

THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

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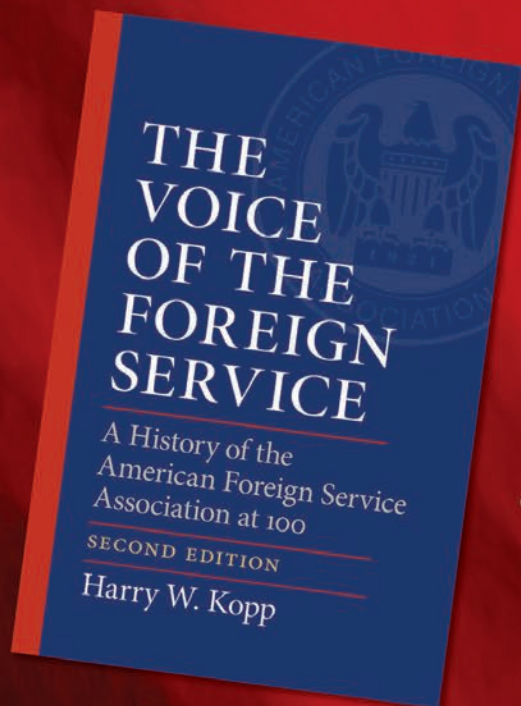


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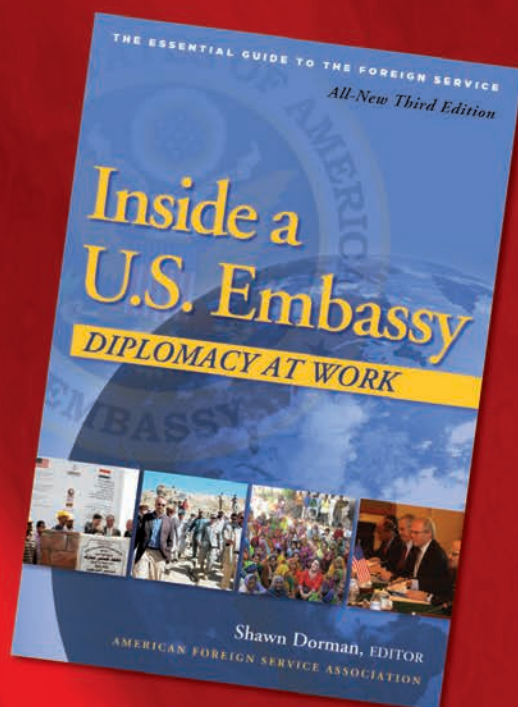
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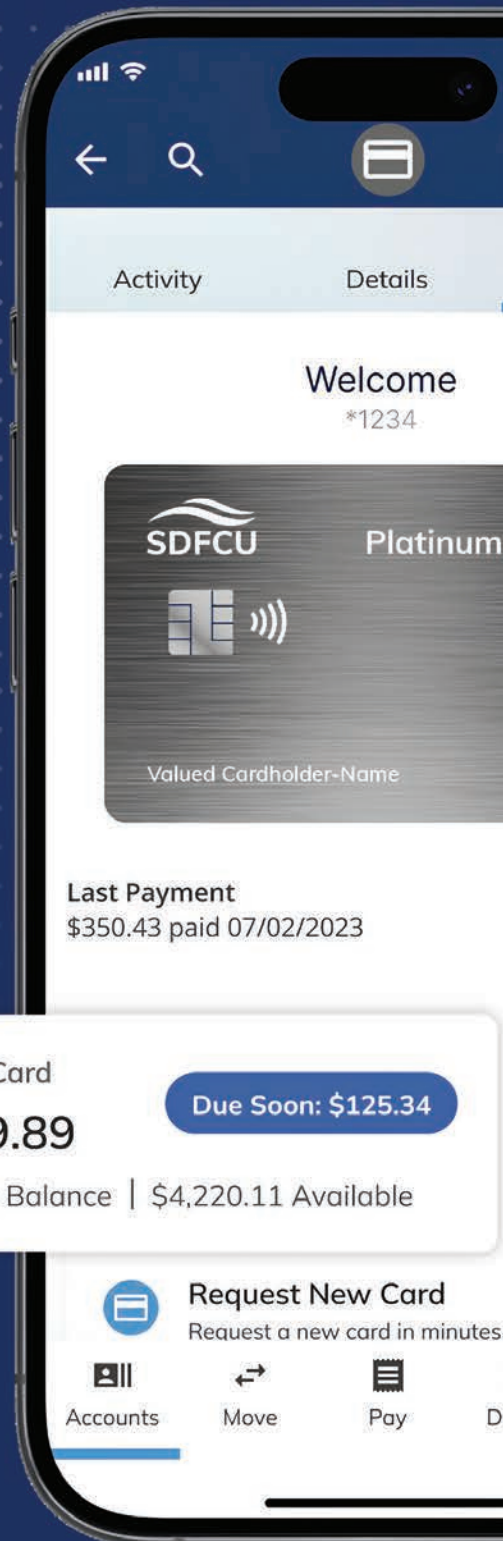
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THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

December 2024 Volume 101, No. 10



Focus on AFSA Awards: Honoring Excellence and Constructive Dissent

22

2024 Award for Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy

A Conversation with Ambassador
Marc Grossman

38

2024 Awards for Exemplary Performance

50

Foreign Service Champions Award



32

2024 Awards for Constructive Dissent



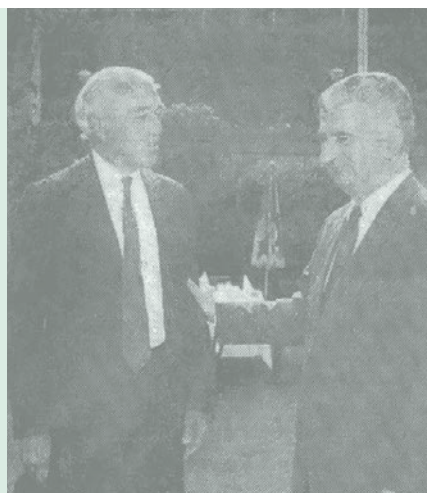
Feature

52

Social Entrepreneurship and the Professional Diplomat

The scope has increased for “Track II” diplomacy—work to which former members of the Foreign Service are generally well suited.

By John Marks



Education Supplement

69

Navigating the Foreign Service Educational Landscape

Learn about education resources available to Foreign Service families.

By Rebecca McPherson

74, 76

Education at a Glance

THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

Perspectives

7

President's Views

An Eventful Year Comes to a Close

By Tom Yazdgerdi

9

Letter from the Editor

What's Next?

By Shawn Dorman

18

Speaking Out

The Foreign Service at 100:
It's Time for Renewal

By George Krol

92

Reflections

Mighty Oaks from
Little Acorns Grow

By Jonathan B. Rickert

94

Local Lens

Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania

By Nathan Tidwell



Departments

10 Letters

12 Talking Points

85 Books

Marketplace

88 Real Estate

90 Classifieds

91 Index to Advertisers

AFSA NEWS

THE OFFICIAL RECORD OF THE
AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

- 57 AFSA Awards Honor Excellence and Constructive Dissent
- 58 State VP Voice—Consensus Building Creates Effective Teams
- 59 USAID VP Voice—AFSA Wins Grievance
- 60 FCS VP Voice—Some Things to Celebrate
- 61 FAS VP Voice—Explain Yourself
- 65 AFSA President's Outreach in California
- 66 AFSA Governing Board Meeting, Sept. 18, 2024
- 66 Foreign Service Night at Nationals Park
- 67 Foreign Policy at Chautauqua
- 67 AFSA Welcomes USAID and State Cohorts
- 68 AFSA Good Works—Member Engagement



Cover art—2024 AFSA award recipients at the State Department, Oct. 16, 2024. Top row, from left: Konrad Turski, Cornell Overfield, Amb. Laura Dogu, David Houston, Christophe J. Paccard, Mark Delavan Harrop, Paul Estrada, and Amb. Marc Grossman. Bottom row, from left: Mark Wilson, Emily Green, Sherri Zimmermann, Harry Kopp, Mariya Ilyas, Patricia Scroggs, and Tom Yazdgerdi. Recipients not pictured: Michael Casey, Anne Martin-Montgomery, Dana Sutcliffe, Diana Trinh, Caryl Tuma, and Dinah Zeltser-Winant (AFSA/Joaquin Sosa).

An Eventful Year Comes to a Close

BY TOM YAZDGERDI

The centennial year of the U.S. Foreign Service and AFSA is drawing to a close, and I want to thank all our members who leveraged this milestone to advocate for a strong and appropriately funded Foreign Service.

Through your local newspapers, world affairs councils, and retiree associations; by speaking to students about Foreign Service careers; and through many other activities, you helped get the word out about our proud Service and what it means for America's continued security and prosperity. Please continue to look for opportunities for outreach in 2025.

I also want to thank our great AFSA staff, who did so much to help mark this anniversary. This included creative ideas like the "100 Words for 100 Years" collection; our writing competition, which drew numerous terrific essays about the ideal Foreign Service of the future; a centennial "party-in-a-box" sent to 30 posts worldwide; and a centennial video about the Foreign Service, shown for the first time at our May 21 gala at the State Department, and on many occasions since. You can use the video for your own efforts to highlight what we do.

One of my favorite AFSA events is our annual awards ceremony, held this year on Oct. 16, to showcase the commitment, talent, and courage of our members. This year we honored Ambassador Marc Gross-



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

man with AFSA's Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award. It was given not only to recognize Marc's spectacular diplomatic career but also for what he's done since retiring, in particular his work on Foreign Service reform and involvement with the Senior Living Foundation. (See the interview and profiles of all the recipients beginning on page 22.)

Patricia Scroggs was only the third recipient of the new Foreign Service Champions Award, which honors influential members of the foreign affairs community who have made meaningful contributions to diplomacy and the Foreign Service. Through her work as director of diplomatic fellowships at Howard University from 2006 to 2024, she was instrumental in helping transform the workforce of the foreign affairs agencies. Patricia helped manage and expand the Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Program, the Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship, USAID's Donald M. Payne International Development Fellowship, and similar programs in the Foreign Agricultural Service and APHIS.

I was equally proud of all the members of the Foreign Service community who received awards for constructive dissent and outstanding performance. AFSA does not always have dissent winners who tackle the central foreign policy issues of the day, but this year both the entry- and mid-level awards dealt with the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Listening to the recipients' acceptance remarks, I was struck by their poise, commitment, and courage to constructively challenge the system on such a

difficult and complicated issue. And I was gratified that AFSA could provide them a platform to do just that. Congratulations to all the winners!

As we look ahead to a new administration, AFSA is ever mindful of the nonpartisan, professional nature of our Service. We serve as the institutional link between outgoing and incoming administrations and carry out the foreign policy of the duly elected president.

I am hopeful that the Foreign Service will be accorded respect and proper funding, and that internal, constructive dissent will continue to be prized as a means to arrive at the best outcomes possible.

Speaking of elections, AFSA has its own coming up—for the 2025-2027 Governing Board. There are both full-time and volunteer positions available. Look for the official call for nominations by AFSA-net on Jan. 15 and in the January-February *FSJ*. Candidates must file their intent to run by Feb. 14. Ballots will be distributed on March 31 and results announced on April 15.

I hope that both active-duty and retired members will consider serving our Foreign Service community by serving on the Governing Board. We would like to see as diverse a board as possible, including a mix of generalists and specialists. Please check out www.afsa.org/election for more information, and write to the elections committee at election@afsa.org.

As always, please let me know your thoughts at yazdgerdi@afsa.org or member@afsa.org. Wishing you all happy holidays! ■

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What's Next?

BY SHAWN DORMAN

As we go to press, we drop this final page into the December edition—our annual focus on constructive dissent and outstanding performance in the Foreign Service told through the stories of recipients of the yearly AFSA awards. It has been a remarkable year. The 2024 presidential election was just called for Donald Trump. The American people have spoken, and now we head into the transition.

The Foreign Service will, of course, remain engaged representing the U.S. to the world. The American Foreign Service Association will remain on the job representing you and supporting our professional, nonpartisan institution. And the *FSJ* will remain a place for your voices, as it has been for more than 100 years.

On the cusp of the next century of diplomatic service, let us gain inspiration from this year's excellent award recipients, from the venerable Marc Grossman, selected for the Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award; to Foreign Service Champion Patricia Hanigan Scroggs; to the constructive dissent award winners: Mike Casey, Emily Green, David Houston, Mariya Ilyas, Caryl Tuma, and Konrad Turski; and to those recognized for outstanding performance: Paul Estrada, Harry



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

Kopp, Anne Martin-Montgomery, Cornell Overfield, Christophe Paccard, Dana Sutcliffe, Diana Trinh, Mark Wilson, Dinah Zeltser-Winant, and Sherri Zimmermann.

During this centennial year for the Foreign Service and AFSA, in 10 editions of the *FSJ*, we have featured more than 100 of your voices, all contributing to the conversation about the past, present, and future of the Foreign Service and diplomacy. We heard from those who are in or have held critical high-level positions (Antony Blinken, Samantha Power, James Baker, Hillary Clinton, Julianne Smith, Nick Burns, to name a few), and many currently serving, making a difference on the ground in places like Ukraine, Palau, and Oman. Thank you to all who have engaged with the community through these pages.

Thank you to the hundreds who responded to our *FSJ* Reader Survey. We will report back on the results and adjust our coverage based on your input.

This month we present the Editorial Calendar of focus topics for 2025 (see box), and we invite you to consider writing for the *Journal* on one of these themes or on any other Foreign Service, diplomacy, or development issue.

Find details about the various *Journal* departments and how to submit an article, letter, or photo in the Author Guidelines at www.afsa.org/fsj-author-guidelines. We are always seeking submissions for Speaking Out, Reflections, Features, FS Know-How, FS Heritage, Off-Road with the FS, Local Lens, and Book

2025 FSJ Focus Topics

JANUARY-FEBRUARY:

A Professional Foreign Service for the Next Century

MARCH: Notes to the New Administration

APRIL: Vietnam: 50 Years After the Fall of Saigon

MAY: Global Health Diplomacy

JUNE: Spotlight on FS Fellowships

JULY-AUGUST: Economic Security and Subnational Diplomacy

SEPTEMBER: The U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy

OCTOBER: Changing Dynamics in the Middle East

NOVEMBER: FS Writing and Publishing (ITOW)

DECEMBER: Recognizing Constructive Dissent and Outstanding Performance

Reviews. Send your submissions, pitches, questions, and comments to journal@afsa.org.

And finally, a shout-out to this month's Local Lens contributor FSO Nathan Tidwell for taking the centennial *FSJ* along to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro. Not sure anyone can top that, but we invite you to try—snap a photo with the *FSJ* from a cool location and send it over to journal@afsa.org.

We welcome your responses to this edition and ideas for future articles as we prepare to kick off the next Foreign Service century in a few short weeks. Please consider writing for us in 2025. ■

Cherishing a Marine's Legacy

I reached out to *The Foreign Service Journal* to see if I could obtain a copy of an article published in the September 2011 edition, "Witness to Tragedy: A Reflection on the 10th Anniversary of 9/11," by Donna Ayerst.

This article was written about my uncle, U.S. Marine Jonathan D. Gross, who died in an accident while assigned to the U.S. embassy in Mozambique in 2001. I found it while talking about my uncle to my 7-year-old son, and I thought having a physical copy of the article in my family's possession would help cherish my uncle's legacy.

I have a difficult time putting into words just how significant finding this article was for me. I remember getting the news of my uncle's accident 23 years ago. I was a 16-year-old kid, listening to Jay-Z's "The Blueprint" album, walking home from school and into my grandmother's apartment, which was filled with military personnel.

My grandmother, my mom, my younger sister, and my aunt were all in tears as they told me, "There was an accident." My entire life changed from there on.

Reading that September 2011 *FSJ* article was a lot for me to process. My uncle was my hero, the person who taught me the life lessons I'm now teaching my son, Elijah. My wife and son have never seen me shed as many tears as I did while reading the article about my uncle.

This edition of the *Journal* sent me on a path to find out whether there was more about my uncle online. A 2017 *Washington Post* comment on his obituary led me to a social media conversation

with a friend my uncle had made while stationed in Mozambique.

I took time away from work to recharge and really process some of the family trauma I buried from the fallout of his death. I started grief counseling and made my first visit in 10 years to his gravesite at Arlington National Cemetery.

Receiving the September 2011 edition of the

FSJ helped me speak life into my uncle's legacy, to celebrate the U.S. Marine he was and the connections he built while in service. I now have a physical copy of the magazine as a memorial to one day pass along to my son. By honoring my uncle's values, holding on to his memory, I know his legacy can live through me and beyond.

Thank you for all the work you put into *The Foreign Service Journal*. The impact of your work is greatly appreciated. My words can't truly express the effect this story had on me—this was my first time ever sharing this in writing.

Christian Gross
Bowie, Maryland

Don't Forget New Caledonia

I read the October 2024 *FSJ* feature story, "Making our Rhetoric Real: U.S. Diplomacy in the Pacific Islands" by John Hennessey-Niland, with interest, hoping that it would make at least brief mention of the strategic island of New Caledonia and possible Chinese interest in its future.

An overseas French territory since 1853, New Caledonia holds 25 percent of the world's deposits of nickel, as well

as significant quantities of chromium, cobalt, iron, and magnesium. Since 1947, it has hosted the headquarters of the South Pacific Commission and its successor, the Pacific Community.

New Caledonia has suffered several periods of violent strife between French settlers and the indigenous Kanak population, most recently beginning in May 2024. China may be fishing in these troubled waters to expand its influence, especially since we maintain no presence other than occasional consular visits from our embassy in Fiji, more than 800 miles away.

We were not always absent. In anticipation of the outbreak of war with Japan, we opened a consulate in Nouméa in early 1941. From 1942 to 1945, New Caledonia was an important staging area in support of the Allies' conduct of the war, and upward of 50,000 American soldiers were present on the island at any given time. By some accounts, James Michener began writing his celebrated *Tales of the South Pacific* while there.

My father, Claude G. Ross, served as U.S. consul in Nouméa from 1949 to 1951, and it was there as a first and second grader in a French school

that I learned the French that served me so well in my own career with the Department of State and the United Nations. We closed the consulate in 1957, reportedly as part of a cost-cutting exercise.

I am convinced that our interests require an on-site presence as we work to protect the world's access to New Caledonian resources and counter Chinese influence. Twice, I have written to the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs



urging that we examine the pros and cons of reopening a consulate.

On May 9, I wrote Secretary Antony Blinken with the same request—just four days before the worst violence in decades erupted between extremist Kanaks and the settler population, and it is ongoing.

We need our own eyes and ears on the ground, but in the absence of a substantive response to my missives, I do not know whether my urgings have made any headway.

*Christopher Ross
Ambassador, retired
Washington, D.C.*

Remembering the MDBs

After a more than 40-year career at USAID and the World Bank, I welcomed the *FSJ* focus on foreign assistance in the October 2024 edition. I was struck, however, by the lack of reference to multilateral development banks (MDBs), the largest and most technically endowed institutions delivering long-term financial support, technical assistance, and training in emerging markets.

My surprise is compounded by the fact that the U.S. is often one of the largest shareholders in many of these critical development organizations.

Much of this disconnect stems from the fact that management of the U.S. relationship with the MDBs rests with the U.S. Treasury rather than USAID.

Nevertheless, I've seen firsthand how the development agencies from other major donors successfully collaborate, cooperate, and strategically influence the MDBs, while USAID often appears disengaged or uninterested.

USAID, and U.S. foreign assistance programs overall, would certainly benefit from a more strategic review of how they could more effectively cooperate and utilize these major financiers of development assistance.

*Joel Kolker
FSO, retired
Falls Church, Virginia*

The Best Recruiting Tool

Having skimmed the article "Foreign Service Proud: 100 Words for 100 Years" when it appeared in the May 2024 centennial edition of the *Journal*, I just now had a chance to read it more carefully and wanted to write to you immediately.

I think it is the best recruiting tool for the Foreign Service that I have seen in a long time! I wonder if you might publish it in pamphlet form and make it available to recruitment offices at State and the other Foreign Service agencies, including the Diplomat in Residence program.

The stories are truly inspiring and, for me at least, would be even more effective than our classic *Inside a U.S. Embassy* among the American students interested in diplomatic careers whom I have taught

over the years.

*Ken Moskowitz
Senior FSO, retired
Yokohama, Japan, and
Arlington, Virginia ■*



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about this month's issue.**

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State Hosts Global Music Diplomacy Program

As part of the State Department's Global Music Diplomacy Initiative in October, 13 international musicians and music professionals participated in the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), reinforcing music's role as a tool for diplomacy.

The initiative, launched by U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken in 2023, aims to promote peace and democracy through public-private partnerships to foster economic equity and expand the global creative economy.

Participants from Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, and Nigeria traveled to Washington, D.C., Detroit, Kansas City, and Los Angeles, where they engaged in workshops and collaborative sessions with American music professionals.

Discussions focused on preserving musical heritage, best practices in music management, and how music can promote social awareness, empower youth, and contribute to community development.

The Global Music Diplomacy Initiative complements other new programs, including the American Music Mentorship Program and the Fulbright-Kennedy Center Visiting Scholar Award in Arts and Science. At the 2023 launch event, music icon Quincy Jones received the inaugural Peace Through Music Award for his role in advancing cross-cultural understanding through music.

As part of the broader initiative, efforts such as Sing Out Loud aim to integrate music into English-language learning programs, further promoting U.S. cultural diplomacy.

The program aligns with the Biden administration's Promoting Peace, Education, and Cultural Exchange (PEACE) Through Music Diplomacy Act, which

Contemporary Quote

Last week I asked that President Biden withdraw my nomination as U.S. ambassador to Libya. This very difficult decision comes 32 months since the Department of State asked me to consider the position and initiated the vetting process, nine months since the Senate received my nomination, and only after the Senate recessed for the election last week having failed for six months to advance the now-26 career nominees out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

U.S. national security deserves better than this. There has been no U.S. ambassador in Libya for two years, ceding space to Russia and China who have actively sought to exploit our perceived absence and destabilize NATO's southern flank. I passionately believe in diplomacy as our best tool to counter such malign influences. It has been my privilege to spend 26 years fulfilling this calling. ...

It was the honor of my career to be nominated for this position.

—Senior FSO Jennifer Gavito in a LinkedIn post, October 2024.

supports the use of music in fostering international relationships and promoting shared values.

New Crop of Foreign Ambassadors in Washington

Washington's newest cohort of ambassadors represents a wide range of countries and backgrounds from India, the world's most populous nation, to Barbados, one of the smallest.

India's new envoy to the U.S., Ambassador Vinay Mohan Kwatra, brings 36 years of diplomatic experience, including a prior posting in Washington. Kwatra has served in numerous positions around the world, from director of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in Nepal to ambassador to France and UNESCO. He was also India's foreign secretary from 2022 to 2024.

Botswana's Mpho Churchill Mophuting, Colombia's Daniel García-Peña Jaramillo, and Ecuador's Cristian Espinosa

Cañizares are also among the new arrivals. García-Peña, a historian and journalist, is the son of a Colombian diplomat and has spent his career in both public service and journalism.

Three Nordic nations are represented by career diplomats Leena-Kaisa Mikkola of Finland, Svanhildur Hólm Valsdóttir of Iceland, and Anniken Huitfeldt of Norway. Mikkola and Huitfeldt bring extensive experience from various international postings, while Valsdóttir transitions from a long career in journalism and government advisory roles.

Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Sheikh of Pakistan was appointed while overseeing Pakistan's Special Investment Facilitation Council.

Panama's José Miguel Alemán Healy continues a family tradition—his father and brother both previously served as ambassadors in Washington.

Other newly accredited ambassadors include David Kipkorir Kiplagat Kerich of Kenya, Elita Kuzma of Latvia, and Ralf Heckner of Switzerland.

Gaza and Syria Case Studies at GW's Elliott School

On Oct. 15, the Middle East Policy Forum at The George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs met to discuss "State Department Dissent: Gaza and Syria as Case Studies."

Ambassador (ret.) William Roebuck and political scientist and former FSO Annelle Sheline, PhD, shared their experiences and reflections on dissenting against U.S. policies in the Middle East. Amb. Roebuck recounted his dissent during the 2019 Turkish invasion of Kurdish-held areas in Syria, where he was stationed as a senior U.S. adviser. Roebuck's memo, which was leaked to the media, expressed his opposition to the U.S. response to Türkiye's actions and highlighted the betrayal felt by Kurdish forces, who had been important U.S. allies in the fight against ISIS.

Roebuck said his dissent helped repair U.S.-Kurdish relations and raised international awareness of Türkiye's plans to depopulate Kurdish areas.

Sheline discussed her resignation from the State Department, in March 2024, in protest against U.S. support for Israeli military operations in Gaza. Having served in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor until her resignation, she voiced concerns about how unconditional U.S. support for Israel was damaging America's global reputation.

Sheline pointed to the internal dissent within the department, citing the resignation of her colleague, Josh Paul, as an early indicator of widespread discontent.

The event, moderated by Ambassador (ret.) Gordon Gray, included a Q&A session in which both speakers advised mid-level diplomats on how to balance personal values with career aspirations.

Roebuck and Sheline stressed the importance of being honest with oneself and knowing when to take a stand or leave if one's work conflicts with deeply held principles.

Pact for the Future at UN Summit

On Sept. 22, 2024, world leaders at the United Nations' Summit of the Future adopted the Pact for the Future, marking a pivotal moment in global diplomacy. This comprehensive agreement includes a Global Digital Compact and a Declaration on Future Generations, laying the foundation for modernized international cooperation designed to address current and future global challenges.



UN Secretary-General António Guterres emphasized the pact's transformative potential, stating: "We cannot create a future fit for our grandchildren with a system built by our grandparents."

The Pact for the Future introduces important changes, including the most significant push for UN Security Council reform since the 1960s. These reforms aim to improve the council's effectiveness and redress Africa's historical underrepresentation. It also marks the first multilateral commitment to nuclear disarmament in more than a decade.

On the digital front, the Global Digital Compact sets a global framework for artificial intelligence (AI) governance, focusing on connecting all people to

Podcast of the Month: The Lowy Institute's Conversations

This month's featured podcast, *Conversations*, is produced by the Lowy Institute, Australia's leading international policy think tank, and offers a deep dive into the complex and evolving world of international diplomacy and security.

In one of the highlighted episodes, "Hostage Diplomacy," the Lowy Institute's Sean Turnell—himself wrongfully imprisoned in Myanmar for two years—joins national security expert Lydia Khalil to explore the rise of hostage-taking by both state and nonstate actors.

This episode covers the devastating personal effects of hostage diplomacy, the geopolitical stakes, and what can be done to combat this growing threat. Another must-listen is the "South China Sea Series," in which Michael Mazarr from the RAND Corporation joins Susannah Patton, director of the Lowy Institute's Southeast Asia program, to examine U.S. strategy in the region.

With rising tensions between the United States and China, this episode sheds light on the complexities of the South China Sea disputes and explores how the U.S. can address China's growing influence and support its ally, the Philippines. Mazarr argues for strategic planning in the face of potential territorial gains by China, offering a nuanced look at U.S.-China relations.

Each episode of the Lowy Institute's podcast brings expert voices to the forefront, with a mission to give Australia a greater voice on the world stage.

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the internet, anchoring digital policies in human rights, and safeguarding the online space for children.

The pact also tackles pressing global issues like climate change by committing to keeping global temperature rise below 1.5°C and accelerating the transition to renewable energy.

The Declaration on Future Generations establishes new mechanisms to ensure future generations are considered in today's decision-making, including the possible creation of a UN envoy for future generations.

A document summarizing the summit's achievements is available at <https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future>.

Putin Hosts BRICS Summit

Russian President Vladimir Putin welcomed leaders from BRICS nations and Global South countries to Kazan on Oct. 22, 2024, for a summit aimed at challenging Western influence. Russia sought to demonstrate that efforts to isolate it over the Ukraine war have failed.

The BRICS bloc, originally comprising Russia, Brazil, India, China, and South Africa, now also includes Iran, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, expanding its geopolitical and economic footprint.

As BRICS expands, it seeks to coordinate policies on economic development and global governance, with a focus on reducing reliance on Western-dominated institutions like the U.S. banking system.

Notably, the bloc has proposed creating an alternative payment system and financial institutions such as the New Development Bank to rival the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

However, BRICS members face internal divisions, particularly over Russia's actions in Ukraine. Further, China-India tensions are ongoing, and countries like Brazil and

100 Years Ago

Record-Breaking Voter Turnout

The electorate cast the largest vote in American history—between 30,000,000 and 32,000,000 as compared with 26,675,000 votes in 1920. This record-breaking ballot may be attributed to a number of causes. The organized appeal, made by both Coolidge and Davis as well as by the American Legion to go to the polls as a patriotic duty regardless of partisanship, must have considerably increased the vote. A large number of women who did not avail themselves of the franchise in 1920 doubtless discharged their duty on November 4 after four more years of political education. The radio for the first time in history had a tremendous effect on the size of the votes by broadcasting political speeches to millions of homes and thus creating a more personal interest in the speakers and the issues of the campaign than was formerly possible through the newspapers alone. On the evening before the election by means of linked radio stations, Mr. Davis' voice from New York was heard in Boston, Chicago, Louisville, Denver, Seattle, and San Francisco, and two hours later the President made his final statement which was also carried throughout the United States by the same medium.

—The "Presidential Election" by Gerhard Gade in the December 1924 edition of *The American Foreign Service Journal*.



India maintain close ties to the West.

Despite challenges, the bloc's collective GDP now accounts for more than a quarter of the global economy, and its population represents almost half the world. With more than 40 countries expressing interest in joining BRICS, the group's influence continues to grow, albeit with questions about its cohesion and long-term goals.

Crocker Urges Caution in Israel's Strategy

In an interview with *Politico*, former U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker expressed serious concerns about Israel's ongoing military strategy following the killing of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar on Oct. 16, 2024, warning of potential overconfidence in its pursuit of a prolonged occupation of Gaza.

Amb. Crocker, a retired Senior FSO with extensive Middle East experience who has served as U.S. ambassador to Lebanon, Kuwait, Syria, Pakistan, Iraq, and Afghanistan, cautioned that Israel's victory claims may be premature. Reflecting on historical parallels, he stated: "I was in Lebanon in 1982 when the Israelis invaded. ... That invasion and subsequent occupation created Hezbollah. This invasion is not going to end it."

Crocker suggested that despite Sinwar's death, guerrilla warfare by Hamas and Hezbollah will persist unless Israel shifts its approach. "If that adversary feels defeated, he is defeated. If he doesn't, he's not," he explained, suggesting that Israeli decapitation strikes are not likely to result in a lasting peace.

Crocker also expressed concern about the possibility that Iran will ramp

up its nuclear ambitions in response to Israel's actions: "The more vulnerable the Iranians look on non-nuclear options ... the greater the impetus will be in Tehran to opt for that nuclear capability."

As Israel continues its military campaign, Crocker urged caution: "If they talk themselves into believing that their incredible feats of arms and intelligence actually constitute a victory, then that is very dangerous." He highlighted the need for diplomacy and a potential cease-fire to avoid further escalation.

OIG Report Highlights Staffing Shortfalls

A September 2024 report from the State Department's Office of Inspector General (OIG) has identified both strengths and challenges within the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM).

The OIG's evaluation covered the bureau's executive direction, foreign policy priorities, staffing, resource management, and information systems, with particular attention given to the bureau's ability to respond to increasing workloads tied to critical global issues.

The report commended PM's leadership, noting that both the assistant secretary and the principal deputy assistant secretary effectively communicated department priorities while fostering resilience among staff.

The OIG found that the bureau's staffing did not keep pace with the rapid growth in its workload. Efforts to address these staffing needs were deemed inadequate, highlighting gaps in the department's workforce planning processes.

The report also flagged concerns in contract and grants management, noting that contracting officers failed to perform sufficient oversight and that many assistance awards lacked full and open competition.



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The OIG made 21 recommendations aimed at addressing these deficiencies. The bureau agreed with 20 of the recommendations.

Full details of the report can be found at <https://www.stateoig.gov/report/isp-i-24-16>.

New Appointments to State Modernization Commission

President Joe Biden has announced his intention to appoint four new members to the State Department's Commission on Reform and Modernization, a panel tasked with addressing the challenges of modern diplomacy.

Established by the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act, the commission has 18 months to deliver its findings to Congress and the president. The appointees are all former State Department officials with extensive experience.

They include retired FSO Ambassador Michael Guest, who previously served as deputy executive secretary and principal deputy assistant secretary for legislative affairs; Ambassador (ret.) Pamela Spratlen, who previously led the investigation into anomalous health incidents; Caroline Tess, a former deputy assistant secretary for Mexico, Canada, and regional economic policy who is currently executive director at National Security Action; and Ricardo Zúniga, former principal deputy assistant secretary for Western Hemisphere affairs.

The commission is charged with making recommendations to improve the department's organizational structure, personnel training, and global facilities. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources Richard Verma have voiced their support for the commission's work, aligning with Blinken's ongoing efforts to modernize the agency to meet current

global challenges, such as cybersecurity and strategic competition with China.

The commission received \$2 million in funding for its work in the Fiscal Year 2024 omnibus spending bill.

These new members will join others appointed by Congress, including Rep. Max Miller (R-Ohio) and former Deputy Secretary of State and Ambassador to Russia John Sullivan.

"Embassy 2050" to Future-Proof U.S. Embassies

Northwestern University, in partnership with the State Department's Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations and Chicago-based architecture firm Krueck Sexton Partners, has developed a comprehensive five-year plan, "Embassy 2050," that reimagines more than 280 diplomatic locations.

Led by sustainability expert Kimberly Gray and the State Department's Curtis F. Clay, the project aims to enhance the resilience of embassies and consulates worldwide in the face of global challenges such as climate change, technological advancements, and resource scarcity.

Gray emphasized the urgency: "Climate change isn't just a threat; it's a threat multiplier." The project's final designs, completed this summer, are now being considered for implementation in the State Department's six-year capital plan.

The report includes recommendations for transitioning to renewable energy sources, enhancing water sustainability, and creating personalized indoor environments to improve comfort and reduce energy use. The initiative seeks to ensure the long-term safety and operational continuity of U.S. diplomatic facilities. ■

This edition of Talking Points was compiled by Mark Parkhomenko.

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SCAN ME

The Foreign Service at 100: It's Time for Renewal

BY GEORGE KROL

Since retiring from the State Department at the end of 2018, I have read with great interest the numerous reports and articles regarding reform and the future of the U.S. Foreign Service, including those featured in the pages of the *FSJ* during this year's centennial. I served in the Foreign Service for 36 of its 100 years; those long years have given me some ideas about how to improve the Service.

Getting Back to Basics

First, we need to define the essential work and value of the Foreign Service. Aside from the important and necessary administrative and legal (i.e., consular) duties members of the Foreign Service perform, the professional diplomat has four major functions: (1) to facilitate communication with the host government; (2) to understand in depth the host government and society; (3) to persuade the host government to take stances in support of U.S. policies and interests, and (4) to represent the United States and its policies publicly to broader audiences in host countries.

The State Department should prioritize training Foreign Service officers

What is needed is stricter enforcement of existing rules regarding Foreign Service recruitment, training, and service.

in these core missions from day one. As many before me have noted, the department does not do enough to equip officers with the basic skills needed to perform these duties at the start and throughout the course of their careers.

Too often, officers are thrown into sometimes-murky pools of diplomacy abroad, where they can struggle to keep afloat. Yes, embassies can and should train officers in the field; but our embassies are often too busy and understaffed to make this training a priority. Moreover, most FSOs have no training in how to train other officers.

As a section head, deputy chief of mission (DCM) and even ambassador, I often asked myself why I was spending so much time being a copy editor for officers who seemed unfamiliar with basic principles of grammar, or why some officers seemed to have no idea how to negotiate and work in another culture outside the embassy's perimeter.

A six-week orientation class (that we knew as A-100 when I joined) does not produce competent diplomats ready to hit the ground running when they arrive at a U.S. mission abroad. Other agencies of the U.S. government require their entry-level officers to undertake many months or even years of basic tradecraft training before deployment, as do many other foreign diplomatic services.

Officers need instruction in the basics of diplomacy, ideally using relevant case studies to prepare them before they go abroad. I know I could have used such training before my first assignment to our embassy in Warsaw in 1982 under conditions of martial law. Before arriving at post, I got six months of Polish language training, a couple sessions of area studies, a week of consular training, and a stern lecture from Diplomatic Security. Economic reporting and cable writing did not figure in the mix.

I agree with the reports that call for officers, especially those who aspire to enter the Senior Service, to hone their basic skills and add new ones like management and leadership throughout their careers. Unfortunately, the department does not make most such training mandatory. For those who do participate, a two-week course in leadership training does not a leader make.



George Krol retired from the Foreign Service in 2018 after a 36-year career during which he served as ambassador to Belarus, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan; and as deputy assistant secretary of State for South and Central Asian affairs. He spent most of his career dealing with the states that emerged from the former Soviet Union, including postings to Russia and Ukraine. He resides in Rhode Island, where he is an adjunct professor at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport and an associate of Harvard's Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies.

Such training, along with courses focused on diversity and ethics, seems to have become mainly a box-checking exercise. The short courses for DCMs and ambassadors are simply not enough to develop seasoned leaders, not to mention the absence of required management training for all first-time section chiefs.

Too often in embassies the blind are leading the blind. Why? Well, now we get to the nub of the problem: Foreign Service culture.

Changing the Culture

Many reports point to Foreign Service culture as a problem, but I've seen none that suggest what should be done about it. Too many officers, anxious to rise rapidly up the ladder, skip "tedious" intermediary home and foreign assignments. They focus on Washington networking over acquiring deep foreign area and management experience that take years in the field to develop. For the ambitious officer, training and overseas assignments can be seen as obstacles rather than skill-building requirements for promotions.

In my own career, I purposefully sought a progression of increasingly senior desk and embassy jobs in a conscious effort to learn all aspects of the Foreign Service, from desk officer to office director to deputy assistant secretary in Washington, D.C., and from consulate reporting officer to embassy section chief, DCM, and ambassador at various posts overseas. The department did not require this progression, but it certainly made me a better, more effective officer and enriched my career.

Unfortunately, it seems the Foreign Service is largely dominated at the highest ranks by those who, having spent a tour or two at embassies early on in their careers, got on the Washington fast track that catapulted them from executive assistant

to senior positions, including rewards of ambassadorships, without having acquired intermediary hands-on experiences at embassies or desks.

While some of these officers made the leap because of extraordinary abilities, others appear to have benefited from their network of relationships within the political levels of the department and the executive branch, setting unfortunate examples that many ambitious officers seek to follow in pursuit of what they consider career success.

Too often, it seems to me, the department makes exceptions to the rules governing the Foreign Service, enabling and even encouraging this counterproductive culture. And, perhaps most discouragingly, those who benefited from this culture often become Foreign Service mandarins, exerting tremendous influence from their perches on the seventh floor. I do not see the culture of the Foreign Service changing if these officers continue to dominate.

Looking back, I see in my own career the great value of service in Washington, D.C., as a necessity for understanding and working with and within the Washington policymaking and political world, but that experience served to complement rather than substitute for an extensive range of overseas assignments.

To build a truly effective Foreign Service, emphasis should be placed on ensuring officers spend the bulk of their careers abroad, learning and practicing the diplomatic trade, rather than in domestic assignments where they can lose—or never effectively attain—that unique perspective FSOs can and should provide policymakers.

Restoring Discipline

The rules and regulations governing our Service, as established by the

Rogers Act and subsequent reforms, do not need much change. The traditional "eight-year rule"—which states that an officer cannot be domestically assigned for more than eight consecutive years—provides a framework for a balanced career encompassing both overseas and D.C.-based assignments, while established performance standards set requirements for acceptable work.

What is needed is stricter enforcement of existing rules regarding Foreign Service recruitment, training, and service. I used to think the Director General would have the ultimate authority to enforce the rules, but it appears that this authority, if it ever existed, has eroded, leaving an office that first and foremost takes its orders from the seventh floor rather than defending and maintaining the integrity of the Service as a professional, nonpolitical institution.

I do not fault the courageous people who have held that unenviable position, but they need clear, independent authority to govern the Service without political influence or the influence of senior FSOs holding seventh-floor positions.

I find it rather ironic that some senior seventh-floor FSOs have called for reforms after leaving office but were apparently unable to implement reforms while they occupied positions of authority and influence in the department. Of course, to be fair, reform is always easier said than done, especially when reform itself is not among the highest priorities of the department's senior political leadership.

Frankly, I do not believe the Foreign Service bureaucracy can reform itself on its own. By their very nature, bureaucracies are averse to change; they are the institutional keepers of the prevailing culture. Change usually must come from

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The breakup of [the USSR] ushered in a period of American diplomatic exuberance that went overboard in treating the world as ours to mold.

the outside, in this case from Congress, as was the case in the Rogers Act, or from the executive branch political leadership, if that leadership is committed to real change and has the political will and congressional support to make it happen.

Unfortunately, I do not see the political stars aligning for that scenario anytime soon.

Diplomacy in a Changed World

Finally, I think it is evident that U.S. diplomats have not adjusted to the reality of a world that has so profoundly changed. Fundamentally, the United States is no longer, if it ever was, the omnipotent and all-knowing power that many U.S. diplomats seem to think it is. The age of America asserting that it can solve all the world's problems is over.

The Cold War, during which I entered the Service, imposed certain restrictions on U.S. diplomacy and diplomats, and we had a canny and powerful state to contend with in the USSR. The breakup of that entity ushered in a period of American diplomatic exuberance that went overboard in treating the world as ours to mold.

The traditional skills of effective negotiation and diplomatic engagement were left to atrophy as our policymakers turned more and more to military force and righteous demands, relegating diplomacy to the back burner in dealing with the world's knotty problems. We lost our sharpness, our desire to listen and to learn.

The Service turned to proselytizing and striving to be “agents of change and transformation” in other countries, with predictably negative results. Diplomacy should uphold values in its application but not force other countries and societies to accept our worldview.

Many officers, particularly those with a Peace Corps or missionary background, told me they joined the Service to change the world, to make it a better place, and I saw how disappointed they became when the world did not change as they wished. I, too, shared that feeling when I first joined the Service, but over time I saw that successful diplomacy requires a clear eye, abundant patience, understanding of the human psyche, and a willingness to seek compromise to advance, even incrementally, clear realistic national interests. Otherwise, we are truly sent abroad on a fool's errand.

In a world of competing interests, dangers, and violence, where the U.S. is not omnipotent, we need professional diplomats now more than ever—to understand the messy world we live in, to communicate effectively with governments whether we like their policies or not, and to provide sound policy advice grounded in experience and understanding of the real world beyond our borders.

The Rogers Act addressed this need in the aftermath of World War I. Now, heading into 2025, with the world in turmoil around us, it is time to renew, reinforce, and reinvigorate the fundamental and historic mission, purpose, and discipline of the Foreign Service as the Rogers Act itself envisaged. ■

CONGRATULATIONS

to this year's AFSA award recipients

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Amb. (ret.) Marc Grossman

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Building a Better DIPLOMATIC SERVICE

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Ambassador Marc Grossman has been named the 30th winner of AFSA's Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award in recognition of his long and distinguished career in the U.S. Foreign Service, as well as the work he has done since retiring to enhance diplomatic readiness, improve personnel management, and strengthen the Service.

I first interviewed Amb. Grossman for *The Foreign Service Journal* in 2000 when he was the new Director General of the Foreign Service. The article, "Meet Marc Grossman," started out with a statement that has stood the test of time: "The truth about Director General Marc Grossman is, people love this guy."

It's an honor to be able to put the spotlight on him now, on the occasion of his selection for AFSA's highest honor. The Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award, given annually, honors an individual's lifetime of devotion to the work of diplomacy and to its practitioners. Past recipients include such luminaries as 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, Anne Patterson, and John Tefft.

A Conversation with Marc Grossman

*Recipient of the 2024 AFSA
Award for Lifetime Contributions
to American Diplomacy*



COURTESY OF MARC GROSSMAN

At a briefing of NATO leaders on Nov. 1, 1985, in Brussels, after U.S. President Ronald Reagan’s Geneva summit with Soviet General secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, from top left: Marc Grossman, Sir Brian Fall, Ambassador Turgay Ozceri, Ambassador Fredo Dannenberg. Seated, from left: British Foreign Minister Geoffrey Howe, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, U.S. President Ronald Reagan, U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz, Deputy Secretary General Eric da Rin, and Chairman Peter Carington.

Amb. Grossman joined the Foreign Service in 1976, serving his first tour in Islamabad. As he rose through the ranks, he served as deputy chief of mission at U.S. Embassy Ankara from 1989 to 1992 and then as executive secretary of the State Department and special assistant to the Secretary of State. He returned to Türkiye as ambassador (1994-1997) and then served as assistant secretary of State for European affairs (1997-2000).

As Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Human Resources (2000-2001), he helped revolutionize the State Department’s human resource strategies, emphasizing increased hiring, training, assignment reform, and retention of personnel. He served as under secretary of State for political affairs from 2001 to 2005.

During his career, he helped marshal the diplomatic response to the terrorist attacks on 9/11, managed U.S. policy in the Balkans and Colombia, and contributed to a further enlargement of the NATO alliance. His distinguished service earned him the title of Career Ambassador in 2004, the highest rank in the Foreign Service.

After retiring from the Foreign Service (the first time) in 2005, Amb. Grossman joined The Cohen Group as a vice chair. He was awarded the Secretary of State’s Distinguished Service Award in 2005, the Director General’s Cup for the Foreign Service in 2006, and the State Department’s Distinguished Service Award in 2013. He was called back to the department to serve as the U.S. special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan from 2011 to 2012, and retired again in 2012.

Amb. Grossman has served as chair of the board of the Senior Living Foundation of the American Foreign Service since 2009. He co-authored the Center for International and Strategic Studies



AP PHOTO/THIERRY CHARLIER

U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman (right) speaks during a news conference at NATO headquarters in Brussels on Feb. 27, 2003. At left is U.S. Ambassador to NATO Nicholas Burns.

(CSIS) study, “The Embassy of the Future” (2007); the Harvard University Belfer Center report, “A U.S. Diplomatic Service for the 21st Century” (2020); and Arizona State University’s “Blueprints for a More Modern U.S. Diplomatic Service” (2022). With Ambassador John Limbert, he is the author of the novel *Believers: Love and Death in Tehran* (2020).

Born and raised in Los Angeles, California, Amb. Grossman holds a BA from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and an MSc in international relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is married to retired FSO Mildred Anne Patterson and has one daughter, Anne.

I had the opportunity to interview Ambassador Grossman in early October, ahead of the AFSA Awards Ceremony.

—Editor in Chief Shawn Dorman



U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman speaks at the March 2003 book launch event for AFSA's new edition of *Inside a U.S. Embassy: How the Foreign Service Works for America*. A supporter of the book who contributed a "day-in-the-life" story to it, Grossman told the crowd that when he had given out copies at a recent Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, Senator Richard Lugar said, "Every American would be interested in this book."

Foreign Service Journal: *You grew up in California. How did that upbringing—studying, working, and living on the West Coast until joining the U.S. Foreign Service in 1976—influence you?*

Ambassador Marc Grossman: Life in Southern California in the 1950s and 1960s seemed pretty idyllic. We lived in a lower-middle-class neighborhood that, from my perspective, was quite egalitarian. My parents were elementary school teachers. Our neighbors were plumbers and electricians and a project estimator for a construction company. The adults worked hard and focused on their children's education. We had the beach and the foothills, so we lived outdoors, which I still relish.

I went to the University of California, Santa Barbara, in 1969. Three things happened that influenced my career. First, because of an oil spill from an offshore drilling platform, Santa Barbara was an early and important center for the environmental movement. I have tried to keep a West Coast attitude toward the land

and sea throughout my life. I also hope I've retained some of Santa Barbara's attitude toward work-life balance.

Second, I worked summers during college as a door-to-door salesman for the Jewel Tea Company. All on commission, no guaranteed money. I learned to persevere. To be the best prepared salesman on the streets. That to sell something, you need to know how to pitch it. To get up after being rejected. To keep a sense of humor. To enjoy the wins.

I learned to keep moving, because to make five or six sales a day, you had to knock on at least two hundred doors that day. I was curious to see what was on the other side of the door. These are all lessons your readers will recognize as relevant to a Foreign Service career.

Third, I was selected in 1972 to participate in the University of California's Education Abroad Program (EAP). I spent a year at the University of Birmingham in the U.K. It changed my life. It is why I am today involved in supporting UCSB's EAP program.

FSJ: *When did you first learn about the Foreign Service, and what led you to a career in diplomacy?*

MG: In 1974, I got a master's degree from the London School of Economics, but I was not cut out for academia. I took the law school entry exam: also not for me. I went back to Santa Barbara to work full time for Jewel Tea.

I kept looking for a career that would pay me to pursue my curiosity about how other people live and how they decide their priorities. I went to a talk one day by Thomas Hughes, a former Foreign Service officer who had been a Bureau of Intelligence and Research assistant secretary and deputy chief of mission in London. I thought the Foreign Service could be the answer to my question. I had the chance years later to thank Mr. Hughes in person for inspiring me.

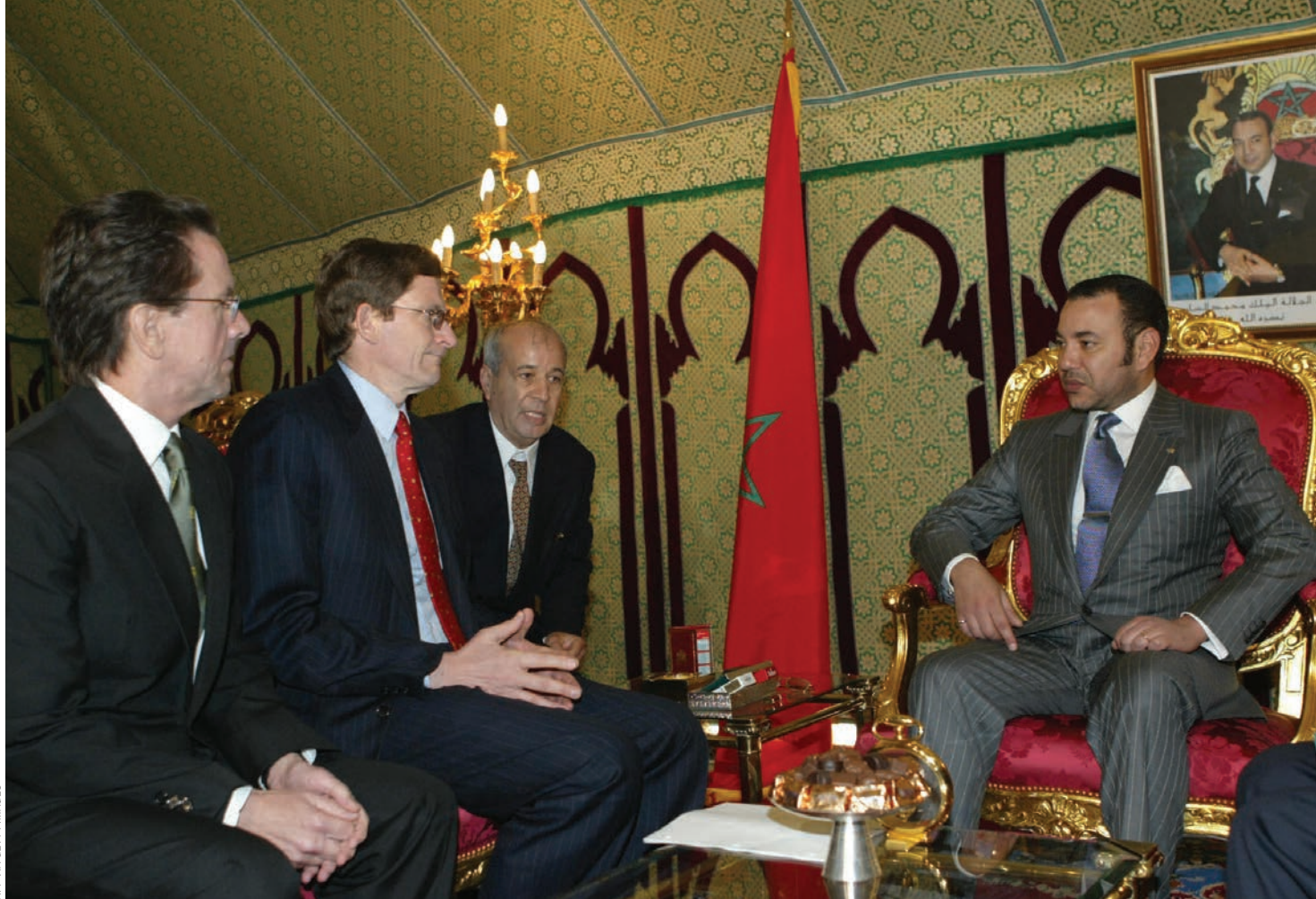
The Foreign Service Career

FSJ: *Your first diplomatic post was the U.S. embassy in Islamabad (1977-1979). What was that like?*

MG: It was challenging, eye-opening, full of instruction, mentoring, and guidance from the remarkable group of senior colleagues serving there, an introduction to a new culture and geography, and, thanks to a wonderful group of junior American, Pakistani, and other international diplomats, a lot of fun.

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

MG: I know some people will say, "Oh, sure," but I liked all my posts. It helps to be curious and an optimist. If I had to choose, I would say being the ambassador to Türkiye, the



U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman (second from left) is received by King Mohammed VI of Morocco on March 1, 2004, in a tent installed for the monarch in Al Hoceïlma, site of the devastating earthquake that had rocked northern Morocco just a week earlier. Grossman was there to discuss humanitarian aid for the stricken region.

assistant secretary for European affairs, and serving as the Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Human Resources. The connecting theme? I had the most chance as the leader of those three organizations to set the agenda and to have a direct impact on the people who worked with me and for me. That was especially true in Türkiye, where I had the privileges and the responsibilities that come with the U.S. president's letter to chiefs of mission. My fantasy is that someday State Department regional assistant secretaries will have a similar letter from the president so they can lead the relevant interagency process.

FSJ: *You served as Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Human Resources from 2000 to 2001. In an interview with me for the November 2000 FSJ, you suggested that a priority for you and for AFSA should be “to bring home to our fellow citizens what it is that we do. This idea that FSOs are living the life of Riley, drinking tea abroad, when we have hundreds of embassies around the world where people are working as hard as they possibly can on behalf of the U.S.—it’s frustrating.” Has enough progress been made on raising awareness about the Foreign Service in the U.S.?*

MG: Certainly, more effort has been made to tell the Foreign Service story since 2000 by the State Department, AFSA, and the

many individuals who speak in communities all over the country and contribute to local news outlets and social media. But it is imperative that this work continues and expands.

FSJ: *What are you most proud of from your time as DG?*

MG: On his first day at the State Department, then Secretary-designate Colin Powell asked me to visit him in the transition space on the first floor. Secretary Powell asked what we most needed to support American diplomacy. Thanks to the fantastic work done by a team in the DG's office, I had an answer: more people. I said that as a military officer, General Powell had never commanded a unit or organization that did not have a 15 percent “float” for training and transit. The department had no such thing. I proposed a Diplomatic Readiness Initiative that would increase the number of people at State by 15 percent over three years. Secretary Powell agreed on the spot. We added just over 1,100 people in the next three years.

Working with AFSA

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

MG: I joined during my A-100 class. I joined because I think employees need a supporting voice in a big bureaucracy. I joined



because AFSA was (and is) committed to telling our story to the public and to the Congress. That's what I tell people when I host a table at AFSA as new entry-level classes come to hear about the organization. And I tell them they will value the *FSJ*.

FSJ: *You've had a great relationship with AFSA over many years, including while you were Director General and beyond. You were an early supporter of AFSA's Inside a U.S. Embassy introduction to the Foreign Service. In your view, how and where can AFSA add the most value?*

MG: By living up to and making operationally effective AFSA's objective of being the "Voice of the Foreign Service." One hundred years of service to American diplomacy is a great accomplishment.

FSJ: *AFSA honors dissent within the system through its annual awards. Any advice for colleagues on whether, when, and how to speak up if they disagree with a policy?*

MG: One of the hardest things to do is to speak truth to power. It is imperative that this happens. I often think of a quote from historian Max Hastings: "Truth should be respected by decision-makers and those who inform them not just as a matter of morality, but instead as an indispensable navigational aid in every field of endeavor."

Post-Retirement Focus

FSJ: *Is your private sector work with The Cohen Group similar to the Foreign Service?*

MG: The majority of our effort at The Cohen Group is to help American companies succeed in their businesses abroad. In that sense, it is like the very important commercial work done in U.S. embassies and in Washington, D.C. We appreciate the guidance and advice we receive from U.S. missions abroad and from State Department employees in Washington.

I kept looking for a career that would pay me to pursue my curiosity about how other people live and how they decide their priorities.

FSJ: *You've made so many contributions to the Foreign Service and diplomacy since "retiring" for the first time in 2005, it's hard to know where to begin. You've been a strong advocate for road safety since the mid-1990s when you were ambassador to Türkiye at the time a young American was killed in a bus crash. Every country, including the U.S., has problems with road safety. Where do you see the issue today, and is there anything that can be done to reduce traffic deaths on a global scale?*

MG: Aron Sobel, a 25-year-old University of Maryland medical student two weeks from graduation, was killed in a bus crash in Türkiye in 1995. Twenty-two other people were killed. Aron's mother, Rochelle Sobel, grieving and furious, called me a few days later. Rochelle wanted something done so that Aron's death was not in vain. We talked about what to do for some months. Rochelle created the Association for Safe International Road Travel (ASIRT). Her first effort was to try to get the State Department to keep statistics on road crashes in which American citizens were killed. It was oddly hard to get anyone to pay attention to road safety at first, but after starting to collect the data, the department has become a strong supporter of Rochelle and ASIRT.

With the support of many donors and volunteers, ASIRT has become a leading global road safety organization. Rochelle, who is among the most determined and purposeful people I have ever met, has spoken at international meetings around the



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

During the Istanbul Conference for Afghanistan at the Ciragan Palace in Istanbul on Nov. 1, 2011, Turkish President Abdullah Gul (right) met with American officials. From left: Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Marc Grossman, U.S. Ambassador to Türkiye Francis J. Ricciardone Jr., and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State William J. Burns.

world. ASIRT’s country reports on road safety are the gold standard. Rochelle has worked with members of Congress to highlight global road safety issues; there is now a bipartisan Road Safety Caucus on Capitol Hill. ASIRT continues to work closely with State to get information about road safety to employees and their families serving overseas.

I am delighted that AFSA has formed a partnership with ASIRT. Past AFSA President Eric Rubin recognized the need, and current President Tom Yazdgerdi has energetically taken on this important cause. AFSA’s recent member survey showed that road safety is an important issue for the organization. AFSA members and their families know firsthand the deep personal loss that comes from road crashes. The *Journal* has played an important role in keeping our community informed and organized.

I am honored to support Rochelle and ASIRT. Making roads safer for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists is a classic case of “it does not have to be this way.” Radically reducing the deaths and injuries caused by road crashes is about better education and awareness, road safety technologies, enforcement, and making road safety a priority and not just a talking point.

FSJ: You wrote a novel, Believers: Love and Death in Tehran, with former AFSA President Ambassador John Limbert. What was that experience like?

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AP PHOTO/ANJUM NAVEED

U.S. Special Representative for Pakistan and Afghanistan Marc Grossman (second from left) shakes hands with Pakistani Foreign Minister Rabbani Khad (second from right), prior to their meeting in Islamabad on April 26, 2012. Grossman held talks with Pakistan and Afghan counterparts on how to rebuild the relationship and on peace efforts in Afghanistan.

MG: It was an enormous amount of fun to work on *Believers* for two years with John. We enjoyed every part of the effort. It makes a great holiday gift!

FSJ: *How did you get involved with the Senior Living Foundation (SLF), and what should our readers know about that organization?*

MG: I first got involved with the SLF as Director General or P [under secretary for political affairs], when I was asked to be one of the department’s liaisons on the board of directors. When I retired in 2005, I became chair of the board.

The SLF’s mission is “Taking Care of Our Own.” Thanks to our very generous donors, the SLF provides retired Foreign Service members in need with critical eldercare resources and assistance. These include care management services, home care, medical expenses, basic living costs, prepared meal services, and emergency aid. In both 2022 and 2023, the SLF’s spending to meet both standing and new commitments doubled from its pre-COVID budget. This is not surprising given inflation and the increased need for the foundation’s services. The SLF is in good shape, and we are especially proud that we have never turned away a qualified former colleague in need of support.

SLF’s Parent Program, now in its sixth year, provides essential support to our active-duty colleagues, particularly those serving abroad, who have aging parents qualifying for help. In most cases, the foundation connects colleagues to highly trained professionals. These professionals then provide comprehensive and effective resources, planning, and support for

both immediate and long-term caregiving needs. This allows active-duty Foreign Service personnel to focus on their missions while knowing that their parents, including stepparents and in-laws, are well cared for.

The SLF has a fantastic staff, led by Executive Director Kyle Longton. The foundation would not exist without the strong support of the American Foreign Service Protective Association (AFSPA). AFSA, DACOR, and the State Department are also key supporters. The board is a wonderful, creative group of individuals devoted to the SLF mission. Being chair of the SLF Board is among the most uplifting things I have the pleasure to do.

Foreign Service Reform

FSJ: *You’ve been a strong voice for Foreign Service reform for many years and, notably, one of the lead authors of the Harvard University Belfer Center 2020 report, “A U.S. Diplomatic Service for the 21st Century,” and Arizona State University’s “Blueprints for a More Modern U.S. Diplomatic Service” (2022), both supported by the Una Chapman Cox Foundation. Has the administration been receptive to the input? Have any of the reform recommendations been adopted; and if so, which ones?*

MG: As you highlight, the Biden administration came into office having received several studies recommending important changes in how the United States carries out its diplomacy. Forty years after the passage of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, the time had come to identify what about the Foreign Service needed to be upgraded, modernized, or changed to meet contemporary challenges.

One of the hardest things to do is to speak truth to power. It is imperative that this happens.

The reports shared the premise that U.S. diplomacy, with its long and proud history, staffed today by a remarkable group of patriotic, committed, and effective employees, confronts crises both from external attacks on its core functions and an internal culture that creates roadblocks to change, and that it needs an honest self-assessment of how best to meet its vital responsibilities.

These and other important observations are the foundation for the November 2020 report, “A U.S. Diplomatic Service for the 21st Century,” published by the Harvard Kennedy School’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. I was a co-author of the Belfer report along with Ambassador Marcie Ries and Ambassador Nick Burns.

We are delighted that some of the proposals in the Belfer report have been adopted, including appointing a State Department coordinator for diversity and inclusion, making a down payment on a training “float” or complement, establishing paid internships that will broaden the socioeconomic base of future applicants, opening up more leadership positions to career officers, establishing new parameters for risk management, and planning for career-long professional education for both the Foreign Service and Civil Service.



COURTESY OF AAD

Ambassador Marc Grossman, top right, leads a program titled “Blueprints for Modern Diplomacy” at an American Academy of Diplomacy event held in collaboration with the San Diego World Affairs Council on March 23, 2023.

After the positive response to the Belfer report, Ambassador Ries and I pursued a Phase II effort focused on four achievable, affordable, urgently needed, high-impact recommendations—the blueprints.

What makes the “Blueprints for a More Modern U.S. Diplomatic Service,” supported by the Una Chapman Cox Foundation and Arizona State University and released in September 2022, unique is that the report has a detailed implementation plan for each blueprint, including all the required legislative or administrative language. We appreciate AFSA’s strong support and the help of the *FSJ* in publicizing the blueprints.

There are four blueprints:

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

We are now trying to get the blueprints accepted, adopted, and funded. This work is being led by the American Academy of Diplomacy, again supported by the Cox Foundation and Arizona State University.



COURTESY OF THE COHEN GROUP

Four ambassadors who served as U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs together at a Cohen Group dinner on March 28, 2019. From left: Tom Pickering, David Hale (then serving in the U/S position), Marc Grossman, and Nicholas Burns.



FSJ/DIGITAL ARCHIVE/ASIRT

Ambassador Marc Grossman (back left) joins AFSA President Tom Yazdgerdi (fourth from right) and ASIRT President Rochelle Sobel (third from left) at a congressional briefing on June 4, 2024.



AFSA/JOAQUIN SOSA

At the AFSA Awards Ceremony on Oct. 16, 2024, from left: Mildred Anne Patterson, Anne Grossman, and Ambassador Marc Grossman.

The department has been very positive about the blueprints. Deputy Secretary Richard Verma, Under Secretary for Management John Bass, Director General Marcia Bernicat, and FSJ Director Joan Polaschik have been open to dialogue and great to work with. We have also found important bipartisan interest in Congress.

Let me give you an example of what is happening on the Diplomatic Reserve Corps. Earlier this year, the State Department submitted a report to Congress that “recommends the establishment of a State Department Reserve Corps as a strategic and cost-effective solution to enhance the department’s diplomatic capabilities.” In September, Representative Jason Crow (D-Colo.) introduced legislation that includes a provision calling for establishment of the “Department of State Reserve Corps” to assist the Secretary, the department, and the Foreign Service in the discharge of their responsibilities and functions.

These are exciting developments. I should also say that we are happy that many of the other recommendations in the blueprints have been adopted by the department.

Building a Better Diplomat

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

MG: On my list I would include patriotism, cherishing the opportunity to promote and protect the interests of the United

States; curiosity and the pursuit of lifelong learning; flexibility; a fierce commitment to justice; a sense of adventure and wonder; humility; resilience; intellectual and physical courage; the strength to make decisions when they are needed; a desire to seek the privilege of leading groups of people; and a recognition that hard work and preparation are the foundations of success.

I would also suggest continually trying to improve yourself and your organization by committing to the thought that “it does not have to be this way,” putting people first, practicing collegiality, finding time to take care of yourself and those dear to you, having as much fun as possible, and maintaining a sense of humor. I am sure others will have many more.

FSJ: *I first interviewed you for the FSJ in 2000 when you were the new Director General for the Foreign Service. Back then I asked whether you would recommend a Foreign Service career to someone starting out today. Here's what you said: "I would. Look, if you're interested in money, this isn't the place for you. If you're interested in public service and in being involved in our foreign*

policy, this is the perfect place for you. Are there challenges we have to meet? Absolutely. Is it hard sometimes? Of course it is. I don't think we should pretend there are no problems here. I can't pay you what a dot.com can pay you, but here you work in an office with an American flag, and I think that's worth a lot."

How would you answer that same question today?

MG: When young people ask me if they should become U.S. diplomats and represent the United States, my answer is “absolutely.” Join the Foreign Service or Civil Service. Become a professional. Promote and protect the interests of our great nation.

Those who answer the call to service will do this honorable work in a changing and dangerous world. They will succeed only if they strengthen and adapt their practices and procedures, culture, and institutions. They can help fashion and pursue policies designed not only to preclude the worst but also to create a more promising future.

Taking the oath of office to serve at the State Department opens the door to living what former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage memorably called a “life of significance.” ■

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2024 AFSA AWARD *Winners*

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

David Houston

Leadership in Digital Innovation

David Houston, diplomatic technology chief at U.S. Embassy Luxembourg, has been awarded the prestigious F. Allen “Tex” Harris Award for Constructive Dissent for his exceptional work in advancing U.S. foreign policy through digital assets (DA) and distributed ledger technology.

Houston’s unique ability to straddle the line between applied and policy-driven technology has made him an indispensable leader in this emergent field, as the State Department increases its role in shaping cyberspace and global financial markets.



David Houston

AWARDS FOR
CONSTRUCTIVE
DISSENT

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

David Houston greets President Barack Obama while on deployment in Afghanistan.

Houston's experience and expertise in digital assets go back several years. He played a critical role in the wake of President Joe Biden's 2022 executive order on the responsible development of digital assets. Tasked to represent the State Department in an interagency working group to develop a national research and development agenda, he took a methodical and inclusive approach.

Houston analyzed three years' worth of cables—more than 600 documents—on digital assets, indexing them into a searchable database. This initiative distilled important insights and provided a valuable tool for diplomats across the department to quickly access relevant country- and topic-specific information on DA.

Houston's analysis confirmed what he suspected: The department's approach to digital assets, particularly in the context of U.S. foreign policy, lacked the necessary scope to fully address the technological and human rights implications of these emerging tools. The interagency discussions had primarily focused on economic and financial aspects, often neglecting the broader policy issues related to distributed ledger technology and its potential impact on maintaining an open, secure, and reliable internet.

Recognizing this gap, Houston sought to build consensus at the working level, initially proposing two innovative ideas to the Secretary's Policy Planning Staff. His first idea focused on experiential learning through creation of a "decentralized autonomous organization," which led to a successful interagency workshop exploring this concept. His second proposal emphasized the need for adequate human resources to manage the nuances of the digital assets portfolio. Though his personnel-focused idea gained only nominal interest, his persistence in pushing for broader engagement continued.

Ultimately, to drive the urgent conversation he envisioned, Houston turned to the department's formal Dissent Channel. In a 13-page cable, he presented both substantive and procedural dissent on the department's handling of the digital assets portfolio. His detailed analysis raised critical concerns about the Department of the Treasury's position on decentralized finance



This award affirms the State Department's commitment to one of America's finest traditions: dissent. It also helps galvanize support for the ongoing efforts underway to implement and consider the recommendations of the dissent cable itself.

—DAVID HOUSTON

and advocated for a recalibration of the department's approach to digital assets, placing a greater emphasis on human rights and technological factors.

Houston's dissent sparked significant action at senior levels. His efforts led to a deputy assistant secretary-level meeting, where he presented his thesis and received support on several important points. The Secretary of State and other seventh-floor principals concurred with several of his findings, setting the stage for important policy shifts. These shifts include reorienting the department's digital assets portfolio toward a more affirmative vision that integrates human rights and technological considerations alongside cyberspace efforts.

The Secretary's office also tasked the under secretary for economic growth, energy, and environment (E) with producing a topline policy framework by mid-2024 to guide the department's work on digital assets. This effort is supported by regular assistant secretary-level meetings on the subject. Additional anticipated changes include increased engagement with civil society and industry, coordination with the Foreign Service Institute on potential training options, and consideration for creating or reorganizing positions dedicated more directly to the digital assets portfolio.

Reflecting on his award, Houston notes: “This award affirms the State Department’s commitment to one of America’s finest traditions: dissent. It also helps galvanize support for the ongoing efforts underway to implement and consider the recommendations of the dissent cable itself.”

Houston’s career is an example of a steadfast commitment to addressing the complex and often controversial challenges of U.S. foreign policy. A former U.S. Army captain and combat veteran of the Afghanistan war, Houston brings technical and leadership expertise to his role as a diplomatic technology officer. His academic background, which includes studies in music, linguistics, computer science, and international relations, uniquely positions him to navigate the interdisciplinary challenges of the digital age.

Since joining the department, Houston has served in Beijing, Panama, Mogadishu, and Washington, D.C., where he worked on cyber policy with the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and provided IT support for posts in Europe in the bureau of Diplomatic Technology.

David Houston’s contributions to digital diplomacy have strengthened U.S. foreign policy and demonstrated the vital role of technical expertise in shaping the future of diplomacy.

W. Averell Harriman Award for an Entry-Level Officer

Mariya Ilyas

Fostering Unity in Divisive Times

Mariya Ilyas, a political-concoed Foreign Service officer, has been named the recipient of the 2024 W. Averell Harriman Award for her initiative, courage, and leadership.

Currently serving as a staff assistant to Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations (USUN), Ilyas has been a powerful but pragmatic voice of dissent since Hamas’ Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel—challenging the U.S. government’s public messaging on support for Israel and, as chair of the employee organization American Muslims and Friends at State (AMFAS), undertaking sustained efforts to ensure that the State Department’s leadership hears the voices of Muslim and Arab employees.



Mariya Ilyas

Together, we stand united against hate and terrorism, in all forms; and we stand in solidarity for peace and justice.

—MARIYA ILYAS

One of Ilyas’ key initiatives has been expanding access to employee consultation services for Muslim and Arab employees. While those services were initially restricted to employees serving in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv due to resource limitations, she successfully persuaded the Bureau of Medical Services to broaden their reach, resulting in bimonthly virtual sessions; more than 100 employees worldwide have participated, receiving essential emotional support. Ilyas conveyed these employees’ concerns over both U.S. policy and messaging to senior department leaders.

“For me, dissent in the context of U.S. policy on Gaza came through community building,” Ilyas explains. “I wanted to support the people within the State Department—the individuals who come to work each day striving to make a difference.”

Ilyas’ leadership brought the workforce together through employee-centered initiatives. Most notably, on Oct. 30, 2023, she gathered Muslim, Jewish, and Christian employees from the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to host a “Moment of Silence in Unity and Peace” to honor innocent lives and stand together against hate. Ilyas delivered a livestreamed address at the C Street lobby of the Harry S Truman building where nearly 200 employees gathered.

“Together, we stand united against hate and terrorism, in all forms; and we stand in solidarity for peace and justice,” Ilyas remarked. The event featured speeches from senior department leaders, including Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources Richard Verma and USAID Deputy Administrator for Management and Resources Paloma Adams-Allen.

Ilyas subsequently organized an interfaith “Gathering in Solidarity” on Nov. 29, 2023, building a coalition with leaders from 17 employee organizations to co-sponsor the event. The event featured speeches from Department Executive Secretary Derek Hogan and Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Bonnie Jenkins as well as readings from various religious texts, poetry, and an invocation.

While serving as a political-military officer within the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Ilyas noted the risk that U.S.-made weapons could cause civilian harm in Gaza, expressing her concerns to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Deputy Secretary Verma, and Under Secretary Jenkins.



Mariya Ilyas presenting at a State iftar event she helped organize in April 2024.

The consequences of Ilyas' advocacy efforts have reached beyond the walls of the State Department. She played a critical role in persuading the Office of International Religious Freedom to publish the office's first-ever cable addressing Islamophobia to educate foreign governments on the importance of combating rising hate against religious minorities. Working closely with White House liaisons, she also facilitated a global listening session for AMFAS members and collected feedback from more than 70 individuals, which directly informed the Biden administration's first-ever National Strategy to Combat Islamophobia.

Building on months of work, Ilyas invited Secretary Blinken to break bread with Muslim employees at an iftar event on April 8, 2024, during Ramadan. Secretary Blinken applauded her initiative in organizing the event and commended her service to the department and the country. "I am proud to be your colleague," he said. "Your leadership to bring us together, even in the most difficult times, is in the highest tradition of service to this department as well as to this country."

From her early days as a Fulbright Scholar in Türkiye, to her time as a consular officer in Amman and Doha, to her current role at the USUN, Ilyas has consistently demonstrated initiative, courage, and leadership, showing how public servants can challenge the status quo, advocate for inclusive policies, and support their colleagues in trying times.

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

*Konrad Turski,
Caryl Tuma, Emily Green,
and Michael Casey*

Communicating Concerns in a Sensitive, Fast-Moving Situation

Konrad Turski, Caryl Tuma, Emily Green, and Michael Casey have been selected as co-recipients of the William R. Rivkin Award in recognition of their efforts, initiative, and leadership in the face of an evolving and sensitive situation.

Following the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel, they—along with their colleagues—used their resources and information on the ground to provide Washington accurate details and thoughtful analysis on the various and often conflicting U.S. policy interests and priorities.

Over the next few months, policy discussions progressed about



Konrad Turski



Caryl Tuma



Emily Green



Michael Casey

the impact the war was having on the lives of Gazan civilians. These four officers at the U.S. Office of Palestinian Affairs (OPA) in Jerusalem decided a Dissent Channel message was their best option to ensure that their concern, based on their on-the-ground experience and nuanced perspectives, would be evaluated and considered.

The cable they drafted exemplified the value of intellectual courage: It clearly defined the topic on which they disagreed, and it was narrow enough for the department to take action if it chose to do so. Their dissent cable showed their understanding of the subtleties of U.S. policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its regional implications, and clearly articulated why, despite the complexity, the department should take specific actions.

The four co-recipients took Arabic together and have served together for the past 5 years.

Konrad Turski is a career Foreign Service officer who joined the State Department in 2014 and previously served in Cairo and Buenos Aires. From 2021 until 2024, he served as one of the two Gaza watchers at OPA in Jerusalem, where he focused on helping leadership in Jerusalem and Washington understand the humanitarian and economic situation inside Gaza.

With the eruption of the conflict in October 2023, his work, like that of his colleagues, was transformed overnight, including efforts to ensure the safety of locally employed staff and their families inside Gaza. He and his colleagues began work-

ing to draw attention to areas where policy changes could help protect the lives of civilians amid the devastating conflict.

“I once heard it said that the people who know the most about something are those least able to talk about it,” Turski says. “The department’s Dissent Channel is a unique opportunity to test that notion, providing not only a way to share what we see on the ground directly with our leadership, but the opportunity to do so in a way that can actually improve our policy. For me, this award represents a recognition of our responsibility as Foreign Service officers to do exactly that.”

FSO Caryl Tuma arrived in Jerusalem in August 2020 and worked in OPA for three years, advancing the U.S. relationship with Palestinian private sector representatives and entrepreneurs across East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza, and developing programs that support Palestinian students and young professionals with leadership and professional development opportunities. In the course of her work, she also had the opportunity to meet Palestinian and Israeli peacebuilding activists, who are inspiring in their commitment to coexistence.

“I am grateful that the department encourages intellectual debate about policy and process, and that our leadership in Jerusalem embraced that,” Tuma says. “The culture of dissent—including an official dissent channel—is part of that larger picture, and the fact there’s an award for it is a clear indication of that value. I hope this award is evidence that intellectual and principled discussions can exist, even around the most controversial and heart-wrenching issues.”



Caryl Tuma at an olive grove in the West Bank.



Emily Green en route to Bonthe, Sierra Leone, for an embassy-funded civic education program in the lead-up to the 2018 election.

Tuma joined the State Department in 2009 as an intern in the Conflict and Stabilization Office, later becoming a civil servant in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs before joining the Foreign Service in 2014. She previously served in Manama and Dakar.

Career Foreign Service Officer Emily Green was the cultural affairs officer at OPA from 2021 to 2024. Her team included Gazan local staff, and they worked with Gazan exchange participants, alumni, and civil society partners. She also met Israelis passionate about building peace through her work with the peacebuilding portfolio, which was done in collaboration with her colleagues at Embassy Jerusalem.

“The Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel was both shocking and horrifying, marked by brutal violence and the abduction of innocent hostages,” Green says. “In the aftermath, the high civilian casualties in Gaza and the suffering endured by the displaced population have been deeply distressing. Throughout this crisis, I had the privilege of working alongside many brave colleagues trying to do the right thing in an utterly untenable situation.”

Green continues: “Dialogue around this very complicated and horrific war has been twisted to harm even more people through a proliferation of anti-Semitism and anti-Arab, anti-Muslim hatred, discrimination, and attacks. Our dissent wasn’t about choosing a side but rather recognizing our duty with empathy and compassion.”

Regarding the award, Green says: “Dissent is important. It makes our institutions stronger, and I’m honored to work for an

I am grateful that the department encourages intellectual debate about policy and process, and that our leadership in Jerusalem embraced that.

—CARYL TUMA

organization that values opposing views even when it’s complicated. I hope anyone reading this will find the courage to speak up in alignment with your values.”

Green previously served in Freetown, Conakry, Tel Aviv, and Washington, D.C.

Michael Casey resigned from the Foreign Service in July 2024, while serving as the deputy political counselor at OPA in Jerusalem. He had previously served in Kuala Lumpur, Islamabad, Beijing, and as a watch officer in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in Washington, D.C. Before joining the Foreign Service, Casey was an Army engineer officer, serving in Iraq, Alaska, and North Carolina.

The integrity, courage, and clear-eyed commitment of this group to speaking up demonstrates the importance of constructive dissent, particularly in a crisis situation, and makes them outstanding recipients for this prestigious award.

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

Dana Sutcliffe

Champion of Efficiency and Morale

AWARDS FOR EXEMPLARY PERFORMANCE

Dana Sutcliffe has been named the 2024 winner of AFSA's Nelson B. Delavan Award for her exemplary work at U.S. Embassy Tegucigalpa. As the office management specialist (OMS) to Ambassador Laura Dogu, Sutcliffe has focused on enhancing operational efficiency, fostering innovation, and building a stronger community.



Dana Sutcliffe

One of her most important contributions was the development of a new collaborative tasking tool, called the Embassy Tegucigalpa Collaboration Team, that revolutionized how agencies and offices within the State Department work together by streamlining processes, eliminating the need for email attachments and paper,



Dana Sutcliffe (left) with her Foreign Service colleagues visiting the Ice Festival in Harbin, China.

and facilitating immediate, effective communication. The tool has been widely adopted across 40 posts and was even mentioned in Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s Modernization Agenda.

“Miraculously, she connected all agencies despite technological challenges,” says Ambassador Dogu. “This multipronged tool allows immediate collaboration and conversation, flattens the organizational structure, moves items requiring clearance along much more quickly, and prioritizes pending work for the deputy chief of mission and ambassador—all without email attachments or paper.”

In addition to her technical innovations, Sutcliffe has excelled in leadership and management within the front office support team. She focused on upgrading positions, prioritizing staff education, and creating detailed standard operating procedures to ensure seamless operations even in her absence. Her approach has fostered a high-performance, high-morale team that supports the smooth functioning of the large interagency embassy team.

As co-chair of the embassy’s employee association, she played a pivotal role in reviving community spirit following the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. When Honduras lifted its mask mandate in March 2023, Sutcliffe’s team used the embassy garden to host events, bringing back a sense of community and significantly raising post and community morale.

An active member of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Council, Sutcliffe headed Leadership Lab activities to encourage each office and agency to develop a capstone project.

Recognizing that American staff traditionally had more access to senior leaders, she suggested and implemented monthly meetings between new locally employed staff and the ambassador and deputy chief of mission. “Local staff commented on how welcome they felt as they began their new careers at the embassy,” one colleague shared. “This initiative improved teamwork and morale across all agencies of the mission.”

Sutcliffe also served on a recruitment panel, encouraging more than 700 potential candidates to join the State Department. As a subject matter expert for the Board of Examiners and an assessor, she ensured that the hiring process reflects the evolving complexities of the OMS role and that new hires possess the necessary qualifications. “She is shaping the future by building a more modern, diverse, and inclusive institution with the most qualified individuals,” a supervisor remarked.

“Receiving this award is deeply meaningful to me on both a personal and professional level,” Sutcliffe says. “It symbolizes the collective effort of a team and the supportive environment we’ve cultivated at Embassy Tegucigalpa.”

Receiving this award is deeply meaningful to me on both a personal and professional level. It represents a recognition of the hard work, dedication, and passion I bring to my role every day.

—DANA SUTCLIFFE

She adds: “This award acknowledges the impact of our collaborative initiatives, the advancements we’ve made in streamlining operations, and the commitment to fostering a positive and inclusive work environment. It motivates me to keep pushing boundaries and exploring new ways to contribute to the Department of State’s goals.”

Sutcliffe joined the State Department Foreign Service in 2016. She has served in Managua, Shanghai, and Mexico City, as well as serving on a five-month bridge assignment with Diplomatic Security’s COVID-19 response team.

Before joining State, she worked as an executive assistant and event planner for a private equity firm in Chicago, Illinois. She holds a bachelor’s degree in international business and Spanish from Valparaiso University. Originally from Holland, Michigan, Sutcliffe is married with two children.

Nelson B. Delavan Award for Foreign Service Office Management Specialist (Runner-Up)

Diana H. Trinh

Mentor, Leader, Advocate

Diana H. Trinh, executive office manager at the U.S. consulate general in Ho Chi Minh City, has been recognized as the runner-up for the 2024 Nelson B. Delavan Award. Her dedication to community building; diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) efforts; and professional mentorship has improved morale and effectiveness at her post, reflecting the core values of an office management specialist (OMS).



Diana H. Trinh



Diana Trinh (in red) at the U.S. Consulate General booth at the HCMC Lunar New Year Flower Festival.

As the sole OMS at the U.S. consulate general in Ho Chi Minh City for the past four years, Trinh has had the unique opportunity to build relationships with staff across post, mentor 20 first- and second-tour (FAST) officers, and guide senior officers when they take on acting roles in the executive office. She has also led essential training sessions on administrative procedures, supported postwide committees, and contributed to community events.

“I love being an office management specialist!” Trinh says. “Most of us get the opportunity to work in a front office during our first tour, and we are entrusted with this responsibility because we are hired with the skills, knowledge, and abilities to make a significant positive impact at our posts. Our specialty is making the office run effectively and efficiently. For me, this includes paying attention to morale and doing what I can to make sure our workplace is an inclusive environment where staff thrive.”

As co-chair of the post’s DEIA Council, she won the inaugural Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs’ Secretary Colin L. Powell DEIA Award in 2023 for her outstanding work leading the popular DEIA Buddy Program, which paired American and Vietnamese staff to promote cultural understanding and create a respectful work environment. After passing on her leadership role, Trinh has remained an active advocate, organizing Locally Employed Staff Appreciation Day and ensuring that all team members are recognized for their contributions.

Mission Vietnam had a particularly demanding year, with an influx of visitors and a visit by President Joe Biden to mark a strengthening of U.S.-Vietnam relations. Trinh’s ability to keep the consulate running smoothly during such high-profile events exemplifies her organizational skills, leadership, and proactive approach.

She led the consulate’s transition to a cloud-based document management system, reducing issues with version control and

promoting collaboration across the team. Her success in Ho Chi Minh City even inspired U.S. Embassy Hanoi to adopt a similar system.

Trinh’s efforts have gone beyond her OMS responsibilities. Her mentorship has been a driving force behind the success of many at the consulate, with colleagues—from newly hired officers to acting consul generals—regularly seeking her counsel.

“I am delighted to have been selected as an honorable mention for the 2024 Nelson B. Delavan Award. It’s extremely rewarding to be recognized for the work we OMSes do to improve our workplaces,” Trinh says.

Trinh joined the State Department Foreign Service in 2016. She has also served at the U.S. Mission to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris and at U.S. Embassy Addis Ababa.

M. Juanita Guess Award for a Community Liaison Office Coordinator

**Christophe J. Paccard
and Sherri Zimmermann**

Excellence in Crisis Leadership

The 2024 M. Juanita Guess Award honors two outstanding community liaison office coordinators (CLOs), Foreign Service family members Sherri Zimmermann in Tel Aviv and Christophe J. Paccard in Jerusalem, for their exceptional leadership, dedication, and service during the aftermath of the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas terrorist attack on Israel.



Christophe J. Paccard

Their remarkable coordination and care in one of the most difficult periods in recent history brought essential relief to their embassy communities, both in Israel and abroad.

Zimmermann recalls the fear and confusion of that morning. “The sirens began at around 6:30 a.m.,” she remembers. “My husband and I grabbed our go-bags and headed to the shelter, uncertain of what was happening.” The days blurred together as she and her team worked around the clock, offering emotional support, organizing town halls, and ensuring that the embassy



Christophe Paccard (second from right) at a charity event for the Al-Shurooq school in Beit Jala, West Bank.

We worked around the clock, cared for our community, and cared for each other. This award is a profound honor, and I'm grateful to be receiving it alongside Sherri.

—CHRISTOPHE J. PACCARD

community had access to vital resources. Zimmermann also revamped the CLO Tel Aviv WordPress site to ensure that comprehensive crisis information was available to all—an invaluable tool in the chaos that followed.

Once Washington authorized the departure of eligible family members (EFMs) on Oct. 15, Zimmermann's work did not slow down. As large portions of the community left on authorized departure (AD), she remained at post, ensuring that those who stayed were cared for and offering valuable feedback on the pulse of the community to Front Office leadership.

She organized events to boost morale, hosted virtual meetings, and provided crucial updates on both the conflict and available support. Her thoughtful planning resulted in events that brought moments of normalcy amid the uncertainty, maintaining a strong sense of community among those remaining at post.

Paccard's leadership in Jerusalem after the Oct. 7 attack was also essential in helping the embassy and consulate community navigate the chaos and uncertainty. As rockets rained down and the community was forced into bomb shelters, Paccard became

a vital point of contact. His calm demeanor and ability to anticipate community needs ensured that families had the support they needed during this unprecedented crisis.

When AD began, Paccard stayed behind to assist with repatriating others back to the U.S. and ensuring that all those wishing to remain in Jerusalem were accommodated. He and his spouse departed for Washington, D.C., six days later.

Paccard's work did not stop there. From Washington, Paccard organized events and maintained daily communication with families on AD, ensuring they felt connected and supported. His quick thinking even saved the life of a community member who had remained behind in Jerusalem and fell gravely ill. Paccard used his established contacts to facilitate the member's emergency hospital admission, a critical intervention that saved their life.

Despite the seven-hour time difference, Paccard and Zimmermann stayed in constant communication throughout the 2.5-month AD period, ensuring that both groups—the families who stayed at post and those who left—felt informed, connected, and supported.



For Zimmermann, this marked the second time she served in the role of CLO. Her first tour as CLO was at U.S. Embassy London from 2015 to 2018, where the community also experienced multiple terror attacks. This tour at U.S. Embassy Jerusalem's Embassy Branch Office in Tel Aviv began in 2020 with COVID-19 and lasted through July 2024, ending with the Israel-Hamas war. Her spouse, David Zimmermann, was an



Sherri Zimmermann on a CLO trip at the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

FBI supervisory special agent at both posts.

Before moving overseas, Zimmermann worked as a community engagement coordinator for a private nonprofit in Charlotte, North Carolina. Prior to that she worked as coordinator of volunteer services for a nonprofit in the Jewish community. A graduate of Texas A&M University and Troy State University, she holds both a bachelor's in speech communication and a master's in counseling and human development. She felt that serving as CLO epitomized her education and experience and is grateful for having had the opportunity.

For Paccard, the award is the culmination of years of service and dedication to the embassy community. He was born and raised in a small village in the French Alps. After earning a BA in hospitality, he moved to London in 1997 to improve his English and pursue his career. By 2000 he had relocated to New York, where he worked in the luxury hotel industry.

In 2001 Paccard moved to Washington, D.C., and eventually received sponsorship for a green card. He became a permanent resident in 2012 and, two years later, a U.S. citizen. During this time, Paccard joined his husband, a Foreign Service officer, on assignment in Caracas, where Paccard began his first of four tours as a CLO. He and his spouse have served in Reykjavík, Algiers, Jerusalem, and Port Louis, Mauritius, where he worked as the regional security office manager.

Now back in Washington, Paccard works in the Office of the



Sherri Zimmermann

Chief of Protocol, a position that blends his extensive experience in the Foreign Service community with his hospitality expertise. Throughout his career, Paccard's focus has always been on serving others and lifting the spirits of those around him, which is at the heart of the work he does.

"We worked around the clock, cared for our community, and cared for each other," he says. "This award is a profound honor, and I'm grateful to be receiving it alongside Sherri."

The contributions Sherri Zimmermann and Christophe J. Paccard made to their community were nothing short of heroic. Their leadership and teamwork exemplify the very spirit of the M. Juanita Guess Award, honoring community liaison office coordinators who go above and beyond in times of need. Their work demonstrates what it means to lead with empathy, dedication, and a sense of service.

Avis Bohlen Award for a Foreign Service Family Member

Cornell Overfield

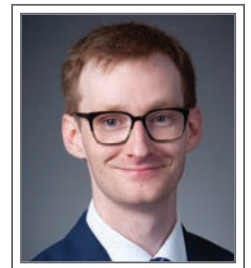
From Stray Cats to Civil Society

The 2024 Avis Bohlen Award, which honors family members of Foreign Service employees whose efforts advance U.S. interests abroad, has been awarded to Cornell Overfield for his transformative work in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Overfield's initiative, the "Mishek Ui" (Cat Home) project, was the first of its kind in the Central Asian capital, addressing the city's growing stray cat population through humane, sustainable methods.

Overfield's journey as a Foreign Service family member began in 2021, though he also spent part of his childhood at U.S. embassies in Abuja and Gaborone as the child of a U.S. Army foreign area officer.

His first assignment with his wife, Cultural Affairs Officer Miranda Lupion, brought him to Bishkek, where he quickly immersed himself in the local culture. In addition to his professional work as a research analyst for the Center for Naval Analyses, with articles published in *Foreign Policy* and *Lawfare* on the law of the sea and national strategy, Overfield spent his time volunteering with local animal rescue groups.



Cornell Overfield

This prize means so much to me and, more importantly, to our partners in the Bishkek cat community: the vet faculty and students at the Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University, the local rescue groups and volunteers, and our embassy colleagues. Their efforts helped us far exceed our initial goals.

—CORNELL OVERFIELD



Cornell Overfield and his team of local volunteers building winterized cat homes.

Shortly after arriving in Bishkek, Overfield connected with the city's leading animal rescue group. He was struck by the dedication of local women, who worked tirelessly to save animals in distress.

Many of the volunteers were retirees, affectionately known as *babushki*, or “grandmas,” who used their modest pensions to feed the ever-growing number of stray cats in the city.

Tragically, the volunteers explained, many of these strays perished during the harsh Kyrgyz winters or faced even worse fates at the hands of animal control. These conversations, coupled with Overfield's own past experiences caring for street cats, inspired the idea for the Mishek Ui project.

The project's mission was simple: humanely reduce the stray cat population through a Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) program, and build low-cost, winterized shelters to increase the cats' chances of surviving Bishkek's brutal winters.

Overfield partnered with one of the city's top veterinary schools, the Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University, and local animal welfare advocates to make his vision a reality. Together, they drafted a proposal and secured a small grant from the J. Kirby Simon Foreign Service Trust.

With this support, the team got to work. Local volunteers, including embassy staff, caught up to seven cats a day, which received anti-parasitic treatments and sterilization surgery from 30 veterinary students, who gained valuable clinical experience in the process. The project also built 32 winterized cat homes in just one afternoon, using cost-effective materials provided by a local wholesaler.

Embassy staff volunteers translated instructional cards into Russian and Kyrgyz, which were laminated and attached to the shelters. The shelters were then delivered to residents of Bishkek and surrounding villages, who monitored local cat colonies.

The Mishek Ui project quickly surpassed expectations. In just two months, the team treated approximately 150 cats, far exceeding their initial goal. At the closing ceremony, the enthusiastic participants asked a single question: “When can we resume work next spring?”

Overfield was scheduled to depart post, but before leaving, he passed on his contacts and knowledge to another dedicated embassy colleague. The local coalition continues to meet and expand the work.

Reflecting on his achievements from his new home in Frankfurt, Overfield says: “This prize means so much to me and, more importantly, to our partners in the Bishkek cat community: the vet faculty and students at the Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University, the local rescue groups and volunteers, and our embassy colleagues. Their efforts helped us far exceed our initial goals.”

Overfield plans to use the money from the Bohlen award to help volunteers in Bishkek continue the important work he started. With funding in place, the coalition plans to resume the program this fall, just as the vet students return to school. Overfield's work has already begun reducing Bishkek's stray cat population while improving local health outcomes by limiting the spread of disease.

But Overfield's impact goes far beyond animal welfare. His project fostered meaningful relationships between the U.S. embassy, local veterinary students, and animal rescue advocates, demonstrating the power of grassroots efforts in uniting communities.

His work reflects the best of what American diplomacy has to offer: creativity, compassion, and an unwavering belief in the power of collaboration.

Mark Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy

Paul Estrada

Strengthening Democracy Amid Russia's War Against Ukraine

Foreign Service Officer Paul Estrada was given the Mark Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy in 2024 in recognition of his bold, creative, and effective leadership on the Ukraine desk as the country defended its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence. Assigned to the Ukraine desk from 2022 to 2024, through his work, he helped significantly strengthen Ukraine's democracy in the face of Russia's full-scale invasion.

Estrada's strategic work across various offices within the State Department, in collaboration with U.S. Embassy Kyiv and interagency partners, was pivotal in directing \$22.9 billion in U.S. direct budget support to Ukraine. His focus on leveraging this substantial aid to help Ukraine win the war and, as he told the *FSJ*, to "win the future" through advancing anti-corruption and other essential reforms showcases his commitment to democratic governance.

As the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs' lead action officer for recovery and reforms in Ukraine, Estrada was instrumental in developing guidelines for U.S. budget support for Ukraine in light of Russia's full-scale invasion. Crafting meticulous démarches for delivery to the highest levels of the Ukrainian government, Estrada articulated the U.S. rationale, held firm on positions, and ensured that expectations and decision-making metrics were clear.



Paul Estrada

His leadership during discussions between Embassy Kyiv, the National Security Council, and senior leadership at the State and Treasury Departments guaranteed maximum effectiveness for the U.S. government's investment.

One of Estrada's most notable achievements was consolidating reforms the U.S. government sought from Ukraine, encompassing fiscal, anti-corruption, defense, and judicial reforms. This was a Herculean task, requiring extensive coordination and development of consensus among diverse interagency views.

His tireless stewardship resulted in an enduring tool that aligns messaging by senior officials with Ukrainian interlocutors and influences other donors' plans.

The secret to Estrada's effectiveness lies in the credibility and trust he built across all corners of the department and among interagency partners. His ability to persuade others—including Ukrainian officials—to prioritize long-term democratic reform set him apart from his peers. His efforts supercharged U.S. government advocacy for strengthening the independence, capacity, and effectiveness of Ukraine's anti-corruption institutions, ensuring a unified voice among U.S. officials working on Ukraine.

Ukraine remains at war, defending its sovereignty and striving to shed the remnants of its Soviet past. Estrada's leadership and vision have been instrumental in helping Ukraine move more swiftly toward its Western aspirations, backed by the full support of the U.S. government. His work exemplifies the influence that dedicated and strategic action can have on promoting and preserving democratic governance in the face of adversity.

Estrada holds a BS in aerospace engineering from the Mas-



Paul Estrada (far right) visiting a hydrogen demonstration plant in Brunei with the late Ambassador Matt Matthews (second from right).

sachusetts Institute of Technology. He spent six years in the U.S. Air Force before joining the U.S. Foreign Service in 2016. He has previously served as the deputy political, economic, and consular chief in Bandar Seri Begawan and as a consular officer at the American Institute in Taiwan. Since June 2024, he has been economic and commercial officer in Ljubljana.

Mark Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy

Mark Wilson

Championing Democracy and Peace in Senegal

In 2024, Mark Wilson, a Foreign Service officer with USAID, was honored with the prestigious Mark Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy, in recognition of his exceptional efforts in strengthening democratic processes and fostering peace in Senegal.

As the director of USAID/Senegal's Democracy, Rights, Governance, and Peace (DRGP) office, Wilson has demonstrated leadership over the past five years that has been instrumental in preserving democracy and ensuring the peaceful transfer of power in a region increasingly troubled by coups and military takeovers.

Wilson's experience in navigating challenging elections across Africa—including in Guinea, Kenya, and Uganda—proved invaluable when Senegal faced a constitutional crisis. The nation's hard-won stability teetered on the brink when former President Macky Sall signaled his intention to run for an unconstitutional third term but, later, canceled the presidential elections scheduled for February 2024.

Wilson assembled a 25-person interagency team to craft strategic recommendations on program management, policy engagement, and messaging. His successful advocacy for continued support reinforced democratic processes at a time when distrust between the electorate and the executive was escalating.

Understanding the critical role of civil society and transparent elections, Wilson secured an additional \$1 million in supplemental funding to bolster electoral support. He worked closely with implementing partners to expand local initiatives that promoted peaceful protests and voter education. By doubling



Mark Wilson



Mark Wilson (left) with the Department of Kanel Prefect Maguette Diouck and USAID Governance Specialist Samba Ba in Senegal.

the number of accredited local election observers to 1,000, he significantly reinforced transparency on election day.

His diplomatic finesse ensured that USAID's electoral support project maintained its neutrality and credibility, even amid violent protests and political unrest. "I believe I was nominated for this award for my ability to work with Senegalese officials, civil society, and the interagency to assess and influence an extremely challenging electoral process," Wilson says. "I'm particularly grateful to both the American and Senegalese staff that supported me and instilled a level of confidence that allowed me to take certain risks to achieve results."

In August 2023, when the former Senegalese president requested U.S. assistance to reinforce a newly signed peace agreement with a separatist movement in the Casamance region, Wilson took the lead in formulating a response. He launched sensitive and discreet negotiations to determine feasible support, ultimately securing \$5 million in conflict mitigation

funding from USAID/Washington. This investment facilitated the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of approximately 200 combatants and community members, paving the way to end one of Africa's longest-standing conflicts and reinforcing the U.S. partnership with Senegal.

"Having the recognition of my peers and being nominated by my colleague from the Department of State is one of the highest honors I have ever received," Wilson says. "I've been privileged throughout my career to work with ambas-

sadors and political officers who have challenged and supported me. I'm most grateful to my peers and colleagues who have influenced, mentored, and pushed me in ways that have allowed me to make a difference."

Having the recognition of my peers and being nominated by my colleague from the Department of State is one of the highest honors I have ever received.

—MARK WILSON

Mark Wilson joined USAID’s Foreign Service as a crisis stabilization and governance officer in 2008. His career has taken him to Kenya, Afghanistan, Guinea, Uganda, Senegal, and Ethiopia, where he is currently posted.

His dedication to public service was inspired early on while living in Accra, where his father was a Fulbright scholar. An internship with the U.S. Information Service in Cape Town—where he observed his first election and reported on the final amnesty hearings of that country’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission—cemented his commitment to conflict prevention and good governance.

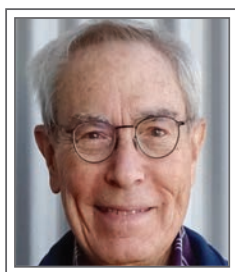
Wilson told the *Journal* he is deeply grateful for the support of his wife and two teenage boys, acknowledging that without them, he couldn’t have pursued his passion for social justice and forging new relationships.

AFSA Achievement and Contributions to the Association Award

Harry Kopp

AFSA’s Unofficial Historian Has Lessons for All of Us

As the U.S. Foreign Service and the American Foreign Service Association mark this centennial year, understanding the past has never been more critical. Reflecting on the Foreign Service’s history, successes, and challenges offers guidance for the future, and no one has contributed more to this reflection than Harry Kopp.



Harry Kopp

This year, Kopp was honored with the AFSA Achievement and Contributions to the Association Award in recognition of his unparalleled contributions to chronicling and preserving the legacy of the Foreign Service and AFSA.

As far as AFSA history goes, Harry Kopp wrote the book. For real. He is the author of *The Voice of the Foreign Service: A History of the American Foreign Service Association*, published by AFSA’s FS Books in 2015. Kopp describes the book as an institutional biography of AFSA. For this project, Kopp spent countless hours unearthing documents and records from AFSA’s archives (before they were digitized), becoming the only person to have read every back issue of *The Foreign Service Journal*—from its earliest itera-

The State Department and the Foreign Service, I realized, were different institutions with often different—and often divergent—interests.

—HARRY KOPP

tion as *The American Consular Bulletin* in 1919 to the present day.

This year, in honor of the centennial for both AFSA and the Foreign Service, Kopp did a full revision and update of the text for a second edition, *The Voice of the Foreign Service: A History of the American Foreign Service Association at 100*, extending the history up through 2023.

Kopp’s involvement with AFSA was not straightforward. After joining the Foreign Service in 1967, he was only briefly an AFSA member. “I believed that commissioned officers should not belong to a union,” he says, reflecting on his decision to let his membership lapse when AFSA became a union in 1973.

After leaving the Foreign Service in 1985, however, he began to question his prior convictions. “The State Department and the Foreign Service, I realized, were different institutions with often different—and often divergent—interests. Through unionization, AFSA had come to speak for the Service,” he says.

He also began writing about diplomacy. His *Commercial Diplomacy and the National Interest*, was published jointly by the American Academy of Diplomacy and the Business Council for International Understanding in 2004. And in collaboration with the late FSO Charles A. Gillespie, Kopp wrote *Career Diplomacy*, which was published by Georgetown University Press in 2008. Subsequently revised and updated by Kopp and former AFSA President John Naland, that guide to the Foreign Service is now in its fourth edition.

In 2012 AFSA commissioned Kopp to write AFSA’s history. Over the following years, the *FSJ* turned repeatedly to Kopp for articles on various aspects of FS and AFSA history, and in the process, he became the unofficial AFSA historian.

In addition to his extensive writing, Kopp was instrumental in convincing AFSA to digitize over a century’s worth of *The Foreign Service Journal*. “Now every article ever written for the *FSJ* is available to a global audience online,” he notes, reflecting on one of his proudest achievements. This digitization project has made the *Journal*’s content accessible to scholars, diplomats, and the public, preserving the legacy of the U.S. Foreign Service for generations to come.



Harry Kopp as a young Foreign Service officer in Warsaw, 1974.

Kopp's dedication to AFSA goes beyond his historical work. He served on the *FSJ* Editorial Board for six years, the maximum allowed, making significant contributions to the magazine's excellence. His advice to AFSA presidents and senior leaders has been invaluable; Kopp has provided critical historical insights during key moments of decision-making for the association.

Kopp's Foreign Service career began in 1967. He served overseas in Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Warsaw, and Brasília; and

Harry Kopp signing copies of the centennial edition of *The Voice of the Foreign Service* at DACOR Bacon House on Foreign Service Day, May 3, 2024.

in Washington, D.C., he held various positions, including deputy assistant secretary of State for international trade policy during both the Carter and Reagan administrations. His work earned him numerous accolades, including meritorious and superior honor awards from the State Department and a presidential award for public service.

This year, he was also honored with DACOR's Foreign Service Cup for his lifetime contributions to diplomacy.

Reflecting on his legacy, Kopp credits former AFSA President Susan Johnson for encouraging him to write the association's history more than a decade ago. On receiving the AFSA award, Kopp quipped, "I'm delighted to be recognized for the work—for which, I should acknowledge, I was also paid." He urged the audience to read the updated edition of *The Voice of the Foreign Service*, calling it "a pretty good book"

Kopp's contributions to AFSA and the Foreign Service are immeasurable. "No other contemporary figure has done as much to help all of us understand the history of AFSA and the Foreign Service," says former AFSA President Eric Rubin. His work will undoubtedly shape the way future generations understand the institution and the countless diplomats who have dedicated their careers to public service.

AFSA Post Representative of the Year Award

Dinah Zeltser-Winant and Anne Martin-Montgomery

Advocating for Members at U.S. Mission Thailand

Foreign Service Officer Dinah Zeltser-Winant and Diplomatic Courier Anne Martin-Montgomery, joint AFSA representatives at the U.S. embassy in Bangkok, have been recognized with the 2024 AFSA Post Representative of the Year Award for their exceptional dedication to advancing AFSA's mission at one of the largest embassies in the world.

Their sustained efforts—both together and individually—to support colleagues, address pressing issues, and advocate for institutional improvements have left a lasting effect at post and across the entire East Asia and Pacific (EAP) region.

The pair played a pivotal role in the March 2024 first- and second-tour (FAST) officers' regional conference, which brought together FAST officers from 21 different posts, working tirelessly to ensure AFSA's presence was front and center throughout the event. They gave a joint presentation to the attendees on AFSA's accomplishments and the benefits of joining the organization and provided a consistent presence by staffing a desk to answer questions and offer guidance. Both made it a point to personally connect with as many participants as possible, ensuring officers felt welcome and informed about AFSA's role in their professional lives.

Beyond their work at the conference, Zeltser-Winant and Martin-Montgomery focused on supporting a diverse range of officers and specialists at post. They took the lead in identifying critical gaps in onboarding and promotion processes, especially for FAST officers and specialists, helping to highlight areas that had been previously overlooked. By addressing these



Dinah Zeltser-Winant



Anne Martin-Montgomery

concerns, they contributed to improving the overall work environment and career trajectories of many officers.

Zeltser-Winant's advocacy for financial planning resources was also instrumental in their recognition. Understanding the unique financial challenges faced by Foreign Service families, they worked to promote education and access to resources that help officers succeed during their careers and prepare them for a secure retirement.

Both have expanded their focus to engage with various interest groups and employee resource groups (ERGs) within the embassy, such as the Federal Women's Program. This targeted engagement ensured that AFSA's presence was felt across different segments of the embassy community. At the same time, Zeltser-Winant focused on working with USAID's 40-plus Foreign Service officers at post, offering guidance on labor management issues and ensuring that USAID officers felt represented and supported. Zeltser-Winant's depth of expertise in labor management issues has been particularly relevant in providing timely and comprehensive feedback to queries from officers at post as well as supporting the development of her co-rep Martin-Montgomery in the role.



Dinah Zeltser-Winant engages in "plov diplomacy" at post in Kyrgyzstan.

I find satisfaction when we can help a fellow officer feel heard, get an answer, and begin to solve an issue.

—ANNE MARTIN-MONTGOMERY

Zeltser-Winant's individual advocacy work was also deeply personal. After the passing of her tandem FSO spouse in 2022, she encountered issues with the Federal Employees Group Life Insurance Program (FEGLI), which she discovered calculates payouts based on the Overseas Comparability Pay as a substitute for Washington locality pay for officers who died while serving overseas. This results in beneficiaries receiving 11 percent less payout than if their loved one died while stationed in Washington, D.C. Determined to address this inequity, she partnered with AFSA's Legislative Affairs team to advocate for a policy change that would ensure fair compensation for all Foreign Service officers, regardless of location. This legislative effort, which was adopted as one of AFSA's priorities for fiscal year 2024, showcases Zeltser-Winant's determination to make systemic improvements that benefit the entire Foreign Service community.

For Martin-Montgomery, winning this award symbolizes the power of AFSA representatives to effect meaningful change. Her passion for improving working conditions and resolving individual issues is evident in her everyday efforts to assist fellow officers, whether through timely answers, professional guidance, or helping them navigate the complexities of embassy life. "I find satisfaction when we can help a fellow officer feel heard, get an answer, and begin to solve an issue," she says.

Anne Martin-Montgomery is a first-tour diplomatic courier. Prior to joining the State Department, she spent 20 years working in both the for-profit and nonprofit sectors, supporting Asian American community service and cultural organizations in the greater Philadelphia area. She also ran a Mandarin-as-second-language school, promoting multilingual families.

Passionate about representation and accountability, she has previously worked with labor organizations outside government. Through her work with AFSA, she is committed to improving the quality of life for Foreign Service members.

Martin-Montgomery holds graduate degrees in anthropology and Middle East studies. She has one adult daughter.

Dinah Zeltser-Winant joined the USAID Foreign Service in 2008 as a democracy, governance, and stabilization officer. She has served in Liberia, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, South Africa, and



Anne Martin-Montgomery and her daughter at Sukhothai Historical Park in Thailand.

Washington, D.C. She is currently posted in Thailand as the deputy regional director of the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance South and Central Asia Office. Zeltser-Winant has also served on *The Foreign Service Journal* Editorial Board.

A former refugee from Ukraine, she has had a career shaped by her personal history and commitment to global humanitarian work.

Together, Zeltser-Winant and Martin-Montgomery have created a powerful partnership, demonstrating the vibrance of pairing new FSOs with experienced officers as post representatives, thereby effectively increasing AFSA's visibility and enhancing its role as the voice of the Foreign Service. Their efforts to improve workplace conditions, identify overlooked issues, and advocate for policy and legislative change have made a tangible difference in Bangkok and beyond, earning them well-deserved recognition as AFSA Post Representatives of the Year.

AWARD FOR FOREIGN SERVICE CHAMPIONS

Patricia Hanigan Scroggs

Building a More Diverse Service from the Outside

A FSA is proud to honor Patricia Hanigan Scroggs as the 2024 recipient of the Foreign Service Champions Award. This prestigious award, established in 2021, recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to diplomacy and the U.S. Foreign Service, demonstrating a deep commitment to the institution and positively shaping the future of U.S. foreign policy.

Patricia Scroggs embodies the spirit and the highest standards of this award. With almost 40 years of service, both inside and outside the State Department, she has left an indelible mark on the U.S. foreign affairs establishment by fostering inclusivity and innovation in the recruitment of Foreign Service officers.

Scroggs served as the director of diplomatic fellowships at Howard University until her retirement in January 2024, guiding fellowship programs that are transforming the workforce of the foreign affairs agencies. Following a 20-year Foreign Service career, Scroggs joined Howard



Patricia Hanigan Scroggs

University in 2006 to lead its efforts to administer the Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Program jointly with the U.S. Department of State. Over the next 18 years, she worked with State, USAID, and USDA to develop, administer, and expand the number and scope of high-impact diplomatic fellowship programs.

Among her most notable achievements is successful leadership of the Department of State's Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Program and the Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship; USAID's Donald M. Payne International Development Fellowship; and USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service International Agricultural Fellowship and Animal Plant Health Inspection Service Foreign Service Fellowship Program. Howard University administers these fellowships jointly with U.S. government agencies through cooperative agreements.

Behind her tireless work are two simple yet powerful passions: to make the Foreign Service more diverse, equitable, and open to new perspectives, and to attract top talent prepared to advance U.S. national interests.

Throughout her career, Scroggs has been relentless in her advocacy, building relationships across the diplomatic establishment and working closely with AFSA, developing a nationwide network of individuals who help identify diverse talent for the fellowships, establishing innovative professional development and mentoring programs, and facing down challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and budget constraints.



Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton recognizes Patricia Scroggs (center) and then-Howard University President Sidney Ribeau at the Oct. 2, 2012, celebration of the Pickering Fellowship program's 20th and the Rangel Program's 10th anniversaries.

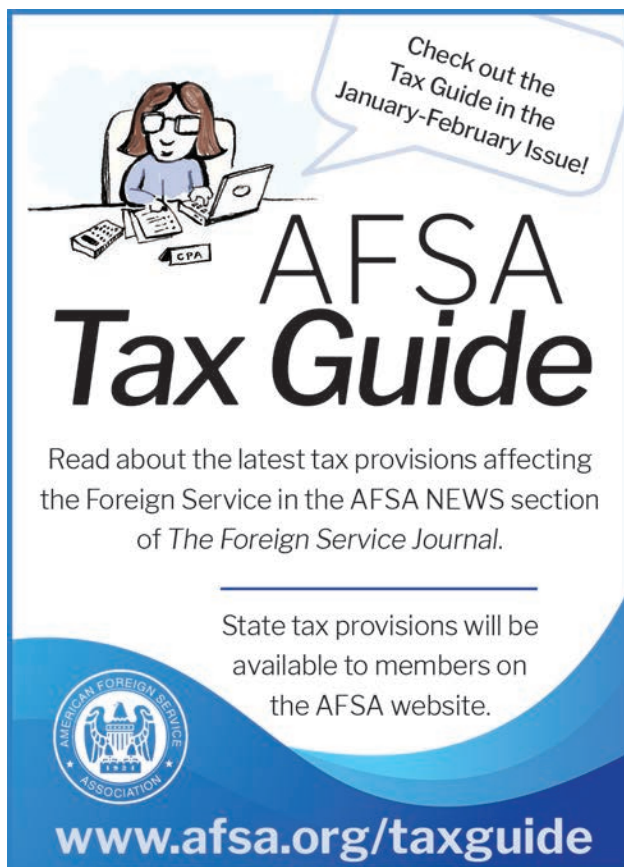
She has fostered partnerships with senior department leaders, employee organizations, retired ambassadors, university leaders, and members of Congress and staff to build a robust network of champions and mentors to support these vital fellowship programs. Her personal mentorship of current fellows and alumni is a hallmark of her service.

Over the years, Scroggs also forged partnerships with more than 50 universities to supplement fellows' funding for graduate school, resulting in more than \$4 million in additional assistance for the recent cohorts of Rangel and Pickering fellows.

Scroggs' commitment to the future of the Foreign Service is rooted in the vision of the 1924 Rogers Act, which sought to create a competitive and open Foreign Service, breaking barriers of race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. She has traveled across the United States, visiting both small towns and major cities, to recruit fellows and share the Foreign Service story with domestic audiences—aligning with AFSA's mission to promote the importance of the Foreign Service at home.

Her efforts have not gone unnoticed. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said that these fellowship programs “have transformed our department,” with fellows advancing U.S. interests in critical roles around the world, from special assistants to ambassadors. This transformation is due in large part to Scroggs' dedication and vision. Her decades of leadership, mentorship, and advocacy have made the Foreign Service a more inclusive and effective institution, ensuring that the U.S. diplomatic corps is representative of the nation it serves.

Patricia Scroggs joined the Foreign Service in 1986 and served for two decades. With a focus on the Asia-Pacific region, she served overseas in Tokyo and Seoul and held multiple D.C.-based positions in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, including director of the office of regional security affairs, special assistant to Assistant Secretary Winston Lord, and multiple desk officer tours. She also served in the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs and in Mazatlan, Mexico. She was the 1990 recipient of AFSA's W. Averell Harriman Award for Constructive Dissent. ■




Check out the Tax Guide in the January-February Issue!

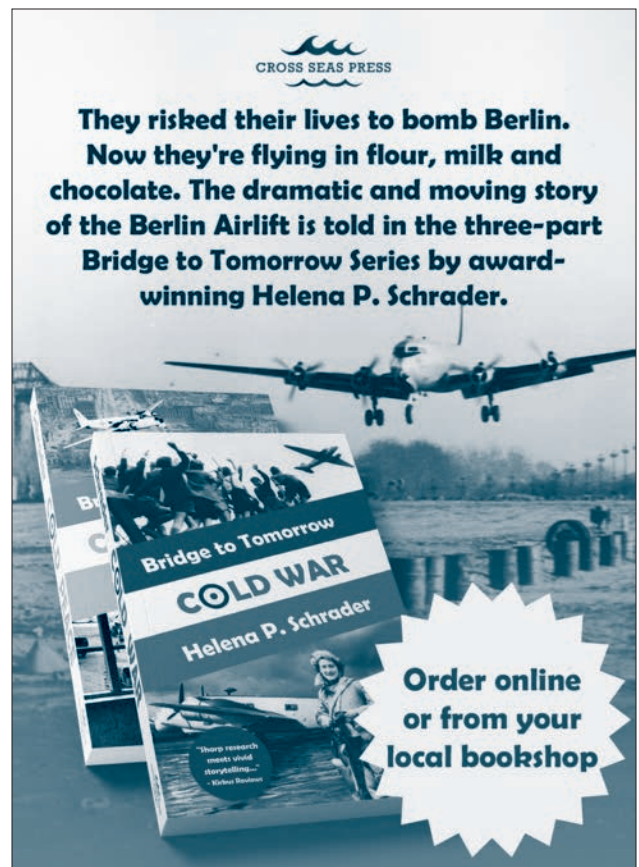
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Social Entrepreneurship AND THE Professional Diplomat

As international geopolitical dynamics become more complex, the scope has increased for “Track II” diplomacy—work to which former members of the Foreign Service are generally well suited.

BY JOHN MARKS



*John Marks is a former Foreign Service officer (1966-1970) who resigned in protest during the Vietnam War. He subsequently worked as executive assistant to U.S. Senator Clifford Case (R-N.J.) and authored two books: *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence* (with Victor Marchetti, 1974) and *The Search for the “Manchurian Candidate”* (1979). In 1982 Marks founded and headed the nonprofit *Search for Common Ground*, which he and his wife, Susan Collin Marks, built into the world’s largest dedicated peacebuilding nongovernmental organization. This article is adapted from his newest book, *From Vision to Action: Remaking the World Through Social Entrepreneurship* (Columbia University Press, 2024).*

Diplomacy between nations has always been accompanied by unofficial gatherings, consultations, and discussions. During the past several decades, as international affairs and foreign policy challenges have become more complex and the activity of a variety of nonstate actors more widespread and significant, such “Track II” diplomacy has come into its own. Today nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) work unofficially around the world on a variety of issues to promote positive social change, including finding the basis for viable official solutions to problems ranging from trade disputes to civil war.

Track II ventures are often begun by social entrepreneurs. These are people who are skilled at launching endeavors aimed at promoting positive change in their community and the world. Their bottom line is not financial profit but the common good.

The nonprofit organization I founded in 1982, Search for Common Ground (commonly known as “Search”), made extensive use of the methodology of social entrepreneurship. Our vision at Search was large: we aimed to transform how the world deals with conflict—moving away from adversarial, *win-lose* approaches and toward nonadversarial, *win-win* problem-solving. The goal was to defuse or prevent violent conflict.



COURTESY OF JOHN MARKS



From left: John Marks, Ambassador Robert Frowick, and Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov in 1993.

Begun as an effort to improve U.S.-Soviet relations, our first major project was to promote superpower cooperation against terrorism. After the fall of the Soviet Union, we grew steadily, branching out to other regions and addressing other issues. In 1991 we began working on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and in 1995 we established our first full country program in Africa, in Burundi. When I stepped down as president of the organization in 2014, we had a staff of 600 full-time employees at work in 35 countries. In 2018 Search for Common Ground was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. We had become the world's largest peace-building nonprofit, and our toolbox included everything from traditional negotiation and mediation to production of TV soap operas and retraining more than 100,000 Congolese soldiers and conducting training to prevent sexual assault by soldiers.

The world would almost certainly be a better place if there were less need for our services. However, I was convinced, and still am, that peace is possible, and that even the most intractable

where resolving conflict was. And moving from a world of protocol and *démarches* to a free-flowing organization like Search usually required major leaps of faith.

Our engagement with the Foreign Service and former ambassadors began in 1991, when I received a phone call, out of the blue, from retired Senior FSO Alfred "Roy" Atherton Jr., a former ambassador to Egypt and assistant secretary of State for Near Eastern affairs. He had heard about Search's work and wanted to become involved. We had never before had such a high-level volunteer, and Atherton became the chair of our Middle East Advisory Board. With the assistance of other retired FSOs and former ambassadors, Search's Middle East projects developed. And when Atherton passed away in 2002, retired FSO and longtime ambassador to Israel Samuel "Sam" Lewis replaced him as head of Search's Mideast board.

Over the decades our engagement with career diplomats has continued; here are two examples of successful collaboration.

conflicts can be resolved without violence.

From early on, I found that retired career diplomats and former ambassadors could be very useful in carrying out this kind of work, and our relationship with the U.S. Foreign Service has been important. Certainly, the diplomats have had to be comfortable operating in a milieu where advancing U.S. foreign policy was not necessarily the goal but



After the agreement with Iran on its nuclear program, the JCPOA, was signed in 2015, from left: Marvin Miller, nuclear scientist; Olli Heinonen, former deputy director, International Atomic Energy Association; Frank von Hippel, Princeton University physicist; Ali Akhtar Salehi, former head of Iranian Atomic Energy Organization; Rush Holt, former U.S. Congressman and a physicist; and Ambassador (ret.) Bill Miller, members of Search's nuclear group.

Macedonia's "Lafayette"

In 1992, Robert "Bob" Frowick had been about to retire from the U.S. Foreign Service when Acting Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger personally asked him to take on an unorthodox position as the U.S. government's unofficial envoy to Macedonia, which had just become a separate country and was not yet officially recognized. Seconded to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and sent to Skopje, Frowick lacked the amenities that a U.S. ambassador normally receives. Still, he was the highest-ranked foreign official in Macedonia, and he became, in effect, the Western proconsul who worked closely with President Kiro Gligorov. (Later, I described him as "Macedonia's Lafayette"—that is to say, the foreigner who had the greatest impact in securing a new country's independence.)

After six months, Frowick went home to what he thought would be a peaceful retirement. A few months later, I offered him the job as Search's country director in Skopje, and, somewhat to my surprise, he accepted. His goal was "to keep Macedonia from exploding" due to ethnic and religious conflict. Search gave him a platform from which he could strengthen the country's immune system. He brought his stature as a senior diplomat, and he projected impeccability. In the steamy Macedonian summer, he usually wore white linen suits, which might have been designed by Halston, the famous fashionista who happened to be his brother.

As Search's man in Skopje, he remade the connections he had formed earlier in his days with CSCE, including his close relationship with President Gligorov, who became a strong supporter of Search. In those days, we were still a tiny organization, and having the backing of the president certainly helped us.

Search was a critical player in what was a three-legged effort to prevent violence. The components were a small United Nations military peacekeeping force, governmental foreign aid programs, and NGO activities like ours. Our role under Frowick and his successors was to carry out projects to promote tolerance and mutual understanding, and we did this by working closely with the press, by producing extensive TV programming, and by revamping early childhood education.

As significant as our work was, ultimately the most important reason the country did not explode probably was that Macedonians were fully aware of the appalling violence in nearby Bosnia, and most people—no matter what their ethnicity—did not want their country to suffer the same fate.

Initiative on Iran

Search's role in the decade-long lead-up to the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the agreement between Iran and the P5+1 (U.S., U.K., France, Russia, China, and Germany) on the Iranian nuclear program, also points to the value of career diplomats in Track II work.

William G. "Bill" Miller, who joined the Foreign Service in 1959 and resigned in 1967 over policy differences, spent five years in Iran as a young FSO. After Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini seized power in 1979, President Jimmy Carter asked Miller to be ambassador to Iran. Before he could be confirmed, militant students seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran. Miller never took up the post, and he was very involved in negotiations to free the hostages. After 444 days, the hostages were finally released, but diplomatic relations never resumed.

Fast forward nearly 20 years. In 1998, after serving as U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, Miller joined Search to work on our initiative to improve U.S.-Iranian relations, something he could not have done from inside the government. Ever the optimist, Miller believed that at some future time Iran and the United States would start talking about the most critical issue that separated them: namely, Iran's nuclear posture. He reasoned that for negotiations to be successful, the two countries would need to find mutually acceptable solutions to technical issues, and he thought that Search could provide an unofficial forum in which experts from both countries could start that process.

In 2005 Miller convened a group that included a United Nations nuclear inspector, Iran's former chief negotiator on nuclear matters, a hydrogen bomb designer, and several others with similar credentials. The group focused on providing impartial analysis and creative problem-solving. Miller kept White House and State Department officials informed, and they privately urged him to continue. We at Search became prime

interlocutors between the U.S. and Iran because the two governments were not connecting in any meaningful way.

Over the next two years, our nuclear group met on six occasions with Javad Zarif, then Iran's ambassador to the UN. Zarif later became foreign minister, and he personally negotiated the eventual nuclear agreement. Miller also met privately with Zarif about once a month. Here is what Zarif had to say about our involvement during this period: "I believe you saved our negotiations. ... Without the work of the group, I believe discussions would have ended. ... If there is any outcome of the negotiations that is to the satisfaction of both sides, it will be a derivative of the discussions of this group."

Just after President Barack Obama was inaugurated in 2009, Miller arranged for and then attended confidential meetings in Europe and New York between former U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry and Ali Akbar Salehi, head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization. Both men had access to top-level policymakers. We never learned what Salehi told Iranian leaders, but we knew that Perry personally reported to Obama that agreements on nuclear

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issues were possible. Miller believed that this was a critical step in moving the two countries into negotiations.

When official talks finally got underway, members of the Search group collaborated on detailed technical papers on how to overcome obstacles. Particularly important was a plan co-authored by three participants—Frank von Hippel, Hossein Mousavian, and Alex Glaser—to redesign the Arak heavy water reactor into a device with far less yield of plutonium and to convert 20 percent enriched uranium into fuel plates. This paper provided the basis for eventually resolving the issue. As Foreign Minister Zarif said in 2016: “I have used what I learned from you when we last met in the negotiations, particularly on conversion of the fuel to oxide form, the limit of the number of centrifuges, and conversion of the Arak reactor. ... You can claim parenthood in this endeavor. Thank you for putting the road in place for us to follow.”

Zarif’s American negotiating partner, Secretary of State John Kerry, similarly stated in a 2017 interview: “During the Iran talks, the fresh ideas you provided helped us to achieve a breakthrough on the Arak heavy water reactor.”

By establishing a credible forum to examine nuclear issues in a mutually respectful manner, Search provided a testing ground for innovative ideas and helped to build trust, which was necessary for eventual negotiations to succeed. Despite our disappointment at the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018, we still were pleased to have contributed as much as we had. We had proved to be ahead of the curve. As Track II diplomats, we had fulfilled our mission of complementing, supplementing, and sometimes anticipating official policy decisions with the invaluable assistance of retired career members of the U.S. Foreign Service, professional diplomatic practitioners.



In the turbulent and fast-changing world of the 21st century, the need for unofficial diplomacy and effective social entrepreneurship can only grow. Senior-level diplomats casting about for meaningful ways to put their skills to use in a follow-on career would be wise to take note. ■

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AFSA Awards Honor Excellence and Constructive Dissent

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. 16 in the State Department’s Dean Acheson Auditorium.

Approximately 250 guests gathered to recognize the winners of the 2024 awards for constructive dissent and 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 11 awards in all; profiles of the winners begin on page 22.

AFSA President Tom Yazdgerdi served as emcee for a distinguished audience; in attendance were many former recipients of AFSA’s Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award, including Ambassadors Ruth A. Davis, Ron Neumann, John Negroponte, Anne Patterson, Nancy Powell, and Tom Pickering.

Other VIPs in attendance were former Secretary of Defense William Cohen, Acting Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs John Bass, Executive Secretary Dereck Hogan, Under Secretary for Economic Growth,

Energy, and the Environment Jose W. Fernandez, and Director of the Foreign Service Institute Joan Polaschik.

Family members and colleagues of the 2024 recipients and senior State officials, such as Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Richard Verma and Director General of the Foreign Service Marcia Bernicat—the co-host of the event—were also in attendance.

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’s Delegates Lounge.

AFSA congratulates all the 2024 award recipients.

Lifetime Contributions

Deputy Secretary Richard Verma presented the 2024 Award for Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy to **Ambassador Marc Grossman** for his long and distinguished career in the U.S. Foreign Service, and for his efforts to enhance diplomatic readiness and to reform and strengthen the Foreign Service.

In accepting the award, Amb. Grossman thanked his family, friends, AFSA, and several organizations that have been part of his journey, including the Senior Living

Continued on page 62

CALENDAR

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

- December 11
12-1:30 p.m.
AFSA Governing Board Meeting
- December 11
4:30-6:30 p.m.
Member Happy Hour
- December 25
Christmas
AFSA Offices Closed
- January 1
New Year’s Day
AFSA Offices Closed
- January 7
12-1:30 p.m.
AFSA Governing Board Meeting
- January 30
12-1 p.m.
Welcome Lunch for USAID C3-39



AFSA award recipients at State, Oct. 16. Top row, from left: Konrad Turski, Cornell Overfield, Amb. Laura Dogu, David Houston, Christophe J. Paccard, Mark Delavan Harrop, Paul Estrada, and Amb. Marc Grossman. Bottom row, from left: Mark Wilson, Emily Green, Sherri Zimmermann, Harry Kopp, Mariya Ilyas, Patricia Scroggs, and Tom Yazdgerdi.



Consensus Building Creates Effective Teams

From day one of our Foreign Service careers, we are part of the State Department team. We are also embedded into the matrix of agencies that make up our executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. As team members in myriad organizations, we need one vital skill to influence both policies and people: consensus building.

There is no “Consensus Building 101”; we develop the skill using approaches we bring from our own cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, learn in various Washington statecraft and leadership courses at the Foreign Service Institute, and acquire on the job.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) defines consensus building as one of the necessary conditions for “team members’ ability to make decisions and solve problems as a group.”

We create consensus by pooling opinions, listening effectively, discussing ideas and differences, and coming to an agreement everyone can live with even though they don’t get all they want. Consensus is not bargaining. It is also not a unanimous or majority vote.

Consensus at AFSA.

While our union does engage in bargaining, I want to focus on our track record for building consensus with State Department counterparts so our Foreign Service work-

force can use this skill in the field. We are always willing to uncover challenges and bring them to the department’s senior management.

When some FS-1 and FS-2 members had trouble fulfilling aspects of the Foreign Service professional development plan (PDP), we listened to the workforce and gathered data on its pain points.

We pick our battles, focusing on achieving long-term goals for reform and modernization of the Foreign Service. Our dialogue with the department usually results in a common understanding of the best approach at that time, given the totality of all the circumstances.

On the PDP issue, reaching consensus has meant the department and AFSA aligned on an approach, stepping up the frequency and quantity of information that helps educate our workforce on the requirements to reach the Senior Foreign Service. We, of course, have more to do to ensure PDP pain points continue to be addressed.

Approaching Consensus. AFSA’s actions in driving consensus do not translate into departure from our core mission to advocate for the long-term health of the Foreign Service.

Rather, we are always looking to improve mutual understanding while respectfully challenging institutional views, with the goal of delivering reforms that address

We pick our battles, focusing on achieving long-term goals for reform and modernization of the Foreign Service.

workforce needs, whether it is a pay issue, a promotion issue, or personnel regulation.

Waymo engineer and former Google DeepMind strategist Vincent Vanhouke describes the ways of building consensus as (1) agree to disagree, (2) agree to agree, and (3) disagree to agree.

The first, agree to disagree, is the most frequent type in the U.S. workplace—and in the State Department—where consensus is reached even when all parties state that they remain in disagreement. Under this scenario, people avoid overt conflict in favor of deferring difficult discussions, discussing issues offline, or escalating to an authority figure.

The second type, agree to agree, can be more efficient but can lead to dismissing issues too early in the discussion. For this strategy, stakeholders often agree to save face and avoid disagreement, even when no enduring consensus is reached, because anything other than full agreement is extremely uncomfortable. The last approach, disagree to agree, begins with opposing views, but favors robust discussion of all views to work toward a compromise.

This often doesn’t drive toward an explicit consensus, instead reaching an implicit consensus by the total sum of perspectives in the room. This approach is a great way to clarify one’s thoughts, create rich debates, and elicit out-of-the-box ideas, but can lead to exhausting conversations.

Find the Right Approach. Like Vanhouke, I believe there is no single “right” approach to consensus building. But a diverse, intergenerational team must be able to flexibly deploy any of these approaches to build trust in the workforce and generate innovative solutions.

At AFSA, we continue to step up our consensus building work within the organization and externally with our agency counterparts. As an organization that promotes constructive dissent and serves as the voice of the Foreign Service, we take the time to engage in consensus building through every approach. ■



AFSA Wins Grievance

In 2020 AFSA filed an implementation dispute with the Foreign Service Grievance Board (FSGB) against the agency for not adhering to policies that had been negotiated with AFSA, as outlined in ADS 414.3.2.3, regarding the creation of noncareer Foreign Service Limited (FSL) positions and improperly withdrawing from the governing USAID AFSA Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The dispute was not filed over FSLs as a hiring category or on behalf of a specific individual or group of FSLs.

AFSA represents both career and noncareer Foreign Service (FS) employees—including FSLs—as part of our bargaining unit, as outlined in the 1980 Foreign Service Act and reaffirmed in the USAID-AFSA Framework Agreement.

FSLs are highly qualified and valued members of the FS who serve as specialized technical advisers, strategic planning and resource management specialists, budget analysts, and in a host of other roles.

Why did AFSA file this dispute? For two years prior to filing the dispute, the agency had been refusing to comply with the terms of ADS 414.3.2.3 and the terms of the MoU governing ADS 414.

Under the MoU, AFSA was to be provided with documentation supporting

the creation of new FSL positions and afforded the opportunity to ask clarifying questions. AFSA was not permitted to deny the creation of new FSL positions. Our role was to ensure agency compliance with ADS 414.

During this period, AFSA submitted numerous requests, with no response from the agency or a refusal to respond. Ultimately, the agency advised AFSA that it would not answer any future requests and withdrew from the MoU. AFSA filed a dispute alleging that the agency:

1. Violated a 2017 Foreign Service Limited Appointments MoU when the agency failed to respond to AFSA's comments and questions;
2. Violated the collectively bargained criteria for FSLs set forth in ADS Chapter 414.3.2.3; and
3. Did not withdraw from the MoU governing ADS 414 in a timely manner.

After filing the dispute, AFSA and the agency engaged in a very lengthy discovery process and filed various motions and legal memoranda.

On Sept. 4, 2024, in case number 2020-049 the FSGB ruled in favor of AFSA on points 1 and 2 and against AFSA on point 3.

What does it mean, and what's next for AFSA?

It means that the agency failed to follow policy, that

AFSA will continue to serve as a check on new positions while also increasing efforts to support our valued FSL colleagues.

had been negotiated with AFSA establishing new FSL positions. And the agency failed to engage in constructive dialogue with AFSA in the performance of our duties protecting and advocating for the FS workforce by ensuring proper implementation of ADS 414.

The FSGB directed the agency to notify the field that it had not complied with the requirements of ADS 414.

For the more than 26 positions established in the period covered by the dispute, the agency must now respond to the original questions submitted by AFSA.

Additionally, the FSGB directed the agency to “comply with ADS 414.3.2.3 for future FSL appointments unless or until its provisions are amended through collective bargaining.” The FSGB also invited AFSA to submit a petition for attorney fees.

Since the ruling, the agency and AFSA have been discussing a settlement outlining implementation of the ruling.

AFSA's intent is to return to the oversight provided under the MoU but with caveats recognizing the need for FSL positions at the FS-2 level in D.C. while protecting

FSO positions overseas and at the FS-1 level in D.C.

Our aim is to be a check on the agency and ensure that the policies outlined in ADS 414 and new ADS 414 are followed, that bureaus are doing required due diligence creating FSL positions, and that HCTM adheres to agency policy.

Too often, the agency allowed bureaus to create FSL positions without proper planning as a way to avoid budget constraints. This has harmed both FSOs and FSLs at USAID, who too often found themselves pitted against each other and feeling undervalued.

The FSGB's decision, coupled with the new ADS 417 on workforce planning and updates to ADS 414, should go a long way in restoring real workforce planning at USAID. AFSA will continue to serve as a check on new positions while also increasing efforts to support our valued FSL colleagues.

If you have any questions on the implementation dispute, the FSGB's ruling, or any other issue please contact me at chester@afsa.org. ■



Some Things to Celebrate

Like many of us, at the end of each year I often reflect on the past dozen months. I've found these annual reviews useful for discovering areas in which I have grown and for acknowledging areas that need more work.

Similarly, organizations can take this approach to both uncover areas for improvement and celebrate their achievements.

As we turn the corner on 2024 and welcome the new year and new administration ahead, FCS has a tremendous amount to celebrate. I certainly am not one to gloss over the immense challenges that lay before us, nor the systemic process issues that continue to hinder our ability to serve our nation.

I have and I will dedicate column space to those issues to prove whether sunlight really is the best disinfectant. Right now, however, let's celebrate!

I'm writing this shortly after an all-hands town hall call with FCS leadership. Hundreds of colleagues joined from the U.S. and around the world to hear our leaders share the outstanding successes we have achieved as an organization this past year.

In fiscal year 2024, FCS supported more than 100,000 companies, helped to create or retain more than 588,000 U.S. jobs, and had an economic impact on our

nation of more than \$176.5 billion in exports and inward investment!

These are staggering numbers for a small agency. Kudos to our colleagues for hitting these impressive milestones. A victim of our own success, we have set a new bar for the Office of Management and Budget and our appropriators.

These wins have certainly come at a cost, however, and our FCS teams overseas are feeling burned out. And, with 75 percent of our senior-most officers leaving in the coming two to three years, the picture in the rearview mirror looks brighter than the road ahead.

Nevertheless, there have been some other less measurable, but no less important, wins worth noting from the past year.

AFSA fought furiously and successfully to overcome the potential lapse in overseas comparability pay (OCP). So many of us breathed a huge sigh of relief when that was resolved, for now. In the year ahead, I am committed to addressing the Senior Foreign Service pay inequities by collaborating with some internal champions.

Slimmer budgets have slashed our training opportunities. Yet, thanks to the creativity of our members, AFSA will be helping to organize new "communities of practice" designed to enhance

officer development through collaborative learning and shared expertise.

Our goal is to create a meaningful forum that taps into the knowledge within our community to support growth and innovation. This peer-to-peer training initiative is just getting started, and I'm hopeful that it will help us all up our game in the year ahead.

It's also important to celebrate that FCS has a new compass and focused direction. With internal initiatives like the modernized Commercial Service and a detailed five-year plan, we have an organizational destination that is clearer now than in years past.

FCS plays a major role in advancing our national security, and we have the plans and processes to do it. A key missing ingredient, though, is more people. There is hope that with these plans and renewed focus, funding will flow.

It's also imperative that we spike the football on a few other wins that will make FCS stronger. After more than 18 months of negotiations and litigation, the Foreign Service Grievance Board found that the special bidding opportunity process contravenes written agreements with AFSA (FSGB 2023-020). The Foreign Service Labor Relations Board (FSLRB) subsequently denied the agency's appeal

of the FSGB decision.

In another case, the agency and AFSA resolved a petition for clarification of the bargaining unit that AFSA had filed with the FSLRB. There was a question about which positions in headquarters are outside the collective bargaining agreement and therefore ineligible for union protections. That question has been officially settled.

All Foreign Service positions, with the exception of the Deputy DG and the career development officer positions, are again part of the bargaining unit represented by AFSA. Welcome home, deputy assistant secretaries and executive directors!

These cases needn't have been fought, and our association's efforts could have been better spent fighting budgetary and other common challenges. Such issues came about likely due to poor advice to leadership, and their resolution unnecessarily took time and resources. Special thanks to AFSA's Office of General Counsel and my predecessors for their exceptional work on this.

With so much to celebrate as 2024 ends, we turn the page toward the unknowns of the year ahead. Let's raise a glass and toast to a stronger and more focused Commercial Service! ■



Explain Yourself

I learned many important lessons as a first-tour officer in Tokyo. Among them was this: Never assume someone knows what you do or who you are—even if you just told them.

In Tokyo, I helped our Agricultural Trade Office team host roughly 60 U.S. companies in the USA Pavilion each year at Japan's largest food and beverage tradeshow. For four years, I would kick off the tradeshow with a country briefing, educating a packed room of 40-50 U.S. exhibitors about FAS, our programs in Japan, and the latest economic conditions in the Japanese market.

Throughout the show, I'd regularly drop by exhibitors' booths to talk about their products, their experience at the show, and any challenges my office might be able to help them overcome.

Through these conversations, I got to know the exhibitors—especially those that came back every year. I got to know about their families, their career goals, big projects they were working on, you name it. It was retail public service. I was the friendly, helpful face of the USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service. And I was crushing it. Or so I thought.

In my fourth and final year in Tokyo, I started talking about my next assignment and how I'd miss all my tradeshow friends the

following year. Incredulously, an exhibitor for whom I'd written a letter of recommendation for a graduate degree program replied, "Wait a minute. You work for the government? I thought you just worked for the tradeshow!"

I was reeling. What about the country brief during which they took copious notes? What about the USDA logos? What about when I brought Ambassador Caroline Kennedy to the pavilion?

None of that had registered; my role as a Foreign Service officer was completely misunderstood. I asked more exhibitors, and virtually none of them knew that FAS had helped foot the bill for the pavilion, let alone that our dedicated team of locally employed staff was ready to help them resolve trade issues, navigate Japanese government bureaucracy, and so much more.

It was a humbling and extremely useful lesson for an entry-level officer. Since that day, I've never assumed that anyone I'm talking to has any idea who I am or what I do.

It was at that show that I developed my FAS elevator speech, explaining who FAS is, what we do, and why.

I had assumed that our tradeshow exhibitors were intelligent, capable people (they are) who would put the pieces together on

their own (they didn't). And though I feared "selling" my agency so directly could be off-putting to some, I concluded taxpayers' lack of understanding about FAS' role would be a greater risk to the FAS mission.

Much to my delight, my 30-second summary (see box) has nearly always lit the proverbial light bulb above my audience's head in the seven years since.

Ironically, this is a useful lesson even within my own agency, where our 150(ish) Foreign Service officers are a relatively small group in comparison to our roughly 600 civil service colleagues or the 350 or so locally employed staff.

As I take the baton from my predecessor and engage with a new agency negotiating team, I look forward to sharing with them the experiences, the wisdom, and the passion that FAS officers like me bring to our work.

I am confident that by explaining our wide range of experiences—along with not assuming, suppressing ego, thinking creatively, setting clear expectations, and working hard—we'll be able to find mutually agreeable improvements in agency policy and procedures that will carry FAS forward more effectively, more efficiently, and with better morale. ■

The Elevator Pitch for FAS

The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, with 95 offices in 75 countries, works to expand U.S. agricultural exports in three key ways.

First, FAS uses trade policy to ensure U.S. food and agricultural products can legally enter overseas markets.

Second, it promotes U.S. products and builds demand by working with around 70 U.S. agricultural trade associations, providing matching funds to help them reach a broader audience.

Third, in developing countries, FAS provides trade capacity building and non-humanitarian food assistance to promote economic development.

More broadly, FAS also supports global agricultural trade through rigorous economic analysis and market intelligence, including its Global Agricultural Information Network (GAIN) and contributions to USDA reports such as the World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE). ■

AFSA Awards
Continued from page 57

Foundation (SLF) and the Association for Safe International Road Travel (ASIRT). He began with a tribute to Ambassador Davis, and also paid tribute to those who have passed, including his parents and colleagues from the Foreign Service family.

Reflecting on his time in the Foreign Service, Amb. Grossman spoke about the broader purpose of diplomacy in the 21st century: “What purpose will American diplomacy serve in the 21st century? I was proud to be an American diplomat. I believe diplomacy has a role to play in solving many of the problems that confront individual citizens and the nations in which they live. Diplomacy can identify paths to a more prosperous and peaceful future.

“To make [positive outcomes] possible, Americans must bridge the divisions that today consume our public institutions. Simultaneously, the purposes, processes, culture, and supporting institutions of U.S. diplomacy must change if today’s diplomats have any chance of carrying out their vital work effectively.”

Grossman reiterated the enduring value of diplomacy: “When young people ask me if they should become diplomats and represent the United States, my answer is always ‘absolutely.’ America needs professional, creative, and courageous diplomats



At the award ceremony reception, from left: Mariya Ilyas, Director for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at SFRC Mischa Thompson, AFSA Governing Board Member Kimberly McClure, Foreign Service Champion Patricia Scroggs, Foreign Service Officer Hermes Grullon and AFSA State Vice President Tina Wong.

who represent the values, diversity, and strength of the United States to promote and protect America’s interests, values, and citizens around the globe.”

He reminded the audience that those who take the oath of office to serve in the State Department are embarking on what former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage memorably called “a life of significance.”

See the *Journal’s* interview with Amb. Grossman on page 22.

Foreign Service Champions

Established in 2022, the **Foreign Service Champions Award** recognizes an influential 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, nongovernment organizations, or elsewhere.

Tom Yazdgerdi presented this year’s award to **Patricia Hanigan Scroggs**. After serving in the Foreign Service from 1986 to 2005, Scroggs devoted herself to transforming the U.S. Foreign Service by developing and expanding fellowship programs that promote diversity in the Foreign Service and Civil Service.

“I am honored to be recognized for my leadership of the Diplomatic Fellowships program administered by Howard University. These are the Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Program, the Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship Program,

the Donald M. Payne International Development Fellowship Program, and the newer USDA fellowship programs.

“Our fellows bring the resilience, persistence, cultural adaptability, intelligence, and other attributes that have allowed them to excel as they navigate lives that often include significant challenges. Their stories are as powerful and diverse as the challenges they will face in their Foreign Service careers.”

Scroggs shared her pride in the fact that today, one in nine Foreign Service officers is an alumnus of one of these programs, and she expressed hope for the continued success of their efforts in shaping the future of American diplomacy.



Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Richard R. Verma (right) presents Ambassador Marc Grossman with the 2024 Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award.

Awards for Constructive Dissent

Ambassador Charles Rivkin presented the **William R. Rivkin Award for Constructive Dissent** by a mid-level officer. The 2024 award went jointly to **Konrad Turski, Caryl Tuma, Emily Green, and Michael Casey** for their efforts, initiative, and leadership in the face of a sensitive and evolving situation following the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel.

In her acceptance speech, Green said: “Throughout this crisis, I had the privilege of working alongside many brave colleagues trying to do the right thing in an utterly untenable situation. My colleagues and I came together to develop a narrow, constructive dissent that we felt compelled

to submit in line with our values, integrity, and high standards of professional conduct. And we’re honored to work for an organization that allows for and even celebrates dissent.

“It’s vital that we confront and challenge these prejudices, not just in moments of high visibility, but as a constant practice in our daily lives.”

In his remarks, Konrad Turski took the opportunity to honor his colleagues at the U.S. Office of Palestinian Affairs and across U.S. Embassy Jerusalem.

“These are some of the most inspiring people you will meet in the Foreign Service, serving under extraordinary pressure,” Turski said. He spoke about the challenges his colleagues faced, from missile barrages and

airport closures to threats of violence, adding, “Despite all this, our extraordinary colleagues persevered, not despite, but because of the urgency of this crisis.”

Casey and Tuma were unable to attend the ceremony.

Information Management Specialist **David Houston** was the recipient of the **F. Allen “Tex” Harris award for a Foreign Service specialist**. The award was presented by AFSA President Tom Yazdgerdi.

A former U.S. Army captain and Afghanistan war veteran, Houston was recognized for his pioneering work in advancing U.S. foreign policy through digital assets and distributed ledger technology.

Mariya Ilyas, a political-conced Foreign Service officer, received the **2024 W. Averell Harriman Award** for her leadership and intellectual courage following the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel.

While serving in the Bureau of Political Military Affairs in Washington, Ilyas advocated for more inclusive policies, expanding Employee Consultation Services globally and elevating the voices of Muslim and Arab employees.

In her acceptance speech, Ilyas said: “To dissent is not to be an idle contrarian but a passionate pragmatist—one who worries when a discrepancy emerges and identifies pathways for course correction.

“Together, we can demonstrate that justice, dignity, and peace are not illusions, but possibilities.”

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 to post or office effectiveness and morale beyond the framework of their job responsibilities.

Mark Delavan Harrop presented this year’s award to **Dana Sutcliffe** for her work on innovative collaborative projects at U.S. Embassy Tegucigalpa, where she serves as the OMS to Ambassador Laura Dogu.

Sutcliffe was unable to attend, but in her acceptance remarks, delivered by Amb. Dogu, Sutcliffe expressed deep gratitude: “This recognition is not just a reflection of my efforts; it represents the collective spirit of our team. Your support and partnership have been the driving force behind our successes.

“Mission Honduras aims to be a forward-thinking leader in diplomatic initiatives, and we strive to embrace technology to improve our operations. I hope we all continue

to champion innovation, teamwork, and inclusivity as we shape the future of our department.”

In addition, **Diana H. Trinh**, the executive office manager at the U.S. consulate general in Ho Chi Minh City, was recognized as the honorable mention for the 2024 Delavan Award for her leadership in community building, DEIA initiatives, and professional mentorship.

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.

The 2024 award was presented jointly to **Christophe J. Paccard** and **Sherri Zimmermann** for their exceptional leadership and service in the aftermath of the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas terrorist attack on Israel.

In her acceptance speech, Zimmermann emphasized the critical role of CLOs: “Our job is to be directly responsible for driving and maintaining the morale and quality of life for the diplomatic staff, their families, and the embassy community as a whole.”

Paccard expressed gratitude to the Global Community Liaison Office (GCLO) for their support and acknowledged the personal

significance of the award: “Coming from a small village in France, I never imagined that one day I’d be accepting such a prestigious award.

This moment truly fulfills my American dream.

“Let’s continue to lift each other up and stay strong, no matter what challenges come our way.”

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.

Two recipients were selected this year: **Paul Estrada**, for his work on the Ukraine desk at the onset of Russia’s full-scale invasion, and **Mark Wilson**, whose work was instrumental in ensuring a peaceful transition of power in Senegal amid regional instability. The awards were presented by Shiraz Mahyera.

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 and presented this year by Avis Bohlen.

The 2024 award went

to **Cornell Overfield** for his transformative work in Bishkek, where he launched the “Mishek Ui” (Cat Home) project.

“The close relationship between civil society and U.S. embassy community members is invaluable. As they would say in the Kyrgyz Republic, ‘Two friends can go over one pass; two friendly nations will go over a thousand passes,’” Overfield said in his acceptance speech.

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

The 2024 award was presented jointly to **Dinah Zeltser-Winant** and **Anne Martin-Montgomery**, AFSA representatives at the U.S. embassy in Bangkok, for their outstanding efforts in supporting AFSA’s mission at the largest embassy in the world.

While Zeltser-Winant and Martin-Montgomery were not able to attend the ceremony, Martin-Montgomery’s nephew, Gavin Robey, had the following words to say on her behalf:

“On behalf of my aunt, I would like to extend her thanks for the tireless support of her co-rep Dinah Zeltzer-Winant, James Yorke, Patrick Bradley, and

the amazing AFSA staff. As a first-tour Foreign Service officer, she is honored to have the opportunity to serve her fellow FSOs at U.S. Embassy Bangkok and looks forward to filling the role of post rep in her future assignments. ... This honor reflects the potential all AFSA reps have. She hopes to live up to that potential.”

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.

The AFSA president presented the award to **Harry Kopp** in recognition of his unparalleled contributions to chronicling and preserving the legacy of both the Foreign Service and AFSA.

In his acceptance remarks, Kopp candidly reflected on his journey with AFSA, saying: “I could say as politicians do that I’m humbled by this award, but I’m not. I’m really kind of proud and not ashamed to say so.”

A recording of the event is available at <https://afsa.org/videos>. ■

AFSA President's Outreach in California

On Oct. 6, AFSA President Tom Yazdgerdi embarked on an outreach trip to Southern California, taking advantage of an invitation from the World Affairs Council of Orange County (WACOC) to deliver a keynote address on the Foreign Service Centennial at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum on Oct. 7.

His visit aimed to foster connections with local communities, business leaders, students, and AFSA members—both active-duty and retired.

Yazdgerdi also participated in a radio interview with Voice of Laguna after addressing an audience of students, business professionals, and community members at the Nixon Library.

He remarked on the Foreign Service's role and current challenges, including the continued importance of diplomacy and the need to appropriately fund what is America's first line of defense.

This event, co-hosted by WACOC, also featured a panel of Foreign Service officers who shared insights into diplomatic life and encouraged the audience, which had a number of students, to consider a career in the Foreign Service. A notable outcome was the extension of the Foreign Service Centennial exhibit at the Nixon Library through the end of 2024.

In Los Angeles, Yazdgerdi met with Ambassador Nina



Tom Yazdgerdi discusses the importance of the Foreign Service during a radio interview with Voice of Laguna.

Hachigian, the U.S. special representative for city and state diplomacy, to discuss the growing importance of subnational diplomacy, especially set against the backdrop of the 2028 Summer Olympic Games, which Los Angeles will host.

Yazdgerdi also visited LA City Hall to meet officials working for the deputy mayor for international affairs, an office that Amb. Hachigian established in 2017—the first of its kind in the United States—to institutionalize the growing importance of contacts with mayors, provincial leaders, and governors in countries across the world.

He also visited USC's Center on Public Diplomacy, where he spoke with students about careers in diplomacy and fielded questions about




Tom Yazdgerdi addresses an audience of USC students.

the ability to dissent constructively

Throughout the trip, Yazdgerdi connected with AFSA members over discussions ranging from overseas comparability pay to the high cost of living in California, which can influence subnational diplomacy rotational opportunities.

This AFSA outreach trip helped raise awareness about the work of the Foreign Service and strengthened partnerships for future collaboration, continuing the commemoration of the Foreign Service's centennial year. ■


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Foreign Service Night at Nationals Park

Continuing a beloved annual tradition for the Foreign Service community, AFSA and the Washington Nationals hosted Foreign Service Night at Nationals Park on Sept. 27, 2024.

Despite the rain, more than 300 members of the Foreign Service and their families gathered to watch the Nationals take on the Philadelphia Phillies.

AFSA's group had a bit of extra luck this year, as their section was chosen as the "Lucky Row" for the game. Everyone in the area received fun treats, including M&Ms and Hubba Bubba bubble gum.

The Nationals' dominant 9-1 victory over the Phillies brought plenty of cheers from the crowd. Even after the final out, the festivities continued as country music group Lady A performed a lively postgame concert despite the rainy weather.

AFSA extends a big thank you to the Washington Nationals for making this event possible and to everyone who braved the rain to make Foreign Service Night 2024 such a memorable occasion.

This annual event, first held in 2016 as part of AFSA's strategic outreach initiative, continues to offer a wonderful opportunity for the Foreign Service community to gather, celebrate, and enjoy America's pastime together. ■



AFSA Governing Board Meeting, September 18, 2024

At their Sept. 18 meeting, the board approved distribution from the Legal Defense Fund of up to \$20,000 to support a collective action challenging a recent State Department ruling on anomalous health incidents (AHI) benefits eligibility.

The board approved a \$15,000 distribution from the Legal Defense Fund to defray a portion of a member's legal fees incurred in pursuing disability retirement. The member is also a member of the collective AHI action referenced above.

The board appointed AFSA State Representative Heather Pishko to serve as chair of the DEIA committee.

The board appointed AFSA FAS Vice President Evan Mangino to serve on the membership and scholarship committees.

The board accepted the independent auditor's report. ■

AFSA Welcomes USAID and State Cohorts

On Oct. 1, 7, and 16, AFSA welcomed two new cohorts of Foreign Service professionals, hosting a luncheon for incoming USAID Foreign Service officers and two luncheons for the September 2024 State Department orientation class.

The Oct. 1 luncheon celebrated the arrival of 22 new USAID FSOs representing nine different backstops including executive officers, financial management officers, agriculture officers, and economists.

The group brings rich experience: They speak a combined 11 languages, including Arabic, French, Russian, and Swahili, and have lived, worked, or studied in 71 countries across the globe. They have had colorful

personal experiences, such as cycling across 10 countries and bungee jumping into the Nile River.

Eleven participants have previous experience with USAID, adding valuable perspectives to the team. Others come from the non-profit sector, private industry, other U.S. government agencies, and international organizations.

On Oct. 7, AFSA welcomed the September 2024 State Department orientation class at two separate luncheons. This cohort includes approximately 235 Foreign Service professionals, 51 percent of whom are generalists while 49 percent are specialists.

Fellows make up a quarter of the class, including

34 Pickering Fellows, three Rangel Fellows, nine Foreign Affairs Information Technology (FAIT) Fellows, and nine Consular Fellows.

Women comprise 44 percent of the total class, while 57 percent of the generalists are women. The class includes 31 political officers, 29 public diplomacy officers, 24 Diplomatic Security special agent candidates, and 26 office management specialists, along with a mix of construction engineers, financial management officers, and facility managers.

Around 60 percent of these new hires have previous ties to the State Department as direct hires, interns, contractors, or eligible family members. Addition-

ally, nearly 25 percent have served in other federal government roles, including as Peace Corps volunteers.

Their expertise spans a variety of fields, including architecture, law, engineering, and project management. Many have also honed their skills abroad, with nearly 70 percent familiar with at least one foreign language and 40 percent speaking two or more.

The class is rich with unique experiences, including teaching yoga to cabinet ministers in Djibouti, defusing bombs, creating Nepal's first digital library, and volunteering at a carbon-negative farm in Costa Rica.

Welcome to the new USAID and State members. ■

Foreign Policy at Chautauqua

During the week of Sept. 23, AFSA collaborated with the Road Scholar program to present a weeklong series of foreign policy lectures at the historic Chautauqua Institution in upstate New York.

The series attracted 150 participants from more than 25 U.S. states, with one attendee traveling from as far away as Perth, Australia. Set against the backdrop of Chautauqua's rich tradition of intellectual engagement and the beautiful lake of the same name, the event featured in-depth discussions on a

range of international issues, including U.S. foreign assistance, Middle East turmoil, an aggressive Russia, and life in the Foreign Service.

The Chautauqua Institution is a nonprofit, 750-acre community on Chautauqua Lake in southwestern New York State. It is dedicated to exploring the best in human values and enriching life through programs that address religious, social, and political issues, encouraging creative and thoughtful engagement. Chautauqua is celebrating its sesquicentennial in 2024.

The program included talks by AFSA President Tom Yazdgerdi, former AFSA President Ambassador Eric Rubin, Ambassador John O'Keefe, Jim Bever, Molly Williamson, Roberta Mahoney, and Steve Herman.

Their perspectives and expertise provided participants with a vivid window into the complexities of global affairs.

The series was part of AFSA's ongoing outreach efforts to enhance public understanding of the vital work that the Foreign Service performs in implementing U.S. foreign policy. ■



AFSA speakers at Chautauqua. Clockwise from back left: Eric Rubin, John O'Keefe, Tom Yazdgerdi, Steve Herman, Roberta Mahoney, and Molly Williamson.



AFSA's Good Works

Member Engagement

As a membership organization, AFSA devotes significant resources to keeping its members informed and connected. Below is a list of some of AFSA's most popular resources and opportunities to be engaged for members.

Every weekday morning, the AFSA **Media Digest** shares links to news stories, opinion pieces, and blog posts about issues affecting Foreign Service members. The digest gathers items from far and wide, offering a range of information beyond what one would find by subscribing to a handful of leading newspapers and magazines.

Several times a month, AFSA sends **AFSANet** email messages updating members on the association's programs and activities. Among those messages are updates on congressional advocacy, agency-specific initiatives, and state-level advocacy. An archive of past messages is on the AFSA website at <https://afsa.org/recent-afsa-messages>.

AFSA's flagship publication, **The Foreign Service Journal**, is mailed to members 10 times a year and also available online. The **FSJ AFSA News** section provides updates on programs and events as well as informative columns by AFSA vice presidents representing each agency and retirees.

Members who are active on social media can get AFSA content on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, and X (formerly known as Twitter).

News and guidance on federal benefits from AFSA is available in multiple formats. The bimonthly **retirement e-newsletter** provides both active employees and retirees with information about their benefits. AFSA's **Retirement Resources webpage** at <https://afsa.org/retirement-resources> contains more than 100 documents and links, including checklists for retirement planning, frequently asked questions, and videos of presentations about retirement topics led by subject matter experts.

Finally, current retirees are mailed an annual **retiree directory**, which, along with contact information on fellow retirees, includes 25 pages of benefits guidance.

Active-duty employees can obtain authoritative guidance on workplace issues from AFSA's Office of the General Counsel on that office's **labor management guidance webpage** at <https://afsa.org/labor-management-guidance-office-general-counsel-ogc>.

Included in the 45 documents linked there is information on policies and procedures for grievances, equal employment opportunity (EEO) investigations, and Diplomatic Security interviews.

Throughout the year, AFSA offers a variety of **online presentations** and **in-person events** to inform and connect its

AFSA's Good Works

We conclude the centennial year with this tenth and final profile of an AFSA program that advances the collective or individual interests of its members. This issue features member engagement.

members. Online programs include town halls, professional development webinars, presentations on retirement benefits, discussions of post-retirement activities, and book talks by authors on Foreign Service topics.

In-person events at AFSA headquarters include happy hours and the annual Foreign Service Day open house.

To celebrate the 2024 centennial of the founding of the U.S. Foreign Service and AFSA, your association created an **online merchandise store** featuring Foreign Service-related merchandise including caps, sweaters, and coffee mugs. Click on "Shop our Merch" at <https://afsa.org/celebrating-100-years-american-diplomacy>, and wrap up your holiday shopping.

AFSA offers a variety of ways for members to get actively involved in advancing the association's mission. The **AFSA Governing Board** comprises members who stepped up to seek election. Look for the call for nominations for the 2025-2027 board in next month's AFSA News.

Nearly 100 members currently serve as **AFSA post representatives**, assisting fellow employees with management-related problems and serving as a liaison with AFSA to pass on the views of members at post.

Each year, more than 30 members answer the call to serve as judges in AFSA's **academic merit scholarship program**. More than a dozen members currently serve on AFSA committees including the **Foreign Service Journal Editorial Board** and the **Elections Committee**.

Members are also an important part of AFSA outreach activities that focus on telling the story of the Foreign Service. AFSA's **Speakers Bureau** deploys members across the country to participate in virtual and in-person events.

The work of members is featured on AFSA's social media, and members play an important role in amplifying AFSA content. *The Foreign Service Journal* publishes articles by active-duty and retired members in each of the 10 editions per year.

Finally, many of AFSA's advocacy efforts begin with an email or phone call from a member reporting a problem or raising an issue. To contact AFSA, email member@afsa.org or use the form at <https://afsa.org/contact-us>.

Member involvement and input makes AFSA stronger, so please stay engaged with your association during your career and throughout retirement. ■

—John K. Naland

From preschool through college, you're never alone. Learn about education resources available to Foreign Service families.

BY REBECCA MCPHERSON



Navigating the Foreign Service Educational Landscape

Whether you are new to the Foreign Service community or have been posted overseas for years, you're likely to have questions about education issues that affect you and your family members overseas. What you need to know for your 2-year-old's preschool education is vastly different from what you need to prepare your high school junior for the college application process. Understanding where to go and who to talk to is paramount when you are navigating your child's education.

For many FS parents, the first step is the Global Community Liaison Office (GCLO), formerly the Family Liaison Office.

GCLO's mission for the past 46 years has been to advocate for solutions to challenges posed by the Foreign Service lifestyle, to provide programs and client services that cater to all demographics in the community, and to extend these services overseas through the management of the Community Liaison Office (CLO) program.

Under the GCLO umbrella, the education and youth team functions as a central resource hub providing comprehensive information and connecting FS members to partner offices that can help answer questions and guide clients to what, where, and how to meet the educational needs of their children.



Rebecca McPherson has been a Foreign Service family member for 10 years, serving both overseas and domestically. She joined the Global Community Liaison Office in January 2020, first as the support services specialist and, in September 2021, as the education and youth program specialist. Prior to that, she was a biometrics facilitator in Manila and a community liaison office coordinator in Lusaka. Before joining the State Department, she was in sales and marketing, served in the ministry both in South Africa and New York, and worked as a real estate agent and property manager in Maryland. She is currently on a DETO assignment while posted to Angola.

The education and youth team functions as a central resource connecting FS members to partner offices that can help answer questions and guide clients.

From Preschool to College

Every year, GCLO updates and distributes the Overseas Child Care Report (OCR), a snapshot of options for nannies, daycare, preschool, and summer camps available at overseas posts. This report is compiled by community liaison office coordinators (CLOs) at post and is meant to be a starting point for employees and their families to research options; it includes contact information

for facilities used by families at that post, programs available, estimated cost of attendance, and more.

Contact GCLOAskEducation@state.gov or the CLO at post to request a copy. Your CLO can also connect you to other families who can provide feedback about these facilities.

The OCR is one of several reports available in the Overseas Briefing Center’s Post Info to Go (PITG) report,

an extensive bidding resource tool that provides information about life at each post. Employees and family members can request access to PITG by emailing PostInfoToGoExternal@state.gov.

Transitioning Overseas and Back to D.C.

Heading back to D.C. for language training or an assignment? GCLO’s childcare webpage provides information on preschools and daycare facilities in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia, including at the Foreign Service Institute and near Main State. It also includes links to free preschools in Washington, D.C., as well as summer camp options.

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Supporting children during transitions from school to school and post to post can be a daunting endeavor.

can be a daunting endeavor. Many factors come into play: everything from the size of the school to the course offerings, whether there is an orchestra or volleyball team, and if the student culture is welcoming.

If your child has specific behavioral, social, emotional, or educational needs, and you want to find out which schools overseas can meet these needs, connect with the regional education officers (REOs) in the Office of Overseas Schools. REOs have decades of experience as educators and administrators

in international schools and maintain close working relationships with the school directors at the Department of State’s assisted schools.

Also check with the Child and Family Program (CFP) at the Bureau of Medical Services, as they determine eligibility and provide authorization for the Special Needs Education Allowance (SNEA).

If you are transitioning back to the D.C. area, the GCLO report “Bouncing Back: Transition and Re-entry Planning for the Parents of Foreign Service

Youth” can help you guide your children through this process. If you have questions about dual immersion language programs or need to know which public schools offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, take a look at the resources listed on GCLO’s website.

The coordinators of the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia (DMV) public school student registration offices understand the challenges that highly mobile families face and can be helpful when navigating the registration process. GCLO meets with and maintains a list of those contacts in its annual School Enrollment Guidance checklist; contact GCLOAskEducation@state.gov to request the list.

(Continues on page 78)



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EDUCATION AT A GLANCE

Go to our webpage at www.afsa.org/education.

| 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 | 77 | 330 | 50/50 | 15 | 20 | PK-12 | AP | N | Limited | 3 | Y | Y | 60,100-68,150 ^{abdeg} |
| Ojai Valley School | 79 | 321 | 60/40 | 24 | 10 | PK-12 | AP | Y | Y | 84 | Y | Y | 67,800 ^{df} |
| Riverstone International School | 82 | 315 | 52/48 | 32 | 12 | PK-12 | IB | Y | Y | 9 | Y | Y | 18,000-55,000 ^b |
| Rochambeau The French International School | 82 | 1239 | 46/54 | NA | 30 | PK-12 | AP/IB | N | Limited | 60 | Y | N | 70,500 ^b |
| JUNIOR HIGH/SENIOR HIGH | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| New England Innovation Academy | 79 | 123 | 60/40 | 30 | 16 | 7-12 | NA | Y | Limited | 38 | N | Limited | 68,856 ^{be} |
| Valley Forge Military Academy | 83 | 125 | ALL Boys | 94 | 11 | 7-12 | NA | Y | Y | 20 | N | Limited | 39,304 ^{abd} |
| SENIOR HIGH | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Christchurch School | 81 | 221 | 57/43 | 70 | 30 | 9-12 | AP | Y | Y | 50 | Y | Y | 64,900 ^d |
| EF Academy New York | 71 | 250 | 40/60 | 98 | 90 | 9-12 | AP/IB | N | Y | 40.5 | Y | N | 46,200-76,100 ^{ab} |
| EF Academy Pasadena | 71 | 250 | 54/46 | 85 | 75 | 9-12 | AP | N | Y | 32 | Y | N | 46,200-76,100 ^{ab} |
| Fountain Valley School | 77 | 240 | 50/50 | 70 | 25 | 9-12 | AP | Y | Limited | 80 | Y | Limited | 72,700 ^b |
| Oldfields School | 81 | 30 | All Girls | 70 | 3 | 8-12 | AP | Y | Y | 35 | Y | Limited | 31,000-59,000 ^b |
| Marvelwood School | 79 | 120 | 50/50 | 80 | 14 | 9-12, PG | AP | Y | Y | 55 | Y | Limited | 66,200 ^{abce} |
| St. Andrew's School | 72 | 320 | 50/50 | 100 | 11 | 9-12 | NA | Y | Limited | 49 | Y | Limited | 66,400 ^{df} |
| St. Mark's School | 73 | 375 | 50/50 | 75 | 24 | 9-12 | NA | Y | NA | 29 | N | Limited | 76,199 ^{bf} |
| OVERSEAS | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| American Overseas School Rome | 79 | 593 | 50/50 | NA | 70 | PK-12 | AP/IB | N | N | 20 | Y | Y | 11,900-27,600 ^{bc} |
| Berlin Brandenburg International School | 70 | 900 | 50/50 | 10 | 70 | K-12 | IB | N | Y | 22 | Y | N | 52,500 ^c |
| Carlucci American International School of Lisbon | 75 | 750 | 49/51 | NA | 79 | PK-12 | IB | N | Limited | 18 | Y | N | 11,143-23,609 ^{abc} |
| EF Academy Oxford | 71 | 125 | 42/58 | 100 | 100 | 11-12 | IB | N | Limited | 43 | Y | N | 65,000 ^a |
| Frankfurt International School | 80 | 1800 | 50/50 | NA | 80 | K-12 | IB | N | Limited | 12 | Y | N | 11,744-29,608 ^{bc} |
| Leysin American School in Switzerland | 71 | 310 | 50/50 | 100 | 85 | 7-12, PG | AP/IB | N | Limited | 75 | Y | N | 120,000 ^{abd} |
| St. Stephen's School - Rome | 75 | 300 | 47/53 | 20 | 64 | 9-12, PG | IB | N | N | 12 | Y | N | 54,560 ^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 BC Back Cover IFC Inside Front Cover

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Go to our webpage at www.afsa.org/education.

| 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 \$) |
|------------------------------|-------------|--|-------------------------|------------------|---------------|----------------|--------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ■ SPECIAL NEEDS | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gow School, The | 80 | 130 | 70/30 | 90 | 10 | 6-12, PG | NA | N | Y | 25 | N | Limited | 80,000 ^b |
| New Haven | 73 | 86 | All Girls | 100 | NA | 9-12 | AP | N | Y | 45 | N | Y | 237,250 ^b |
| ■ DISTANCE LEARNING | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Catholic Virtual | 78 | 1,603 | 50/50 | NA | 7 | K-12 | AP | N | Limited | NA | Y | NA | 4,000-10,000 |
| Sora School | 77 | 430 | 50/50 | NA | Varies | 6-12 | N | N | Limited | NA | Y | Y | 5,000-16,900 ^{bd} |
| ■ OTHER | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| DACOR Bacon House Foundation | 78 | DACOR Bacon House Foundation offers Dreyfus Scholarships to children and grandchildren of Foreign Service officers and specialists studying at Yale or Hotchkiss. Contact dacor@dacorbacon.org or go to www.dacorbacon.org/scholarships_fellowships . | | | | | | | | | | | |
| GCLO | 76 | Global Community Liaison Office: Information and resources for Foreign Service families. Contact GCLOAskEducation@state.gov . | | | | | | | | | | | |
| FSYF | 76 | 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
^aSibling discount ^bFinancial aid available ^cDollar value subject to exchange rate ^dAid for federal employees
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(Continued from page 72)

Homeschooling and virtual schooling have significantly increased since 2020, and GCLO now includes more than 100 home study programs that have been used by families in the FS community on its website. Familiarize yourself with the allowances available for homeschooling and accredited distance learning programs to help narrow down your choices.

And remember that you can seek support from both the Office of Allowances (GoASKallowances@state.gov) and your post financial management officer (FMO), who can guide you through the process of confirming which expenses are reimbursable.



ISTOCKPHOTO/CAIMAGE, ROBERT DALY

The College Application Process

When it's time to apply for college, parents often ask how their child can leverage their Foreign Service experience in college applications, and even how to narrow down the college choices—

no small task for families overseas, who don't have unlimited opportunities to visit stateside colleges.

What are the legal considerations you need to understand when your child heads to university while you are posted overseas? Where should you look for

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scholarships and financial aid? What alternatives are there to a traditional four-year college experience?

These crucial questions are answered on GCLO’s newly expanded College and Beyond webpage. The page contains information on qualifying for in-state tuition, college FAQs, and links to articles from experts within the Foreign Service community on the application process, colleges overseas, supporting your child’s emotional well-being while in college, and more.

There are contests, awards, and scholarships available from the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA), Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW), and the Foreign Service Youth Foundation (FSYF).

In the same way you should have a personal preparedness plan for your family, consider creating an educational “go plan” to meet your children’s specific needs.

Evacuating Post During the School Year

You may be faced with the sudden news that due to political or civil unrest, a natural disaster, or some other factor, post will have to evacuate. Leaving post during the school year adds additional challenges to an already stressful situation. An evacuation will typically last about three months. There is always a chance, however, that it could be lon-

ger—evacuations can last up to 180 days.

You may have questions like, “What is the school’s plan during emergencies like this?” and “Where do I go for support to manage this process?” In the same way you should have a personal preparedness plan for your family, consider creating an educational “go plan” to meet your children’s specific needs.

Here are some steps to take to ensure your child’s educational continuity

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during either an ordinary move or an evacuation:

Collect and carry important documents. Ensure you have birth certificates (original or certified copies), photo IDs (passports), current special needs learning plan (IEP/ILP) if applicable, immunization records including proof of recent negative TB test, and most recent physical health exam records. Be prepared to hand carry these documents as you travel, and keep scanned copies on hand, as well.

Contact the school at post. Request official transcripts and records of course titles and current units of study, assignments and current grades earned, standardized or specialized test scores, and dates of attendance. Gather recommendation letters (especially for high school students). Be patient with the school as they may need several days to get these documents to you.

If possible, obtain the records in both paper and digital form. Find out if the school is planning to send your child with a physical packet of work, or if they have established a comprehensive plan for virtual learning. Ask if the learning will be asynchronous or synchronous.

Consider your options. Your bureau, post management, and GCLO's crisis management team will likely coordinate an informational town hall with subject matter experts prior to departure to help with evacuation logistics. Decide where you want to safe haven, and identify your support system should the evacuation be extended.

If the school at post only offers synchronous learning, and that means your child would have to wake up at 2 a.m. where you intend to safe haven, think about whether your child can manage that, or if you should instead pivot to enrolling them in the local public school. You will know what is best for your child.



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A Parent's Guide to Psychoeducational Evaluations
by Chad Nelson

What You Need to Know: Returning to U.S. Public Schools with Special Education Needs
by Charlotte Larsen and Rebecca McPherson

Getting a Degree Overseas: An Option Worth Considering?
by Rebecca Grappo

College Options: Community College with a Guaranteed Transfer Program
by Francesca Huemer Kelly

How to Qualify for In-State College Tuition
by John K. Naland

What's New with Special Education Allowances?
by Charlotte Larsen

THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

Communicate with the school at the safe haven location. Discuss with your family early on—preferably *before* an evacuation looms—where you would safe haven. Reach out to the school in the place where you will land, and check their website for registration requirements. You will need proof of residence/physical presence in the school district (mortgage, temporary quarters, or short-term lease agreements) to enroll.

Maintaining the routine of attending school will help when your children go back to school at post. If you have high schoolers, try to find a school with the same or comparable Advanced Placement (AP) or IB class offerings.

Connect with GCLO and the Office of Overseas Schools. Both GCLO and the Office of Overseas Schools can provide information and suggest tools to guide you during an evacuation. REOs can assist with getting transcript and course information from the Department of State (DOS) assisted school, and they can communicate with the school administration regarding any available virtual options.

In the Washington, D.C., area, GCLO's education and youth team can connect you with public school registrars and student support offices that provide guidance and answer questions about registration and student placement.

You're Not Alone

Sometimes it can feel like you're the only family in the Foreign Service community ever to face these specific educational issues. But you're not alone. Whether you're grappling with early childhood education, special needs issues, college applications, or even an evacuation, chances are there's a resource out there to help you make wise decisions. Contact the GCLO team with your education questions at GCLOAskEducation@state.gov. ■



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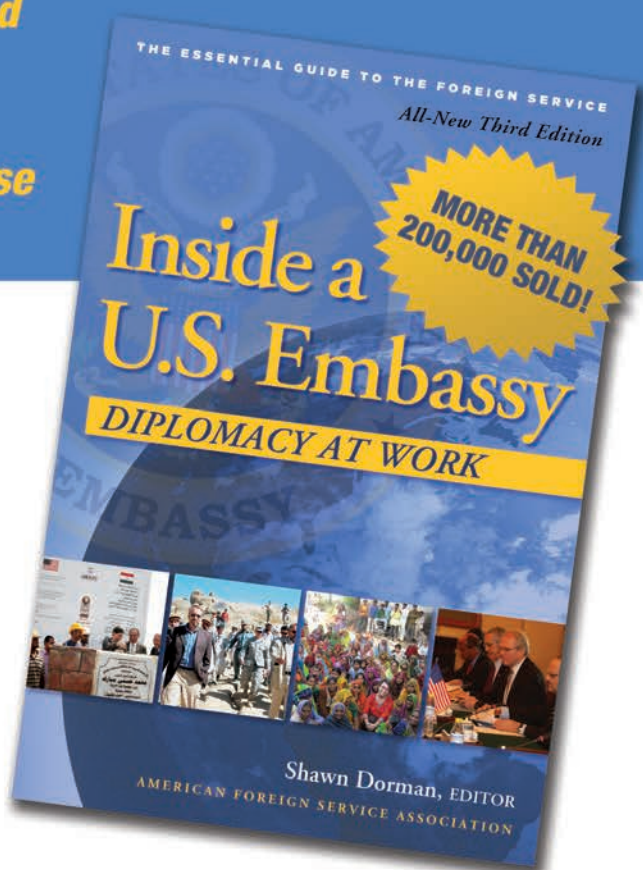
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Understanding Negotiations: A Primer

The Art of Diplomacy: How American Negotiators Reached Historic Agreements That Changed the World

Stuart E. Eizenstat, Rowman and Littlefield, 2024, \$35.00/hardcover, e-book available, 520 pages.

REVIEWED BY RONALD E. NEUMANN

There are many books on negotiations. What makes former diplomat and negotiator Stuart E. Eizenstat's book stand out is the combination of the breadth of the different negotiations he reflects on, the personal knowledge he brings from his own experience and interviews with senior negotiators, and the distillation of their common lessons. *The Art of Diplomacy* is ambitious in scope and based on a vast number of interviews.

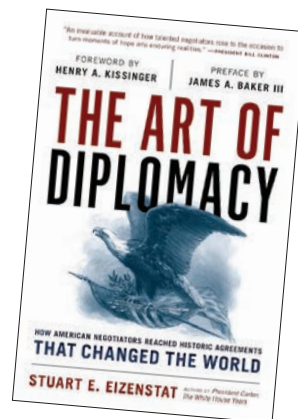
The author draws on a broad and deep experience in national and international affairs. Currently a partner and senior counsel at the Washington, D.C.-based law firm Covington & Burling, Ambassador Eizenstat is a former deputy secretary of the Treasury (1999-2001), under secretary of State for economic affairs (1997-1999), under secretary of Commerce for international trade (1996-1997), U.S. Ambassador to the European Union (1993-1996), and White House domestic affairs adviser (1977-1981).

As under secretary of State for economic affairs, he led the U.S. delegation at the third session of the Conference of the Parties in Japan, which concluded with adoption of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change.

Amb. Eizenstat also has extensive experience in resolving Holocaust claims and related disputes, gained during service as the special representative on Holocaust-era issues during the Clinton administration, and has served as an expert adviser on the subject to subsequent administrations.

In this book, Eizenstat examines 12 cases, including Northern Ireland, Angola and Namibia, the Balkans, a major trade negotiation, a lengthy effort for compensation for Holocaust assets, and more. While the book is large, it is readable and accessible for students, teachers, and practitioners. As such, it is likely to be—and deserves to be—a staple for years for the teaching of this aspect of diplomacy.

Each chapter centers on a lengthy negotiation or series of related negotiations, such as on climate, some of which lasted years. This approach is bound to lead to some superficiality. Specialists or those who were involved in the negotiations can point out lapses or question



a lacunae that leaves major questions about the long-term utility of the accords.

Those using the book for teaching will find ample scope for deeper analysis of particular negotiations and debate about many. But that there is room

for debate and for criticism does not lessen the book's value. As a model for the teaching and consideration of what makes a negotiation and negotiator successful or limits the potential for success, the book is a notable achievement.

This is particularly the case because of the variety of negotiations from which Eizenstat draws common lessons. The chapters on negotiations he took part in for Holocaust assets and the Paris climate accords are particularly valuable because those are different from and much less known than, for example, those on the Balkans or South Africa that have been the subject of extensive study and writing.

From this range of different negotiations, Eizenstat draws broad lessons. Each chapter reflects on individual lessons from the case, but perhaps most

This readable and ambitious book is a significant achievement in the understanding of negotiations.

some points in various accounts, such as in the chapter dealing with Northern Ireland where a colleague involved in the negotiations disputes the role of former Prime Minister John Major.

Some may note that the chapter on the Abraham Accords focuses only on the achievement and not on what was left completely out—the Palestinians,

interesting is the 35-page conclusion that pulls together common lessons from the case studies. Some of these are areas in which the U.S. has sometimes been weak, such as having concerned allies at the table or really understanding the country and mind of the other party. Vietnam and Afghanistan come to mind as examples. Some are debatable.

Eizenstat likes deadlines as “action forcing” events. In some cases, this was true. But my own experiences and study of Iraq and Afghanistan show that when we bluff, when the deadlines are neither real nor enforced, they make negotiations *more* complicated. An illustration of this contrary result was in negotiations for a bilateral security agreement in Afghanistan.

In that case, one senior official after another threatened troop withdrawal if President Hamid Karzai would not agree by a certain date. No withdrawals took place, and the false deadlines only strengthened Karzai’s belief that these were bargaining tactics that he could safely ignore.

Eizenstat has a realistic sense of how domestic political forces and the geo-

political context shape negotiations and limit what is possible. This was particularly the case in Vietnam, when ebbing domestic support for the war steadily cut the ground out from under U.S. negotiators. In the case of Afghanistan, President Donald Trump’s demands for speed coincided with Taliban patience to push America to steadily weaken its demands for peace as well as a withdrawal agreement.

In reviewing major conclusions, Eizenstat in no way suggests that his lessons learned can be used as a cookie cutter or magically applied. But he does make clear that ignoring them will come with a high price.

Whatever debates one may have about either the description of individ-

ual events or the greater lessons drawn from them, it remains the case that this readable and ambitious book is a significant achievement in the understanding of negotiations. I believe it will remain in use for many years for scholars and practitioners alike.

Ambassador Ronald E. Neumann is president of the American Academy of Diplomacy. A member of the Senior Foreign Service, former deputy assistant secretary of State, and three-time ambassador—to Algeria, Bahrain, and Afghanistan—Neumann retired in 2007 after a distinguished 37-year diplomatic career. He is the author of two books: The Other War: Winning and Losing in Afghanistan (2009) and Three Embassies, Four Wars: A Personal Memoir (2017).

Learning from the Best

Diplomatic Tradecraft

Edited by Nicholas Kralev, Cambridge University Press, 2024, \$44.99/paperback, 352 pages.

REVIEWED BY DENISE GERONIMO

In June 2024, alongside other Charles B. Rangel Fellows, I attended a lecture at the United States Institute of Peace, “Preparing the Next Generation of Diplomats.” We heard Ambassador Thomas Pickering and Executive Director of the Washington International Diplomatic Academy Nicholas Kralev discuss *Diplomatic Tradecraft*, Kralev’s new book, and the current state of global diplomacy.

As a newly minted university graduate, I listened to their concerns regarding the training of the future generation of diplomats, and it made me nervously

wonder, “How prepared am I to join the Foreign Service?”

Structured as a textbook, *Diplomatic Tradecraft* maps out some of the inner workings of the Foreign Service and its areas of engagement, along the way covering a wide range of topics from the differences among the career tracks to ambassadorial protocols.

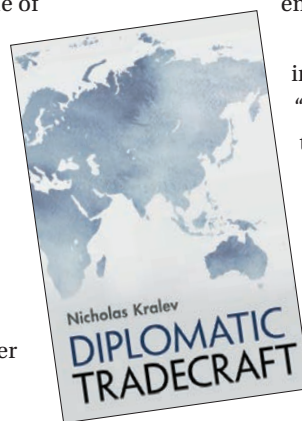
In each chapter, former practitioners and current diplomats explain an aspect of the Foreign Service, and their firsthand experiences not only make the guide more digestible to readers but also convey the tangible effects of diplomacy in action.

Contributors include Ambassadors Chas W. Freeman, Lisa Kubiske, and Thomas Pickering, as well as 15 other

former and current diplomats who together document an outstanding history of the Service and offer troves of empirical knowledge.

As Kralev explains in his introduction, the book aims to “go beyond theory and history” to provide “practical” information for future diplomats. The United States stands as one of the most influential state powers on the international stage. Yet to this day, no official diplomatic doctrine exists to prepare U.S. diplomats to enter the Service.

The book addresses this gap by breaking down the structure, functions, and purpose of diplomacy, covering topics including the interagency process, embassy hierarchy, and bilateral and multilateral negotiations. To my relief, charts and diagrams complement the authors’ explanations, and bolded



Armed with insights from *Diplomatic Tradecraft*, I feel more prepared and motivated to pursue a Foreign Service career.

definitions for terms like “diplomatic démarche” make it easy for the casual reader to understand.

Given that I am expected to join the Foreign Service in the next few years, I especially appreciated these detailed, engaging insights into my future career. The Rangel Fellowship, one of five flagship programs offered by the State Department, provides participants funding for graduate-level studies and professional development training. With the additional years of preparation, the goal of the fellowship is to help aspiring individuals like me enter the Foreign Service—and, ideally, stay in the Foreign Service for a full career.

However, as various authors and Kralev explain, officer training relies heavily on on-the-job learning, which has perpetuated a sink-or-swim culture over the past century.

While mentorship should remain an important piece in building a strong diplomatic community, this textbook, coupled with programs like the Rangel Fellowship, offers a robust education for incoming diplomats that can give them confidence when heading to their first post. The book’s contributors do not shy away from addressing the challenges and realities of a Foreign Service career, offering valuable insights that individuals should consider before committing to this line of work.

In addition, the book explores the five specialized career tracks for State Department Foreign Service officers and highlights key areas, such as cyber-

security, multilateral spaces, and health and science. Chapter 5, “How Does an Embassy Work?,” briefly covers other agencies with ties to foreign affairs, including the Foreign Commercial Service, Foreign Agricultural Service, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USAID, defense attaché offices, intelligence agencies, law-enforcement agencies, U.S. Agency for Global Media, and the Peace Corps.

Importantly, every chapter ends with related case studies and training exercises. The former allows readers to relate the chapter’s contents to memorable historical examples, and the latter gives them the opportunity to challenge their critical thinking with hypothetical situations in the Foreign Service.

I think *Diplomatic Tradecraft* will serve the mission Kralev envisioned when he started this project: to inform and inspire the next generation of diplomats. I read through the pages as if reading an action novel, and the stories from distinguished Foreign Service members reinforced my decision to serve and represent U.S. interests abroad.

What makes it more than a textbook, more than an informative or theoretical

manual, is the concrete advice provided by career diplomats. The entirety of chapter 3 is dedicated to the skills every officer should exhibit; but throughout the book, each author emphasizes the daily importance of empathy, skillful management, humility, and negotiation in the Service.

Whether working with a host government to ensure the well-being of an American arrested overseas or coordinating logistics for an embassy event, soft skills and human connection play a crucial role in effective diplomacy.

I still have much to learn, and my anxiety has not entirely subsided. But, armed with insights from *Diplomatic Tradecraft*, I feel more prepared and motivated to pursue a Foreign Service career. Knowledge that I can always return to the invaluable guidance in this book—crafted by individuals who have navigated similar challenges before me—reassures me as I try to follow in their footsteps.

Denise Geronimo is a 2024 Charles B. Rangel Fellow and 2024 Fulbright grant recipient to the Philippines. Currently, she is researching the information and communication technology sector’s impact on Filipino labor migration at the University of the Philippines Open University. She will then pursue a two-year master’s degree in law and diplomacy at Tufts University’s Fletcher School before joining the Foreign Service. ■



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AFSA Award Recipients / 21
AFSA Tax Guide / 51
Apply for an AFSA
Scholarship / 55
Dreyfus Scholarship / 78
Look for the 2025 Summer
Camps & Programs / 83

Rochambeau French
International / 82
Sora Schools / 77
St. Andrew's School / 72
St. Mark's School / 73
St. Stephen's School—
Rome / 75
Valley Forge Military / 83

BOOKS

Cross Seas Press / 51
FS Books / Inside Front
Cover
Inside a U.S. Embassy / 84

FINANCIAL PLANNING & TAX SERVICES

David L. Mortimer, CPA / 66
Windecker Financial
Planning LLC / 66

CLASSIFIED LISTINGS

Classifieds / 90, 91

EDUCATION

American Overseas School
of Rome / 79
Berlin Brandenburg Interna-
tional School / 70
Carlucci American
International School of
Lisbon (CAISL) / 75
Catholic Virtual / 78
Christchurch School / 81
Education Archives / 82
Education-at-a-Glance
Chart / 74, 76
EF Academy / 71
Fairfax Christian School,
The / 77
Foreign Service Youth
Foundation / 76
Fountain Valley School / 77
Frankfurt International
School / 80
Global Community Liaison
Office / 76
Gow School, The / 80
Leysin American School in
Switzerland / 71
Marvelwood / 79
New England Innovation
Academy / 79
New Haven / 73
Ojai Valley School / 79
Oldfields School / 81
Riverstone International
School / 82

INSURANCE

AFSPA—Dental / 17
AFSPA—FS Benefit Plan / 3
CareFirst Blue Cross Blue
Shield / Back Cover
Clements Worldwide / 27
FEDS Protection / 11
State Department Federal
Credit Union / 4

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Senior Living
Foundation / 31

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Mighty Oaks from Little Acorns Grow

BY JONATHAN B. RICKERT

It is normal to take for granted familiar buildings, monuments, and organizations that have seemingly been around forever. We seldom pause to think about how they started, who created them, and why.

Each has its own story, and many are well worth looking into. Such is definitely the case with the American School of Bucharest, ASB (now the American International School of Bucharest, or AISB).

Launched in 1962 by then U.S. Minister (later Ambassador) William A. Crawford and his wife in an apartment in communist Bucharest, with two teachers and six students, it is now an institution with about 900 preschool through 12th grade students from more than 60 countries. The school has more than 280 faculty and staff from 20 countries, a 10-hectare purpose-built campus, and features International Baccalaureate programs at the higher grades. Impressive growth by any standard.

But how did ASB get its start? Fortunately, we have the story in Amb. Crawford's own words. First, a little background.

From 1991 to 1995, in my role as deputy chief of mission at U.S. Embassy



Retired Senior Foreign Service Officer Jonathan B. Rickert spent the majority of his 35-year career in or dealing with Central and

Eastern Europe. His final two overseas posts were as deputy chief of mission in Sofia and then Bucharest.



AISB class of 2024 graduation.

Bucharest, I served as chair of the ASB school board and worked closely with school director Larry Crouch. We were proud of our growing school, then only K through 8th grade but with well over 100 students.

Toward the end of the 1994-1995 school year, when Larry and I started thinking about how to make the June 6 graduation ceremony special, we came up with the idea of inviting Amb. Crawford to give the commencement address.

As it happened, I knew the ambassador fairly well; and his son Bill was then serving as the embassy's commercial officer. Though we understood he might be reluctant at the age of 80 to make the long journey to Bucharest, his son's presence there and the lure of the graduation festivities at the school that he and his wife had founded were enough to entice him back.

His address was a great addition to the school's graduation ceremony and his

return visit a resounding success. At my request, Amb. Crawford wrote down his recollections about the founding and early years of the school. His story is transcribed from his handwritten account.



In his letter to me, which included the attached history of the school (at right), Amb. Crawford expressed satisfaction at having launched the school and that it had "become apparently what I thought it eventually would, i.e., an international (or let us say *the* international) school, but with an American curriculum."

Referring to "the larger exciting story of the school's later history," he wrote that "I feel very humble to think of what we started and where it led." The school had already made impressive strides when he visited in 1995 and has advanced a great deal further since then.

As the old English proverb says, "Mighty oaks from little acorns grow." ■

Origin of the American School of Bucharest

In the period immediately following World War II, our diplomatic missions in Moscow, Warsaw, Prague, Belgrade, and Budapest all reestablished elementary schools of their own dating back to the prewar years. Our only missions in Eastern Europe without them were Bucharest and Sofia.

During a visit to Bucharest in 1955, I noted that the lack of any American school there presented a morale problem for children and parents alike. Mothers with children taught their own in their own fashion, at the cost of much time and energy, and with mixed results. There was general dissatisfaction with the prevailing situation, compromising rapport between families and among children.

When I was appointed U.S. minister to Romania, in November 1961, my wife and I had personal reason to recall my earlier reaction. For we had become the parents of two small children, ages 8 and 6, who were to accompany us there. We realized instantly that we must start a school.

Mrs. Crawford was not without experience in such matters, having directed the American School in Prague from 1957 to 1959. So, before leaving home, we held consultations on appropriate texts and procedures with the Potomac School in Washington and the Calvert School in Baltimore, the latter being well known for its own system of home instruction.

Thus prepared, upon arriving in Bucharest we were able to enlist the enthusiastic support of the staff for a voluntary effort to set up a legation school.

By a timely stroke of luck, we were soon blessed by the sudden availability of a recently vacated apartment of suitable size, which was not to be reoccupied. Happily, the Romanian Foreign Ministry graciously acceded to our request that we continue to rent it as premises for an American school, and in response to our further request for suggestions for a qualified Romanian teacher with appropriate professional background and knowledge of English, they recommended Mrs. Minella Suma.

Hence the stage was set for us to establish a six-grade elementary school, starting in the fall of 1962, with six legation children, plus Mrs. Suma and one American wife as teachers. As for the latter, the air attaché's wife, Mrs. Pat Polivka, who had prior teaching experience, promptly volunteered and served for the next three years with skill and enthusiasm.

The new school was to be well equipped. American class books were ordered from home. School desks, blackboards, and other supplies were purchased in Frankfurt and brought in on the U.S. Air Force cargo plane on which the minister was allowed to travel. The Association of American Foreign Service Women (now Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide) generously presented a collection of children's books and reference texts to form a small library.

Although it was an entirely voluntary undertaking, costs were, more or less, adequately covered by official education allowances.

Once the school had opened, its academic results were soon to prove most gratifying, and parent-student morale remained high. Over the next three years, prior to our departure in October 1965, the school gradually grew in size. In addition to legation children, we soon began to admit children from foreign missions with an already good knowledge of English. We insisted on one point only, that a standard American curriculum be maintained.

By 1965, the school had become sufficiently large and well regarded to attract direct State Department funding and support, including an offer to send us a full-time director from Washington. Thereupon, all was fair sledding, and after leaving Bucharest, I learned that not long afterward the growing school had moved to new and larger quarters.

In our day, we already considered the new school a marked success, and upon returning home, all its first students transferred easily into their respective grades or higher. There are good reasons, of course, why it prospered then, and increasingly later, as an institution. As a reminder, I should mention that among the most important, and not to be forgotten, is the cooperation we received from the Romanian Foreign Ministry.

In a real sense, the school turned out to be an admirable joint venture. For without Romanian approval of its initial location and the invaluable assistance of Mrs. Suma since its inception, the school could never have taken off and flourished as it did.

Perhaps impressed by our example, and capping it all, the State Department subsequently took the initiative to establish an American school in Sofia, thus completing the circle of officially sponsored American schools in Eastern Europe.

—Ambassador William A. Crawford
Greensboro, Vermont
Aug. 19, 1994

LOCAL LENS



Rising to a height of 19,341 feet (5,895 meters), Mount Kilimanjaro is the world's tallest free-standing mountain, and it is known for its many climate zones. Climbers hike for six to eight days through the low-land cultivation zone, rainforest zone, moorlands, alpine desert, and arctic zone to reach the summit, where some of Africa's last glaciers remain. During a trip to Tanzania, I made the hike, summiting on the beautifully clear morning of Oct. 7, 2024. ■

Nathan Tidwell is the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration's regional refugee coordinator for the Horn of Africa, based in Addis Ababa. He took this photo, holding the centennial issue of the FSJ (May 2024), on an iPhone XR.

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.

THANK YOU!

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Open Season is November 11 – December 9