multilateral partners will respond to the idea, what their criticisms are, and whether they are valid. Ask the team to question their assumptions: Do you still assess that our reasons for action hold? Has the context changed, or have priorities shifted?

—Holly Holzer

The State Department established the right of foreign affairs officials to dissent in February 1971.

remain, at least in the first instance, *in-house*.” The Open Forum's chairperson objected to these procedures because they did not require the department to *act* on dissents. The Open Forum asked for an action office to be designated that would distribute dissents to a small group of senior officials and respond to each dissent's recommendations.

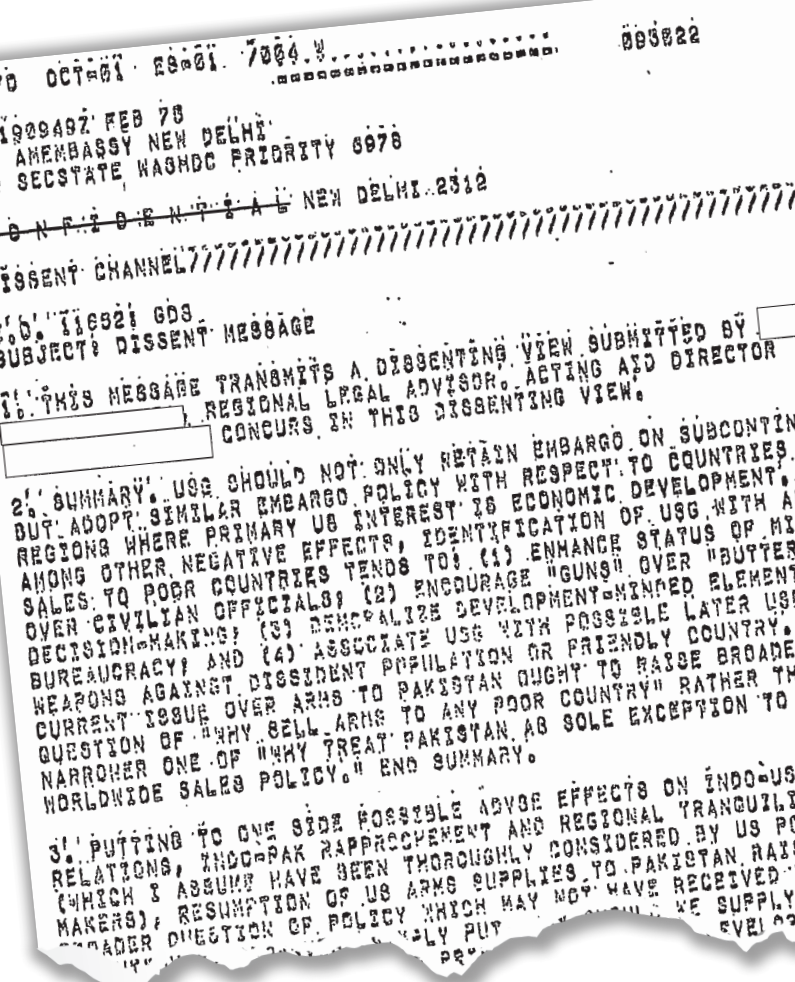
On April 8, 1972, according to the May 1972 Department of State *Newsletter*, the department officially created the Dissent Channel and outlined the process for submitting a dissent message. The Secretary's Policy Planning Staff (S/P) was the office responsible for overseeing the Dissent Channel and acting on dissent messages—a role S/P continues to hold today. In 1971 and 1972, five Dissent Channel messages were sent to S/P.

Informed and Thoughtful Analysis

Early, now-declassified dissents showcase the informed and thoughtful analysis that is essential to policymaking. Many of the first messages discussed U.S. policy in Southeast Asia, but dissenters also wrote about Somali influence in Ethiopia, Italian elections, the impact of assassinations on U.S. policy toward Chile under Pinochet, and U.S. arms sales to Pakistan. Many dissents were about evergreen topics such as how the U.S. should relate to authoritarian governments, how sanctions should be used, or how to engage with opposition groups abroad. Some dissents seem quite prescient in their analysis of, for instance, U.S. policy and the Mobutu regime in Zaire, the end of martial law in Poland, Soviet economic modernization, or the Rios Montt government in Guatemala.

Other early dissent messages covered management issues or raised concerns about waste, fraud, and abuse. Over the years, with the establishment of the Office of Inspector General in 1986, the passage of whistleblower protection laws, and other mechanisms for reporting fraud, abuse, and management problems, the Dissent Channel evolved to serve as a mechanism solely for dissent on foreign policy and its implementation.

Today, there are 404 Dissent Channel messages in the State Department's retired holdings. Between 1972 and 2017, there



The Dissent Channel is an outgrowth of both the tumultuous politics of the Vietnam War and a period of institutional modernization.

were an average of almost nine messages per year sent to Washington, although a record 33 messages were sent in 1977. The retired Dissent Channel files remain classified and captioned, and they will be transferred to the National Archives. In response to an FOIA request, many of the older declassified Dissent Channel messages and responses from that set of files were properly declassified in 2018. These records, all of which are at least 35 years old, are available at foia.state.gov under Case # F-2016-07743.

The subjects of dissent messages reflect their times. During the first 20 years of the Dissent Channel, with authoritarians in power in much of the Americas and the U.S. deeply involved in Central America, Grenada, and Panama, messages from or about the Western Hemisphere made up a quarter of all dissents. In the 1990s, with NATO expansion and wars in the Balkans, messages about Europe made up more than a third of the dissents. At the same time, there were many proposals to reorganize the State

Department amid post-Cold War funding cuts, so a relatively high percentage of dissents discussed issues related to department administration or reorganization. But messages on two mainstays of department business, bilateral relations and consular affairs, still composed a plurality of dissent messages during the 1990s.

Recent dissents have instigated the development of new policies and the adaption of components of existing policy. They have also served as an impetus for bureau and office conversations on both leadership and dissent and how to dissent effectively (these are still classified and captioned).

Overall, Dissent Channel messages have generally fallen into three categories:

- Dissent or disagreement with policy, strategy, or goal, with a recommendation the department shift or change the overall policy.
- Disagreement with a particular action or policy implementation, often including an analysis that the department response or action is not strong enough (and the dissent is a call to action) or is too strong (and the dissent is a request to temper a policy).
- Appealing decisions that the dissenter either knows or believes have been made by senior leadership, and the dissent is a request for reconsideration before final action is taken.

The Value of the Dissent Channel

Policy professionals have often asked: Do Dissent Channel messages have an impact? In short, yes. Channel messages and their perspectives are often incorporated into ongoing policy discussions or serve as the impetus for a policy assessment or review, adding additional perspectives or a more complete assessment of potential consequences. Policies might be adapted, or timelines for implementation shifted. Dissent messages have served to open the doors for other stakeholders to join policy conversations and have moved bureau leadership to solicit alternative views within their teams and offices. Dissenters have been asked to meet with the Secretary or other senior officials to discuss their views, and in the early years, they were sometimes invited to discuss the issues at other internal venues.

Noteworthy also is that while strong dissents may not have “changed policy” in the moment, they have “influenced” how leaders thought about that same policy problem in later years. Outside commentators have even recommended that other agencies need dissent channels, too.

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ELECTIONS AND PUBLICLY DECLARES HE WILL STEP DOWN FROM OFFICE AT THAT TIME. ANYTHING LESS THAN THIS WOULD BE MORE THAN A GIANT LEAP AWAY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS THAT WE SUPPOSEDLY HOLD SO DEAR. THE USG SHOULD MAKE A CLEAR AND PUBLIC STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT WE DO NOT CONDONE THE SELF-IMPOSITION OF A PRESIDENT IN WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO RECOGNIZE AS A DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC. BY FAILING TO DO THIS WE FORFEIT OUR RIGHT TO BE LEADERS OF THE FREE WORLD.

DISSENT CHANNEL

FOR ARA, HA/HR, IHR, S/P

E.O. 12065: GDS 6/10/86 (GONZALES, RAYMOND J.) DR-P
TAGS: CASC, PHIS, SHUM, GT
SUBJECT: ~~US SHOULD CONDITION RECOGNITION OF PRESIDENCY OF RIOS MONTT~~

REF: GUATEMALA 285

1. ~~ENTIRE TEXT~~

2. FOLLOWING DISSENT CHANNEL MESSAGE DRAFTED BY

3. THE USG SHOULD NOT AND CANNOT RECOGNIZE WITHOUT COMMENT THE NEW PRESIDENCY OF GENERAL FRAJIN RIOS MONTT. TO HAVE RECOGNIZED THE MILITARY JUNTA THAT TOOK POWER MARCH 23 WAS TO STRETCH OUR CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY TO ITS LIMITS. IN THAT INSTANCE, HOWEVER, THERE WAS AT LEAST POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE OVERTHROW OF THE CORRUPT LUCAS REGIME AND POWER WAS AT LEAST DIVIDED TO SOME DEGREE AMONG THE JUNTA MEMBERS. NOW WE HAVE NEITHER A REFLECTION OF POPULAR WILL NOR ANYTHING THAT RESEMBLES A DIVISION OF POWER. TO TRY TO PUSH THIS COUNTRY IN THE DIRECTION OF DEMOCRACY AFTER RECOGNIZING THE LEGITIMACY OF A RIOS MONTT PRESIDENCY WOULD BE AS HYPOCRITICAL AS SUDDENLY RECOGNIZING THE ARGENTINE'S CLAIM TO THE FALKLANDS JUST TO AVOID FURTHER PROBLEMS FOR OURSELVES. BOTH INSTANCES ARE BASED ON PRINCIPLES WE CANNOT METAMORPHOSE THAT HIS ASCENDENCY WAS ALSO GAINED BY FORCE OF ARMS. HE HAS NO NATIONAL MANDATE, NO POPULAR WILL EXPRESSED BY A VOTE, ONLY THE TENUOUS SUPPORT OF THE MILITARY. AS LONG AS THE USG CONTINUES TO RECOGNIZE HEADS OF STATE IMPOSED ON THE CITIZENS OF A COUNTRY BY THE MILITARY POWERS, WE HAVE NOT COME FAR FROM THE DAYS IN WHICH WE RECOGNIZED FULGENCIO BATISTA, ANASTASIO SOMOZA OR JUAN VICENTE GOMEZ.

IN ADDITION, THE USG SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT IN THE FIGURE OF RIOS MONTT WE ARE DEALING WITH A MAN WHO MAY NOT BE IN FULL POSSESSION OF HIS MENTAL FACULTIES. I HAVE PERSONAL AND RELIABLE INFORMATION THAT AN HOUR BEFORE HIS PRESS-CONFERENCE OF YESTERDAY, JUNE 9, TO HAVE HIMSELF ANNOUNCE AS PRESIDENT, HE MADE A CALL TO HIS "CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF THE WORD" ASKING HIS ELDERS TO PRAY FOR HIM AS HE WAS ABOUT TO TAKE ON "GREAT POWERS." WHILE I HAVE NOTHING AGAINST PRAYER, I FEEL HE MAY GO SO FAR AS TO JUSTIFY INDISCRIMINATE KILLING IN JULY WHEN THE AMNESTY PROGRAM ENDS, BY HERELY ASKING HIS ELDERS TO JOIN IN PRAYER BEFORE THE SLAUGHTER. WE ARE DEALING HERE WITH A MAN WHO MORE AND MORE IS TAKING ON THE IMAGE OF A DESPOT WHO BELIEVES HE RULES BY DIVINE WILL. HE WILL NOT ONLY EMBARRASS THE USG IN THE FUTURE, BUT ALSO CAUSE GREAT HARM TO HIS PEOPLE AND THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS. WE SHOULD WITHHOLD ANY IMMEDIATE RECOGNITION OR AID UNTIL HE SETS A SPECIFIC DATE FOR

AW

Dissent Channel
June 10, 1982
Subject: US Should Condition Recognition of Presidency of Rios Montt

... The USG should not and cannot recognize without comment the new presidency of General Rios Montt. To have recognized the military junta that took power on March 23 was to stretch our concept of democracy to its limits. In that instance, however, there was at least popular support for the overthrow of the corrupt Lucas regime, and power was at least divided to some degree among the junta members. Now we have neither a reflection of popular will nor anything that resembles a division of power. To try to push this country in the direction of democracy after recognizing the legitimacy of a Rios Montt presidency would be as hypocritical as suddenly recognizing the Argentine's claim to the Falklands just to avoid further problems for ourselves. ... He has no national mandate, no popular will expressed by a vote, only the tenuous support of the military. As long as the USG continues to recognize heads of state imposed on the citizens of a country by the military powers, we have not gone far from the days in which we recognized Fulgencio Batista, Anastasio Somoza or Juan Vicente Gomez. ... We should withhold any immediate recognition or aid until he sets a specific date for elections and publicly declares he will step down from office at that time.

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DISSENT CHANNEL

DRAFTER DESIRES DISTRIBUTION TO P, AF AND EA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PDAS, PGDV, IORC, MILI, CG
SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION FOR US POLICY TOWARDS ZAIRE

REF: 5 DAN 212. 3C

8. SUMMARY: THE DEGREE OF CORRUPTION AND INEPTITUDE OF THE MOBUTU REGIME HAS REACHED THE POINT WHERE INTERNAL REFORM IS FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES IMPOSSIBLE--WITNESS THE LACK OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REFORMS ANNOUNCED BY MOBUTU IN JULY 1977 AFTER THE FIRST SHABA WAR

AND RELATED REFORMS PROMISED ON EVEN EARLIER OCCASIONS. ALL AVAILABLE EVIDENCE INDICATES THAT MOBUTU WILL FIND A WAY TO SABOTAGE EXTERNALLY

IMPOSED REFORMS WHICH THREATEN TO REDUCE HIS POWER AND FINANCIAL PREROGATIVES. THE INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION IS THAT MOBUTU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO

REVERSE THE DECLINE OF HIS POLITICAL FORTUNES, AND THAT HIS REGIME WILL, SOONER, OR LATER, BE OVERTHROWN. THE LONGER MOBUTU HANGS ON, THE GREATER

THE DANGER OF A REVOLUTIONARY UPEHAVAL GIVING RISE TO A RADICAL, ANTI-US REGIME ALONG ANGOLAN, ETHIOPIAN, OR CUBAN LINES. THERE ARE ONLY TWO REALISTIC OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE US TO COUNTER THIS GROWING THREAT TO OUR INTERESTS IN ZAIRE:

--TO CONCERT WITH BELGIUM AND FRANCE TO REMOVE MOBUTU FROM POWER;

--TO REDUCE SUBSTANTIALLY OUR PRESENCE HERE, IF BELGIUM AND FRANCE

REFUSE TO COOPERATE, IN ORDER TO INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF OUR BEING ABLE TO ESTABLISH GOOD WORKING RELATIONS WITH THE SUCCESSOR REGIME.

THIS DISSENT PAPER, PREPARED BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR [REDACTED]

ARGUES THAT WE SHOULD SEEK THE FIRST ALTERNATIVE WHILE BEING PREPARED TO FALL BACK ON THE SECOND IF THE BELGIAN AND FRENCH REFUSE TO COOPERATE. END SUMMARY.

CORRUPTION

2. SOCIAL SCIENTISTS HAVE A WONDERFUL TERM TO DESCRIBE A REGIME LIKE ZAIRE'S: "CLEPTOCRACY" DEFINED AS "GOVERNMENT BY ORGANIZED THEFT."

WHILE PRESIDENT MOBUTU MAY NOT KNOW THE TERM, HE WELL UNDERSTANDS IT MEANING. DURING A 1976 MAY DAY ADDRESS TO A LARGE BODY OF PARTY STALWARTS AT KINSHASA'S MAIN STADIUM, MOBUTU CHIDED THEM FOR THEIR GLUMSPEULATIONS. "INKHA MAVELE," HE ADVISED THEM IN LINGALA, WHICH

IN PLAIN ENGLISH MEANS "STEAL CLEVERLY."

3. WHETHER OR NOT MOBUTU WAS JUSTIFIED IN COMPLAINING ABOUT HIS

COLLEAGUES' LACK OF FINESS, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT CORRUPTION FORMS THE BASIS OF MOBUTU'S RULE. MOBUTU HIMSELF IS GUILTY OF MASSIVE MALFEASANCE IN OFFICE; HOW ELSE COULD AN EX-SERGEANT REACH THE POINT AFTER THIRTEEN

YEARS IN POWER WHERE PEOPLE COULD SERIOUSLY DEBATE WHETHER OR NOT HE IS THE RICHEST MAN IN THE WORLD. (IN AN INTERVIEW MOBUTU GAVE MOHAMED BAYKAL A FEW YEARS AGO, WHEN BAYKAL WAS STILL EDITOR OF EGYPT'S "AL-AHRAM," MOBUTU ACTUALLY BOASTED OF BEING THE THIRD RICHEST MAN IN THE WORLD.)

4. WHETHER MOBUTU IS FIRST, THIRD OR TENTH, HE IS CERTAINLY IN THE RACE. THE VAST MAJORITY OF HIS FUNDS HAVE BEEN STOLEN FROM THE ZAIRIAN PEOPLE; FOR EXAMPLE, MOBUTU HAS AWARDED HIMSELF A PERSONAL MONOPOLY OVER ALL THE DIAMONDS PRODUCED IN ZAIRE. MORE RECENT DISCLOSURES THAT ZAIRE'S PRESIDENT STOLE 11, 000, 000 OF AMERICAN FUNDS DESTINED TO ASSIST OUR MUTUAL ALLIES IN ANGOLA SHOW AN

ADMIRABLE LACK OF NATIONAL BIAS. THIS SAME CORRUPTION FORMS THE VERY BASIS OF THE GOVERNMENT, INDIVIDUALS

Dissent Channel
June 2, 1978
Drafter Desires Distribution to P, AF and EA
Subject: Recommendation for US Policy Towards Zaire
SUMMARY: The degree of corruption and ineptitude of the Mobutu regime has reached the point where integral reform is for all practical purposes impossible--witness the lack of implementation of the reforms announced by Mobutu in July 1977 after the first Shaba War and related reforms promised on even earlier occasions. All available evidence indicates that Mobutu will find a way to sabotage externally imposed reforms which threaten to reduce his power and financial prerogatives. The inescapable conclusion is that Mobutu will not be able to reverse the decline of his political fortunes, and that his regime will, sooner or later, be overthrown. The longer Mobutu hangs on, the greater the danger of a revolutionary upheaval giving rise to a radical anti-US regime along Angolan, Ethiopian, or Cuban lines. There are only two realistic options available to the US to counter this growing threat to our interests in Zaire: (1) to concert with Belgium and France to remove Mobutu from power; (2) to reduce substantially our presence here, if Belgium and France refuse to cooperate, in order to increase the likelihood of our being able to establish good working relations with the successor regime. This dissent, prepared by political counselor XXXXX, argues that we should seek the first alternative, while being prepared to fall back on the second if the Belgians and French refuse to cooperate. END SUMMARY

On Dissenting Well—The ABCD

Anticipate the counterargument. You need to know the issue well enough to be able to articulate the disagreement to what you are putting forward. Define the issue, provide data, identify gaps or needs, and know your audience.

Build curiosity, offer what is possible. Aim to create a space where people want to hear more, not set off their threat radar. Outline the potential consequences, and demonstrate previous efforts to address the issue.

Collect allies. Take the time to engage people one-on-one to build support. When you do this, you are showing respect to others and demonstrating that they are valuable to you.

Demonstrate your loyalty to the group. People often skip this step, but it is critical to show how your dissenting position is aligned with the mission and the group and to demonstrate that you are committed to the welfare of the team or institution.

—Holly Holzer

Secretaries of State have valued the channel as a tool for personnel to offer expert advice to the political leadership on issues central to U.S. foreign policy. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has repeatedly underscored the value he places on the right to dissent and the Dissent Channel. In 2021 testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he said: “This Dissent Channel is something that I place tremendous value and importance on. It is a way for people in the State Department to speak the truth, as they see it, to power. ... I factored what I read and heard into my thinking and into my actions.” At the Foreign Service Institute in October 2021, he said: “I’m reading and responding to every dissent that comes through the Channel. And I hope the Dissent Channel will encourage a culture of constructive, professional dissent, more broadly throughout the department, because dissent makes us stronger.”

The channel is a valuable conduit of communication between senior leaders and the workforce at State. As former AFSA President Ambassador Eric Rubin wrote in the December 2022 *FSJ*: “Constructive internal dissent can lead to better policies, better ideas, higher morale, and a stronger United States if it is encouraged and taken seriously.” The continued practice of keeping Dissent Channel messages “in-house,” and requiring S/P to distribute them carefully and respond to them quickly, enables more honesty and candor. Leaking Dissent Channel messages undermines the value of the channel itself and potentially turns an apolitical policy tool into a political weapon, either against dissenters or against senior officials. Most drafters use the channel because they want to dissent confidentially and within the confines of the institution, to better inform department policy, and to influence the thinking of the Secretary.

An effective dissent is drafted not to give the dissenter the satisfaction of speaking out but rather to influence. With the

audience being the Secretary, strong dissents offer straightforward analysis and propose alternatives. (Even the most experienced ambassadors and assistant secretaries pause before sending a direct message to the Secretary.) The messages demonstrate that the dissenter has worked to influence decision-making within the existing policy process and has tried to build consensus with other stakeholders, but that they believe the issue is so important that they must continue trying to convince senior officials, even when they’ve exhausted all their other options.

The Dissent Channel also serves as a symbol of the value and importance of dissent within the department. Every year AFSA offers four awards for constructive dissent by members of the Foreign Service. Many of the awards are given not for Dissent Channel messages (which AFSA does not receive) but for advocacy within the department to change an issue or policy or put forward alternative perspectives within our normal operations. Indeed, most of the dissent in the department happens routinely, in memos and meetings, in conversations and cables, and not in the Dissent Channel. This is as it should be, a part of our responsibility as diplomats and leaders.

At a recent Open Forum event on the Holocaust, one of the panelists asked: If there had been a Dissent Channel in the 1930s, would restrictive U.S. immigration policy toward Jewish refugees have been challenged or changed? We will never know, but the question gets to why the existence and use of the Dissent Channel remain important. For 52 years, the Dissent Channel has embodied the value placed on dissent by our institution and our leaders. Speaking truth to power with integrity and expertise is critical to the State Department’s role as the lead foreign affairs agency in the U.S. government, and integral to the ability of the U.S. to continue its primacy in world affairs. ■

MEETING POST-COLD WAR CHALLENGES

Complete Professional, Celebrated Mentor, Russia Expert

Ambassador John F. Tefft, a four-time chief of mission who specialized in Russian and Eurasian affairs and played a critical role in the peaceful transition of the post-Soviet space, a leader revered for his professionalism, and mentor to several generations of diplomats during his more than 45-year Foreign Service career, is this year's recipient of the American Foreign Service Association's Award for Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy. (For coverage of the Oct. 5 ceremony, see AFSA News, page 63.)

Tefft is the 29th recipient of this prestigious award, given annually in recognition of a distinguished practitioner's career and enduring devotion to diplomacy.

Past honorees include George H.W. Bush, Thomas Pickering, Ruth A. Davis, George Shultz, Richard Lugar, Joan Clark, Ronald Neumann, Sam Nunn, Rozanne Ridgway, Nancy Powell, Thomas Boyatt, William Harrop, Herman "Hank" Cohen, Edward Perkins, John D. Negroponte, and Anne Patterson.

Ambassador Tefft joined the Foreign Service in 1972. Early assignments included Jerusalem, Budapest, and Rome, but most of his distinguished career focused on Russian and Eurasian affairs. As deputy director in the Office of Soviet Affairs from 1989 to 1992, he was at the center of Washington's efforts to deal

with historic transitions from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the end of the Soviet Union. As deputy chief of mission in Moscow from 1996 to 1999 (and chargé d'affaires from November 1996 to September 1997), he managed one of our largest missions and most important relationships.

Appointed by President Bill Clinton to serve as U.S. ambassador to Lithuania (2000-2003), he worked successfully to have Lithuania admitted to NATO. He served as the international affairs adviser at the National War College in Washington, D.C., from 2003 to 2004, when he was named deputy assistant secretary of State for European and Eurasian affairs responsible for U.S. relations with Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova.

In 2005 he returned overseas as U.S. ambassador to Georgia (2005-2009), leading the embassy during the 2008

Russo-Georgian war and U.S. efforts to assist Georgia's recovery from the war. Amb. Tefft was then named U.S. ambassador to Ukraine (2009-2013).

Amb. Tefft originally retired from the Foreign Service in September 2013 and served as executive director of the

RAND Corporation's U.S.-Russia Business Leaders Forum from October 2013 to August 2014, when he was recalled to duty as U.S. ambassador to the Russian Federation (2014-2017). There he navigated the strained relationship between the U.S. and Russia following the Russian invasion and annexation of Crimea.

*A Conversation with
Ambassador John Tefft
2023 Lifetime Contributions to
American Diplomacy Recipient*

AP PHOTO/SHAKH AVAZOV, POOL



U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Daniel Fried (front second from left) and U.S. Ambassador to Georgia John Tefft (right) visit a checkpoint, Akhmaji, near the Russian-backed separatist region of South Ossetia, which had broken away from Georgia, on Oct. 19, 2008. The visit came amid persistent tension along the edges of the breakaway region at the heart of the August war between Georgia and Russia.

Throughout his career, Amb. Tefft has received numerous awards. Among them are the Secretary of State's Distinguished Service Award in 2017, the State Department's Distinguished Honor Award in 1992, the Deputy Chief of Mission of the Year Award for his service in Moscow in 1999, and the Diplomacy for Human Rights Award in 2013. He received Presidential Meritorious Service Awards in 2001 and 2005.

Amb. Tefft holds a B.A. degree from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and an M.S. from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. He is married to Mariella Cellitti Tefft, a biostatistician and nurse who served with him at each of his Foreign Service assignments and contributed greatly to their joint effort to represent the United States. They have two daughters, Christine and Cathleen, who both live and work in the Washington, D.C., area, and two granddaughters.

Editor in Chief Shawn Dorman conducted this interview with Ambassador Tefft in October.

Joining the Foreign Service

FSJ: *What led you to a career in diplomacy?*

Ambassador John F. Tefft: As I entered my senior year at Marquette University in 1970, I was looking at a variety of future options, including studying for a Ph.D. in history, teaching history in secondary school, and seeking a position in government

service. I had long been interested in international affairs, and applied for the Foreign Service. I surprised myself by passing all the exams. I was offered a position in the fall of 1971 and accepted. I was sworn in on Jan. 6, 1972.

FSJ: *What was notable about joining the Foreign Service in the early 1970s? What do you recall about the orientation and training from that time?*

JFT: The Foreign Service was coming off a period in which many officers were sent to the Civil Operations and Revolutionary/Rural Development Support (CORDS) program in Vietnam; this was a rural pacification and development initiative. My Foreign Service class was the first in many years that did not have officers assigned to CORDS. My life began at the Foreign Service Institute, which was then located in a high-rise building in Rosslyn. I took the A-100 course with 14 other officers; the State Department had a very restricted budget in those days, so we had one of the smallest classes in Foreign Service history. My wife, Mariella, took the "Wives' Course," as it was then called. I was young and inexperienced, so everything was new to me. But I was excited about a career in government service.

When the assignments for our class came out, I was slotted for a rotational position at our consulate general in Jerusalem. It was a great first assignment, as I spent about half my time in



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

U.S. Ambassador to Russia John Tefft (left) and Secretary of State John Kerry greet President Vladimir Putin at the Bocherov Ruche—a government villa—in Sochi, Russia, before a bilateral meeting on May 12, 2015.

the consular section, and the remainder doing some political and economic reporting on Jerusalem and the West Bank, which made up our consular district. This gave me a broad perspective on the work of the Foreign Service. The big event during our tour was the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, and subsequently Secretary of State Henry Kissinger’s shuttle diplomacy, which we supported.

FSJ: *You were a career Foreign Service officer for more than 45 years, including service in real hot spots. What kept you in the Service for that long?*

JFT: I found the Foreign Service fascinating from the very start. My experience in Jerusalem had a big impact on me. It gave me a chance to see history being made right before my eyes. I had some wonderful bosses and mentors over the years. I was also fortunate to continue to get good assignments. I ended up feeling that this was a career for which I had the right personality and skills. I never really thought of another career. And I had the wonderful support of my wife, Mariella, throughout my career. She was my partner in the Foreign Service for 45 years.

On Dealing with Russia

FSJ: *Much of your career was spent in the Soviet Union and then Russia and the countries that had been part of the USSR. What sparked your interest in this region?*

JFT: When I was a senior at Edgewood High School in Madison, Wisconsin, I took an elective course in Russian history. Sister Marie Michel, our teacher, not only taught us the main political and economic developments in Russia but also Russia’s cultural achievements. She took us to see the opera, “Boris Godunov,” at the Lyric Opera in Chicago. She had prepared us by teaching us about the “Time of Troubles” and about Musorgsky’s opera. She played records with the most famous arias and gave us English-language librettos to follow along. It was a phenomenal experience, a wonderful introduction to Russian culture.

That same year, in 1965, David Lean’s film, “Dr. Zhivago,” was released. It captivated me. It was a visual introduction to Russia’s history, capturing the trauma of the Bolshevik Revolution and its aftermath through an exploration of the memorable characters in Boris Pasternak’s novel. Russia was in my imagination now as it never had been before.

FSJ: *After “retiring” from the Foreign Service in 2013, you were called back in 2014 to be the U.S. ambassador to Russia, which had just annexed Crimea a few months before. At the time, Ambassador (ret.) Steven Pifer said this to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: “I can’t think of a better choice for the embassy in Moscow. ... He knows how to deliver a tough message in a way the*

recipient may not like the message but doesn't want to shoot the messenger." How do you do that?

JFT: That was a wonderful compliment from Steve, one of the very best diplomats I ever worked with. Throughout my career, I always tried to be as professional as possible. For me and my staff, the situation in Moscow in 2014 placed a high premium on the need for professionalism. I had no illusions about the new assignment. I knew that we were in for a tough time. Our relationship had been strained before the Crimean invasion. Now it was nearly frozen.

We were often harassed, and we were attacked in the Russian press. I tried to convey messages, both official and personal, in a candid but transparent manner. The same was true in our interactions with Russian media. There was a lot of emotion and anger that the U.S. did not just accept what the Russians thought was their right, not to mention the sanctions we had imposed on Russia.

FSJ: *During that period, the Russian Foreign Ministry ordered the U.S. to cut down staff significantly, leading to closure of consulates and the departure of many staff, both U.S. diplomats and locally employed staff. This must have been so hard. How did you manage this and keep the embassy functioning?*

JFT: Right at the end of my assignment, the Russian Foreign Ministry ordered us to reduce our staff at the embassy and at

The situation in Moscow in 2014 placed a high premium on the need for professionalism. I had no illusions—I knew that we were in for a tough time.

the three consulates general in St. Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, and Vladivostok to the same level of personnel at the Russian embassy and consulates in the U.S. The Russians did not employ Americans at their facilities, but we did have many Russian employees, so the cuts were severe. This new draconian Russian order forced us to cut nearly two-thirds of our staff. Subsequent ordered cuts reduced our staff even more and forced the closing of our consulates general.

Our new deputy chief of mission (DCM), Anthony Godfrey, did a masterful job working with the section chiefs and agency heads, laying out a clear set of embassy objectives and needs, and then deciding which employees we needed to keep to meet those criteria. The choices we had to make were difficult and traumatic for American and Russian employees alike. Officers who had just arrived were asked to go home, while others who were in training in Washington had their assignments can-

celed. Many of our Russian staff were let go. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson authorized a generous severance package of one-half year of salary and health benefits for our Russian employees. Some of the employees went to work with Russian firms, which then provided contracted custodial and other services to the embassy. They were able to continue working. For many others, it was a sudden and tragic end to their career at the U.S. embassy.

We had a number of town hall meetings where I tried to explain the rationale behind

John and Mariella Tefft (right) with former Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko and his wife, Katya, after a dinner at the Yushchenko residence in 2012. From left: Stanford University Professor Larry Diamond; President Yushchenko; Katya Yushchenko; Christine Tefft, the ambassador's daughter; Ambassador Tefft; and Mariella Tefft.



COURTESY OF JOHN TEFFT



Ambassador John Tefft and his wife, Mariella, meet with former President of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev at the Gorbachev Foundation on Oct. 12, 2016. From left: Ambassador Tefft, Mariella Tefft, U.S. Political Minister Counselor Anthony Godfrey, and President Gorbachev.

the difficult choices we had to make. I emphasized that we did not want this outcome but had no choice. I will always remember a conversation at the end of one of those town halls with one of the Russian employees who had worked in our public affairs section for 18 years processing the numerous international visitors we sent to the U.S. She told me she was sorry to hear that she was being let go. She said she appreciated our effort to explain candidly how we had come to making the difficult decisions on personnel. She said that working for the American embassy had been the greatest experience of her life and thanked me. I had tears in my eyes as she gave me a hug and said goodbye.

FSJ: *What advice would you have for today's ambassador to Moscow on dealing with the Russian government?*

JFT: I don't need to give Ambassador Lynne Tracy any advice. She is enormously qualified and has a long background of service in Moscow and at difficult Foreign Service posts. Amb. Tracy was my deputy when I was ambassador, and she was intimately involved in every aspect of our diplomacy with Russia. She ran the embassy brilliantly and has a wealth of knowledge about Russia and our relationship with Russia. I thought she was an ideal choice to be our ambassador at such a difficult time in our bilateral relationship. She epitomizes the professionalism I spoke about earlier.

FSJ: *Early in your career you had experience working with Moscow on the delegation to the START arms control negotiations leading to a successful agreement that held for decades. New START, now the only remaining nuclear weapons treaty between the U.S. and Russia, was set to expire in 2021, but the two sides agreed to extend it for five years. However, in February, President Putin said Russia was "suspending its participation." Do you have any hope for Russia to return to the agreement? What might it take to restart arms control cooperation between the U.S. and Russia?*

JFT: I served for about a month with the State Department team at the START negotiations in 1985. It was a great experience, sitting across the negotiating table from the Soviet group. I learned a lot about arms control and the process through which we and the Soviets tried to find negotiated compromises to some of the thorniest and most technologically complex issues.

I think that we will have to wait and see how the Russian war in Ukraine transpires before we can know with any confidence whether Russia will return to compliance with New START and how they will proceed on nuclear arms control in the future. With the war having a serious impact on Russian finances, I do not think the Kremlin wants to get into any new arms race. We also have to remember that the clock is ticking; New START will expire in 2026 and cannot be renewed.

FSJ: *In the late 1990s you served as DCM and chargé at Embassy Moscow. How would you compare that to your time as ambassador there in 2014 to 2017?*

JFT: They were two very different periods in the history of our bilateral relationship. President Boris Yeltsin still ruled in the late 1990s when I was DCM. We had a broad-based bilateral relationship, featuring visits by President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore. Gore headed a bilateral commission with Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin that met every six months or so. Cabinet members and ministers in a variety of fields met regularly to shepherd many different bilateral initiatives. At the embassy, we had wide access to Russian officials and to the Russian people across the country.

Later, my three years as ambassador were marked by serious strains in the relationship caused by Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea and subversion of the Donbas in 2014. Western sanctions had begun to hurt the Russian economy. The Russian government could not impose economic sanctions on us, so they took it out on the embassy. We had our access to officials limited

and were harassed regularly. We tried to preserve our people-to-people programs. I and my staff traveled around the country. We worked hard to get our message out to the people of Russia but were constantly attacked by a withering Russian propaganda onslaught blaming the U.S. for nearly everything.

FSJ: *You are the only U.S. FSO to have served as both ambassador to Russia and to Ukraine. Are there particular insights you gained from this unique experience that might inform policymakers today?*

JFT: I wrote an article for *The Foreign Service Journal* in March 2020 in which I reflected on the course of Russia and Ukraine in the post-Soviet period and the challenges it presented for the United States. I think most of my judgments in that article remain pretty sound, although back then no one predicted that Putin would make the strategic mistake of an all-out invasion of Ukraine with his February 2022 attack.

I think we will continue to need strong bipartisan support for our Ukraine policy. We are at a seminal inflection point in Europe now, as President Biden has frequently said. The results of this war and the security structure that emerges from this conflict will profoundly affect the region and American foreign policy for years to come. The conflict in Ukraine will have a serious impact on our country and our foreign policy. This conflict cannot be ignored any more than the Hamas attack on Israel can be ignored. The United States is still the leader in defending the world from aggression and terrorism. We cannot retreat into an isolationist shell and pretend otherwise.

FSJ: *How can our diplomats rebuild the relationship with Russia after Putin?*

JFT: This is really an impossible question to answer right now. We do not know how the Russian war on Ukraine will turn out, and it is hard to estimate today what lasting changes will occur in Russia as

With the war having a serious impact on Russian finances, I do not think the Kremlin wants to get into any new arms race.

a result of the war. We need to help Ukraine defeat Russian aggression, and then help build a new, more stable order, which will restore and preserve Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

There is good work going on outside the government now in think tanks and among Russian experts, trying to scope out what our priorities need to be. Clearly, we will need to address the control of nuclear weapons as the New START treaty comes to an end in 2026. That will not be easy with all the new weapons and technologies being developed. And China is rapidly building up its nuclear arsenal. I suspect we will have a broader struggle to rebuild the international order, with Russia partnering with China in opposing democracy and promoting an authoritarian world.

Other Postings

FSJ: *You served as ambassador in Lithuania from 2000 to 2003. Today, some 20 years later, what's the biggest change you see there?*

What was the highlight of your time as ambassador and what was the biggest challenge?

JFT: The most important development during my ambassadorship, and one on which I and my staff worked hard, was Lithuania's selection to be a member of NATO. Along with membership in the E.U., NATO has transformed the Baltic states. I was very impressed with what the Lithuanians have achieved politically and economically when I visited Vilnius in



Ambassador John Tefft and his wife, Mariella, had lunch with former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (center) at the ambassador's residence in Kyiv on June 24, 2012.

COURTESY OF JOHN TEFFT

September. Lithuania is a success story, an advertisement for what democracy and a market economy can achieve. I am proud that the United States has supported Lithuania every step of the way.

FSJ: *You were ambassador to Georgia in 2008 when Russia invaded over the disputed areas of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Did the embassy see that coming?*

JFT: It was clear to us that Russia was intent on trying to bring Georgia to heel and block membership in NATO and, more broadly, Western integration. The Russians sent more troops into Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the first half of 2008, and the

United States and the E.U. worked hard to support a negotiated solution. Most saw Abkhazia as the likely potential flash point. In the end, the conflict was set off in South Ossetia.

When war broke out, it quickly became clear that Russia wanted to oust Georgia's democratically elected government. The U.S. rallied to the support of Georgia. Our \$1 billion assistance package after the war ended helped the Georgians deal with their humanitarian crisis, stabilize their economy, and rebuild their country.

Our American and Georgian staff did a tremendous job during the very tense days of the war and in implementing the assistance package. There was a lot of fear in the first few days. It

peaked the night Russian forces broke through Georgian lines and advanced on Tbilisi. We offered our American dependents voluntary departure to Yerevan, where Ambassador Masha Yovanovitch and her staff hosted them until the fighting ended. Many of our Georgian staff had loved ones and friends caught up in the fighting. I tried to share with them every day what I knew and tried to console them as the fighting raged.

FSJ: *Before that crisis, what opportunities and challenges did you face in Georgia?*

JFT: People often forget about the substantial progress Georgia made in reforming its economy and fighting corruption in the years before the war. A Russian expert on economic reform once told me that Georgia did more than any other post-Soviet nation to reform itself. Through our USAID programs, we contributed financing and expertise to help the Georgians design and implement the reform programs.

FSJ: *You were ambassador to Ukraine during another time of tension with Russia (2009-2013). Can you tell us what that was like, and what were the primary achievements in the U.S.-Ukraine relationship?*

JFT: Early in my assignment, Viktor Yanukovich was elected president of Ukraine. We tried to work with his government, and we had some success. Ukraine, for example, gave up more than 100 kilos of highly enriched ura-



John and Mariella Tefft make a winter visit to the Yasnaya Polyana Estate of Leo Tolstoy (with his grave in the background) in 2016. From left: Ambassador Tefft; Dr. Galina Alekseeva, director of research at the estate; and Mariella Tefft.

COURTESY OF JOHN TEFFT

The United States is still the leader in defending the world from aggression and terrorism. We cannot retreat into an isolationist shell and pretend otherwise.

nium as part of the Obama administration's program to improve nuclear security in the world.

Over time, however, Yanukovich and his "family" grew more corrupt and steadily estranged themselves from the Ukrainian people. Civil society was getting stronger in Ukraine, and the U.S. and Europe supported the development of civil society. By the time I left Ukraine in July 2013, Yanukovich's support had fallen below 20 percent. In November, under pressure from Putin, he abandoned the association agreement that Ukraine had been negotiating with the E.U. Demonstrations broke out on the Maidan Square in Kyiv, and we all know what happened after that.

FSJ: Any advice for the U.S. ambassador in Kyiv today, during the continuing assault from Russia?

JFT: Bridget Brink, our ambassador in Kyiv now, is a superb Foreign Service officer. She was our political counselor in Georgia during my time there and did a great job. From my observations, she is doing very well leading our embassy in Kyiv in very dangerous conditions.

On Being "The Best Boss"

FSJ: You are being honored with the lifetime award in part because of how you mentored multiple generations of diplomats. Many who have worked for you refer to you as the best boss they've ever had. What's your secret?

JFT: I am not sure there is any secret. I always tried to treat the people with whom I worked the way I wanted to be treated when I was a younger officer. Foreign Service professionals want to be treated with respect and openness. They want to know that their work is valued and that they are contributing to our foreign policy goals. I have always tried to make sure that each member of my staff understood that I valued their work. I have always written recommendations for my staff and continue to do so today six years into retirement.

HONOR A COLLEAGUE

Nominations for AFSA's 2024 Constructive Dissent and Exemplary Performance Awards Are Now Being Accepted.

DISSENT AWARDS

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

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

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

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

PERFORMANCE AWARDS

The Mark Palmer Award
for the Advancement of Democracy

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

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

The Avis Bohlen Award
for an Eligible Family Member

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

MORE INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE
AT WWW.AFSA.ORG/AWARDS.
THE DEADLINE FOR NOMINATIONS
IS MAY 13, 2024.

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



COURTESY OF JOHN TEFFT

Former U.S. ambassadors to Russia (from left) John Tefft, Alexander “Sandy” Vershbow, John Beyrle, and William “Bill” Burns, at a dinner hosted in their honor by former Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women’s Issues Melanne Verveer at her home on Jan. 13, 2018.

I have always found former Secretary of State Colin Powell’s 13 rules of leadership to be a good practical guide. They are:

1. It ain’t as bad as you think! It will look better in the morning.
2. Get mad; then get over it.
3. Avoid having your ego so close to your position that when your position falls, your ego goes with it.
4. It can be done.
5. Be careful what you choose. You may get it.
6. Don’t let adverse facts stand in the way of a good decision.
7. You can’t make someone else’s choices. You shouldn’t let someone else make yours.
8. Check small things.
9. Share credit.
10. Remain calm. Be kind.
11. Have a vision. Be demanding.
12. Don’t take counsel of your fears or naysayers.
13. Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier.

FSJ: *What qualities make for a good leader and a good manager, and what advice do you have for others in leadership positions?*

JFT: On his 100th birthday, Dec. 13, 2020, former Secretary of State George Shultz wrote an opinion piece for *The Washington Post* titled “The 10 most important things I’ve learned about trust

over my 100 years.” It had some excellent advice for leaders.

Shultz reflected on his century of life and long years of public service, saying: “I’m struck that there is one lesson I learned early and then relearned over and over: *Trust is the coin of the realm.* When trust was in the room, whatever room that was—the family room, the schoolroom, the locker room, the office room, the government room, or the military room—good things happened. When trust was not in the room, good things did not happen. Everything else is details. ...

“‘In God we trust.’ Yes, and when we are at our best, we also trust in each other. Trust is fundamental, reciprocal and, ideally, pervasive. If it is present, anything is possible.

If it is absent, nothing is possible. The best leaders trust their followers with the truth, and you know what happens as a result? Their followers trust them back. With that bond, they can do big, hard things together, changing the world for the better.”

It is hard for me to come up with better advice for leaders. And Secretary Shultz proved it by the success he had in serving our country in multiple high-level positions. You have to work hard every day to build trust and invest in those who work for you.

AFSA and Dissent

FSJ: *When did you join AFSA, and what convinced you to join?*

JFT: If my memory serves, I joined right after I entered the Foreign Service. I joined because I felt that we needed an organization to represent the interests of all the members of the Foreign Service. We needed an organization to speak for the Foreign Service as a whole and to represent individual members when they needed guidance or help in resolving disputes with management.

FSJ: *In your view, how and where can AFSA add the most value?*

JFT: I have seen firsthand how AFSA has helped its members over and over during my career. At the recent AFSA awards ceremony, I was so pleased to learn of AFSA’s support for initiatives dealing with disabled children of FSOs. And AFSA raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to cover the legal expenses

of officers who were caught up in the Trump administration scandal over Ukraine. These and many other initiatives show just how important AFSA is and how it has responded to the needs of individual officers and the Service as a whole.

FSJ: *As you know, AFSA also honors dissent within the system through its annual awards. What has been your experience with dissent? Any advice for colleagues on whether, when, and how to speak up if they disagree with a policy?*

JFT: I have always thought AFSA's support for dissent through its annual awards was a critical component of AFSA's mission. I tried in the embassies I led to encourage anyone with alternative views about our policy or the direction of our mission to come forward and tell me and the DCM. I thought it best to have a healthy internal discussion. We could then fix the problems at post and/or share with the department alternative views on how to deal with the situation we confronted in the country to which we were assigned.

Perspectives on Diplomacy

FSJ: *What are the essential ingredients for a successful diplomat?*

JFT: I don't think there is one specific model for a successful diplomat. The Foreign Service is a very diverse group of personalities, and overall we are enhanced by that mix. Clearly, the best FSOs are empathetic and adept in social situations. They love to represent their country and the American people in foreign countries. They are practical problem-solvers and need to be good negotiators. I was very fortunate as my career developed to have had some extraordinary mentors and bosses. Among them were Tom Simons, Lynn Pascoe, Jim Collins, Roz Ridgway, Sandy Vershbow, Larry Napper, Beth Jones, and Tom Pickering.

FSJ: *As you know, the Foreign Service reaches its centennial in 2024. What would you say will be the top three issues for American diplomacy in the coming years?*

JFT: I think the United States faces a vast array of new challenges. The international order which we have known since World War II is now being seriously challenged by China and Russia. They are promoting authoritarianism over democracy. We see resurgent attempts at imperial-style domination instead of respect for sovereign independent states. International security has been challenged. War, terror, and instability afflict our world, as we see in Ukraine, the Middle East, and Africa. President Putin has stopped complying with the New START treaty, and both Russia and China are expanding their

People often forget about the substantial progress Georgia made in reforming its economy and fighting corruption in the years before the war.

nuclear arsenals and developing new technologies for delivering nuclear weapons. We cannot manage this alone; we need strong alliances and effective multilateral diplomacy to achieve our national goals.

We will also have to confront a number of existential threats to our world. Climate change is already wreaking havoc in many ways around the world. Artificial intelligence will transform every aspect of life. COVID-19 has taught us the threat posed by pandemics. It is really a staggering list of issues that our country and new generations of the U.S. Foreign Service will have to confront. There is, by the way, an excellent new book by Andrew Hoehn and Thom Shanker, *Age of Danger*, which provides a very readable survey of the array of challenges and threats we face.

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

JFT: Everyone considering leaving the Service has their own reasons. Sometimes it is policy; sometimes it is family or other personal issues; and sometimes it is because the individual does not feel they are achieving what they're capable of in the Foreign Service. This is why mentorship is so important. Every officer needs to feel that they can discuss their problems, their needs, and their future with a sympathetic boss or mentor.

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

JFT: Yes, absolutely. I think it is a wonderful career. That said, I tell university audiences that individuals considering a Foreign Service career should look at all aspects of the career before they make the decision: living abroad away from family for long periods, serving in danger posts or in unaccompanied assignments, the impact of Foreign Service on the life and career of a spouse or partner, having and raising kids in the Foreign Service. There are more. I try to make sure that young people considering this career go in with their eyes as wide open as possible.



Ambassador John Tefft and Mariella Tefft at the State Department for the AFSA awards ceremony, where he received the award for Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy on Oct. 5, 2023.

FSJ: *Are you optimistic about the future of professional diplomacy? Why or why not?*

JFT: Yes. As I said in my acceptance speech for the Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award: "It seems to me that the need for a Foreign Service of creative, nonpartisan

professionals advising our political leaders and implementing American foreign policy around the world is as vital today as any time in my lifetime. Understanding the threats we face and devising creative strategies and tactics to deal with them will be vital. That will require hard and soft power. And we will have to do this with our own country still deeply divided. Like Masha Yovanovitch and so many others, today's Foreign Service officers will have to stand up for our country's values and their personal integrity as they do their work."

FSJ: *Is the Foreign Service as an institution strong today?*

JFT: I think the Foreign Service went through a tough time with the last administration. This is not the first time in our history that we have experienced setbacks. But I think we are getting stronger. The younger officers whom I have met are very talented. During my recent visit to Lithuania, I was impressed with the talent and performance of younger officers. We need to keep building the young talent we have recruited. We need to mentor and nurture their careers. ■



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SCAN ME

2023 AFSA AWARD WINNERS – CONSTRUCTIVE DISSENT –

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

Mark Evans

Changing the Game for Parents of Children with Disabilities

For FSO Mark Evans, receiving an AFSA award for constructive dissent represents a somewhat personal victory. Evans and his wife, Kristen, have four sons, two of whom have disabilities. Early in his career, he says, the department was “empathetic and understanding” of the challenges faced by parents like him. But in 2014, he noticed attitudes shifting dramatically.

Anticipating a move to Stockholm for an assignment and figuring out how to meet the needs of their youngest son, who has Down syndrome, Evans “started hearing from other parents



Mark Evans.

in the Foreign Service community that they, too, were running into increasing challenges in accessing support and that those charged with administering the Special Needs Education Allowance (SNEA) were no longer working with parents in a supportive, empathetic manner.” Evans was working to put in place the services his son would need in Stockholm to move successfully, and, he says, when he asked for help, some officials in the Bureau of Medical Services (MED) even “went so far as to insinuate that we were being neglectful parents and were just looking for a way to ‘get to Stockholm.’”

Because of this experience, and in response to a groundswell of complaints from other FS parents, in 2015 Evans created an official employee organization at the State Department: Foreign Service Families with Disabilities Alliance (FSFDA). Now 500 members strong, FSFDA has two goals: to provide a venue for Foreign Service parents of children with disabilities to support each other, and to enable the affected community to advocate for needed reforms with a common voice.

Evans has served as FSFDA board chair since its inception, leading efforts to change State Department approaches to supporting Foreign Service dependents with disabilities. As a result, numerous significant and positive changes have been made, both in the department’s overall attitude to these issues and in the associated regulations.

As FSFDA board chair, Evans engaged directly with department leadership to push for reforms in the administration of

Award winner profiles compiled by Associate Editor Donna Scaramastra Gorman. All images are courtesy of the award winners, unless otherwise specified.

SNEA and on associated medical clearance issues. For the first several years, FSFDA's efforts were thwarted by direct opposition from some leaders within the department who repeatedly rejected reform proposals despite numerous negative consequences to employees, families, and the department: involuntary curtailments when post medical clearances were lifted mid-tour, breaking onward assignments, and families being forced to separate as employees completed assignments.

Evans was frequently contacted by employees seeking advice about how to resolve issues related to their family challenges. Experiences were so traumatic in some cases that the affected employees resigned from the Foreign Service. Others remained but decided to avoid bidding on overseas assignments until the situation changed.

Given the wholesale lack of responsiveness—and sometimes hostility—of department leadership at that time, Evans encouraged FSFDA members to contact members of Congress and even reporters. Several members of Congress wrote letters expressing concern to the department; articles noting employee concerns appeared in *Foreign Policy* and *The Washington Post*. *The Foreign Service Journal* covered the issue extensively, and Evans co-authored a 2016 *FSJ* Speaking Out on “Supporting FS Families with Special Needs Children.”

He worked closely with AFSA leadership in seeking reforms. He also found an ally within the ranks of senior managers in the Bureau of Global Talent Management (GTM).

Change is possible. It may take years and only succeed when you find the right allies, but if you truly believe in what you are doing and are stubborn enough to stick with it, things may eventually improve and even get turned around.

—Mark Evans

“That proved to be a godsend,” says Evans. “Working in tandem, we were able to push through numerous, desperately needed changes within the FAM regarding the SNEA program—a clearer definition of what SNEA would provide funding for and how to qualify for that funding, and eventually an appeals process for when funding was denied.”

At GTM's request, Evans also redrafted extensive portions of 3 FAM governing the provision of SNEA. Those changes, which resolved many employee concerns, were adopted at the end of 2019 despite active opposition from some within the department.

When it became apparent in 2020 that true change couldn't happen without leadership change in the office governing the administration of SNEA, Evans advocated for this, gathering



Mark Evans meets with a group of Swedish youth in Stockholm.

information to demonstrate the need for new management. Working closely with AFSA, he drafted a memo requesting personnel changes in SNEA administration. AFSA sent the letter to the department with FSFDA's endorsement and input, and in 2020 the personnel changes were made.

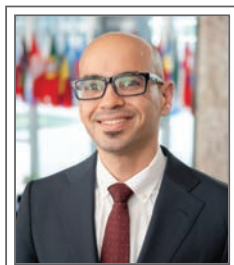
Today Evans continues his work as FSFDA board chair, pushing for further reforms in support of Foreign Service families facing the added challenges that come with raising a child with disabilities in overseas settings. Those efforts include extensive involvement in ongoing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility initiatives. Regulatory and leadership changes brought about by his persistent efforts to challenge the system have contributed to a much more positive, empathetic approach to these issues by current department leadership.

Mark Evans is currently the deputy chief of mission (DCM) in Stockholm. He served as director of the Afghanistan desk from 2020 until 2022, including nearly one year as acting deputy assistant secretary for Afghanistan. He served in Baghdad (twice) and as deputy director on the Iraq desk. Other assignments include Beijing (twice), Stockholm, Oslo, Tokyo, the Operations Center, and as a crisis management trainer at the Foreign Service Institute. Before joining the Foreign Service, Evans worked in the U.S. House of Representatives in leadership offices and as legislative director for a representative from Wisconsin. He holds a B.S. in political science from the University of Utah and an M.A. in international affairs from The George Washington University.

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

Alexander Douglas Pushing for Accountability After Attack

In February 2022, FSO Alexander Douglas displayed remarkable courage after a violent attack on a U.S. Embassy Muscat colleague by a man wielding a knife who had followed the colleague home and tried to kill him. Douglas called on his crisis training to administer first aid, then took the victim to one local hospital and advocated for his transfer



Alexander Douglas.



Alexander Douglas addressing the September 2023 Foreign Service orientation class.

REBECCA SANCHEZ

to a second in search of emergency care. “Alex saved my life,” the colleague later said.

But Douglas’ heroic actions didn’t stop there. In the aftermath of the attack, he raised challenging questions about the embassy’s security procedures and response, both privately and publicly, working tirelessly to find actionable solutions.

When the embassy presented what he saw as incorrect information at a town hall to brief a traumatized embassy community about the attack, Douglas asked questions. Alarmed by the dismissive response, he put together a detailed timeline of the attack and its aftermath, highlighting deficiencies in the embassy’s standard operating procedures and proposing fixes, such as improved security measures at residential buildings and measures to ensure trauma victims go to the correct hospital. He asked questions, both in writing and verbally, of the embassy’s technical (security and medical) staff and senior leadership.

The attack was a shock to the embassy community, and according to Douglas, “we did not have the procedures in place to react appropriately.” He explained that communications issues with Post 1 and the embassy’s mobile patrol force delayed the latter’s arrival at the scene. It took more than 90 minutes to notify American staff that an attack had taken place, while locally employed staff did not find out until the following day. Also problematic, in Douglas’

It’s important to recognize constructive dissent because it helps people in difficult situations see that they’re not alone and that they can do the right thing. We don’t have to choose between our careers and our values.

—Alexander Douglas

view, was that the embassy did not notify U.S. citizens outside the embassy community.

“I was concerned that the embassy’s confidence in its response would prevent us from learning the necessary lessons,” said Douglas, who advocated for improvements in the embassy’s emergency response time and improvements to the way it communicated during emergencies. He also insisted that “people should know they may need to drive themselves to the hospital in an emergency.”

Douglas was counseled for being “disruptive” and “disrespectful,” and while the embassy ultimately made many of the changes he had pushed for, including making improvements to training and procedures, he felt he had no choice but to curtail from post due to an untenable work environment.

Douglas recently started a new tour as a deputy course coordinator for the orientation course for new Foreign Service professionals at the Foreign Service Institute. He has previously served overseas in Rio de Janeiro and Abu Dhabi. In Washington, D.C., he has served as assistant summit coordinator in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, program officer for Haiti in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, and Morocco desk officer. Prior to joining the Foreign Service as an economic officer, he worked as a community economic development volunteer for the Peace Corps in Costa Rica.

Alex Douglas grew up in Falls Church, Virginia, and holds a bachelor’s degree from the College of William and Mary in economics and Hispanic studies. He is married with an almost 4-year-old daughter.

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

Christophe Triplett Fighting for Equal Rights for Locally Employed LGBTQ+ Staff

The vast majority of the State Department’s 50,000+ locally employed (LE) staff worldwide work in restrictive environments for LGBTQ+ persons. Of the 195 countries with which the United States has diplomatic relations, same-sex couples can lawfully marry in just 33. This has meant that the average local employee in a



Christophe Triplett.

Never underestimate your potential to be the catalyst for meaningful change.

—*Christophe Triplett*

same-sex relationship was excluded from key benefits of the local compensation plan, such as health insurance coverage, death and funeral benefits, and education allowances for their family. Unlike their colleagues, they lived without the assurance that they could support their loved ones through difficult times.

As a first-tour officer, Christophe Triplett took on the procurement portfolio during his second year in Amman. He recognized the inequalities that existed were wrong, and he knew he had to take action to help change the situation. But how? Before asking a somewhat reluctant bureaucracy in Washington to address the issue, Triplett had to prove a change was possible. He started by meeting with members of his own team, who initially had serious doubts. He articulated his case, convincing them of its merits.

“When I first proposed the idea of providing more inclusive health care coverage to the LE procurement team member responsible for major contracts, he explained all the reasons why it wouldn’t work,” said Triplett. “But I advocated for diversity and inclusion, explaining that it aligned with our American values and that we had to at least try to make a difference.”

Once the key team member was on board, he and Triplett engaged with the local health insurance provider, persuading them to extend health coverage to same-sex partners of LE staff members in Amman, despite conflicting cultural norms. Triplett then worked with the local legal counsel and the department’s contracting office to secure their support for this expanded coverage. However, the Bureau of Global Talent Management (GTM) did not let Embassy Amman finalize its solicitation to renew the health insurance contract. GTM insisted that its new standardized and more restrictive language, which prohibited extending coverage to any same-sex partner unless Jordanian law recognized the relationship, be used.

This setback triggered a four-month period of sustained advocacy. Triplett raised his concerns to embassy leadership, who provided support. He also engaged in numerous late-night phone calls to Washington, D.C., with board members of glifaa, the organization that represents LGBTQ+ employees in the foreign affairs agencies, and the Secretary’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion. These organizations advocated for this issue with GTM and department leaders in Washington. Yet, at each step, officials reiterated that Triplett could not deviate from the global standard.

When some of the department's most senior leaders descended on Amman for a management officers' workshop (MOW), Triplett saw an opening.

"As a first tour officer, I didn't know how anything worked in D.C., but I had the opportunity to collaborate with post management officers from three bureaus to develop the MOW," explained Triplett. "I talked to some of them about my efforts to try to get a new, more inclusive health insurance policy approved. They were enthusiastic, recommending people that I needed to talk to. We went through the list of attendees and made a plan for me, along with management and HR staff from Amman, to meet with key people who could possibly help bring about change."

Shortly after those meetings in Amman, Triplett's vision became reality when the under secretary for management determined it was in the public interest for U.S. missions around the world to treat their LGBTQ+ staff the same way they treat everyone else. Notably, this global solution leveraged concepts straight from the approach Triplett used in Amman. GTM estimated that as many as 80 posts could use this new framework.

Triplett's journey began with a simple goal—to extend health insurance coverage more inclusively in Jordan. "It hadn't occurred to me that my work might be relevant to a broader policy discussion," he said.

Triplett's dissent directly shaped and accelerated a landmark decision in February 2023 by the under secretary for management. This decision allowed missions, to the extent possible locally, to extend benefits to the same-sex domestic partners and dependent children of LE staff in countries where same-sex marriage is not recognized.

His persistence had a direct impact on the lives of countless LE staff around the world and guided the department toward a more inclusive and equitable future. He used his role as glifaa post representative to bring his case to anyone who would listen, including the Director General (DG) of the Foreign Service. As his award nominator wrote to AFSA: "It is difficult to imagine a more powerful example of constructive dissent than an untenured, first-tour officer who found the courage to tell the visiting DG that, as an institution, we were not living up to our values."

Christophe Triplett joined the Foreign Service in May 2020 as a management officer and was part of the first all-virtual orientation class. His first post was Amman, and he is now serving in Mexico City. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, Triplett worked as a management consultant. He holds a B.A. in economics and Asian studies from Arizona State University and an MBA from Nyenrode University in the Netherlands. He is married to Washington Gonzales, who is originally from Brazil.

– EXEMPLARY PERFORMANCE –

Nelson B. Delavan Award for an Office Management Specialist

Katie Leis Skillfully Managing VIP Visits and Embassy Events

Katie Leis arrived in Phnom Penh in August 2021 to begin her assignment as the Regional Security Office (RSO) office management specialist (OMS) and immediately became an indispensable team member, strengthening embassy security services, furthering broader mission goals, and illustrating her commitment to department core values as she helped manage numerous high-level visits.

As the site lead for the 40th ASEAN Summit, held in Cambodia in 2022, Leis collaborated with the

White House and Secret Service to coordinate security and protocol needs, access, press coverage, and staffing for five meetings with other heads of state. Leveraging her local contacts, she also quickly coordinated a bilateral meeting and unscheduled meet-and-greet for President Joe Biden with ASEAN ambassadors. On the morning of the most important event, the East Asia Summit, Leis coordinated with her local contacts and other participating delegations to move President Biden's seat

after she discovered that the approved seating chart had been changed the night before.

"During the president's visit, I was able to see our highest level of diplomacy in action, as well as see how much work goes into preparing for it," said Leis. "It took a massive team to make the visit a success, and I was proud to be a part of it."

As the control officer for a congressional (CODEL) visit to Siem Reap, Leis used her cultural expertise to negotiate with airport leadership for vehicle access



Katie Leis.

to the tarmac. This allowed the CODEL to attend all planned meetings and showcase the importance of U.S. regional partnerships in Cambodia. Leis was also the control officer for the ambassador's visit to Siem Reap to participate in the Cambodia Climate Change Summit and to visit U.S.-supported programs focusing on youth development and food security.

With just one day's notice, Leis visited each site and worked across the mission and with local partners to coordinate security, protocol, and public messaging to ensure a safe and successful visit. Advancing people-to-people ties, she also helped organize a town hall for more than 200 high school students, where the ambassador highlighted the importance of U.S.-ASEAN relations. Leis was later recognized by the assistant secretary for the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs for drafting a "cable of note" highlighting the visit.

Leis frequently volunteered for work that was outside her job requirements. "During my second tour, I wanted to learn as much as I could about how diplomacy and sections and agencies throughout the embassy work," she explained. "I also wanted to work with as many mission colleagues as possible, so I volunteered to take on roles outside my normal duties in the Regional Security Office."

After COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, one of the U.S. ambassador's priorities was to have a large Independence Day reception. Leis volunteered to be the event coordinator, establishing a planning committee comprising both American and local staff to elicit input and support for the 450-person reception. She collaborated with the front office to ensure its expectations were met, delegated tasks to the committee, managed a large budget, coordinated closely with venue management, and kept the planning team on schedule. She then established templates and clear guidelines to improve efficiency and reduce redundancies in future years.

Leis also volunteered to work with a colleague from USAID to develop the mission's Integrated Country Strategy (ICS). Coordinating across all embassy sections and with 11 mission agency heads, planning started with a senior staff retreat and continued with a series of brainstorming and drafting sessions that were led by Leis and her co-coordinator. She worked closely



Katie Leis teaching art as a volunteer in Cambodia.

with the ICS team in Washington, D.C., to ensure all guidelines were followed and potential areas of friction were avoided. Over the course of four months, Leis led the mission team to create a sustainable three-year strategic plan; she then presented the implementation strategy to nearly 100 American staff.

"I am honored to receive this award from AFSA and to showcase some of the amazing work that OMSs do every day!" Leis told the *FSJ*. "The events and projects that led to this award were group efforts, and as such, this award also reflects the hard work of my many talented colleagues in Phnom Penh. They helped me shine!"

During the president's visit, I was able to see our highest level of diplomacy in action, as well as see how much work goes into preparing for it. It took a massive team to make the visit a success, and I was proud to be a part of it.

—Katie Leis

Katie Leis joined the Foreign Service as an office management specialist in 2019, serving first in Accra and then in Phnom Penh. Earlier, she worked as a Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia, where she taught English and health studies, helped her community build a library, and started a support and income-generating group for adults living with HIV/AIDS. She also worked at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C., as a small grants specialist. Prior to joining the Peace Corps, Leis worked as an eligible family member at the U.S. embassies in Kabul and Tel Aviv. She holds a B.A. in sociology from Portland State University and an M.A. in international development from American University. Her hobbies include scuba diving, running, traveling, and volunteering to teach English and art to kids.

Mark Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy

Marina Grayson Fighting Corruption and Russian Influence in Bulgaria

Located on NATO's eastern flank and characterized by deep historical ties to Russia, Bulgaria sits on the front lines of U.S. efforts to counter Russia's destructive influence in eastern Europe. Bulgarians annually rank their country worst among European Union members in perceptions of corruption, and corruption is one of Moscow's primary weapons to influence government decisions, control important sectors of the economy, and weaken Bulgaria's ties with its trans-Atlantic allies.

Marina Grayson's outstanding performance significantly advanced U.S. work to fight corruption and counter malign Russian influence. She led U.S. Embassy Sofia's efforts to support Bulgaria's fight against corruption by engaging senior government officials, legislators, civil society members, and local leaders to advocate for judicial reform, the implementation of anti-corruption policies, and the imposition of sanctions on individuals involved in corruption.

A top U.S. objective in the campaign to strengthen the rule of law in Bulgaria was passage of 11 pieces of judicial reform legislation. Grayson developed a strategy to advocate for the adoption of these bills during the three-month life of Bulgaria's 48th parliament, identifying the three highest-priority bills and the key stakeholders to engage. During that period, Grayson led the embassy's gradually escalating outreach to members of parliament, chairpersons of relevant parliamentary committees, and leaders of the most powerful parties, urging them to pass the legislation.

Resistance was stiff, but by orchestrating a campaign of intense targeted pressure behind closed doors in tandem with a public diplomacy campaign making the case for reform, Grayson helped achieve the passage of four bills, including protections for whistleblowers, before parliament was dissolved ahead of new elections.

The success of anti-corruption efforts in Bulgaria rests, in part, on ensuring that this issue is not perceived as a U.S. priority imposed on the country but as an example of the trans-Atlantic



Marina Grayson.

community supporting Bulgarians in reforming their own society. Given the economic costs of corruption, the business community was a natural partner in the campaign. Grayson worked closely with the American Chamber of Commerce in Bulgaria to develop a conference on the rule of law, bringing together representatives from several other chambers of commerce and nearly half a dozen European embassies in a groundbreaking demonstration of broad international support for the economic necessity of these reforms. This event was a pivotal point in the campaign to pass judicial reform legislation.

Recognizing that corruption also needs to be addressed at the local level, Grayson arranged the embassy's participation in events with Bulgaria's mayors, 10 of whom signed anti-corruption pledges and worked with the International Republican Institute to bring actionable plans to promote transparency back to their municipal councils. She also planned a meeting that included mayors from Bulgaria's Black Sea coast, where Russian influence is particularly strong.

While securing passage of four bills was an important achievement, parliament failed to pass several other important bills before it was dissolved. Anticipating this outcome, Grayson spent months working with colleagues in the State and Treasury departments to prepare a package of sanctions under the Global Magnitsky Act. Crucially, she also coordinated with the United Kingdom to jointly announce sanctions under its equivalent authority. As a result, exactly one week after parliament dissolved without passing all the necessary judicial reform legislation, the United States and United Kingdom announced sanctions on several high-profile individuals widely recognized as having been involved in corruption. The announcement met with near-universal approval, and almost all political parties immediately pledged their support for passing the remaining elements of judicial reform legislation as soon as the next parliament convenes.

"This was a whole-of-mission effort, with tremendous support from top embassy and Washington leadership as well as staff across multiple agencies, including dedicated local staff who had pushed for decades for these reforms," said Grayson.

I do believe that our efforts to shine a light on corruption and push the government to do better are having a real impact on the ground.

—Marina Grayson

“Improving corruption is a long-term generational process, so I have no illusions that passing legislation will by itself solve Bulgaria’s rule-of-law problems. But I do believe that our efforts to shine a light on corruption and push the government to do better are having a real impact on the ground.”

Grayson served as a political-economic officer in Sofia from 2020 to 2023. She previously served in Tegucigalpa, Santo Domingo, and as the Armenia desk officer in Washington, D.C. Before joining the State Department Foreign Service, Grayson worked as a lawyer in private and public practice, focusing on international arbitration and civil litigation. On a fellowship from 2008 to 2009, she worked at Human Rights Watch and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in Moscow.

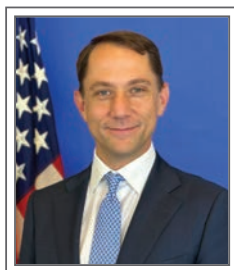
Marina Grayson received a B.A. in government from the University of Texas at Austin, a J.D. from New York University, and a master’s degree in public administration from Princeton University’s School of Public and International Affairs. Born in Kyiv, she came to the United States as a refugee with her family, settling in San Antonio, Texas. She travels the world with her husband, Matthew, and their three children.

Mark Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy

David Burnstein Standing Up for Human Rights in Russia

When Russia invaded neighboring Ukraine in February 2022, many ordinary Russians defied their government and took to the streets in protest. Russian authorities detained thousands of citizens for expressing anti-war views, sentenced opposition figures to decades in prison, and trampled on fundamental freedoms and basic human rights. Standing up against Putin’s repression was a White House priority, and political officer Dave Burnstein led U.S. government efforts on the front lines of that effort in Moscow.

Week after week, Burnstein showed up at Russian court-houses, often serving as the U.S. government’s sole representative at court hearings for Russians who had been detained simply for expressing their opinions.



David Burnstein.



David Burnstein speaks to reporters outside a Moscow courtroom in April 2023.

The stakes were enormous. Russian journalists accosted Burnstein, authorities tried to intimidate him, and the security services published his photo online. But he was not deterred and eventually became a fixture at the proceedings. Some colleagues from other missions called him the “dean of the diplomatic corps” at the courthouse for helping attract and inspire the attendance of dozens of diplomatic colleagues from other countries.

Burnstein’s bold and effective efforts were the U.S. government’s most tangible demonstration of support for U.S. values amid Putin’s brutal crackdown. In one of the most hostile and challenging environments worldwide, amid an unprecedented deterioration in bilateral relations, Burnstein worked tirelessly in support of U.S. policies focused on advancing democracy, freedom, and governance.

“It was a privilege to be part of U.S. Embassy Moscow’s advocacy for human rights and democratic principles in Russia during a very challenging period in our relations,” said Burnstein. “The democracy and anti-war activists whose trials I attended should never have been arrested. They are being prosecuted for daring to have and express opinions that are different from the Kremlin’s, and their resilience is inspiring.”

When Russian authorities arrested Russian opposition leader and longtime embassy contact Vladimir Kara-Murza for expressing anti-war views, Burnstein led efforts within the embassy and international community to demonstrate to Putin that the world was watching. He rallied 40 foreign diplomats

from 25 countries to attend hearings on the case and spent time with the activist's family and lawyers, demonstrating U.S. leadership in support of human rights.

When prosecutors piled on new charges that included high treason, Burnstein pressed the State Department to include Kara-Murza in a new campaign to free political prisoners worldwide, collaborating with the public affairs team to amplify the campaign. When the court imposed a 25-year sentence, Burnstein served as the site officer at the courthouse where Ambassador Lynne Tracy publicly condemned the court's decision, an act that garnered international media attention and ensured Russia's crackdown on democracy drew the spotlight it deserved.

"Supporters of political prisoners say that a major fear of those in detention is that they have been forgotten—out of sight and out of mind," said Burnstein. "But they are not forgotten, and the United States continues to call attention to those cases and work for their release."

Since joining the Foreign Service in 2012, Dave Burnstein has served in Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Russia, and Washington, D.C. He was a political officer at U.S. Embassy Moscow from August 2021 until September 2023, when he was declared *persona non grata* by the Russian government and given seven days to leave the country. A native of Louisville, Kentucky, Burnstein served as a U.S. Army officer and worked as an attorney prior to joining the State Department.

M. Juanita Guess Award for a Community Liaison Office Coordinator

Erin Cederlind Morale Building and Evacuation Support

When Erin Cederlind arrived in post-pandemic Djibouti, she immediately threw herself into the event planning that is essential to the job of a community liaison office coordinator (CLO), starting with a Halloween Trunk-or-Treat party and moving on to events for all segments of the embassy population, including adults, children, singles, and couples. There wasn't much of a blueprint for her and her co-CLO to work with, as events at the embassy had been put on hold while COVID-19 spread across the globe.



Erin Cederlind.

Her workload changed suddenly when nearby Sudan went on ordered departure, and Djibouti was told to prepare for an influx of evacuees from Khartoum.

"In the aftermath of the pandemic, many posts around the world had lost the connections and traditions they'd worked hard to create over the years," said Cederlind. "Djibouti was no different—so when I started as CLO, there was a lot of rebuilding to be done. But with each task came an opportunity to consider the best approach and try new ideas."

Cederlind began creating fun, low-to-no-cost events for the community, partnering with the Regional Security Office and others to develop brown bag informational lunches; editing Djibouti's first "Post Info to Go" video; participating in diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility events; refreshing contacts with local guides and vendors that had been lost during the pandemic; and serving on family member appointment (FMA) interview panels.

Her workload changed suddenly when nearby Sudan went on ordered departure, and Djibouti was told to prepare for an influx of evacuees from Khartoum. Cederlind worked dozens of hours of overtime as she canvassed the embassy community for clothing, toiletries, pet supplies (a real rarity in Djibouti), baby supplies, and other essential and comfort items.

When the military rescue effort began to evacuate people from Khartoum, Cederlind reported for work at 3 a.m. to await the evacuees at nearby Camp Lemonnier. When more than 80 U.S. diplomats and their family members—including several pets and young children—arrived in Djibouti en route to Germany, they found everything they needed to relax and de-stress during these first moments of safety before continuing their onward travel later that day.

"Years ago, my husband and I left Libya just a few months before the embassy was evacuated," said Cederlind. "As the situation there worsened, we followed the news of what was happening, and being unable to help was a terrible feeling. When our embassy became part of the planning to evacuate Khartoum, I was very glad to be able to help this time around. I hope I brought a measure of comfort to those who came through Djibouti."

Cederlind's tireless efforts and close coordination with the Moral, Welfare, and Recreation; Veterinary; and Red Cross offices at Camp Lemonnier were a key component of the embassy's success in dealing with the larger Sudan crisis. After the initial group of evacuees left Djibouti for safe haven in the United States, she continued to gather and deliver supplies for fresh waves of American citizen evacuees who stopped over in Djibouti, even coming to the embassy late at night to load her car with donations. Once all evacuees had been cared for, Cederlind arranged a final event to offer local staff an opportunity to receive any remaining donations.

Erin Cederlind grew up in Nebraska and studied music at Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota. While there, she met her husband, Jonathan Poole. He joined the Diplomatic Security Service in 2003, the same year the couple were married. They and their two sons have since been posted in San Francisco, St. Petersburg, Tripoli, USUN New York City, Helsinki, and Washington, D.C. Cederlind has brought her love of music with her as they've traveled, participating in any performance opportunities she can find at post, joining orchestras and choirs, playing piano for receptions, or singing the national anthem for Independence Day events.



Erin Cederlind serving ice cream at a poolside event.

Avis Bohlen Award for a Foreign Service Family Member Honorable Mention

David Baugh Creating Community After Ordered Departure

With a deteriorating economic outlook and an ongoing civil war, Addis Ababa can be a tough place to live. After the embassy went through an ordered departure of more than 300 staff and family members in November 2021, its three-person Community Liaison Office was reduced to zero, leaving the remaining employees in desperate need of morale boosting.



David Baugh.

Retired British diplomat and U.S. Foreign Service family member David Baugh arrived at post in February 2022 and took on the challenge of rebuilding morale in the bi-mission community (U.S. Embassy Addis Ababa and the U.S. Mission to the African Union), offering a continuous stream of social events. He organized pub quiz nights and events at the Marine House, intentionally bringing different groups in the community together. He coordinated the restoration of the outdoor pizza oven on the compound and advocated for upgrading the premises. He worked with the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Council to host the post's first-ever representational PRIDE event—no easy feat in a country where homosexuality is illegal. He led the Marine Ball committee in planning the first ball since COVID-19. He worked with the post facilities and the American commissary to resurface degrading tennis courts.

Even after the CLO was fully staffed, Baugh continued to volunteer, co-hosting a Halloween event, the Regional Security Office's community preparedness day, Thanksgiving, a winter holiday party, Take Your Child to Work day, and a thank-you event for embassy social sponsors.

He played a pivotal role in organizing post's first post-pandemic Independence Day event in 2022, an event for 400 guests planned and executed within six weeks. The following year, Baugh encouraged the embassy to plan an even bigger bash, and the embassy welcomed almost 1,000 guests to an early Independence Day celebration. Baugh set post records in



David Baugh, shown here with May Salameh Jones, played a pivotal role in organizing embassy events, including this celebration on May 4, 2022.

fundraising and acquiring in-kind donations for the event.

During a Spring Celebration event at the embassy, with more than 300 in attendance, including 150 children, Baugh was on the sidelines at the start of a sack race. Noticing a 3-year-old falling behind, he picked the boy up and helped him across the finish line. That act, though small, exemplifies his true character and symbolized all he has done for the 1,500-person bi-mission in Addis Ababa.

David Baugh is a 37-year veteran of the British Diplomatic Service, having served overseas in Lisbon, Ashgabat, Dushanbe, Port of Spain, Belmopan, Kabul, and Pristina. Baugh met his wife, Ambassador Tracey Jacobson, in Ashgabat, and the couple managed to mostly serve together before retiring (for the first time) in 2017. When his wife was recalled to duty as chief of mission in Addis Ababa, he embraced the opportunity to put his management and planning skills to good use both for official entertaining at the chief-of-mission residence and for community-building events.

AFSA Post Representatives of the Year

Felix Peng and Paige Puntso Supporting AFSA Members in China

Felix Peng and Paige Puntso are being jointly recognized for their work as AFSA post representatives in Beijing. Together they organized numerous AFSA information tables during embassy events, maintained a regular AFSA Corner in the post newsletter, and served as advocates for member concerns. They advocated directly for issues such as pay errors and technology allowances, and kept AFSA informed about member concerns in the difficult period during China’s “zero COVID” policy.

Felix Peng joined the State Department as an economic officer in 2020, and Beijing was his first post. He is currently assigned to Bogotá.



Felix Peng.



Paige Puntso.

Paige Puntso joined the Foreign Service as a consular officer in 2014 after retiring from the U.S. Army. She has served in Ciudad Juárez, Guangzhou, and Beijing. She is currently the AFSA representative and chief of American Citizen Services in Dhahran.

AFSA Achievement and Contributions to the Association Award

Ken Kero-Mentz Defending the Diplomats Defending Our Country

During a decade and a half of active engagement with AFSA, Ken Kero-Mentz made significant contributions to the association both in its role as the professional association for U.S. career diplomats and as the labor union representing Foreign Service members.



Ken Kero-Mentz.

“I’ve always believed in trying to make the State Department the best place to work for everyone, and especially those of us in the Foreign Service, where ‘work’ is a 24/7 kind of thing,” said Kero-Mentz. “AFSA has been the best place to bring my energy, enthusiasm, and ideas to fruit. We are so fortunate to have AFSA on our side.”

Between 2006 and 2009, Kero-Mentz served as a volunteer AFSA post representative at U.S. Embassy Berlin, assisting members with questions and guiding them to find appropriate resources within the department or within AFSA. He also advocated for his colleagues in discussions with post management. AFSA recognized his efforts by naming him AFSA Post Rep of the Year in 2009.

Between 2011 and 2015, Kero-Mentz served two terms as an elected State representative on the AFSA Governing Board. He served on several AFSA committees and represented AFSA in meetings on Capitol Hill and with State Department leadership as well as in discussions with journalists and outside organizations. “It gave me tremendous insight into the inner workings of AFSA, the professional association, and AFSA, the union,” Kero-Mentz told the *FSJ*. “I also saw how AFSA can work in partnership with the various employee organizations, like glifaa, Working in Tandem, Balancing Act, and others, to further our joint goals of making the State Department the best place to work in Washington and around the world.”

Kero-Mentz then served as AFSA State vice president from 2017 to 2019, acting as lead negotiator for AFSA’s largest constituency and overseeing AFSA’s 10-member Labor Management staff of attorneys and counselors. Serving during the chaotic first two years of the Trump administration, Kero-Mentz

fought to protect Foreign Service (FS) members, fought against proposals to slash the size of the Foreign Service, and worked to maintain employee benefits.

He helped convince the State Department to improve its treatment of FS families with special needs children and helped secure additional treatment and assistance for employees suffering from unexplained health incidents in Cuba and China. He negotiated the first new union-management Framework Agreement with the State Department since 1987. He served on the Governing Board committee that proposed substantial revisions to the AFSA Bylaws, which the AFSA membership overwhelmingly approved. He remembers fondly working so closely with a devoted team of AFSA employees, noting that “across the board, our members should know how fortunate we are to have folks at AFSA working every day to further AFSA’s goals—which of course are your goals.”

From 2019 to 2021, Kero-Mentz served as the AFSA secretary on the Governing Board. During these tense final two years of the Trump administration and the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, he chaired the AFSA Legal Defense Fund Committee as it rose to the historic occasion of assisting the dozen AFSA members called to testify during the 2019 Trump impeachment hearings.



GREG KUBIAK

Ken Kero-Mentz delivering remarks at U.S. Embassy Lisbon’s Pride Reception in 2021.

We are so fortunate to have AFSA on our side.

—Ken Kero-Mentz

The fund raised more than \$750,000 in three months and paid \$468,000 in attorney fees to save FS colleagues from the severe financial hardship they would have suffered if they had had to pay for their own representation. He worked with other Governing Board members to reform AFSA internal personnel policies to enhance family and medical leave benefits for AFSA staff.

Kero-Mentz joined the State Department in 2000 and served overseas in Rio de Janeiro, Baghdad, Berlin, Colombo, and Erbil; worked domestically in the Bureaus of European and Eurasian Affairs and Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; and as an assessor for the Board of Examiners. He was a frequent board member of glifaa (Gays and Lesbians in the Foreign Affairs Agencies), serving as its president from 2012 to 2013.

An economic officer, Kero-Mentz twice won the Superior Honor Award, for his work on arms control in Berlin (2009)

and as chief of the 16-person political and economic section in Erbil (2016). Prior to joining State, he spent five years on Capitol Hill covering a wide range of legislative issues, from environment and trade to education and foreign policy.

Raised in Vermont, Kero-Mentz earned a B.A. in international affairs and a master's degree in public administration from The George Washington University in Washington, D.C. He speaks German and Portuguese. He retired from the Foreign Service in 2020 but continues to serve the department as a reemployed annuitant.

Ken Kero-Mentz and his husband, Neil, are currently in the process of obtaining residency and purchasing an apartment in northern Portugal, where they plan to live. "In many ways, my time in the Foreign Service brought me to where I am today," Kero-Mentz told the *FSJ*. "I learned Portuguese at FSI before serving in Brazil, and I took advantage of retirement shortly after hitting 50, opting to follow a different path than the high-stakes work/life of international diplomacy. I wouldn't be able to live the life I'm living had it not been for the Foreign Service, and I know just how fortunate I am."

— FOREIGN SERVICE CHAMPIONS AWARD —

U.S. Global Leadership Coalition

Engaging on the Importance of U.S. World Leadership

Launched last year, the Foreign Service Champions Award recognizes the accomplishments and achievements of individuals or groups from Congress, the military, or other influential non-career members of the foreign affairs community who have made meaningful contributions to diplomacy and the U.S. Foreign Service. This year AFSA is pleased to recognize an outstanding organization that has advocated for the critical role the Foreign Service plays in shaping U.S. foreign policy and has had an enduring impact on the diplomatic profession: the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition (USGLC).



USGLC President Liz Schroyer.

USGLC is the preeminent advocacy network working to strengthen America's investments in diplomacy and development, alongside defense. Often called the "strange bedfellows" coalition, USGLC brings together more than 500 businesses and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with retired military officers, veterans, faith leaders, mayors, and farmers across the country. AFSA is a member organization and works closely with USGLC.

Established in 1995 in response to a rise in isolationist voices following the Cold War, today the broad-based USGLC coalition—led by powerhouse advocate Liz Schroyer—educates and engages in Washington, D.C., and in all 50 states on the importance of U.S. leadership around the world to advance America's security and economic interests. Advocating for robust



Liz Schrayer (fourth from right) and USGLC staff accepting the Foreign Service Champions Award at the AFSA awards ceremony on Oct. 5, 2023.

investments in the U.S. international affairs budget, the coalition engages Republican and Democratic champions and supporters from Capitol Hill to the White House.

The USGLC’s board of directors, advisory councils, state advisory committees, and networks—like Veterans for Smart Power and Farmers for Prosperity—bring together a strong bipartisan group of distinguished leaders, including former Secretaries of State and defense, members of Congress, and more than 250 retired three- and four-star generals and admirals, along with executives from some of the nation’s top businesses and nonprofits to make the case why leading globally matters locally.

With an expanding footprint around the country, USGLC hosts dozens of public town halls every year with members of Congress from the Freedom Caucus to the Progressive Caucus in their home districts. USGLC also seeks to educate the public and candidates running for the White House and Congress about foreign policy issues and how diplomacy and global development connect to kitchen table issues here at home.

USGLC continues to be a leading voice on the value of diplomacy, the importance of a strong Foreign Service for keeping

America safe, and on how businesses and NGOs are partnering with the U.S. government—including the State Department and USAID—to find solutions to the world’s toughest challenges.

Accepting the award on behalf of USGLC was Liz Schrayer, the organization’s president and chief executive officer. Under Schrayer’s leadership, USGLC has grown from a D.C. advocacy group to a nationwide network of advocates in every state.

Schrayer said she is “always inspired by the professionalism, dedication, and passion of our nation’s diplomatic team that is working on behalf of the American people all around the world. It’s why receiving this award from AFSA is such an honor, because the true heroes are all of our fellow citizens who serve—often in harm’s way—to make our world and our country a safer and better place.”

Schrayer also currently serves on the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation’s Development Advisory Council and USAID’s Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid, as well as several advisory boards and committees for the University of Michigan, including the Gerald Ford School of Public Policy. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. ■



OPERATION NICA WELCOME



In February 2023, some 200 political prisoners were spirited to the United States from Nicaragua. Here's the story of that unforgettable freedom flight.

BY KATE APPLGATE



Kate Applegate joined the Foreign Service in 2015 after 20 years in journalism. She has served overseas in San José and Ciudad Juárez and for the State Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement in Washington, D.C.

She is currently posted to Tegucigalpa as a political officer.

The plane took off after midnight, mostly empty. Sitting in a largely vacant cabin, 10 U.S. Civil Service and Foreign Service officers chatted, listened to music, and tried to calm their nerves. One moved back to an empty seat to pray. Two days earlier, most had had no idea what was about to unfold. Lance Hegerle, then deputy director for Central American affairs at State, had reached out cryptically, inviting colleagues on a mission with the barest of details: Spanish speakers. Plane travel. Diplomatic passport. Twenty-four hours.

Just before takeoff from a naval base in Norfolk, Virginia, late on Feb. 8, 2023, the team learned their full mission. It sounded more Hollywood than HST. They would leave Norfolk Naval Station on a USAID-funded jet, land in Managua, pack the plane with some 200 political prisoners pulled hours earlier from their jail cells, and spirit them to the United States, all in a matter of hours.

The mission was unclassified, but lives were at stake. Loose lips could sink the trip, condemning the political prisoners to continued imprisonment under the regime of Daniel Ortega and his wife, Rosario Murillo. Many political prisoners had spent years behind bars. The plan to free them came about in a matter of days,



Left: Members from the Embassy Managua team and personnel from Washington set up to work on the tarmac at the Managua airport. In the foreground is a crate of Nicaraguan passports for the political prisoners that the government of Nicaragua turned over shortly before releasing them. In addition to matching passports to individuals, U.S. officials needed to verify that each prisoner was going to the U.S. voluntarily. Above: Diplomats and U.S. government personnel process a busload of political prisoners freed by the Ortega regime in the early morning of Feb. 9, 2023.

after long months of backdoor diplomacy. It came to fruition on Jan. 29, when Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Denis Moncada posed an unexpected question to then-Ambassador Kevin Sullivan, who had led U.S. Embassy Managua since 2018. Would the United States accept all the political prisoners from Nicaragua?

A flurry of activity ensued. Ambassador Sullivan boarded a plane to Washington to rally the interagency response, entrusting Chargé d’Affaires Carla Fleharty and a tiny embassy team to secure regime agreement on logistics, timing, and assurance that only prisoners who freely consented would leave for the United States.

Negotiations with the regime were touch and go until the last minute, when the ambassador overcame a major disagreement that had threatened to derail the entire operation. With that phone call over, Operation Nica Welcome was a go.



While the plane winged its way from Norfolk to Nicaragua, an embassy team assembled in Managua. Chargé d’Affaires Fleharty, Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Ryan Reid, Information Officer Gaby Canavati, Acting Consular Chief Katie Jonas, Acting Regional Security Officer Will LaChance, and Defense Attaché Lt. Col. Dennis Rhoan climbed into a motor pool SUV, toting a large plastic crate stuffed with more than 220 freshly printed Nicaraguan passports. For prisoners with no prior passport, the regime had substituted mug shots.

About half the group had been arrested in 2018, when thousands of Nicaraguans protested proposed changes to social security. Security forces squelched dissent with live ammunition, injuring a few hundred people and arresting hundreds more.

Over the coming months, security forces killed more than 300 protestors—some, newspapers showed, had been targeted by regime snipers.

The regime rounded up another wave of prisoners as the 2021 election loomed. Every presidential contender was arrested, seven candidates in all. Journalists, business figures, even Sandinistas who fought beside Ortega for decades, but later broke with him, were jailed. Many landed in the infamous “El Chipote” prison, in solitary confinement, without access to lawyers or loved ones.

The crackdown hit close to home for U.S. diplomats. As Managua’s political chief from 2020 to 2022, Hegerle remembers hosting Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, a journalist and politician, and his wife for wine and cheese one night in June 2021. The next day, Chamorro texted Hegerle just before his arrest. Then Chamorro’s WhatsApp line went silent.



On Feb. 9, 2023, the embassy team met their Nicaraguan foreign ministry contacts at Managua’s airport after midnight. Reaching the tarmac on the military side of the facility, Reid spotted police clad in balaclavas, wielding automatic weapons. Out of the darkness came the roar of a dozen Russian-made buses. The windows were covered with blankets or paper, but the diplomats could see the passengers’ profiles: hands shackled, heads down. “That was the moment it was real,” Reid said.

The passengers clearly weren’t told where they were headed. Some concluded they were off to a judicial hearing or another prison. Seeing the plane, others figured they were headed to Cuba or Venezuela. Some were terrified they were about to be executed. “They seemed to have no clue what was happening,” Reid said.



MILEYDI GUILARTE

The Nica Team (from left): Katrina Reichwein (from State Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs' Monitoring Working Group), Katie Jonas (acting consul general in Managua), Ryan Reid (political-economic chief in Managua), Mileydi Guilarte (USAID deputy assistant administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean), Carla Fleharty (chargé d'affaires), Bill Muntean (from State Department Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs), Marta Youth (former deputy chief of mission in Managua, now principal deputy assistant secretary in State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration), Tanner Gildea (from State's Office of Management Strategy and Solutions), Lance Hegerle (from State Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs' Office of Central American Relations), and Gaby Canavati (Embassy Managua PAS).

"They would step off the bus, and you could see them processing the plane, knowing that they're leaving, but not knowing exactly what was going on."

Fleharty greeted each person as they stepped off the bus, explaining the operation. Reid moved throughout the crowd, speaking with his contacts. Several prisoners realized what was happening upon glimpsing Hegerle and former Deputy Chief of Mission Marta Youth (now principal deputy assistant secretary for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration), former economics chief Bill Muntean (2015-2018), and other Embassy Managua veterans.

"Marta, I love you!" hollered Michael Healy, a U.S. citizen among the prisoners, kidding that this was his second U.S. government rescue. Healy was in good spirits. He approached Muntean, who had grown a long beard during the pandemic, and asked, "Bill, what the hell happened to you?"

"Mike, you're the one who's been in jail for the last year and a half!" Muntean replied.

Hegerle's familiar face—if not his waistline—was another welcome sight for some. "*Estamos más flacos*," former Nicaraguan Deputy Minister of Government and Foreign Affairs José Bernard

Pallais gestured to his companions, giving Hegerle a mischievous smile. "*Y tú—tú estás más gordo* [We all got skinnier, but you—you're fatter!]"

A former engineering student exited the bus and stopped. Reid watched him inhale deeply.

"I haven't been outside in three years," the student said. "Look at my skin. Look how pale I am." Gazing at the sky, he took another deep breath of fresh air.

With no airline personnel, no airport employees, no paper or virtual tickets, the diplomats got to work. They flipped over the plastic crate that had held the passports and made a small table. Youth pulled out the small flashlight she always carries, a gift from her husband, to match passports to passengers. "I don't think my husband ever envisioned that we'd be using the flashlight to read Nicaraguan passports in the dark," Youth said.

Some Nicaraguans were visibly overwhelmed in choosing indefinite prison or an unknown future in the United States. One woman grieved, realizing she'd never see her dying mother again. A man whose family had visited him the day before in prison was anguished to leave them behind. Others wondered how they'd support themselves.

Marta Youth addresses passengers flight attendant-style. “We never forgot you,” she said. With her is Juan Lorenzo Holmann Chamorro, a Nicaraguan newspaper publisher who was jailed in 2021.

The team was honest about the unknowns but assured them the U.S. government was committed to reuniting families. One man was tormented over whether to board the plane.

Hegerle offered basic facts: The Nicaraguans would receive U.S. humanitarian parole for two years and permission to work. He asked whether the man’s wife had brought homecooked meals to the jail, as many families do.

Yes, the man confirmed.

“If you work hard, you’ll be sending money back to your wife,” Hegerle pointed out. “If you get on this plane, you can be your family’s provider.”

The man walked up the jetway.

At another point, tensions on the tarmac rose between waiting passengers and military police. One prisoner paced back and forth near the plane, trying to decide whether to stay or go; police



MILEY/O'GUILARTE

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MILEYDI GUILARTE

Nicaraguans, freed hours earlier, take off from Managua, en route to the United States. The chartered flight carried 222 political prisoners released by the Ortega-Murillo regime to freedom—and many unknowns.

threatened to take him back. LaChance, Youth, and Hegerle stepped between him and the police, convinced him to board and hustled him into the cabin. Youth worried that if problems grew, the police might halt the entire operation, stranding the prisoners on the final buses.

After about two and a half hours, the buses were empty. As the sun began to rise, the plane’s crew ran through preflight checks and triple-checked the manifest. Finally, the Omni Air 767 taxied down the runway and lifted off.

The embassy team watched in silence. Canavati pulled out a cell phone to record the moment. “There it goes,” she said as she filmed the plane climbing into the brightening sky. “God bless America.”



Inside the cabin, the newly liberated Nicaraguans broke out in the national anthem. A chorus of chants rang out, extolling Nicaragua’s cities: “Viva, Nicaragua Libre!” “Viva, Managua!” “Viva, Masaya!” “Viva, Chinandega!”

Hegerle took to the plane’s intercom, previewing what would happen after landing. Passengers shared pens and

began filling out the first of many forms they would see over the coming days.

Hegerle passed Youth the intercom. Reviewing some thoughts she’d scribbled on a piece of paper, Youth told the Nicaraguans that the United States had never forgotten them. It had kept fighting for the jailed dissidents: for better prison conditions, for rights to an attorney, for their freedom. “Finally, that day has come. I know that for you all, our departure from Nicaragua is bittersweet. But what’s important right now is that you are free. You are saved. You are safe. And you are with friends. We have to give thanks, because it’s almost a miracle.”

“We are here for you, and it’s an honor to accompany you,” she added. “It isn’t every day you get to travel with more than 200 heroes.”

Reunions began. Spouses, parents, and children, imprisoned separately, were suddenly face to face again. Three brothers compared their respective ordeals. Aisles filled with passengers hugging, shouting, making up for lost time. Stewards barely squeezed through with food service.

Upon landing at Dulles, the released political prisoners were celebrities. Ambassador Sullivan greeted them on the tarmac.

A media helicopter hovered nearby for live coverage. Families, friends, and diaspora gathered beyond the sliding airport doors, clutching blue and white Nicaraguan flags.



Because the operation occurred outside the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, the Nicaraguans didn't qualify for refugee funding. Instead, they relied on volunteers and organizations that compressed lessons from 2021's massive Afghan resettlement into mere days. More than 350 employees from State's kaleidoscope of bureaus had volunteered just hours before to serve in an undisclosed crisis response. Some escorted the evacuees to a nearby hotel ballroom that became an ersatz Ellis Island. The Foreign Service Institute's Spanish teachers interpreted so first responders could understand each freed prisoner's personal needs.


Staffed with representatives from the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Health and Human Services, Virginia and Fairfax County emergency responders, and various nongovernmental organizations, the ballroom was a 24-hour haven for acute medical response, meals, winter coats, cell phones, toiletries, onward travel, and ecstatic reunifications. After six days, all 222 passengers had departed, embarking on new lives in 25 states.

Much work remains. NGO partners are continuing case management. Teams in Embassy Managua and Embassy San José are helping the interagency reunite families amid intensified regime repression. Shortly after the prisoners were airborne, Ortega's regime stripped citizenship from all 222, as well as 94 other Nicaraguans, seizing their property. The international community condemned it as a human rights violation and continues to call for Nicaragua's return to democracy and the rule of law.

No one involved will ever forget the freedom flight. Secretary of State Antony Blinken praised the operation as a "model of what diplomacy can achieve for human rights and democracy in the most difficult circumstances."

Then-Director for Central American Affairs Patrick Ventrell lauded the U.S. response. From the moment the regime made the offer to Ambassador Sullivan to release the prisoners, Ventrell said, there was no hesitation in how to respond. "Our only discussion was what size plane and how to land it," he said.

Watching the freed Nicaraguans step from the Dulles escalators and out the sliding doors "was probably the most extraordinary moment in my entire career," Ventrell said. "You design a policy, have a breakthrough, and—this is the moment why we do it all." ■



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AMERICA'S COLLECTION: The Art & Architecture of the Diplomatic Reception Rooms at the U.S. Department of State

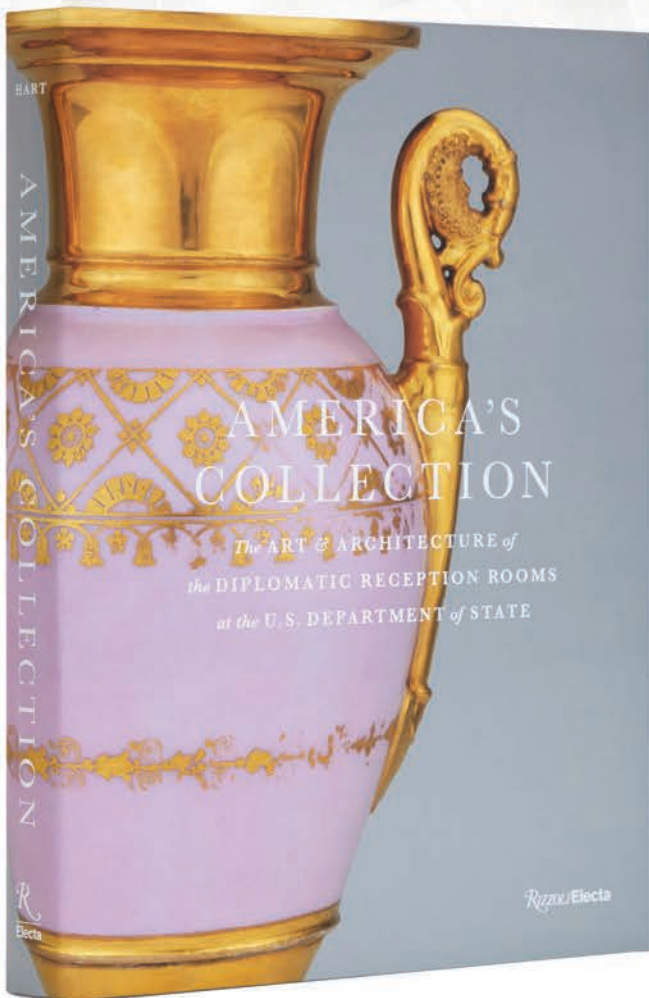
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AFSA Awards Honor Excellence and Constructive Dissent



Deputy Secretary of State Richard Verma (center) with Ambassador (ret.) and Mariella Tefft on Oct. 5.

For more than 50 years, AFSA has been proud to highlight achievement, courage, and sacrifice within the Foreign Service community through its awards program. This year, AFSA hosted the annual awards ceremony on Oct. 5 in the State Department's Dean Acheson Auditorium.

Approximately 100 guests gathered to recognize the winners of the 2023 awards for constructive dissent and for outstanding performance and the recipient of AFSA's Foreign Service Champions Award, as well as to honor this year's recipient of the Award for Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy. AFSA presented 13 awards in all; profiles of the winners begin on p. 42.

AFSA President Tom Yazdgerdi served as emcee

for a distinguished audience that featured four former recipients of AFSA's Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award: Ambassadors (ret.) Nancy Powell, Ruth A. Davis, Anne Patterson, and John Negroponete.

Family members and colleagues of the 2023 recipients and senior officials from the State Department were also in attendance.

"AFSA takes immense pride in its duty to acknowledge the commitment, patriotism, and excellence that are synonymous with the Foreign Service," Yazdgerdi said in his opening remarks. "Our diplomats' dedication plays an instrumental role in shaping global relations and fostering a brighter future for our nation and the international community."

Award winners traveled

to the ceremony from all over the world. They each gave brief remarks as they accepted their awards. The ceremony was followed by a reception in the State Department Delegates Lounge.

AFSA congratulates all the 2023 award recipients.

Lifetime Contributions

Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources Richard Verma presented the 2023 **Award for Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy to Ambassador (ret.) John Tefft** for his lasting contributions to U.S. foreign policy formulation and implementation, for mentoring and inspiring several generations of U.S. diplomats, and for his lifelong commitment to public service.

In accepting the award,

Amb. Tefft shared the recognition with his wife, Mariella, who "was always there for me and for our country." He said, "She was my partner throughout the 45 years we spent in the Foreign Service. She was with me at every post, went through two wars together with me, and represented the United States with warmth and empathy."

Amb. Tefft then reflected on his decades of State Department service—he joined the department in

CALENDAR

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

December 4
AFSA Scholarship Applications Available

December 5
1-2 p.m.
Reviewing Your Retirement Plan

December 6
12-2 p.m.
AFSA Governing Board Meeting

December 25
Christmas Day
AFSA offices closed

January 1
New Year's Day
AFSA offices closed

January 17
12-2 p.m.
AFSA Governing Board Meeting

January 18
12-1:30 p.m.
Housing for Seniors—
What Are the Options?

February 2
4:30-6:30 p.m.
AFSA Happy Hour



AFSA President Tom Yazdgerdi (left) with dissent award winners Christophe Triplett, Alexander Douglas, and Mark Evans, and presenter Robert Rivkin (right).

AFSA/CALEBSCHLABACH

1972—and outlined the challenges facing today's diplomats.

"I am a member of an exceptional generation of Foreign and Civil Service professionals who worked on American foreign policy as freedom spread in Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union imploded," said Tefft. "A new post-Soviet world of independent states and serious new geopolitical challenges took its place. ... We now have a new generation of officers in Eastern Europe, who are dealing with an array of new problems, most notably Vladimir Putin's horrific invasion of Ukraine.

"Resisting Russia in Ukraine and rebuilding both Ukraine and international security will be major challenges for this new generation of Foreign Service officers," he continued. "But they are only some of the many challenges that our Foreign Service will have to confront. China has joined Russia in trying to reject large parts of the post-

World War II international order, promoting authoritarianism over democracy, and threatening U.S. interests in Asia. New weapons and technologies pose new threats to international security. Artificial intelligence will transform every aspect of the world we live in, where climate change is already having serious effects."

Amb. Tefft emphasized the need for "a Foreign Service of creative, nonpartisan professionals advising our political leaders and implementing American foreign policy around the world" and reminded the audience that "today's Foreign Service officers will have to stand up for our country's values and their personal integrity as they do their work."

See the *Journal's* interview with Amb. Tefft on p. 30.

Foreign Service Champions

Established in 2022, the **Foreign Service Champions Award** recognizes an influ-

ential noncareer member of the foreign affairs community who has made meaningful contributions to the Foreign Service and the diplomatic profession. Recipients may be from Congress, the U.S. military, non-government organizations, or elsewhere.

This year's recipient was the **U.S. Global Leadership Coalition (USGLC)**, the preeminent advocacy network working to strengthen America's investments in diplomacy and development. Accepting the award on behalf of the coalition—which she memorably called "the strange bedfellow coalition"—was USGLC President and CEO Liz Schrayner.

"We all know the high stakes work that the brave women and men of our Foreign Service deliver for the American people every day—and the incredible work of AFSA," Schrayner told the audience. "USGLC is proud to tell your story—to make the connection of why leading globally matters locally, and

to encourage policymakers to speak up."

For more on USGLC and the Foreign Service Champions Award, see p. 54.

Awards for Constructive Dissent

AFSA's four constructive dissent awards are unique within the U.S. government. Every year for over a half-century, AFSA has given these awards to Foreign Service officers and specialists who demonstrated the courage to dissent within the system, to question the status quo, and to take a stand.

This year, the **Christian A. Herter Award** for Constructive Dissent by a Senior Foreign Service Officer was given to **Mark Evans**, currently the deputy chief of mission (DCM) in Stockholm, for his yearslong dedication to supporting Foreign Service families with special needs dependents.

When accepting the award, Evans said he believes that "by supporting children within our community who have disabilities, we are also strengthening the State Department as an institution, since supporting Foreign Service family members appropriately is inextricably linked with issues of morale and retention."

It also helps, he continued, to "ensure that we can place the best people into the positions where they are able to be most effective in achieving our foreign policy aims."

Robert Rivkin presented the **William R. Rivkin Award**

for Constructive Dissent by a mid-level officer. The 2023 award went to **Alexander Douglas** for his courage in the aftermath of a violent attack on a colleague in Muscat and his unwavering commitment to accountability and security improvement in the weeks after the attack.

Douglas shared his experience, saying that being intimidated and told to stand down by senior leaders “shook my faith in the State Department—an institution that had until then nurtured me, supported me, and empowered me.”

But, he continued, “the situation challenged me to develop a clearer sense of my purpose. With time I’ve recovered my enthusiasm for serving in the department—not because the department has always done the right thing, but because of the department’s promise and noble purpose.”

The **W. Averell Harriman Award** for Constructive Dissent by an entry-level officer went to **Christophe Triplett**, who pushed for equal treatment of locally employed (LE) staff in same-sex relationships in Amman and ended up changing mission policies around the world, helping countless staff and family members.

In his speech, Mr. Triplett remarked on “the steadfast determination, dedication, and enthusiasm of those who believed in this cause and extended themselves to help bring about this change.”

“I spent many long nights



AFSA State VP Tina Wong presents AFSA Post Representative of the Year Award to co-winner Felix Peng on Oct. 5.

and used a considerable amount of their time discussing this issue,” he went on. “To these individuals, I extend my deepest gratitude for not only embracing this issue but also for working tirelessly behind the scenes. Their efforts helped transform a local challenge in Jordan into a catalyst for broader change in State Department policy.”

Awards for Exemplary Performance

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

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

Katie Leis is the recipient of this year’s Delavan Award for her significant contributions to strengthening

embassy security services and advancing broader mission goals in Phnom Penh. She was unable to attend the event, but her sister Rachel Brucas offered remarks on her behalf.

The **M. Juanita Guess Award**, presented by Jon Clements in honor of his late mother, for whom the award is named, recognizes the work of a community liaison office coordinator (CLO) who has demonstrated outstanding leadership, dedication, initiative, or imagination in assisting the families of Americans serving at an overseas post.

This year’s Guess Award winner, **Erin Cederlind**, was lauded for her near-round-the-clock work to welcome evacuees from Khartoum, along with her energy and initiative in organizing community events for Embassy Djibouti.

The **Mark Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy** is open to all Foreign Service members from any of the foreign affairs agencies, especially early- to mid-career level, who promoted American

policies focused on advancing democracy, freedom, and governance through bold, exemplary, imaginative, and effective efforts.

The award was named in honor of the late Ambassador Mark Palmer, known for his lifelong passion for promoting democracy and human rights. It was presented by his niece, Rohani Mahyera.

Two recipients were selected this year: **David Burnstein**, whose focus on supporting jailed Russian opposition leaders ultimately contributed to the Russian government’s decision to expel him from Russia; and **Marina Grayson**, for her work to fight corruption and counter malign Russian influence in Bulgaria.

“I have no illusions that the road ahead for Bulgaria is easy,” Ms. Grayson said when receiving her award. “The work of rooting out corruption, creating strong institutions, and changing deeply entrenched mindsets takes time—indeed, it may take generations. But I believe the process that started this year in Bulgaria will not be turned back, and I am immensely proud and honored to have played a small part.”

The **Avis Bohlen Award** honors the accomplishments of a Foreign Service family member whose relations with the American and local communities at post have done the most to advance the interests of the United States. The award was established by Pamela Harriman in 1982.

This year, Foreign Service



David Baugh, Felix Peng, Erin Cederlind, David Burnstein, and Marina Grayson were honored for exemplary performance.

family member **David Baugh** was named honorable mention for the Bohlen Award in recognition of his efforts (as the spouse of Addis Ababa’s chief of mission), to rebuild the community after a draw-down due to civil war.

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

The 2023 award was presented jointly to **Felix Peng** and **Paige Puntso** in recognition of the many hours they devoted to supporting AFSA members in China, advocating directly for issues such as pay errors and technology allowances, and keeping AFSA informed about member concerns during the difficult period under China’s “zero COVID” policy.

“I look at my fellow honorees in this room and see so

many colleagues who have done so much more than me,” said Peng in his remarks. “You made principled stands to protect people with dis-

and locally engaged staff helped strengthen people-to-people ties. Your determination and solidarity inspire me every day.”



AFSA President Tom Yazdgerdi, Palmer Award winner Marina Grayson, presenter Rohani Mahyera, and Palmer Award winner David Burnstein.

abilities and the queer community, to advance human rights and fight corruption. You fought for safer working conditions and built broad support for us diplomats. And your efforts to tighten the bonds between American

Puntso was unable to attend the ceremony.

The **AFSA Achievement and Contributions to the Association Award** recognizes an active-duty or retired AFSA member from any of the foreign affairs

agencies who has made a significant (nonmonetary) contribution to the association in its role as either a professional association or a labor union.

Ken Kero-Mentz, who was unable to attend this year’s ceremony, received the 2023 award in recognition of his many years of service as a volunteer post representative, a State Department representative on the governing board (2011-2015), and later as AFSA’s elected State vice president (2017-2019).

“I’ve always believed in trying to make the State Department the best place to work for everyone,” said

Kero-Mentz of his many years at AFSA. “We are so fortunate to have AFSA on our side.”

Watch this space in the coming months for information on how you can nominate next year’s winners. ■



Resourcing Career-Long Learning

There is a lot of buzz around the release of the State Department's new Learning Policy. I am particularly enthusiastic about the 40 hours of dedicated learning and use of individual development plans (IDPs), including supervisors' ratings of their support for their team's professional development starting in the 2024-2025 Foreign Service rating cycle. These elements are combined with the new Foreign Service Institute "core curriculum" to bolster fundamental skills.

The Learning Policy—centering our professional development in a culture of career-long learning—is critically needed. The Foreign Service workforce faces significant gaps in both leadership and management skills and in emerging specializations such as cybersecurity.

AFSA plays an important role both in outreach to the FS workforce to deepen this culture of learning and in advocating for programs and initiatives that help our members to reskill and upskill for global power competition. I want to offer some specific suggestions on next steps.

We need to deploy a comprehensive workforce communications strategy to inculcate a cultural shift toward learning. For too long, we have let an outdated perspective thrive, namely, that our FS workforce should be able to learn on the job,

jump in and swim, training not required.

FSI training has too often been seen as time taken away from a performance evaluation at best, irrelevant at worst. To the department's credit, reforms of FSI curriculum have greatly improved course offerings and teaching approaches, helping the FS workforce regain a level of trust in its training institution.

FSI alone can't succeed in catalyzing this cultural shift, however. The Policy and Planning Office, Bureau of Talent of Management, and regional and functional bureaus have identified additional barriers and tested new learning solutions. I would like to see bureau-led communications, such as the recent FSI and Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy (CDP) joint messages on new tradecraft coursework to build cyber resilience.

We also have much to learn from academic institutions, which have developed the most cutting-edge curriculum on leadership and specialized fields.

The department should leverage its 40 hours of learning per year to invite all supervisors to seek new management best practices and actively deploy them. There should also be a community of practice, accessible to everyone, to socialize and expand best practices and tips.

The Learning Policy—centering our professional development in a culture of career-long learning—is critically needed.

Communicating ideas and encouraging training are insufficient without the proper resources. In the current limited-budget environment, the department needs to creatively incentivize—and fund—the FS workforce to engage in career-long learning. First, our institutions should compile a list of strategic partners already aligned with Learning Policy goals and expand those private-sector funding streams.

Some successful learning partnerships include the Secretary's Leadership Seminar at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government; the Cox Foundation Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Champions Initiative; and the University of Denver/Aspen Institute International Career Advancement Program. We should also tap into the biggest donors and philanthropists to offer more across our ranks.

Within the department, we need to "train the trainer" much more efficiently and expansively. Every participant in pilot leadership and skills enhancement programs should take at least one action to spread the knowledge acquired and join the department and AFSA in advocacy for more of

these positive learning opportunities.

Count on AFSA to also partner with our members to share these learning and leadership stories with members of Congress.

AFSA also believes that employees encumbering positions, who subsequently take time off to engage in learning, must be fully back-filled. We need to develop a significant training float as a long-term option, while in the short term, we need to leverage our own workforce.

We have minister counselors and other members of the Senior Foreign Service awaiting ambassadorial confirmations and other senior administration appointees who could lead or serve in this training float. We could potentially tap interagency colleagues from Commerce and USAID to train State's workforce on specialized topics including global health security and commercial statecraft.

Specialists could cross-train our generalists (or vice versa). We don't have any centralized database of expertise to infuse such offerings for our workforce. We need one.

Let's challenge each other to learn, and to learn from each other, every day. ■



Contact: chester@afsa.org | (202) 712-5267

Time to Celebrate, Reflect, and Plan

More than the end of the fiscal year, the end of the calendar year offers a time for celebration, reflection, and planning.

CELEBRATE completing another promotion cycle, the Operational Plan, the Performance Progress Reporting, and the bidding cycle. These milestones are accompanied by our everyday successes at posts and in Washington, D.C. From daily responsibilities managing awards and supervising staff to completing new designs, strategies, or policy papers, the work we do matters.

Taking time to pause and **REFLECT** gives us an opportunity to internalize our

individual accomplishments and assess our role in achieving mission and agency goals. Regardless of rank or position, our service has an impact, a point of pride we all should recognize.

Finally, as we approach a new calendar year, taking the time to **PLAN** your next steps is critical. Reflecting on and celebrating your achievements are instrumental to the coming year. Whether it's planning to retire, transfer, or take a new direction—the successes and failures of the past year guide our future.

At AFSA, we are **CELEBRATING** our member engagement—we manage 60 to 100 monthly requests from

USAID AFSA members needing assistance to overcome and resolve issues on allowances, promotions, assignments, security clearances, and other problems in the workplace.

At the policy level, we hope we can soon celebrate passage of the State Department authorization bill, which will (1) offer per diem allowance for newly hired Foreign Service members; and (2) waive Fly America restrictions for personnel traveling with pets.

We are **REFLECTING** on successful engagements with the Bureau for Human Capital and Talent Management (HCTM). Positive engagement with HCTM on the Foreign

Service/Senior Foreign Service Strengthening Initiative and ongoing dialogue with the Office of Employee and Labor Relations on personnel policy reform highlight approaches for change and strengthened relations.

Building on 2023, AFSA's **PLANNING** includes: working with HCTM to develop and implement a workforce plan that strengthens career FSOs; promoting and streamlining promotion reform; improving transparency in assignments; and supporting a strong, vibrant, diverse, and empowered Foreign Service.

As 2024 nears, take a minute to celebrate, reflect, and plan. I wish you all the best in 2024, and remember: AFSA is only an email or phone call away. ■



Contact: naland@afsa.org

Reviewing Your Retirement Plan

The end of the year is a good time to review your finances and retirement-related planning to determine if any course corrections are needed. For example, how has your choice of investments in the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) or elsewhere been doing? Is your Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) plan still the best for your current situation? Have you had a relationship change that might prompt

you to revise your estate planning documents and beneficiary designations? Do you have an up-to-date list of your financial accounts, insurance, debts, and assets if your next of kin should someday need that information?

To help you conduct an end-of-year retirement plan checkup, I am scheduled to present the webinar "Reviewing Your Retirement Plan" on Dec. 5 covering

15 topics. Registration instructions were emailed to members and posted on the AFSA homepage in November. About a week after the webinar, a video will be posted at www.afsa.org/retirement for viewing any time. On that same webpage is the one-page "Retirement Planning: Checklist for Current Retirees" that will be referenced in the webinar.

Later in December, retired members will receive

the *2024 AFSA Directory of Retired Members* containing a front section with information on Medicare, FEHB, Social Security, beneficiary designations, survivor benefits, and more. That guidance should assist in your end-of-year retirement plan checkup.

If you have not done so, please review the "2024 Foreign Service Annual Annuitant Newsletter" published by

Continued on next page



Making Strides in Accommodating Careers Overseas

Despite broad recognition by legislatures across the United States of the risks and dangers that American diplomats face on a regular basis while abroad, Foreign Service members do not enjoy the same protections and benefits that are in place for other government employees with careers based mainly overseas.

U.S. Foreign Service officers and specialists spend about two-thirds of their careers abroad, often serving at difficult and dangerous posts, and AFSA explains to legislators that to retain talented diplomats it is essential to ease some of the burdens of life overseas. Luckily, the past few years have provided the opportunity to pass provisions into law to do so.

AFSA's most consequential win related to accommodating life overseas is the

2021 Foreign Service Families Act, which was included in the Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). This bill applies portions of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to members of the Foreign Service, including protection from financial penalties for breaking residential leases, car leases, and telephone contracts when given orders to serve overseas.

It also provides members of the Foreign Service, their spouses, and dependents in-state tuition in the member's state of domicile. Thus, FS members are no longer "stateless" because of their overseas service when it comes to qualifying for in-state tuition at institutions of higher education.

We have achieved further accommodations related

AFSA explains to legislators that to retain talented diplomats it is essential to ease some of the burdens of life overseas.

to work overseas through agency-level advocacy, often accompanied by pressure from Congress. For example, a previous NDAA provided members of the military up to \$4,000 for the purpose of pet travel. At AFSA's urging, Congress threatened to mandate this same benefit for FS members in the subsequent NDAA.

In spring 2023, the State Department and the other foreign affairs agencies agreed to provide this benefit for all members of the Foreign Service without the need for a congressional mandate. AFSA is proud to have played a role in reducing the cost of transporting pets for our members.

AFSA has continued to push for accommodations in subsequent State Department authorization bills, which have all been attached to NDAAs. The 2023 State Department Authorization Act, which AFSA hopes will become law before the end of the year, includes provisions to aid members of the Foreign Service when they first arrive at post.

For example, the bill includes a provision granting expenses-paid internet at posts with a 30 percent hardship differential. This

ensures members of the Foreign Service, especially those serving in positions that are often harder to fill, can do their jobs immediately with a needed utility. If the bill becomes law, AFSA hopes to expand this provision to more posts overseas.

We want to build on our past legislative victories and continue to push for provisions that will make a career overseas less stressful for our members, which will help with morale and retention. In future State or other broad authorizing bills, AFSA will look at opportunities to have additional provisions of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act applied to members of the Foreign Service.

We hear from the AFSA membership most frequently on maintaining their home state residency for the purpose of taxes and the ability for professional licenses to be portable within the United States, especially in relation to spousal employment.

AFSA encourages members to continue writing us at member@afsa.org to help us identify the facets of work overseas that have a negative impact on morale and retention in the Foreign Service, so we can look to prioritize solutions in our advocacy work. ■

*Retiree VP Voice
Continued from previous page*

the department's Office of Retirement. It was posted in November at <https://RNet.state.gov> under the "What's New?" tab. The more than 40-page newsletter contains official information on retirement benefits, including an explanation of how your annuity is taxed, instructions on how to report post-retirement marriage or divorce, and instructions on how your next of kin can apply for survivors' benefits.

Finally, the AFSA website at www.afsa.org/retirement has more than 100 documents and links, including frequently asked questions, videos of AFSA "Next Stage" panels on post-Foreign Service job and volunteer opportunities, and other written and video resources on retirement benefits. If you have not looked through that information in a while, doing so is another useful end-of-year activity. ■

AFSA Governing Board Looks Ahead

The AFSA Governing Board that took office in July 2023 for a two-year term held an offsite retreat in Alexandria on Oct. 13 to discuss advocacy and other priorities and to decide on the most effective ways to take their goals forward.

During the lunch hour, staff made presentations on more opportunities for board members to get involved with AFSA and serve the membership.

Based on the productive discussions and a few carry-over priorities from the previous Governing Board, the group agreed to look at the following specific issues:



Board members hard at work during their retreat on Oct. 13 in Alexandria, Va.

Anti-bullying policy implementation; portability



The AFSA 2023-2025 Governing Board, Oct. 13, Alexandria, Va.

of professional licenses for Foreign Service members and spouses; dog ban exemption for federal employees; FEGLI payouts (D.C. locality pay); re-introduction of State

Foreign Service classwide promotions; mental health care; appropriate use of 360 reviews; road safety; D.C. cost-of-living; and the assignment review process. ■

AFSA President and GB Reps Speak at Chautauqua

On Sept. 25, AFSA President Tom Yazdgerdi and other speakers from AFSA joined almost 150 attendees at the Chautauqua Institution in Chautauqua, N.Y., as part of AFSA's long-standing collaboration with the Road Scholar program, "U.S. Foreign Policy for the 21st Century." This program is part of AFSA's outreach offerings, designed to introduce the public to the work of the U.S. Foreign Service.

Yazdgerdi spoke about the ways the people of the U.S. Foreign Service work to ensure prosperity and security in the United States, and he provided an overview of

AFSA's role in supporting the institution.

"When I was new to the Foreign Service, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright pronounced the United States as the 'indispensable nation.' We are still that, but the world looks a lot different today," said Yazdgerdi. He called on Congress to maintain bipartisan support for the foreign affairs budget and more quickly confirm our ambassadors.

Other AFSA speakers at this week-long program included AFSA Governing Board Secretary and FSO (ret.) Sue Saarnio; Foreign Agricultural Officer Alicia



At Chautauqua on Sept. 25. From left, back row: Ambassador (ret.) Alphonse LaPorta, AFSA President Tom Yazdgerdi, Alicia Hernandez, James Bever. Front row: Molly Williamson, Steve Herman, Sue Saarnio.

Hernandez; Ambassador (ret.) Alphonse LaPorta; VOA Chief National Correspondent Steve Herman, AFSA representative for the U.S. Agency

for Global Media; retired USAID Senior FSO James Bever; and retired State Department Senior FSO Molly Williamson. ■

AFSA Welcomes Newest FS Members



AFSA/DONNA GORMAN

One of three groups of new FS members who were invited to AFSA HQ in October.



AFSA/DONNA GORMAN

Amb. (ret.) Lino Gutierrez addresses class members on Oct. 11, 2023.

AFSA welcomed more than 200 new State Department FS officers and specialists to AFSA HQ in October. The newest crop of FS members is so large that we had to hold three separate events to fit them all into the building. The 131 generalists and 96 specialists included facilities managers, security engineers, DS special agents, and FSOs from all five career tracks. The group included 58 former State Department employees, including contractors and family members as well as 70 people who have served as State Department interns or fellows. We met 101 class members who have prior government experience outside of the State Department, including 40 who served in the U.S. Armed Forces. Of the 227 class members, 202 have previously worked, studied, or volunteered abroad.

One class member speaks eight languages, while another plays nine instruments. Among the class members is a pole vaulter, a competitive lumberjack, an amateur sumo wrestler and at least two black belts in taekwondo. One class member was adopted into a Foreign Service family as an infant, while another is the first person in their family to travel internationally.

And one class member, our own former *FSJ* associate editor Julia Wohlers, signed up for AFSA membership as a new public diplomacy officer headed to Beijing.

We enjoyed meeting all these new FS members and look forward to many years of working on their behalf. ■

Thank You, Table Hosts!

As the year draws to a close, AFSA wishes to extend its sincerest gratitude to members who have served as table hosts at our welcome lunches for incoming classes of the Foreign Service.

Over the course of this year—in which we welcomed a bumper crop of new hires—AFSA has hosted 17 lunches, requiring nearly 150 table hosts.

Table hosts are at the heart of the association's recruitment events, serving as the voice of AFSA, engaging with new recruits, and ready to answer any questions they might have about Foreign Service life, the career itself, and the work that AFSA does to support it. They bring a sense of camaraderie to our recruitment lunches and have generously served as points of contact for new members of the Foreign Service.

We recognize the time and effort required to attend these events and appreciate the contribution of every host who has participated this year. Thank you!

AFSA is always looking for additional table hosts. If you are in the Washington, D.C., area and would be interested in volunteering, please contact Hannah Chapman at chapman@afsa.org. ■

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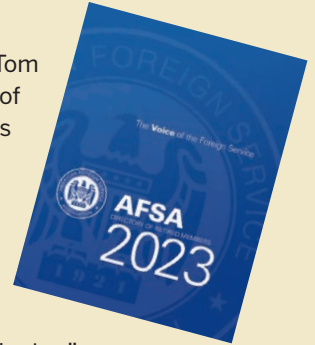
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AFSA NEWS

Outreach to Retired Members

Recently elected AFSA President Tom Yazdgerdi continued the tradition of AFSA outreach to retired members by speaking to the Foreign Affairs Retirees of Northern Virginia in September. He updated the 70 attendees on AFSA activities and answered their questions.



In October, President Yazdgerdi presented a “View from Washington” webinar to retirees worldwide. He travels to Florida in January to speak to the Foreign Service Retirees Association of Florida at their annual general meeting in Sarasota. As 2024 progresses, he plans to visit other Foreign Service retiree groups around the nation.

You can view a list of the retiree groups in the AFSA Directory of Retired Members and online at <https://afsa.org/retiree-associations>. If there is no group in your area and you are interested in starting one, AFSA can help locate retirees in your area to get the message out. Please contact AFSA Director of Programs and Member Engagement Christine Miele at miele@afsa.org. ■



AFSA Governing Board Meeting, October 18, 2023

The board met in person at AFSA headquarters, with some members joining virtually via a hybrid system. The following action items were decided upon:

Updates to the AFSA Employee Handbook

The board agreed to increase AFSA's parental leave to 12 weeks.

The board also adopted clarifying language regarding the number of advance annual leave hours an employee may request.

2024 AFSA Dues Increase

As per the AFSA bylaws, the board agreed to approve an across-the-board increase in AFSA member dues of 3.7 percent for 2024.

2023 Matilda Sinclair Language Awards

The board agreed to name 10 individuals as recipients of the 2023 Sinclair Awards. ■

AFSA Welcomes New Law Clerk



DAMIEN DORRANCE-STEINER

Damian Dorrance-Steiner.

Please welcome AFSA's newest law clerk, Damian Dorrance-Steiner, who will be supporting the legal team by conducting research across a broad range of matters to assist with current cases.

Damian hails from Columbus, Ohio, but moved to California for college, earning

an interdisciplinary bachelor's degree in philosophy, politics, and law from the University of Southern California. At USC, Damian grew interested in applying the rhetorical structures of philosophy to real world issues and decided that the legal field provided the best opportunity to pursue this passion.

Having completed their undergraduate degree during the COVID-19 lockdown era, Damian saw the dramatic effects of unequal bargaining power on the labor market and decided that their pursuits in law would be directed toward protecting vulnerable communities in the workforce.

Currently, Damian is pursuing a J.D. at The George Washington University Law School, where they serve as co-president of the LGBTQ+ student association Lambda Law and are a member of the Labor and Employment Law Society. Damian's current interest is learning how collective bargaining agreements adapt to support emergent issues such as diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives; artificial intelligence protections; and health care issues.

Having arrived in Washington, D.C., just one year ago, Damian is excited to continue exploring all that the city has to offer, creating digital art, visiting Founders Park in Old Town, and listening to audiobooks on long walks with their husky, Ash.

Damian can be reached at dorrancesteiner@afsa.org. ■

AFSA Dues Increase for 2024

In accordance with Article IV of the AFSA Bylaws, the Governing Board can choose to increase dues by no more than the cumulative increase in the national Consumer Price Index, published by the Department of Labor, since the effective date of the previous dues increase.

For 2024, AFSA has increased dues by 3.7 percent for all individual membership categories. In concrete terms, this amounts to an increase of between 18 and 73 cents per pay period for active-duty members and between 21 and 74 cents per month for retirees, depending on an individual's membership category.

Active-duty and retired members paying dues via payroll and annuity deduction will see a small increase in the amount automatically deducted from their paychecks and annuities. Those paying annually will be billed the new rate on their regularly scheduled renewal date. AFSA last increased its membership dues rate in January 2023. ■

Active-Duty Dues Rates

Category	2023 Annual	2024 Annual	2023 Biweekly	2024 Biweekly
SFS	\$515.08	\$534.14	\$19.81	\$20.54
FS 1, 2, 3	\$401.66	\$416.52	\$15.45	\$16.02
FS 4, 5, 6	\$228.88	\$237.35	\$8.80	\$9.13
FS 7, 8, 9	\$124.59	\$129.20	\$4.79	\$4.97

Retiree Dues Rates

Category	2023 Annual	2024 Annual	2023 Monthly	2024 Monthly
Annuity over \$75,000	\$239.57	\$248.43	\$19.96	\$20.70
Annuity of \$50,000-75,000	\$194.16	\$201.34	\$16.18	\$16.78
Annuity of \$25,000-50,000	\$142.48	\$147.75	\$11.87	\$12.31
Annuity Under \$25,000	\$93.43	\$96.89	\$7.79	\$8.08
Retiree Spouse	\$67.45	\$69.95	\$5.62	\$5.83

2024 Associate Dues Rates

Category	2023 Annual	2024 Annual
Associate Member	\$138.64	\$143.77



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A PARENT'S GUIDE TO *Psychoeducational Assessments*

**Discovering and evaluating strengths and weaknesses
in learning can help a child succeed.**

BY CHAD C. NELSON

Editor's Note: *Given that FS families move every few years, they are regularly looking at new school options and figuring out how to meet the learning needs of their children. Many parents find that at some point their child could benefit from psychoeducational testing to help determine the individual learning styles or accommodations needed to help the child succeed. A decade ago, we commissioned an article from Dr. Chad Nelson on what Foreign Service families need to know about psychoeducational evaluations.*

That article, published in The Foreign Service Journal December 2013 Education Supplement, turned out to be an excellent resource for families, both inside and outside the Foreign Service. It has been read online more than 50,000 times and remains one of the most-read FSJ articles every month. At the 10-year mark, we asked Dr. Nelson to revisit the article and offer an update on what's changed, and what hasn't, during the past decade. Here's his response.



Chad C. Nelson, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist in private practice in Baltimore County, Maryland. He specializes in the evaluation of learning, attention, and emotional disorders in children, adolescents, and young adults. He can be reached at chad@drchadnelson.com.

In 2013 I wrote an article for *The Foreign Service Journal* to inform parents about the process and benefits of psychoeducational evaluations.

While the process of psychoeducational assessments remains similar 10 years later, there have been some changes. This article will once again discuss the psychoeducational evaluation, as well as the changes that have occurred and what is anticipated in the years ahead.

Academic struggle can occur throughout a child's education. For younger children, struggle may occur in acquiring early concepts of reading and mathematics; they may have difficulty with attending to and understanding directions, or difficulty with social interaction. For older students, difficulty may occur in the areas of reading

Technology has played an important role in the administration of testing measures.

retention and comprehension, retaining larger quantities of information, attending for prolonged periods of time, organizing tasks and materials, beginning or completing tasks, or completing tasks in the allotted time period.

While intervention may be helpful to students who are struggling, some may continue to experience difficulty, which may lead to frustration for both students and their parents. When struggle is initially noted or persisting, psychoeducational evaluation may provide a greater

understanding of your child's strengths and weaknesses, as well as information to help the child achieve academic success.

For Foreign Service families, in particular, such evaluations may help identify academic intervention and accommodations that may be necessary for children entering or continuing on in American and international schools, as well as transitioning from one school to the other or progressing on in their education to pursue a college degree.

What Is a Psychoeducational Assessment?

Psychoeducational assessment, or evaluation, is a process by which a trained professional works with those involved in your child's learning or development to identify your child's strengths and weaknesses. The goal of evaluation is to assist everyone in understanding how to help your child be as successful as possible.

While much of the psychoeducational evaluation remains the same over time, some changes have occurred in the past 10 years. As with any kind of evaluation, measures are routinely being updated to reflect current abilities, educational experiences, and diversity of the populations that the measures assess.



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In an effort to normalize the testing experience, it is helpful to let your child know that many children undergo testing to see how they learn best.

Technology has played an important role in the administration of testing measures. Many measures, including questionnaires, are now administered electronically. Many measures are also now scored electronically. While the increased reliance on technology for the administration and scoring of evaluation materials is beneficial in providing

faster results to students and their parents, some argue that with the increased reliance on technology for scoring and reporting results comes increased neglect of assessing how those scores were attained.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way many people live their lives, it has also changed the way in

which psychological services are provided. As remote therapy increased as a result of the act of distancing to reduce the spread of COVID, some evaluators also began evaluating children remotely. The benefit of remote evaluations is that they allow students who may not live near evaluators to have the ability to work with evaluators. The drawback of remote evaluations, as argued by some professionals, is that the environment is less controlled when a child completes the evaluation at home instead of in the office setting. For example, internet connection issues may impact test administration, and increased distractors at home may impact a child's attention to the testing situation.

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How Can a Psychoeducational Evaluation Be Helpful?

Consistent with 10 years ago, psychoeducational evaluation can help to answer many questions regarding your child, their learning, and their overall functioning. These questions include:

- What kind of learner is my child?
- Why is my child struggling in one subject but not others?
- Why does my child cry at the thought of school or doing homework?
- Why have my child's grades declined?
- Why do I have to repeat myself over and over to get my child to do something?

- Why is my child struggling to make friends?
- Why is my child misbehaving in class?
- Why is my child so nervous?
- Why does my child seem to be more emotional than their peers?
- Why does my child appear lazy and disinterested when I know they are not?
- What does my child need to help them become a happier and more successful student?
- Why is my college student struggling with the demands that are placed on them?

While evaluators may differ in what they include in an evaluation, psychoeducational evaluations often continue

to involve six areas of questioning/evaluation.

1. Background information and developmental history. To gain a comprehensive picture of your child, it will be important for the evaluator to have a full understanding of your child's development prior to the evaluation. Areas of inquiry may include your child's birth history, developmental history, medical history, academic history, social/emotional history, and family history.

While some parents believe that a "clean slate" approach to testing will lead to an unbiased assessment of their child, this is often not beneficial to the evaluator or to your child. Rather, your child's developmental history is valuable to the evaluator in determining a



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Prior to the evaluation, begin recording any concerns or thoughts that you have to share with the evaluator.

diagnostic formulation and planning appropriate intervention for your child.

2. Assessment of abilities (cognitive functioning). When assessing a child's abilities, the examiner administers a series of measures to determine how your child learns, as well as their ability to process information and formulate responses. These measures often include both verbal and visual tests to examine verbal reasoning, nonverbal reasoning, certain types of memory, and the speed

at which your child processes information and formulates responses.

In addition to the scores that these measures provide, examiners also gain a great deal of information from how your child approaches and solves problems. Do they work "at their own pace," completing a task to the best of their ability? Are they impulsive in their responses (answering without weighing all possible options)? Do they experience difficulty with complex directions and instruc-

tions? Do they become anxious when they know they are being timed? Do they become overwhelmed when they perceive the task to be too great for them to accomplish? These are just a few of the questions that assessment of abilities will help to answer.

3. Assessment of processing. While cognitive assessment is often a thorough process and helps determine strengths and weaknesses that your child possesses, there are other measures that also help provide answers to your child's learning profile. These other measures include speech and language processing, auditory processing, other types of memory not measured in the cognitive evaluation, and visual-motor processing.

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4. Assessment of academic functioning. Achievement, or academic, assessment is completed to assist in understanding your child's academic strengths and weaknesses. Measures often include tasks of reading, writing, spelling, and mathematics. They assess general academic skill and, in many instances, assess concepts such as academic fluency and efficiency.

5. Assessment of attention/executive functioning. In the past 10 years, there has been an increase in examining the impact of attention and executive functioning on a child's functioning. Executive functioning includes a set of mental abilities that include working memory, flexible thinking, organization, and self-control. To assess attention and executive functioning, your child may complete several measures, and you may be asked to complete several questionnaires.

6. Assessment of social/emotional functioning. In recent years, increased attention has been paid to the impact of emotional functioning on the learning process. While positive emotions have been associated with optimal academic performance, negative emotions can contribute to increased inattention, frustration, and demoralization in the classroom.

Therefore, while a traditional psychoeducational evaluation may only examine a child's cognitive and academic functioning, an assessment of emotional functioning is often crucial in determining factors that are affecting performance.

For younger children, social/emotional functioning is often assessed through parent questionnaires and some basic questionnaires. As children get older, they may also complete questionnaires assessing how they feel, and may also be administered measures to see how they cope and view social relationships.



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School	Page Number	Enrollment	Gender Distribution M/F	Percent Boarding	Percent Int'l.	Levels Offered	AP/IB*	Standard Application Online (SAO)	Accept ADD/LD**	Miles to Int'l. Airport	International Students Orientation	Holiday Break Coverage***	Annual Tuition, Room & Board (US \$)
■ ELEMENTARY/JUNIOR/SENIOR HIGH													
Fairfax Christian School	88	330	50/50	15	20	PK-12	AP	N	Limited	3	Y	Y	60,100-68,150 ^{abdeg}
Garrison Forest School	83	560	All Girls	30	14	PK-12	AP	N	Limited	20	Y	NA	67,765-73,705 ^b
Ojai Valley School	90	321	170/151	24	10	PK-12	AP	Y	Y	84	Y	Y	67,800 ^{bd}
Rochambeau The French International School	89	1180	45/55	NA	30	PK-12	AP/IB	N	Limited	15	Y	N	24,750-29,865 ^{ab}
■ JUNIOR HIGH/SENIOR HIGH													
New England Innovation Academy	91	110	60/40	30	31	6-12	NA	Y	Limited	38	N	Limited	68,856 ^{be}
■ SENIOR HIGH													
Christchurch School	93	230	60/40	70	30	9-12	AP	Y	Y	50	Y	Y	61,800 ^d
EF Academy New York	77	250	40/60	98	90	9-12	AP/IB	N	Y	40.5	Y	N	42,000-69,500 ^a
EF Academy Pasadena	77	250	54/46	85	75	9-12	AP	N	Y	32	Y	N	42,000-69,500
Fountain Valley School	80	240	50/50	70	25	9-12	AP	Y	Limited	80	Y	Limited	69,950 ^b
George School	74	534	46/54	47	27	9-12	AP/IB	Y	Limited	36	Y	Limited	73,100 ^b
Kents Hill School	82	220	51/49	70	34	9-12, PG	AP/IB	Y	Y	65	Y	Limited	66,675 ^{abcd}
Marvelwood School	83	120	50/50	80	15	9-12, PG	AP	N	Y	55	Y	Limited	64,700 ^{abce}
South Kent School	76	150	All Boys	95	35	9-12, PG	NA	Y	Y	60	N	N	62,900 ^{def}
St. Andrew's School	86	320	50/50	100	11	9-12	NA	Y	Limited	49	Y	Limited	66,400 ^{df}
St. Mark's School	79	375	51/49	75	27	9-12	NA	Y	NA	29	N	Limited	72,930 ^{bf}
Westover School	87	180	All Girls	60	30	9-12	AP	N	Limited	50	Y	Limited	71,800 ^b
■ OVERSEAS													
American Overseas School of Rome	88	593	50/50	NA	70	PK-12	AP/IB	N	N	20	Y	Y	11,900-27,600 ^{bc}
Berlin Brandenburg International School	79	882	50/50	10	70	K-12	IB	N	Y	22	Y	N	48,000 ^c
Carlucci American International School of Lisbon	78	650	48/52	NA	78	PK-12	IB	N	Limited	18	Y	N	10,490-22,232 ^{abc}
EF Academy Oxford	77	125	42/58	100	100	11-12	IB	N	Limited	43	Y	N	60,000
Frankfurt International School	81	1800	50/50	NA	80	K-12	IB	N	Limited	12	Y	N	11,744-29,608 ^{bc}
Leysin American School in Switzerland	77	310	50/50	100	85	7-12, PG	AP/IB	N	Limited	75	Y	N	120,000 ^{abd}
St. Stephen's School – Rome	81	300	47/53	20	64	9-12, PG	IB	N	N	12	Y	N	46,180 ^b

*Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate **Attention Deficit Disorder/Learning Disabilities ***Dec. 25-Jan. 1 NA, Not applicable

^aSibling discount ^bFinancial aid available ^cDollar value subject to exchange rate

^dAid for federal employees ^eGap year ^fNeed-blind admissions; will meet full financial need ^gHost families



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■ OVERSEAS (CON'T)													
TASIS The American School in England	87	650	50/50	30	41	PK-12	AP/IB	N	Limited	8	Y	N	68,000 ^{bcd}
Woodstock School	89	492	50/50	100	50	6-12	AP/IB	N	Limited	150	Y	N	21,000-26,000
■ SPECIAL NEEDS													
Gow School, The	80	130	70/30	90	10	6-12, PG	NA	N	Y	25	N	Limited	80,000 ^b
■ DISTANCE LEARNING													
Hemispheres Academy	89	24	50/50	N/A	100	2-12	AP	N	Y	NA	Y	NA	10,297-12,797 ^{de}
Lab School Global Division	85	30	50/50	NA	6	3-8	NA	N	Y	NA	Y	NA	20,000-26,500 ^b
■ OTHER													
DACOR	92	DACOR Bacon House Foundation offers Dreyfus Scholarships to children and grandchildren of FSOs attending Yale or Hotchkiss. Contact dacor@dacorbacon.org or go to www.dacorbacon.org/scholarships_fellowships .											
GCLC	81	Global Community Liaison Office: Information and resources for Foreign Service families. Contact GCLCAskEducation@state.gov .											
FSYF	92	Foreign Service Youth Foundation: A support network for U.S. Foreign Service youth worldwide. Go to www.fsyf.org .											
*Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate **Attention Deficit Disorder/Learning Disabilities ***Dec. 25-Jan. 1 NA, Not applicable ^a Sibling discount ^b Financial aid available ^c Dollar value subject to exchange rate ^d Aid for federal employees ^e Gap year ^f Need-blind admissions; will meet full financial need ^g Host families													

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Prior to the evaluation, begin recording any concerns or thoughts that you have to share with the evaluator.

Questions for a Potential Evaluator

When speaking with a professional, ask the following questions:

- *What is your experience assessing students this age?*
- *What is the cost of the evaluation?*
- *Will you be conducting the evaluation?* (While many professionals still carry out their own evaluations, others rely on a psychological technician, assistant, or student to complete

the evaluation. If someone other than the professional completes the evaluation, it will be important for parents to assess how much interaction the professional will have with their child and who will interpret the findings and write the report.)

- *How will the evaluation be conducted?* (Will the evaluation be conducted in person or remotely? Are the measures administered by the evaluator or by a computer?)

- *Do you participate in insurance?* (Some evaluators fully participate in insurance, some are out-of-network providers and will complete paperwork to help you try to obtain reimbursement, and others do nothing with insurance.)
- *How much time will be spent on the evaluation of my child, and what is your rationale for spending that amount of time?* (Some evaluators spend several hours, while others spend several days.)
- *What is included in the evaluation?*
- *What will I be doing during the evaluation?* (Most often, parents will wait in the waiting room while their child and the evaluator are working.)

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- *How long will it take to have completed results and a completed report?*
- *Will I receive a copy of the report?* (Some evaluators have an additional charge for a completed evaluation report.)
- *What will be included in the report?* (Some reports will be a simple review of evaluation results, while others will be a review of results and include recommendations based on those results.)

What to Expect on Evaluation Day

The amount of time that an evaluator spends with a child varies from one occasion for several hours to multiple

occasions for shorter periods of time. During the evaluation process, parents are often not present in the testing room as the evaluator and child work together. If you are planning on staying during the evaluation time, bring something to keep you occupied, as you will likely be waiting for several hours.


Your child may take breaks, so ask if they are allowed to bring a snack or if snacks will be offered to them. If snacks are provided, be sure to inform the evaluator if your child has any food allergies.

To help your child perform to their true potential, here are several suggestions.

1. Prepare your child for the testing experience. In an effort to normalize the testing experience, it is helpful to

let your child know that many children undergo testing to see how they learn best. For younger children, avoid telling the child that they will be playing games, because this expectation can lead to disappointment when discovering that they will not be playing the kinds of games that they are accustomed to. Also, the title “doctor” often brings about thoughts of needles in younger children; telling your child that they will be working with their own teacher or tutor for the day may be more settling.

With high school and college students, inform them of the process and encourage them to be involved. The more involved they are in the process, the more older students “buy into” the evaluation process.



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Feedback is one of the most important aspects of the evaluation.

2. Prepare yourself for the testing experience. Prior to the evaluation, begin collecting documents that may be helpful to the evaluator. Items such as report cards, progress reports, and previous standardized testing results will be helpful. Also, the evaluator may ask you to complete some forms and questionnaires prior to the evaluation. Given that some of these forms take a considerable amount of time, plan ahead and attempt to have the forms completed before the examination.

In addition to collecting documents, collect your thoughts. Prior to the evaluation, begin recording any concerns or thoughts that you have to share with the evaluator. This will help avoid forgetting important information when you meet with the evaluator.

3. Know everyone's schedule when making the appointment. While it may be convenient, refrain from scheduling evaluation appointments during "special days" at school. For example, while your child may not miss academic content if the evaluation is scheduled on a school day, if the evaluation is scheduled when the class has an all-day field trip, the child may be more resistant to the evaluation. Also, if one parent is out of town or has a medical procedure planned on the same day, these kinds of events can also be disruptive to the child.

4. Have your child well rested for the evaluation. Parents should refrain from allowing their children to participate in activities such as sleepovers prior to the evaluation, and evaluations shouldn't be scheduled on the day your family or your child returns from an out-of-town experience. For example, the

day after returning from summer camp may not be the best day to complete an evaluation. Instead, have your child wait a day and rest prior to the evaluation.

5. Have your child well fed and hydrated. A good breakfast and plenty to drink prior to the evaluation is beneficial. Ask the evaluator if your child can bring a snack and beverage on the day of the evaluation, as well. Some children do well when they get to have a snack at break time.

After the Evaluation

Feedback is one of the most important aspects of the evaluation. It provides an opportunity to not only hear the results of the evaluation but to ask questions. Ask any and every question that you may have, and bring something to record notes. If it makes you more comfortable, ask another family member to be present at the feedback session to make sure you understand all of the information that is given to you.

Depending on the age of your child, there may be a child feedback session, as well. By the time children are in middle school, they are often curious regarding their performance. In addition, they may benefit from hearing that they are capable students but that they may require accommodations, different study strategies, or certain interventions to help them be as successful as possible.

When you receive the written report, read through the report several times before sharing it with the school or with other professionals. This allows you to know exactly what information the school is seeing, as well as allowing you



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In recent years, increased attention has been paid to the impact of emotional functioning on the learning process.

to contact the evaluator if there is any misinformation included in the report.

While some parents are concerned with the “labels” that sharing the evaluation may evoke, the information and diagnoses provided in reports are often useful for guiding services and accommodations in the school and with other professionals, such as tutors. This information can also assist in providing the diagnoses necessary to receive school interventions or accommodations.

Given the trend toward reliance on technology for the administration and scoring of evaluation measures, it is likely that technology will continue to play a large role in the evaluation process. In addition, as research continues to examine academic specifics, it is likely that evaluation of specific reading and mathematics concepts will be further assessed to better understand a child’s areas of academic strength and weakness.



If a psychoeducational evaluation may be of interest to you, begin acting now, as many evaluators are booked in advance. Begin asking around for evaluators. Friends, teachers, and pediatricians may all be able to share their experiences with certain professionals. Begin calling those professionals with any questions, and to see if you are comfortable with that person, as well as whether or not your child would be comfortable with the evaluator.

While the psychoeducational evaluation journey may initially seem overwhelming, the information that you gain can be invaluable. I wish you luck in your journey! ■



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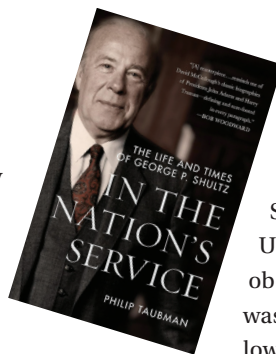
REVIEWED BY JOSEPH L. NOVAK

Few Americans made a mark in so many fields as George P. Shultz. A U.S. Marine who saw combat in World War II, he reached the highest rungs of academia and multinational business, later serving with distinction as labor secretary, budget director, and treasury secretary. His tenure as the 60th Secretary of State from 1982 to 1989 was particularly noteworthy, and he became a much-valued elder statesman.

Philip Taubman's *In the Nation's Service* masterfully explores all the facets of his subject's illustrious career and explains their context. Taubman, a former reporter and editor at *The New York Times*, got to know the then Secretary of State in the 1980s. Shultz asked Taubman, while both were based at Stanford University in 2010, if he would write his biography.

In the Nation's Service makes the case that Shultz has not accrued enough credit for his numerous accomplishments. With respect to U.S. engagement in the unwinding of the Cold War, for instance, the author contends that most observers have focused on the contributions of Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, and the latter's Secretary of State, James A. Baker III. Shultz received less attention—his critical role obscured, at least in part, by his unassuming manner, which “shunned the limelight.”

Seeking to amend the historical record, Taubman convincingly argues that Shultz was one of the most influential Americans of the late 20th century. He cites Henry Kissinger, who said, “If I could choose one American to whom I would entrust the nation's fate in a crisis, it would be George Shultz.” Taubman himself adds: “Across the decades, he served as a model of sensible, nonpartisan leadership, free of rancor and rage.”



Shultz was a vigorous supporter of the Foreign Service. He relied on its top-notch talent while at Foggy Bottom.

When Shultz agreed to take the position at State in 1982, U.S. foreign policy was in disarray. Alexander Haig, the previous Secretary, was erratic and did not get along with Reagan's inner circle. Taubman skillfully details how Secretary Shultz took charge, streamlined the policymaking process, and eventually gained Reagan's confidence. He ran into a buzz saw of interagency infighting, however, and struggled through the Iran-Contra scandal.

Taubman devotes a considerable portion of his narrative to Shultz's leadership in establishing a constructive relationship with the Soviet Union. Unable to gain traction at first, he swiftly gauged that Mikhail Gorbachev, the new Soviet leader, was “capable of moving relations to a new plane.” His views mirrored those of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who memorably proclaimed: “I like Mr. Gorbachev. We can do business together.”

In his dealings with the Kremlin, Shultz found an exemplary interlocutor in Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, Gorbachev's close ally. Unlike Andrei Gromyko, his dour and obdurate predecessor, Shevardnadze was affable and willing to engage. Following Shultz's inaugural round of talks with his new counterpart in 1985, an American official enthused: “We're in a whole new ball game!”

Despite occasional crises, Shultz was successful in keeping the U.S. agenda on track. Gorbachev's bounding out of his limousine in downtown Washington to

greet a crowd in 1987 and Reagan's visit to Moscow's Red Square in 1988 are unforgettable snapshots from this era. Shultz's memoir, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (1993), is a valuable resource on the positive trajectory of superpower ties in the 1980s, especially in regard to the intricacies of the arms control negotiations.

Many years have passed since those halcyon days. Cold War-like tensions have returned with a vengeance due to Russian President Vladimir Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Shultz was never starry-eyed about Russia, and he recognized Putin's expansionist agenda early on. Taubman is no doubt correct that Shultz, had he lived, would have “supported American and NATO efforts to provide Ukraine with conventional arms to defend itself against Russian aggression.”

In the Nation's Service deftly weaves in descriptions of Shultz's leadership and management style. As a pragmatist, he did not want to debate principles but wanted to solve problems. His cardinal rule: "Trust is the coin of the realm." He worked hard to build rapport and consensus. He placed a priority on policy planning, carving out space in his schedule to think about "the big picture" and organizing "Saturday-morning seminars ... with government and academic experts."

After exiting the State Department, Shultz remained in perpetual motion. Taubman's prior book, *The Partnership: Five Cold Warriors and Their Quest to Ban the Bomb* (2012), chronicled Shultz's participation in a coordinated campaign to abolish nuclear weapons. He also spoke out about the risks posed by climate change. In 2020, at age 99, he wrote an article in the *FSJ* titled "On Trust," which called for a renewed emphasis on diplomacy. He died the next year, a centenarian.

Shultz was a vigorous supporter of the Foreign Service. He relied on its top-notch talent while at Foggy Bottom, and *In the Nation's Service* is replete with references to the many career luminaries he worked with. Taubman, in fact, extensively uses a journal kept by Raymond Seitz, Shultz's first executive assistant, to document the initial period of his time at the State Department.

It's worth noting that Taubman's claim that Shultz has not been accorded the respect he deserves manifestly does not apply to the foreign affairs community, where he collected many accolades. In recognition of his legacy of service, for example, the National Foreign Affairs Training Center was renamed in his honor in 2002, and the American Foreign Service Association

awarded him its Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award in 2003.

Outstanding biographies of former Secretaries of State include Walter Isaacson's on Kissinger (1992), James Chace's on Dean Acheson (1998), and Peter Baker and Susan Glasser's on James Baker (2020). *In the Nation's Service* joins this exclusive list. Anyone seeking a riveting account of how diplomacy

can affect the arc of history need look no further than Taubman's gem of a biography.

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 was a Foreign Service officer for 30 years.

Diplomacy as a Lab Experiment

Delegated Diplomacy: How Ambassadors Establish Trust in International Relations

David Lindsey, Columbia University Press, 2023, \$35.00/paperback, e-book available, 376 pages.

REVIEWED BY DENNIS COLEMAN JETT

Delegated Diplomacy is an interesting book, but not for the reasons one might think. It provides almost no useful information about how diplomats function, but it does offer some insights into how academics operate.

Anyone who has been in the Foreign Service for more than a week will not learn anything about diplomacy from this book. But they are not the intended audience. The author, David Lindsey, teaches at Baruch College. Professors don't write books for general audiences or for practitioners.

They write two types of books. The first type widely covers the basics of an academic discipline. The hope is the tome will be adopted as required reading for courses on the subject, forcing students to buy obscenely overpriced books put out by academic publishers.

The second type is written to impress other academics, since the opinion of their peers determines whether professors advance and secure tenure. These books require grand theories and sufficient number crunching, formulas, and jargon to make them incomprehensible to anyone besides other specialists in the field.

The approach for the second type stems from a desire to make social science as data driven and conforming to general rules as the physical sciences. The problem is that with human interactions—as opposed to, say, an electron colliding with an atom—it is impossible to accurately measure the variables that come into play or even be aware of them all.

The result of attempting to reduce diplomacy to something akin to a lab experiment is a book like *Delegated Diplomacy*.

Lindsey describes the practice of diplomacy like an anthropologist would explain some exotic, distant culture. He looks for evidence to provide data to explain the intricacies of diplomacy, but the information used cannot really be interpreted in that way. Despite a prodigious effort, the book therefore arrives at conclusions that lie somewhere between obvious and doubtful.

For instance, Lindsey examines the volumes of the State Department publication *Foreign Relations of the United*

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States for the presidencies from Dwight Eisenhower to Gerald Ford and looks at the 37,133 biographic entries for the diplomats who are mentioned. He also examines the words used in the Presidential Daily Briefs for the Nixon and Ford administrations.

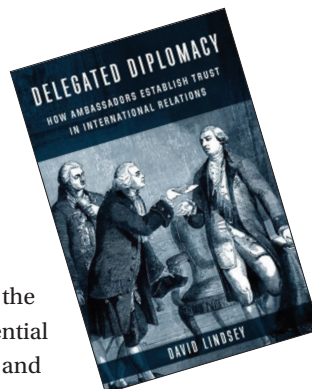
Based on this information, he concludes that “senior diplomats are responsible for nearly all consequential diplomatic activities” and “the main role they play is as intermediaries in intergovernmental communication.” That is about as insightful as saying generals matter more than lieutenants and concern themselves largely with military matters.

Lindsey also has some curious thoughts about the character and effectiveness of diplomats. An English diplomat, Sir Henry Wotton, once observed that “an ambassador is an honest gentleman sent to lie abroad for the good of his country.” Lindsey appears to belong with those who believe nothing has changed since that remark was made 419 years ago.

He goes on at length about whether an “honest” diplomat is more effective than one who is not, though he never clearly defines the term or explains what it means in a diplomatic context. Does he think diplomats are personally dishonest or that they lie because they want to hide the true intentions of their country?

Reflecting the former, he throws in comments like this: “There are many noncriminal ways to use diplomatic or consular office in the pursuit of personal ends. Diplomats have widespread latitude in many administrative aspects of their work and can use this as they see fit.”

At another point in the book, he asserts that “diplomats rarely have reputations for



honesty” and that for a government “choosing an honest diplomat represents a trade-off”

As far as effectiveness, Lindsey believes the key is for an ambassador to be sympathetic to the views of the other country. So much so that

he suggests that “a diplomat loyally serves the national interest by being less than entirely loyal to it.” In this way, the diplomat will supposedly build trust and credibility that will help overcome any bilateral difficulties.

In addition to using massive amounts of data, Lindsey also cites several case studies to support his theories on how diplomacy works. None of them are particularly convincing for establishing the broad insights for which he searches. He makes no distinctions between career and political appointee ambassadors or between types of countries, governments, or leaders, perhaps assuming that being a diplomat in Cuba is the same as being one in Canada.

In the end, Lindsey does come to two very sound, if obvious, conclusions. First, he decides that “it matters who becomes a diplomat.” And second, he observes that “leaders can achieve success and promote international cooperation by choosing the right people.” Anyone who reads *The Foreign Service Journal* does not need a 376-page book to help them realize that.

Dennis Coleman Jett served as U.S. ambassador to Peru and Mozambique and in Argentina, Israel, Malawi, and Liberia during his 28-year Foreign Service career. He is a professor of international affairs at Penn State University and is the author of American Ambassadors: A Guide for Aspiring Diplomats and Foreign Service Officers (2nd ed., 2022). ■

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Ever Heard of the U.S. Naval Sea Cadets?

BY NATALIE AUCOIN

Sponsored by the U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard, Sea Cadets is a youth program focused on developing leaders of character among 13- to 18-year-olds (there is also League Cadets for children ages 10-13). I am in the Alexandria, Virginia, division, one of hundreds of divisions around the country. Once every month on a weekend, we meet and participate in many fun volunteer activities, travel to different military sites, such as Norfolk Naval Station, and learn about the U.S. military. We also go on a camping trip in the fall.

Having grown up overseas, with the majority of time in Africa, I came back to the U.S. with the desire to do something beyond what I had done overseas. I wanted the opportunity to be part of a program that could offer unique experiences, allow me to make lifelong friends, and really help define what I wanted to do in life. Over the last year, Sea Cadets has provided these things, but this summer was especially special.

I had just completed Recruit Training at Lake Frederick in Highland Mills, New York, at the United States Military Academy at West Point. The feeling of

Sea Cadets helps teenagers find out what they want to do after high school and, most important, make everlasting friendships.

accomplishment that went through me when I graduated is indescribable; completing nine days of intense training was a big step for me, a 14-year-old, as it is similar to basic military training. Although Recruit Training was hard and challenged me, I felt a sense of relief and pride upon getting through it.

But why would someone want to go through Recruit Training and not just jump into the fun stuff? To take interesting advanced trainings (think medicine, aviation, field operations, culinary, sailing, diving, STEM, and much more), a cadet must take Recruit Training. The advanced trainings are offered only to someone who is part of the Sea Cadets program, meets the age requirement, and has successfully completed Recruit Training.

Completing Recruit Training is the first step in advancing in rank. For

example, during Recruit Training, I took the CPR course, and now I will try to take basic medicine in December and a leadership course in the spring, even if it requires me to travel.

Held in the spring, summer, and winter, trainings vary in lengths and topics. They are found all over the country, not just in one specific location. Sea Cadets even offers international exchange programs around the world, such as in the U.K., Australia, and New Zealand.

So why Sea Cadets? Sea Cadets is a great program to help teenagers build leadership skills and explore multiple career fields that are of interest. It is also an opportunity to find out if the military is for you, and if you really want to be part of it, before you must make the decision when applying for college. Overall, Sea Cadets helps teenagers find out what they want to do after high school and, most important, make everlasting friendships.

To join Sea Cadets, visit their website at www.seacadets.org. Find the division that interests you (I highly recommend the Alexandria division if you're in the District of Columbia-Maryland-Virginia region). It will help you get started. I have only been in the program for about a year and am loving it every day I show up. ■



Natalie Aucoin is the daughter of Civil Service officer Ursula Iszler and Foreign Service officer Jimmey Aucoin and a rising 9th grade student at Langley High School in Virginia. She is a junior tennis coach at the Great Falls Swim and Tennis Club, where she previously volunteered for two years. She won the Virginia Readers' Choice Award twice and was selected as one

of the main characters for the school play "Mission Possible." Prior to coming back to the U.S., Natalie lived in Germany, Bolivia, Rwanda, and Trinidad and Tobago. This article was cleared by the U.S. Sea Cadets Alexandria Division.

LOCAL LENS



This photo taken in January 2023 shows four “Muskoka” chairs, Canada’s name for Adirondack chairs, at the edge of Lake Ontario in Toronto after a heavy snow. Throughout the pandemic, wintry runs were one way many Torontonians tried to stay healthy while living in small apartments downtown. This spot is a particular favorite because it is full of wildlife throughout the year, with loons and even snowy owls living peacefully during winter. ■

Martin Claessens is a commercial officer who finished his assignment in Toronto in the summer of 2023. He has served in Mumbai, Bogotá, Kyiv, and Toronto, and is moving to Santiago in 2024. He enjoyed jogging and cycling on the many lakefront and riverside trails in the Toronto region. This photo was taken with a Google Pixel 6a.

Please submit your favorite, recent photograph to be considered for Local Lens. Images must be high resolution (at least 300 dpi at 8” x 10”, or 1 MB or larger) and must not be in print elsewhere. Include a short description of the scene/event, as well as your name, brief biodata, and the type of camera used. Send to localens@afsa.org.

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This is a summary of the features of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Service Benefit Plan. Before making a final decision, please read the Plan's Federal brochures (FEP Blue Standard and FEP Blue Basic: RI 71-005; FEP Blue Focus: RI 71-017). All benefits are subject to the definitions, limitations and exclusions set forth in the Federal brochures.

Open Season is November 13 – December 11