

# FOREIGN SERVICE

JOURNAL

THE MAGAZINE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS

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## STATE OF MIND

*Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder & the Foreign Service*

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*Foreign Service Journal* (ISSN 0146-3543), 2101 E. Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037-2990 is published monthly with a combined July-August issue by the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA), a private, nonprofit organization. Material appearing herein represents the opinions of the writers and does not necessarily represent the views of the *Journal*, the Editorial Board or AFSA. Writer queries and submissions are invited, preferably by e-mail. *Journal* subscription: AFSA members – \$13 included in annual dues; others – \$40. For foreign surface mail, add \$18 per year; foreign airmail, \$36 per year. Periodical postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. Indexed by Public Affairs Information Services (PAIS). The *Journal* is not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, photos or illustrations. Advertising inquiries are invited. The appearance of advertisements herein does not imply the endorsement of the services or goods offered.

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E-MAIL: [journal@afsa.org](mailto:journal@afsa.org)

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Printed in the U.S.A. Send address changes to:

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# PRESIDENT'S VIEWS

## *Bench Strength*

BY JOHN K. NALAND

When the dust settled last November, the Foreign Service had, once again, stepped up to the plate to staff the U.S. mission in Iraq entirely with volunteers. That assignment process, however, left many outsiders asking why the State Department had difficulty filling those 252 positions. Here is how AFSA answered that question.



With 11,500 members, the State Department's Foreign Service is less than one half of 1 percent the size of the U.S. military. The entire Foreign Service is smaller than a typical U.S. Army division. The military has more musicians than the State Department has diplomats. Moreover, in contrast to the military, which maintains 79 percent of its personnel inside the United States, a full 68 percent of the Foreign Service is forward-deployed overseas. Two-thirds are at posts categorized as "hardship" due to difficult living conditions including violent crime, extreme health risks or terrorist threats.

Over the last few years, staffing demands on the Foreign Service have soared — for example, in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in the State Department's new office to coordinate reconstruction efforts, in training positions to meet the need for more Arabic-speakers, and in 280 new positions in countries of emerging importance,

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*John K. Naland is the president of the American Foreign Service Association.*

such as China and India.

These new demands have far outpaced hiring, leaving the typical U.S. embassy today at only 79 percent of its authorized staffing. Iraq is the exception. It has been consistently staffed at near

100 percent.

Since 2003, over 1,500 Foreign Service members have stepped forward to serve in what is now the world's largest embassy. All have been volunteers. But last fall, with the Foreign Service facing a fifth rotation into Iraq, the addition of 80 new positions to fill in summer 2008 at Embassy Baghdad and in 25 Provincial Reconstruction Teams around the country pushed the staffing strain to near breaking point.

The problem was a lack of sufficient reserves with which to fill the increasing number of positions in Iraq. Imagine if a coach turned to the team bench during a tough game only to find it empty. That is the situation the State Department faces today.

For example, the June 2007 "Managing Secretary Rice's State Department" report by the Foreign Affairs Council, a nonpartisan umbrella group, pointed to a 1,100-position staffing deficit in the Foreign Service.

The October 2007 "Embassy of the Future" report by the Center for Strategic & International Studies cited updated State Department data showing a 1,015-position shortfall — plus an additional 1,079-position deficit in training and related staffing needs.

And the November 2007 "Smart Power" CSIS report documented the need for "more than 1,000" additional State Department Foreign Service positions to permit expanded training, details to other agencies, and to meet unforeseen contingencies.

Despite these unmet needs, for the past three years, the administration's budget requests to narrow the staffing gaps (which were quite modest compared to actual needs) were not funded by Congress.

This poor support for diplomacy stands in stark contrast to the situation at the Department of Defense, which is expanding the armed forces' rolls by 92,000 by 2011. Note that the State Department's deficits are little more than a rounding error when compared to the resources being dedicated to the Pentagon.

The administration and Congress must act decisively to strengthen the diplomatic element of national power. Failing to fund a strong diplomatic capability will limit our nation's ability to build and sustain a more democratic, secure and prosperous world.

Thus, AFSA continues to press for additional resources for diplomacy. Although this is an issue that we hope the next administration will focus on come 2009, the staffing needs are so urgent that we cannot afford just to mark time hoping for a better reception in the future. AFSA and allied groups will continue to make the case for Congress to fund at least some reinforcements this year. ■



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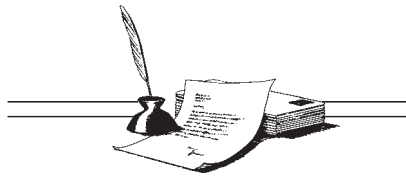
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# LETTERS

## The Roaring Present

The beginning of 2008 seems a fitting time to recognize the *Foreign Service Journal* for its unique service to those in the international community interested in knowing how the conduct of U.S. foreign affairs actually operates.

Veteran practitioners like Edward Walker and Philip Wilcox (December 2006) have earned the right to be listened to anywhere in the world on the Middle East. Ronald Spiers — who, in addition to his service in the Middle East, was a former under secretary of the United Nations — can speak authoritatively about how to reform that troubled institution (September 2006).

James Fox explodes the universal misunderstanding of USAID, which seeks to end, not increase, economic dependence (June 2006). Shawn Dorman's article about the Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq was informed by the best firsthand experience one could hope for there among the rocks and rats (March 2007). And the *Journal's* pages are crowded with fine writers like Deborah Cavin, whose nicely paced, insightful review of Nicholas Sarkozy's book appeared in the November 2007 issue.

The Foreign Service is sometimes mindlessly ridiculed for its hesitation and phraseology — “Yes, but ... Have you considered ... Perhaps it would be better ....” But journalists are jerked from country to country without the opportunity to get underneath a deliberative culture. Our courageous military has an abhorrence of doubt. And academics, with-

out whom we would admittedly descend quickly to a brutish existence, take years to formulate their thinking.

The *Journal* invites everyone into “the roaring present.”

*John J. Eddy*  
FSO, retired  
Rochester, Vt.

## CORDS Failed

David Passage writes in the November *Journal* that “the CORDS program could not have been successful in today's Iraq or Afghanistan.” I agree, but I'd also add that the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support program was not successful in Vietnam, either.

I was with CORDS in Pleiku for most of 1968, starting just before the Tet offensive. Passage says that civilian personnel in CORDS were “remarkably effective.” Not in my experience we weren't, and not for lack of trying, either. After I left Pleiku, I traveled frequently in 1969 to all four regions of Vietnam to see CORDS projects in action. And although there were lots of them, I wouldn't call them effective.

In 1973, I returned for a few weeks during a rare quiet interlude. Again, although the level of fighting was down, real evidence of CORDS' effectiveness was scarce. The sad truth is that despite good intentions, lots of resources and some temporary gains and marginal improvements, the program failed. Wasn't its purpose to win hearts and minds and enable the South Vietnamese to stand on their own and defend their country? Absent a prolonged military

occupation by U.S. forces, this simply was not possible, and honesty should compel us to admit it.

But more important than arguing over CORDS' alleged successes and more obvious failures is to learn from our mistakes. This we failed to do when going into Iraq, and the price we are paying for that omission is extremely high.

Passage is right to insist that the indispensable element of any nation-building/counterinsurgency effort is security, closely followed by an indigenous government that can govern in some way that is visible and acceptable to the population. We never were able to meet either benchmark in Vietnam, and the jury is still out regarding Iraq.

I would also disagree with Passage's description of the training of “CORDSmen,” including language skills, cultural awareness and competence in defensive weaponry. We were deficient in all three and more, in both Vietnam and Iraq.

If we ever have to embark again on a major counterinsurgency/nationbuilding effort, I hope we'll pay better attention to the real lessons learned in Vietnam and Iraq and get it right next time.

*Bill Lenderking*  
FSO, retired  
Washington, D.C.

## CORDS & PRTs

I knew David Passage when we were both CORDS participants. I thought his November Speaking Out column shed light on the subject and clearly spelled out differences be-



tween CORDS and today's Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

Perhaps another difference is that, like CORDS, the Viet Cong and their northern comrades sought to "win the hearts and minds of the people." I see the current crop of bad guys in Iraq as totally unable to do this. Yes, they have in some places built schools and clinics and such, but they do not have the flexibility in their thinking to accommodate the concerns, questions and hesitations of a scared and wavering people.

*Leo Cecchini*  
*FSO, retired*  
*Ft. Myers Beach, Fla.*

### Where Are the Women?

In a recent *AFSA News* column, Retiree VP Bill Farrand encouraged retirees who are not AFSA members to join. I agree that AFSA can play an important role. In fact, I joined during my first week of A-100 over 30 years ago and continued my membership when I retired two years ago. However, I felt compelled to quit AFSA last summer after the Governing Board election.

During my nearly three decades in the Service, I saw great progress made in creating a Foreign Service that looks like America — and it is the better for it. The AFSA election last summer, however, resulted in a board in which all retiree representatives are retired male ambassadors. Clearly, all were elected by the membership and are probably very competent.

But there are reasons why the State Department seeks to recruit and develop a more diverse work force. Not only does it make the Foreign Service more representative of the citizens we serve, but it also makes for a better, more effective organization.

While I do not mean to impugn any of the retiree representatives — whose service to the department and

to AFSA I recognize and appreciate — I am very disappointed that an effort was not made to recruit and build a slate that would better represent the diverse concerns of retirees. Even the examples of the retiree agenda outlined by Ambassador Farrand may be of marginal interest to much of his constituency.

I will, therefore, bide my time until a more representative board comes along.

*Sandy Dembski*  
*FSO, retired*  
*Bethesda, Md.*

### More on a Foreign Service Murder

Len Shurtleff's October article, "A Foreign Service Murder," was truly illuminating. I knew Al Erdos — who was convicted of the 1971 murder of Don Leahy, the administrative officer in Equatorial Guinea — in his pre-Foreign Service days and then happened to serve with him at two posts. He was obviously an able officer, but he was beset with all sorts of doubts and demons.

Local politics may have played some role in the murder, but I am dubious about this assertion. In Conakry, Erdos saw communists hiding under every palm tree and suspected just about everyone, colleagues included, of being unpatriotic, subversive and steeped in communist dogma.

While Conakry was fertile ground for the communist bloc, some of Erdos' conclusions were clearly unfounded. The innocent act of not listing American dollars before foreign currency on statistical charts sent him into a rage. His violent temper regularly erupted at strange times.

Moreover, while there was no sophisticated DNA-analysis technology in those days, there is strong evidence available from two posts that

Erdos, prior and subsequent to his marriage, kept the company of male lovers. After he was discharged from prison in Texas in late 1976, I saw him with a man he called "my lover who understands me totally." This man happened to be a former military officer.

I saw Erdos later in California, just prior to his death, with this same man and one other. All were described as lovers. Thus, I think that the evidence will corroborate the fact that homosexual affairs did, indeed, play a role in the murder of Don Leahy.

The behavior of the State Department was, at best, ambiguous. In spite of countless incidents attesting to Erdos' violent temper and the tendency to be a bully toward subordinates, the department turned a blind eye. Erdos was regularly promoted and rose through the ranks to become a deputy chief of mission. He seemed to lead a charmed existence. Perhaps his sterling reputation was rendered somewhat more realistic with this article by Len Shurtleff.

*Roy A. Harrell Jr.*  
*FSO, retired*  
*Ozona, Texas*

### Memories of Equatorial Guinea

In 1968, my ex-husband and I were celebrating Christmas in Dakar, looking forward to the new year in Senegal. The day after Christmas, the phone rang and my husband was asked if he would be willing to go to Equatorial Guinea to open a new post in that newly independent country. His Spanish-language ability was one of the reasons he was selected.

The Biafran War was going on at that time, and the International Red Cross was using Santa Isabel, the capital (later renamed Malabo), as a transshipment point for food aid to Nigeria. When a group of U.S. congressmen traveled to the country



## LETTERS



to check the operation, they were promptly arrested by the suspicious Equatorial Guineans. Complicating matters further, there was no official American presence in the country at the time.

Armed with the great seal of the United States (which later served, upside down, as a drinks tray) and a footlocker containing cash and one-time pads, the instant embassy and chargé arrived at this difficult time.

I followed several months later and for several months was the only non-African female in the country. After two years working at this amazing post, during which time we saw the establishment of a chancery, the arrival of a Mobil Oil exploration team, the expulsion of the Nigerian cocoa plantation workers, public executions and the descent of Macias Nguema into paranoid insanity, we were due to be transferred out. My husband actually asked for an extension, but the State Department decided otherwise.

In due course, a replacement arrived for me — Don Leahy — and for my husband — Al Erdos. We had requested two families to replace us, because it had been difficult for both me and my husband to be away from post at the same time.

We knew right from the outset that trouble was brewing. Don Leahy had only one previous Foreign Service posting, in charge of a motor pool in Latin America (where he met his wife). He did not type, had no training in the administrative functions he was supposed to perform, and was the very opposite of a bon vivant.

Al Erdos, who arrived a month or so later, was, to put it charitably, pompous. He was the type who could not bring himself to fetch something across the room from where he was sitting, and had to ring for a servant to do it for him. This at a post where my husband and I painted the chancery floor on our hands and knees, and I

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drove the 10-ton truck to the airport to take delivery of the vault door. One wonders how Personnel makes assignments like that. We tried to alert the department, but the deed was done, and it was too late.

At Erdos' trial, his defense attorneys refused to take my husband's testimony because our extension request undermined Erdos' claim of extreme hardship and threat driving him to temporary insanity.

As a postscript to the whole dreadful business, after Erdos was released from prison and living in San Diego — on full medical disability, I might add — he actually had the audacity to ask the director general to be reinstated in the Foreign Service!

*Carmen Cunningham*  
FSO, retired  
San Rafael, Calif.

### A Lasting Tale

Thanks for Len Shurtleff's vivid account of the tragic, albeit intriguing, story of the murder of Donald Leahy. I first heard about it as a student at FSI; then again as regional consular officer (covering Malabo from Lagos); and then when I met the former Mrs. Erdos, who was consul in Accra two decades ago.

Even now, via two friends (both former envoys to Equatorial Guinea), the story continues to have legs. Indeed, prompted by a notice in the DACOR Bulletin a year or so ago, I had a peculiar telephone interview with someone who is writing a book about it.

As disturbing as the details were, the piece served a useful purpose for this reader.

*Thomas R. Hutson*  
FSO, retired  
Thurman, Iowa

### Equatorial Guinea Today

As the regional psychiatrist covering West Africa, I found the story in

the October *Journal* about the murder of Donald Leahy to be of great interest. In an odd coincidence, I happened to be in Malabo on a routine TDY visit when this issue was published. In discussing the article with the officers currently serving at Embassy Malabo, it was most striking to observe how conditions there have changed since the incident.

Equatorial Guinea is undergoing a dramatic transformation, and the current lifestyle there contrasts sharply with the harsh conditions present over 30 years ago. I see it as a rather beautiful place with enormous potential, and feel that a tour in Malabo could be both personally and professionally rewarding. Hopefully the article won't deter bidders from considering a greatly changed Malabo for assignment.

*Paul Beighley*  
Regional Medical  
Officer/Psychiatrist  
Embassy Accra

### A Marshall Plan for Mexico: Bad Idea

Geoffrey Chalmers, in "A Marshall Plan for Latin America" (November *FSJ*), correctly identifies the income disparity, both between Mexico and the United States and within Mexico itself, as driving the illegal immigrant problem in the U.S. He states: "For the past several decades, U.S. support for economic development in Latin America has been effective in some cases, but not overwhelming and certainly not transformational." He then suggests (as have many others) that the answer lies in a U.S. Marshall Plan, in this case for Mexico.

To suggest that the success of the \$13 billion Marshall Plan (1948-1952) can be applied to Mexico demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of the historical and cultural circumstances of post-World War II Europe compared to the circum-

stances prevailing in Mexico. And to imply that any U.S. aid and assistance to Mexico (or the rest of Latin America, Africa, etc.) can result in "transformational" economic development reveals a misunderstanding of what drives development.

The Marshall Plan delivered necessary financial assistance to help European countries get back on their feet. Although devastated by war, they shared a long history of developed economies, educated and highly skilled populations, rational labor laws and efficient judicial systems. All that was needed was the financial injection to get the engine running again. Mexico has none of the elements in place that contributed to the success of the Marshall Plan in Europe.

The answer to Mexico's development dilemma lies not in yet another massive U.S. aid program. Instead, the country's political, economic, legal and cultural elites must demonstrate the will to make the structural and cultural changes that can lead to economic development. In short, nothing will change until the Mexicans themselves decide to change.

As a final thought, Mexico could do worse than study and emulate the model of Chile, a country that got its economics right without huge injections of financial and technical aid.

*William H. Barkell*  
FSO, retired  
Arlington, Va. ■

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# CYBERNOTES

## A Chilly Reception for AFRICOM?

On Nov. 19, within days of Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte's visit to discuss the subject, the Nigerian National Council of State, that country's highest presidential advisory committee, announced its disapproval of the new U.S. Africa Command. "The president restated the position of Nigeria: That it is not permitting the establishment of a U.S. base in our country or the [West African] subregion," council spokesman Bukola Saraki told journalists.

Though this was the closest thing to a formal statement of opposition from Africa so far, controversy over AFRICOM has been swirling and bubbling throughout the continent for months. "The prospect of America's vast military presence in Africa has instigated a flurry of talk and fear by Africans that, finally, all the chips have fallen into place of a long-planned recolonization of Africa," wrote columnist Obi Nwakanma in the Lagos *Vanguard* on Nov. 18.

Creation of the new regional military command was announced by

President Bush in February 2007, after a 10-year deliberation process within the Department of Defense that focused on the emerging strategic importance of Africa ([www.africom.mil](http://www.africom.mil)). According to its developers, AFRICOM will have a very different staff structure than other U.S. commands. Specifically, it will integrate USAID, the Department of State and other agencies involved in Africa. The command is poised to interact with partner nations throughout the continent and support existing regional organizations, such as the African Standby Force.

Formally established as a sub-unified command on Oct. 1, AFRICOM will function under the U.S. European Command for its first year. But according to the presidential directive, it must be established as a separate unified command no later than Sept. 30, 2008. U.S. officials are currently consulting African leaders on where to base the command and what kind of presence it should have. According to the official Web site, "the presence issue is still very much a work in progress."

To date, only Liberian President Ellen Sirleaf has stated that her country would willingly host the command center. Morocco, Algeria and Libya are reported to have refused American requests to do so. South Africa, another obvious candidate, has been ambivalent at best about the project, Francis Kornegay, senior researcher at the Center for Policy Studies in Johannesburg, told

### Site of the Month: [www.lii.org](http://www.lii.org)

The *Librarians' Internet Index* is a useful directory of Web sites containing more than 20,000 entries. Cataloged into 14 main topics and nearly 300 related topics, the site averages over 10 million hits each month. (Created in 1990 by reference librarian Carole Leita, the index became the Berkeley Public Library Index to the Internet in 1994.)

Today LII is publicly funded through the Library Services and Technology Act, which is administered in California by the State Librarian's office. It is maintained by a team of librarians who carefully select high-quality sites and describe and compile them into the LII catalog. Each Thursday morning, LII sends out a free newsletter, "New This Week," detailing the most recently added Web sites for nearly 40,000 subscribers.

Users of the index can search Web sites by title, URL or description. Each entry provides a detailed description of the Web site, publisher information and related Library of Congress subject headings, and is accompanied by the name of the librarian who prepared it and the date it was added to the catalog. Sites are evaluated and added based on their availability, credibility, authorship and other characteristics. The criteria for selection, along with the organization's mission statement, are included on the "About LII" page.

Users polled in LII's 2006 annual survey noted the standard of quality upheld by LII in providing credible sources, the utility of the index for academic research and the openness of the cataloging system.

— Marc Nielsen, *Editorial Intern*




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Council on Foreign Relations news editor Stephanie Hanson last summer.

African critics cite what they see as Washington's overwhelming interest in Africa's oil and mineral wealth and the desire to counter Chinese, and even potential Indian, involvement on the continent — all concerns that have been more or less validated by American experts who herald the command's creation, the May CFR backgrounder points out (<http://www.cfr.org/publication/13255/>).

But according to a recent BBC News review of the controversy, many states are waiting for more details to become public before taking a stand (<http://newsbbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7026197.stm>).

— Susan Brady Maitra,  
Senior Editor

### Internet Governance

Combating cybercrime and bringing Internet access to a billion more people were the key themes of the U.N.-sponsored Internet Governance Forum, held in Rio de Janeiro on Nov. 15. The IGF, which has no decisionmaking power, was established in 2005 as a forum for world leaders to discuss Internet control, free speech and cheaper access ([www.intgovforum.org/](http://www.intgovforum.org/)).

Besides expanding Internet access and combating child pornography, credit card fraud and terrorism, members discussed the assignment of Internet addresses, which remains under the jurisdiction of the U.S. government and an American non-profit, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, or ICANN.

Several governments have sought to strip the U.S. of this oversight position, concerned that the current system allows the U.S. to exert undue influence over the way users access the Internet. After debating the issue at

the Tunisia IGF summit two years ago, the U.S. refused to relinquish control.

But the issue surfaced again in Rio de Janeiro, where Russia and Brazil expressed support for a new system under international control. Russian representative Konstantin Novoderzhkin called on the U.N. secretary-general to create a working group that would determine how best to bring Internet management “under the control of the international community,” the Associated Press reported. The debate will undoubtedly resume when the IGF is held in New Delhi this year.

ICANN, over which the U.S. government retains veto power, was chosen in 1998 to oversee the domain name system. Advocates of the present system argue that the current arrangements provide stability and protect Web sites against censorship, which might occur if individual countries could pull entries out of domain name directories.

The organization, which operates out of Marina del Rey, Calif., recently elected a chairman from outside the U.S. and began testing domain names in other languages, an issue that is especially important to developing countries.

Another critical issue on the IGF's agenda is Internet privacy. To start a Web site, owners must provide their full names, organizations, e-mail and postal address and phone numbers. Some privacy advocates want domain name owners to have more options when registering, such as designating third-party agents. They say individuals shouldn't have to reveal their personal information to have a Web site.

The privacy advocates' main target is *Whois*, a group of searchable databases that allows users to find out who is behind millions of “.com” and other Internet addresses ([www.whois.net/](http://www.whois.net/)). The site is used by trade-





mark lawyers, journalists and spammers to determine Web site ownership, and has been particularly useful to law enforcement in combating fraud and theft.

ICANN is presently reviewing sites like *Whois* and discussing how to protect privacy while ensuring that accurate information about Web site ownership is available to those who need it without charge.

— Marc Nielsen, *Editorial Intern*

### Turkey: A Bridge in Danger

During the last several months of 2007, the world was reminded of Turkey's pivotal role in Middle Eastern and global strategic dynamics when several crises erupted to challenge the U.S. relationship with this key NATO ally.

In October, Turkey's parliament gave a green light to the government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to invade Iraq in pursuit of Kurdistan Workers Party militants based there — a move that promised to destabilize the wider region. At the same time, a U.S. congressional bid to charge Ankara with genocide in the massacre of 1.5 million Armenians in Ottoman-era Turkey threatened to irreparably damage U.S.-Turkish relations.

Only Ankara's recall of its ambassador to Washington and a fierce lobbying campaign by the administration, that included all living former secretaries of State, succeeded in quashing the resolution.

Elsewhere, a hastily convened "neighbors' conference" hosted by Turkey on Nov. 1, followed by Prime Minister Erdogan's visit to Washington on Nov. 3, began to address Ankara's concerns on the Kurdish issue.

In late November, plans for establishing a joint intelligence center, to be located in either Iraq or Turkey, were hammered out during a succession of meetings between


**M**y message today is not about the defense budget or military power. My message is that if we are to meet the myriad challenges around the world in the coming decades, this country must strengthen other important elements of national power both institutionally and financially. ... In short, I am here to make the case for strengthening our capacity to use "soft" power and for better integrating it with "hard" power.

— Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Manhattan, Kan., Nov. 26,  
<http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1199>

senior American generals and the Turkish General Staff. There, satellite and other actionable intelligence on the rebels provided by both security forces will be evaluated.

Ankara still has some 100,000 troops and supporting tanks, artillery and warplanes massed along Tur-

key's southeastern border. The PKK, listed as a terrorist organization in much of the world, has about 3,000 fighters based in northern Iraq, from where they launch raids into Turkey. Begun in 1984, the insurgency's campaign for self-rule in southeastern Turkey gained new momen-



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## 50 Years Ago...

I sometimes think that as a nation we become preoccupied with the machinery of defense as an end in itself — or at least we have succeeded in giving that impression to too much of the world outside... With a strong, modern defense, we can move on to the real job of organizing the peace.



— Adlai E. Stevenson, “The New America” *FSJ*, January 1958.

tum 20 years later, when the U.S. overthrow of Saddam Hussein reinvigorated Iraqi Kurds. Since the uprising’s start, nearly 40,000 lives have been lost.

Though Erdogan reiterated on Nov. 24 that Turkey reserved the right to send troops into northern Iraq if it were deemed necessary, he also re-emphasized the need for diplomatic and political measures

against the PKK, according to an Agence France-Presse dispatch from Ankara. At a meeting of his Justice and Development Party, he appealed for expanding the rights of the Kurdish community to erode support for separatism.

“Let’s maintain pluralistic democracy and strengthen the climate of freedoms in order to secure the ultimate result in the struggle against terrorism,” Erdogan said. “Let’s look together for ways of winning over the people instead of alienating them.” The prime minister also renewed an appeal to Turkey’s main Kurdish political movement, the Democratic Society Party, which holds 20 seats in the 550-member parliament, to sever its ties with the PKK.

Ankara’s handling of the Kurdish issue is a central factor in the country’s bid to join the European Union, now in the second year of negotiation. A recent E.U. Commission report says limits on free speech are undermining Turkey’s chances of becoming a full member of the organization, and calls on the country to reform its judiciary, fight corruption and strip the military of its political powers if it expects to gain membership ([www.voanews.com/english/2007-11-22-voa18.cfm](http://www.voanews.com/english/2007-11-22-voa18.cfm)). There is some concern that the rise of opposition to Turkish membership in Europe and fatigue in Ankara could doom this strategically important initiative.

Turkey is not simply a bridge

between East and West. Though it is the poorest and most controversial recent application to membership in the E.U., it has the biggest and most diversified economy, the deepest-rooted secular democracy and the most powerful army of all 57 countries in the Organization of the Islamic Conference. As such, it is an important model of a democratic Islamic nation.

In less than a decade, Turkey has mastered runaway inflation, produced a coherent, single-party government and witnessed strong economic growth and rising levels of foreign investment. Europeans are keenly aware that pipelines through Turkey could help relieve their energy dependence on Russia.

Moreover, Turkey has contributed strongly to Western peacekeeping missions in Afghanistan, Congo and Kosovo, and sought closer involvement with the European Security and Defence Policy. In 2004, the country came forward on Cyprus, as well: in a referendum, two-thirds of Turkish Cypriots approved the U.N. plan to reunite the island (which, however, was later rejected by Greek Cypriots).

For background resources and to follow this pivotal nation and the challenges it faces, go to the Web sites for the Brookings Institution Web site ([www.brookings.edu/events/2007/1011turkey.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/events/2007/1011turkey.aspx)); the Council on Foreign Relations ([www.cfr.org/region/358/turkey.html](http://www.cfr.org/region/358/turkey.html)); the Center for Strategic and International Studies ([www.csis.org/component?option=com\\_csis\\_prog/task/view/id,1115/](http://www.csis.org/component?option=com_csis_prog/task/view/id,1115/)); and the International Crisis Group ([www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5013&l=1](http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5013&l=1)), as well as the Open Society Institute’s EurasiaNet ([www.eurasia.net.org/resource/turkey/index.shtml](http://www.eurasia.net.org/resource/turkey/index.shtml)). ■

— Susan Brady Maitra,  
Senior Editor

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## Foreign Service Members Speak Out on Directed Assignments

**F**ollowing Director General Harry Thomas' Oct. 24 announcement of a prime candidate exercise to fill the then-remaining 48 Iraq positions for summer 2008 (all the rest – 204 – had already been filled by volunteers), and the contentious Oct. 31 town hall meeting, AFSA heard from hundreds of Foreign Service members. The Journal began receiving so many letters on the subject that we have created this special section for them.

Public airing of the most emotional moments of the town hall meeting sparked the worst anti-Foreign Service media blitz in years. With a few notable exceptions, an already under-informed public was given fodder for further stereotyping diplomats as — to use the phrase most repeated by the Associated Press — “wimps and weenies.”

The threat of directed assignments to Iraq was called off on Nov. 16 because volunteers came forward to fill all of the open positions. But the DG has already indicated that directed assignments to the next set of priority countries are a real possibility if too few volunteers step up. The increasing number of “must-fill” unaccompanied positions — in Iraq and elsewhere — combined with the Foreign Service staffing shortage, leave open the possibility that this prime candidate exercise may not be the last.

### A Bad Precedent

Recent actions by the State Department to threaten directed assignments to Iraq and air disagree-

ments about the issue within the Foreign Service in public leave me saddened and dismayed. The move struck me as purely political. It did little to change any misperceptions about the diplomatic corps on the part of the nation as a whole or ameliorate existing tensions between the Departments of State and Defense in the field.

When I served in both the Regional Embassy Office and the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Mosul, I witnessed firsthand the hard work and dedication of Foreign Service officers to the Iraq mission. While I personally question the necessity for increased numbers at Embassy Baghdad, as well as the utility of the PRTs themselves, I fail to comprehend the need for directed assignments when, as was proven again this year, enough volunteers have come forward to fill every vacancy.

Directed assignments set a bad precedent that could allow future administrations too much leeway to change the scope of the assignment process to fit whatever short-term objectives they may have at the expense of long-term efforts elsewhere.

If the department truly holds its current and former crop of Iraq volunteers in such low regard, and if recruiting only “qualified candidates” is of utmost importance, then one would expect that the example would be set by the seventh floor and then work its way down.

The Foreign Service has always stepped up to volunteer when we've heard the call. It's what we signed up

to do. But when officers have legitimate reservations about the working conditions in Iraq, especially with regard to security and support, those concerns should not be so easily dismissed by the department or used against the Foreign Service for political purposes.

*Jerome P. Hohman*

*FSO*

*Embassy Paris*

### Here in Iraq, to Serve

I have been watching the recent controversy over Foreign Service Iraq assignments. I am dismayed and sorry to see what appears to be a lack of commitment by some people to the mission and job at hand. Very few of us think invading Iraq was a good idea. However, that was nearly five years ago. It's time to move on; our country needs us. We are commissioned officers who have the pleasure and responsibility to serve our country.

I am the Provincial Reconstruction Team leader for Sadr City and Ad-hamiya in downtown Baghdad. I had already been promoted (from Haiti) and certainly did not need to come to Iraq for my career. I did so out of commitment to service — and I have met many other Foreign Service officers who feel the same way. I work with a magnificent group of equally committed military officers from the 2/82nd Airborne.

We are making progress at the local level on governance, reconciliation and, to a much slower and lesser extent, on economic development. Is the situation easy to deal





with? Definitely not. Dangerous? Sometimes. But we all face danger at times in the Foreign Service. Like many FS members, I have war and danger stories — not just from Iraq. If there are people out there who expected to serve in Paris most of their careers, they need to change careers.

Let's show our commitment and discipline. We need our best officers out here. We *don't* need people who are not committed, who are not here for the right reasons. AFSA needs to represent this view, the view of so many other great officers in the Foreign Service.

*Paul Folmsbee*  
FSO  
PRT Baghdad

### Choose Iraq

I volunteered to be the first leader of the first PRT in Iraq. I consider it an honor to have served in Mosul alongside our military colleagues. A number of talented Foreign Service officers served on my team; they were volunteers who did an outstanding job under difficult conditions.

I'm against directed assignments to Iraq because, in my opinion, draftees are less likely to perform well. Rather, I urge all FSOs to volunteer for duty in Iraq, regardless of their feelings about the origin of the conflict or the way it's being carried out. Take the risk willingly, and make the effort wholeheartedly. This is, after all, the most important American foreign policy challenge of our time — and I hope that capable, dedicated Foreign Service officers will take it on.

*Cameron Munter*  
FSO  
Embassy Belgrade

### Contempt from Management

I would like to register my dismay at the way the State Department's leadership announced the directed

assignment policy for Iraq staffing. From beginning to end, I felt we were terribly ill-served by our leadership. Some examples: allowing the policy to be announced first through a press leak; calling a catastrophically poorly planned town hall meeting, in which the director general treated justifiably concerned personnel like crybabies; letting participants' candid, off-the-record comments air on TV and radio; and reminding FSOs that management reserved for itself the right to go to directed assignments for non-Iraq positions *after* we had stepped up and met management's voracious appetite for officers in Iraq.

Yes, thank you, we know you have the right to send us where you want. But why do you have to shove this in our faces again, immediately after we have gone through such a wrenching period?

I understand that the role of the department and its personnel is to fulfill the policy objectives of the administration. That is not the issue. Rather, the issue is how department management goes about working with us to meet department goals. Instead of showing understanding for the very difficult position directed assignments put many of us in — choosing between families, careers and personal safety — our leadership showed us contempt.

Personally, I am disgusted.  
*Woodward Clark Price*  
FSO  
Embassy Athens

### Loyalty Goes Both Ways

With the Iraq assignment issue temporarily resolved, it's time for all concerned to recognize that no other agency can substitute for the State Department. A strong and effective U.S. involvement overseas is indistinguishable from a strong and effective Department of State.

To have that kind of department,

"the troops" must have confidence that their leaders are fighting on their behalf for things that matter to them and their families, not just enforcing the needs of "the system." As the town hall meeting showed, many FS staff justifiably lack that confidence. To restore it, department management must tackle several issues now:

*Staffing.* The shameful neglect that has allowed an undersized Foreign Service to fall more than 2,000 members below requirements must be corrected. That shortage was a major factor in the Iraq assignments problem; allowing outsiders to blame our members for it was indefensible.

*Comparability Pay.* Eliminating the ridiculous Washington vs. overseas pay gap is essential to give department leaders the moral authority to demand ever more overseas time.

*Family-Friendliness.* The Foreign Service is a corps of families, not diplomatic Janissaries. Repairing the recent losses in family-friendliness is not a frill; it's a necessity.

*Force Protection.* Defending the FS against the recent unjust attacks was primarily management's job, not AFSA's. That duty was generally shirked; it must not be in the future.

These issues and others (such as fairness in assignments) are clear. It's time for management's "loyalty down" on such matters to match the "loyalty up" that it requires, and that the Foreign Service has always shown.

*George Colvin*  
FSO  
Embassy Apia

### Support Goes Both Ways

I support directed assignments. We owe it to whatever administration we serve to provide our most suitable people to carry out their policies. We receive a larger pension and an earlier retirement than our Civil Service

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counterparts, advantages granted to us by Congress because we serve in difficult and dangerous places. To take the prestige and financial benefits of a Foreign Service career and then shirk the most difficult task we have faced in a generation reflects poorly on us all.

But the department has responsibilities as well, both to stand up for us with the press and to take care of us after we have served. Many of us have put our lives and those of our family in danger in the service of our country. To allow the media to paint us with a yellow brush does a great injustice to us, our families and our corps.

The department also has a responsibility to care for the medical and psychological needs of our brothers and sisters who take on these most difficult assignments. And that care should be given freely, at no cost in financial or career terms.

Good leaders understand that this is a give/give relationship. We give our best, sometimes all we have, and the leader gives us the support earned.

*Joe Cole*

*IMO*

*Embassy Paramaribo*

### Strike Two

It's reprehensible that most of us found out from the *Washington Post* that directed assignments were in the works. The DG took full responsibility for this at the town hall meeting, yet most of us found out two weeks later, again from the *Post*, that there would be no directed assignments.

I cannot understand why the media are learning about these things before the people who are affected. Will [*Washington Post* reporter] Karen DeYoung start getting our assignment cables before we do?

*Elizabeth Corwin*

*FSO*

*Washington, D.C.*

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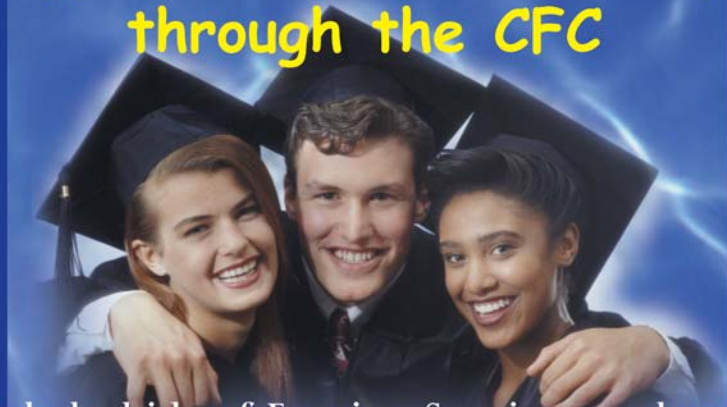
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**Is AP the New ALDAC?**

The prime candidate exercise for unfilled Iraq positions created an unnecessary black eye for the Foreign Service, never the best-understood segment of our government in any case. I can't imagine why management allowed a reporter into the town hall, an internal meeting, and let his report touch off a completely unjustified Foreign Service-bashing free-for-all in the media.

Within three weeks, all positions had been filled. But four days before the cable on that subject arrived, I read about it in the *Washington Post*. We should be able to count on management to communicate with us via cables and e-mails, not via newspaper reports.

The exercise itself was not without flaws, but we all knew it was coming. There was a lack of clarity about who was chosen and why. The town hall meeting should have been held the week before bids were due, not after. I don't personally agree, at all, with the notion that posts in Iraq must all be staffed at 100 percent while other historically difficult-to-fill positions go begging.

We are diplomats. Our job is to try to prevent wars, among other things. We are not soldiers. Worldwide availability means being available to conduct the business of diplomacy around the world, not to fight wars. If anything, this new notion that we're the same as the military insults us and the men and women in uniform at the same time — quite a feat.

What's happening in Iraq in most cases has nothing to do with foreign relations, protecting American citizens or the other functions of the Foreign Service. But in any case, the Service has come through, every single time, to fill the ever-growing number of positions.

I wish someone in a leadership position in the department would

have stood up for us in public, instead of generally remaining silent and letting us be pilloried. And in the future, when it comes to personnel actions, I wish management would not confuse the Associated Press with ALDACs in communicating with us.

*Nikolas Trendowski*  
*FSO & AFSA Post*  
*Representative*  
*Embassy Belgrade*

**Staffing the FS**

Once again we have fully staffed our missions to Iraq and Afghanistan with volunteers. But if these missions are to grow, if our other posts around the world are to be fully staffed, if our global diplomatic reach is to be maintained and if U.S. interests are to be protected, it is time to fully staff the Foreign Service itself.

Call it what you will — “America's first line of defense” (Secretary Albright), or “America's first line of offense” (Secretary Powell) — our country requires nothing less than a Foreign Service fully staffed with its most fundamental resource: people.

*Norman H. Barth*  
*FSO*  
*Washington, D.C.*

**Salt in the Wound**

Before anyone attempts to dismiss my opinion with an ad hominem argument that I'm a tea-sipping, cookie-pushing Euro-weenie, let me stipulate that I have served at three overseas posts: one a danger-pay post, another on authorized departure, and my current 20-percent hardship post. My father, brother and sister all served or are serving honorably as members of our armed forces. If ordered, I would go to Iraq without hesitation. So lecture someone else about unwillingness to sacrifice for God and country.

Director General Thomas' handling of the announcement regarding

directed assignments was a fiasco, and his performance at the town hall meeting that followed left me slack-jawed. Releasing the cable after COB on a Friday and speaking to the media before breaking the news to his own corps are akin to a consular officer working in an American Citizen Services section talking to a *New York Times* reporter about the death of an American citizen before notifying the next-of-kin. Such conduct was un-professional, plain and simple.

There was a simple answer to Jack Croddy's comments at the town hall meeting (most of which I agree with): “Not only have we signed up for worldwide availability, we are obligated to work our hardest to ensure that the foreign policy objectives of this country are achieved, regardless of our political affiliation or personal opinions about the wisdom and prudence of those policy objectives. If you can no longer do that, then it is, indeed, time to find another line of work. If you choose to leave because you can no longer actively support our Iraq policy, we respect that. To walk away from a career on principle is an act of bravery that we will never denigrate.”

The Foreign Service has been pilloried in the media for being a bunch of cowards. I resent that deeply. We risk our lives for the United States. We are this country's foreign policy professionals, and we're angry for the following reason: Prior to the Iraq invasion, no one with even a tertiary knowledge of the Middle East believed that the occupation of Iraq would end well.

Iraq was a conglomerate of Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish factions held in check by a murderous tyrant, its borders drawn according to the interests of former colonial overlords. No one argues otherwise. The subsequent disintegration of “Iraqi society” after the removal of Saddam



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was predictable. The informed analysis of experts in the State Department was ignored — in fact, it was hardly even solicited — and cast aside in favor of political expediency, in favor of the agenda of an administration that had already decided to march on Baghdad.

And now members of the Foreign Service are being coerced to serve in Iraq in an attempt to clean up a mess they predicted would come. And they'll serve amidst gunfire, roadside bombs, family separation and psychological stress, knowing that if the honest, accurate assessment of the state of play in Iraq by proud, patriotic Foreign Service officers, who had this country's best interests at heart, had been listened to, they wouldn't be there in the first place.

This is the salt in the wound, and this is what the DG either doesn't understand or refuses to acknowledge.

*Matthew E. Keene*  
*FSO & AFSA Post*  
*Representative*  
*Embassy Sofia*

### **Institutional Discipline**

I am writing to express my strongest disapproval at the appalling behavior of certain colleagues, and my union, AFSA, at the Oct. 31 town hall meeting. Let me be clear. This is not about AFSA's mission to defend the Foreign Service, which I wholly support. Nor is it about the administration's Iraq policy, which most of us know in our heart of hearts to be a failure of our elected leadership and their lack of vision at

virtually every step en route to the current fiasco.

No, this letter is about institutional discipline. AFSA's failure to explicitly distance itself from the outrageous remarks of certain colleagues ended up implicitly endorsing ideas that are totally incompatible with our professional obligations. Our AFSA representatives John Naland and Steve Kashkett sophomorically threw in irrelevancies like overseas comparability pay and the Secretary's standing in an employee poll. (As if being *any* U.S. diplomat, let alone the Secretary of State, is a popularity contest.) In an explosive situation, the first duty of leaders is to calm the situation and return the debate to the issue at hand. Our AFSA leaders instead fanned the flames and cast discredit on us all.

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Mikiea Thompson



The decision to direct assignments is ultimately made by the Secretary, a Cabinet member appointed by our elected president and confirmed by our elected Senate. We are commissioned officers of the president, and we took an oath to live up to our obligations to serve. It doesn't matter, so long as he is obeying our Constitution, whether our president sends us to Paris, Haiti, Iraq or Bosnia. The president has the right to send us where he may, and it is our obligation to serve. That's why our calling is named the Foreign Service.

The appropriate policy protest for an honorable Foreign Service officer is resignation, not histrionics in the halls of our State Department. Every FSO has the right to resign. Discussion of terms of service is a personnel matter, not a policy one, and should be addressed rationally, without emotion. Sure, the DG was wrong to tell the press of directed assignments before he told us, but that's irrelevant to the treatment he received at the town hall meeting.

Let's quietly debate our terms of service behind closed doors, rationally, the way diplomats do, and not like the mobs that throw stones and chant hatred outside our chanceries.

*Andrew Erickson*  
FSO  
*Embassy Bogota*

### The Power of Resources

Service in Iraq is not a death sentence. FSOs have served in war zones before and have succeeded in Iraq and Afghanistan in the face of great odds. The problem today is the challenge to succeed where officers lack resources, training and an environment conducive to diplomatic and public dialog.

Dialog is important, but we also need to empower officers with the resources to carry out their mandate. Without a budget, FSOs bring nothing

to the table where money and resources influence decisions. When adversaries influence local leaders by giving resources to solve problems, but FSOs only bring an admonition to stay the course, hard-pressed leaders make the most expeditious choice, and another district is lost.

We have accepted the task of implementing policy in a combat zone, but have not changed how we do business. We have to give our volunteers what they need — flexibility, responsibility, resources and training. We can only engage when dialog is possible. If our interlocutors shut down dialog because it endangers them and their families, what is our role? If there is no group to engage with, what is our role? It's not a question of patriotism, but a question of competency: you don't send a baker into the field to grow wheat; you hand him a bag of flour when the wheat has been harvested.

If our volunteers get the resources and training they need and are deployed where they have a role to play and are empowered to carry out that role, and if we acknowledge that our job includes combat and all the responsibilities that implies, then we can be sure FSOs have the capacity to succeed. We will see them at the table as key players.

But if we maintain a system that expects results without resources, experts without training and officers without responsibilities, and that outsources protection, we can only expect to remain marginalized, disempowered, walled in and frustratingly unsuccessful.

*Joe Mellott*  
FSO  
*Washington, D.C.*

### Skimming the Surface

In the discussion of our collective willingness to serve in Iraq, what we're really getting at is a much larger

problem: namely, the lack of support from management for the Foreign Service. This was recently illustrated by the results of an AFSA poll: 88 percent of FSOs do not believe that State management is responsive to staff concerns.

Such concerns include the opaque bidding and assignment process, a lack of consultation in personnel decision-making, a lack of openness to feedback on policy (especially personnel-related) decisions and the career benefits of hardship tours. Real concerns that deserve real answers were raised at the town hall meeting.

Though the discussion shouldn't be limited to Iraq, we might start by asking why our mission there is so large and has been allowed to cause strained staffing levels everywhere else. We might also ask that management be truly open to hearing doubts about the sustainability of our current foreign policy there. And finally, let's honestly examine a major concern many FSOs continue to articulate: are our skills as diplomatic officers really well-placed in what is essentially a military operation?

Of course, all Foreign Service members salute our colleagues who have bravely served in Iraq. But let's not ignore the larger issues at the heart of many officers' reluctance to serve there. Until we work those out, the directed assignments debate is just skimming the surface.

*Matthew V. Cassetta*  
FSO  
*Washington, D.C.*

### Confusing Danger with Dissent

My recollection is that when one is sworn into the Foreign Service, one agrees to serve at the pleasure of the president. That means going wherever the Secretary of State tells you to go. If it's dangerous, so be it.

We didn't sign up for duties re-

## LETTERS



stricted to diplomatic cocktail parties. We were proudly, even snobbishly, distinct from the Civil Service, where one is transferred only if one requests it. We were much more like the military, with a new post every few years, depending on the needs of the Service. Few of us volunteered for Vietnam, but many of us went.

And now Iraq. Foreign Service officers are protesting that they might get killed there. They are saying that because they disagree with administration policies, they should not be asked to risk their lives for the needs of the Service. They have a point. But I think they are mistakenly blending two important and distinct precepts: dangerous assignments and dissent.

If they strongly disagree with administration policy, they should

have made their views known years ago. Some did, and some even courageously resigned. But if they're simply worried about a dangerous assignment, maybe they don't belong in the Foreign Service anyway.

*William B. Stubbs*  
*FSO, retired*  
*Ocala, Fla.*

### Supersized Mission

During the Cold War, when Germany was the front line looking out at the Iron Curtain, we justifiably beefed up our missions in Berlin and Moscow. The Cold War ended around 1990, yet we did not draw down our personnel in those posts until roughly 2005. We now have a supersized Iraq mission. Once you give a post those Full-Time Equiva-

lent slots, it is difficult — particularly in our chronically understaffed Foreign Service — to take them away, even when the environment changes.

It appears that we have decided that Baghdad will be our biggest U.S. embassy, bigger than Beijing, New Delhi, London, Cairo or Mexico City. There are those who call us unpatriotic for questioning this, let alone questioning why we are sending hundreds of diplomats into a war zone that has yet to be secured. These critics are often the same individuals who would like nothing more than to eliminate USAID and merge State into DOD.

Perhaps those who have criticized our right to dissent and blurred the distinction between civilian and military structures have done our democracy the greatest disservice.

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Those members of Congress who called members of the Foreign Service wimps and traitors should resign in shame.

The world is not black and white; this is something the Foreign Service understands. Those who believe it is should not be put in charge of foreign policy, or the result will be a mess that takes decades and many American lives to clean up.

*Ralph Falzone*  
FSO  
*Embassy Hanoi*

### Intimidation Instead of Leadership

The Foreign Service is a risky calling. Extensive tours in violent and wartorn countries have left me, like many of my colleagues, as accustomed to gunfire and landmine explosions as to the clink of wineglasses at a reception. We voluntarily accept, and even seek out, such duty in our desire to serve our country.

It was therefore startling to learn — and from the media on a Saturday morning, no less — that State Department management had decided to invoke directed assignments to Iraq. The following week brought statements, not just by ill-informed commentators but also by some senior State officials, implicitly questioning the suitability for service and the courage of those FSOs who were reluctant to serve in Iraq. At a time when leadership is essential, we got intimidation.

Iraq is one of a myriad of challenges to America's security and prosperity, and meeting those challenges will require department leadership in building and retaining a robust Foreign Service, for Iraq and elsewhere, for now and the future. The short-sighted invocation of contractual legalese needs to be set aside and replaced by vision and a commitment to the entire Foreign Service — its

well-being, its capabilities and its morale.

The Foreign Service has again stepped up to meet its responsibilities. It is time for State leadership to not only set realistic goals, but to support the entire team needed to achieve them.

*Alan J. Carlson*  
FSO  
*U.S. Mission Geneva*

### No à la Carte Policy

I understand the dissatisfaction of a number of my colleagues regarding the DG's recent announcement of directed assignments to Iraq. The Secretary herself should have been at the town hall meeting. That said, I think we FSOs need to tuck in our collective chin and accept directed assignments without any further grumbling.

The fact that there may be legitimate criticism of our Iraq policy as ill-conceived from the beginning, or that our continued presence there is unwanted (or at best grudgingly tolerated), does not matter. When we signed on the dotted line, we agreed to worldwide availability. We cannot eat à la carte from this administration's (or any other administration's) policy menu.

Service in Iraq, Afghanistan or any other post in a war zone is part of our job. Standing up and accepting directed assignments as the dedicated professionals that we are is not only our duty, but the best argument against those who choose to remain ignorant and yet obstreperously critical of our work.

At the same time, the State Department owes it to those who it is sending into harm's way to provide adequate training and support. There are financial issues involved in separating families, in addition to those important but less tangible personal ones that should also be

aggressively addressed by the department. And frankly, now is the time for AFSA to go charging to the Hill, with full and vigorous support from the Secretary, to press Congress on the longstanding issue of overseas comparability pay and the legislation giving income tax breaks to those who serve in war zones.

We will do our part, accepting the directed assignments and serving with dignity and professionalism in war zones to further U.S. policy goals. But let's not waste this opportunity to impress upon the relevant decision-makers that they should give the Foreign Service appropriate consideration when it comes to the legitimate long-standing issues of locality pay and tax breaks.

I hope AFSA and the department leadership will be assertive with regard to these responsibilities, now more than ever, as we FSOs accept our duty to serve where our nation calls us.

*David M. Birdsey*  
FSO  
*Embassy Kabul*

### Where's Service Discipline?

I am puzzled by reports that the director general may have to resort to "drafting" officers for duty in Iraq on pain of dismissal. I was at one time a deputy member of the Board of Examiners and thought that every prospective member of the Foreign Service was required to take an oath "to defend the Constitution against all enemies foreign and domestic" as well as to serve in accordance with "the needs of the Service." We are at war. Where is the Service discipline of the current generation of Foreign Service officers? Are they a bunch of wusses who joined the Service only for sight-seeing abroad at taxpayer expense?

One of the more useful accomplishments of past DGs was creation of the Foreign Affairs Reserve

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Corps, consisting of retired officers immediately available for service abroad in the event of emergency need. Why hasn't the DG availed himself of this resource? I understand that AFSA also maintains a list of officers available for short-term assignment. Has the DG availed himself of this list?

*David Brighton Timmins  
FSO, retired  
Scottsdale, Ariz.*

### The FS Volunteers

Since the Vietnam War, the State Department has filled its overseas positions entirely with volunteers. Foreign and Civil Service employees have served in Iran, Pakistan, Haiti, Congo, Colombia, Grenada, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Sudan and

many other distant and hazardous postings. They volunteered with full knowledge and acceptance of danger and the possibility they could be killed, and many have been killed in the line of duty.

Iraq has morphed into a special challenge, but it is important to note that it is the only country in the world where we are experiencing extraordinary problems with staffing — and only this year, at that. Volunteers for Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and dozens of other countries with hardship postings have all come forward.

Staffing problems for Iraq come down to a combination of an exceptionally large embassy that has already taken a huge number of volunteers and the fact that the

postings are to war zones where our jobs are nearly impossible to carry out. Adding another 50 to 100 people in the Green Zone or on a firebase does nothing to change the fact that they can't work effectively from bunkers or move around freely.

Working-level diplomacy and development assistance activities require a basic level of security that does not exist in Iraq. Those activities just cannot be carried out effectively on a battlefield. As was pointed out at the town hall meeting, in any other country, the embassy in Baghdad would be drawn down, not expanded.

Why then build the largest embassy in the world? Most feel that the numbers are being pushed up as a political gesture to ensure that the

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Department of Defense cannot shift the blame for failed reconstruction efforts to the State Department. Many of those who might otherwise volunteer for service in Iraq believe that there is little they can add barricaded in secure areas or streaking through the streets surrounded by security forces who strike terror in the local population.

Ultimately, enough people did volunteer to fully staff the Iraq mission. Looking to the future, however, it may be worthwhile for Congress and the administration to empower an impartial and broad-based panel to examine the correlation between security and working-level effectiveness, and to determine under what security conditions mission activities should be drawn down, setting out updated tripwires for consideration. Though the new standard should not be compulsory, it could provide a benchmark for comparison that would extend to all missions around the world.

*Leo Gallagher*

*FSO*

*Washington, D.C.*

### **We Are At War**

I have been reading about the protests against being assigned to Baghdad. To be honest, I am offended. Our country is at war. I don't like the war. We should not have gone into Iraq to begin with. Our human rights record and our failure to oppose waterboarding and other torture techniques help the terrorists and weaken America.

Still, if the best and brightest refuse to serve (in other words, ask for a deferment), less skilled officers will manage things. That's ethically unacceptable, and just as wrong as draft-dodging was during the Vietnam War, when our embassy stayed open up to the last day.

Because I have decades of experi-

ence in crisis management, I volunteered to go to Iraq. In fact, I had to fight to get permission to serve there because I wear a defibrillator, but was finally medically cleared. In the end, my office director would not let me go.

Later, I decided to retire from the Foreign Service, in part to protest our policies and work for political change from the outside by joining a campaign.

We can oppose the war. But we also took an oath when we joined the department not to be fair-weather government employees, serving only when it is safe. I am still opposed to the war, which I find morally repugnant. But even though I am retired, I would go to Baghdad today to serve my country if asked. I would hope others would do the same, putting the good of the country over safer job placement.

*Larry Roeder*

*FSO, retired*

*South Riding, Va.*

### **A Colonial Service?**

Rather than treating the recent directed assignment brouhaha as a difficult exercise in personnel management — or, as some would have it, a very public enforcement of Foreign Service discipline — we need to consider frankly, as a government and a nation, how the U.S. diplomatic corps is increasingly being assigned the role of a colonial service in Iraq and elsewhere.

While I generally disagree with columnist Robert Novak, he was spot on when he recently characterized diplomats as skilled negotiators and reporters, not nationbuilders (Nov. 15 *Washington Post*). Novak was faulting the Foreign Service for perceived shortcomings, but I would contend that diplomacy and nationbuilding (or rebuilding, as the case may be) represent two entirely distinct mis-

sions, and that colonial administration has never belonged in the Department of State.

However you judge the history of the British and French empires, London and Paris recognized that their diplomatic and colonial services performed separate functions and required diverse skill sets that only somewhat overlapped. My former colleagues in the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization can provide a detailed, exhaustive listing of the many capabilities needed to rebuild and then administer a country shattered by war. Very little of the required expertise can or should reside in our — or any nation's — diplomatic corps.

If we, as a country, intend to pursue further imperial adventures of the sort we have undertaken in Iraq, then Congress and the American people need to enter into an open, honest debate about the creation of a new colonial service. And that debate needs to address not only the administrative and logistical details, but also the fundamental political question of what the continued pursuit of such policies will ultimately mean for the future of our republic.

*Keith A. Eddins*

*FSO*

*Arlington, Va.*

### **Caring Isn't the Issue**

One of the testiest exchanges during the town hall meeting occurred when the DG vehemently denied the assertion that Secretary Rice did not "care about" the Foreign Service. That was correct, however, and for Amb. Thomas to deny it ignores reality.

In my almost 30 years with the department, including stints on the 7th floor and in HR working for several political ambassadors and assistant secretaries, I never met one who "cared" about the Foreign



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Service. I am not complaining; indeed, I have the utmost respect and admiration for most of them. They did not accept the president's nomination because they cared about me or my colleagues; they did so to assist the president in implementing his policies.

Of more concern is the fact that department management is often inept. How many times have we heard that "State Department management is an oxymoron"? Unfortunately, when lives are on the line, that is no longer a joke.

If we are to be forced into a war zone, unarmed and with very little training or preparation, and with extremely limited resources to deal with potential calamities and tragedies, we have a right to ask who cares,

to demand more from management. Mr. Croddy's questions about "Who will take care of us?" and "Who will raise our kids?" may not have been well-articulated, but I know exactly what he means.

The military and Veterans Administration, despite many problems, have come a long way from Jane Fonda's "Coming Home," but the Foreign Service has done nothing I know of to provide any assistance. And, as David Passage points out in his Speaking Out column in the November *FSJ*, we don't even provide the same preparation to FSOs going to Iraq that we did for those going to Vietnam.

Without pointing fingers, it is safe to say that neither the administration nor Congress has adequately supported the department with the resources

it needs for Iraq or anywhere else. It appears as though neither elected branch of government gives a hoot about the Foreign Service. And the American public hardly even recognizes our existence or role in Iraq. In baseball, three strikes and you're out.

Of course, as events unfolded, all the consternation was unnecessary. In typical fashion, the Foreign Service rose to the challenge and filled the 48 remaining positions in Baghdad with volunteers, again proving that we are prepared to make the same sacrifices as our colleagues in uniform. I hope that lesson is not lost on management. ■

*Robert Downey*  
FSO, retired  
Abuja, Nigeria

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# POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER: HOW BIG A PROBLEM?

BY STEVEN ALAN HONLEY

Writing in the December 2006 *Foreign Service Journal*, FSO Beth Payne recounted her struggle with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder following her service in Iraq. The entire article, “Living with Iraq” ([www.afsa.org/fsj/dec06/livingwithiraq.pdf](http://www.afsa.org/fsj/dec06/livingwithiraq.pdf)), is well worth reading, but the following two paragraphs sum up our purpose in devoting this month’s issue to the topic:

“Why am I now sharing this story with my fellow FSOs, particularly given my concern about clearances and my reputation? These concerns (which were not well-founded) almost stopped me from getting help. Without help, I do not think I would have recovered from PTSD — and, based on my research, my mental and, eventually, physical health problems would have become worse over time.

“A significant number of Foreign Service personnel and family members have already experienced events that place them at high risk for PTSD. Given the number of people who now serve in dangerous posts and the high risk of being targeted by terrorists, the number will continue to grow over the next few years. For those who have the condition, untreated symptoms can cause medical problems, destroy families and sideline careers.”

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*Steven Alan Honley, the editor of the Journal, was a Foreign Service officer from 1985 to 1997, serving in Mexico City, Wellington and Washington, D.C.*

## The MED/FLO Survey

Last summer, recognizing the gravity of this challenge, the Office of Medical Services and the Family Liaison Office jointly surveyed FS employees who had served unaccompanied tours between 2002 and mid-2007. (The survey took place on the intranet and ran from June 1 to July 15.) Of the 2,600 employees who completed unaccompanied tours during the indicated years, 877 — or one third — submitted responses. Of that total, 358 had served in Iraq, 208 in Afghanistan, 185 in Pakistan and 138 in Saudi Arabia. (Twenty-six percent of them had done unaccompanied tours in more than one place.)

The survey asked about exposure to physical danger and the impact of danger- and isolation-related stressors upon a broad range of psychological symptoms and psychosocial functioning in these employees. Unsurprisingly, the results indicate widespread stress-related symptoms among such employees, though there was a falloff in the incidence of those symptoms over time after completion of the tour.

Among a list of 17 symptoms often found in persons enduring chronically high levels of stress, 10 were experienced by more than 20 percent of the respondents. For example, 47 percent admitted to insomnia and 33 percent reported being irritable or unusually hostile during the tour, while 55 percent reported problems in relating to their spouse or partner even after completing the tour. (State Department employees can read the full report on MED’s intranet site at <http://med.state.gov/>.)

Based on an initial review of the survey, the State Department acknowledges that PTSD is probably present in at least 2 percent of the respondents. An additional 15 percent may possibly have this disorder, for a total of 17 percent. While it is important to bear in mind that a thorough examination by a medical practitioner is required to make a definitive diagnosis, the fact that one in six of the survey respondents are potentially at risk for developing PTSD is worrisome.

MED has contracted with a data analysis firm to conduct a more detailed analysis to see if responses differ depending on the post where the unaccompanied tour was served, the length of the tour and the amount of time since departing the post, among other factors. This will allow for a focused assessment of the stress impact in Iraq and Afghanistan, and possible further distinctions among places within those countries. We will report on those findings as they become available.

### **Our Coverage**

Dr. Raymond M. De Castro, director of MED's mental health services division, begins our coverage with an overview full of useful advice ("Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: A Guide," p. 28). While many readers may already be generally familiar with the condition, we hope that the checklists of background factors, symptoms, treatment options and Internet resources will prove helpful. I would particularly call attention to the section in which he discusses the impact of PTSD on family members of the patient.

Next, FSO Rachel Schneller shares her own struggle with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. As she explains in "Recovery: When Surviving Isn't Enough" (p. 35), important as the decision to seek treatment is, it is just the first step of what can be a long, arduous journey. Note: This is a searingly frank and detailed account of what she has endured, which some readers may find disturbing.

While the incidence of PTSD within the Foreign Service (and the military) appears to be increasing, it is definitely not a new phenomenon. Though I know of no official surveys concerning the psychological health of the thousands of Foreign Service personnel who served in Vietnam during the war, several Foreign Service retirees

responded to the AFSAnet solicitation we sent out this fall seeking contributions for this issue with stories of how their time there and in other war zones, or experiences with massive natural disasters, still haunt them today, decades later. (Our thanks to all members who contacted us in response to that request.)

Retired USAID FSO Kristin Loken served in two countries undergoing civil wars in the early 1980s: El Salvador and Lebanon. Those traumatic experiences, along with the lack of institutional support as she attempted to cope with their psychological effects, taught her the hard truth that PTSD is "Not Only for Combat Veterans" (p. 42).

Our longstanding policy is to publish the names of all contributors. However, for reasons that will be obvious when you read it, we are printing a commentary from an anonymous officer who questions the credibility of State's public commitment not to penalize employees who disclose the use of antidepressants or therapy when they seek a security or medical clearance ("Encouraging Employees to Seek Help," p. 46).

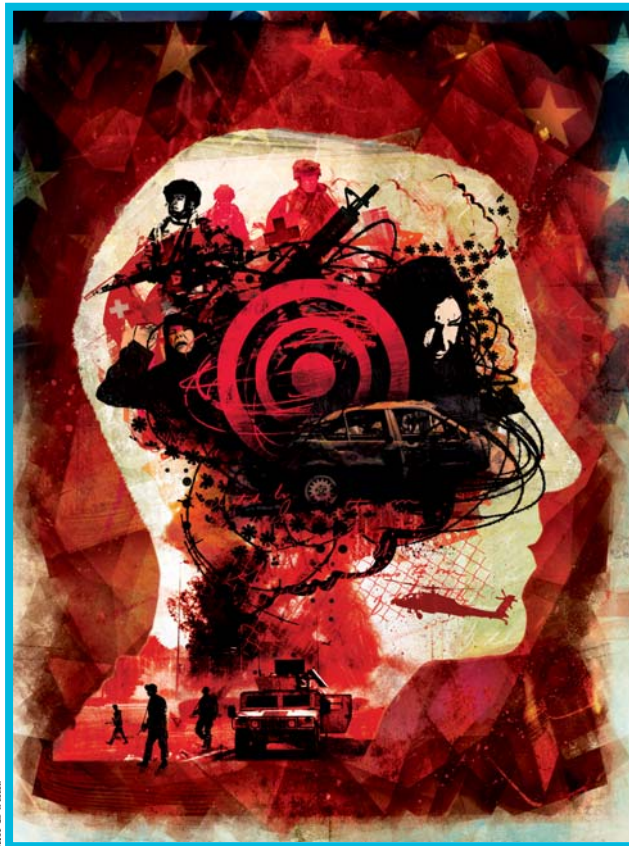
While not suffering from PTSD, this contributor sought professional care for depression, only to receive a downgraded medical clearance as a result. (The individual's security clearance was given additional scrutiny but eventually renewed.) Such experiences, coupled with the grossly inadequate coverage of mental health treatment by many health insurance policies, lead the author to ruefully conclude that "State seems to prefer that I go off my meds and become the unhappy, less productive, less collegial employee I was a year ago."

Today's Foreign Service reality is that more and more personnel have to serve in dangerous environments, including combat zones. And because such places tend to be unaccompanied posts, they have the additional burden of being away from their families and other support networks just when they most need them. We believe that the open discussion of PTSD that follows is needed to help ensure that proper support is given to those who may face this debilitating illness as a direct result of their dedicated service, and hope that it will contribute to updating State's approach to mental health issues generally. ■

*We hope that our  
coverage will raise  
consciousness about  
this growing problem.*



# POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER: A GUIDE



Ian Dodds

**T** UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS HAPPENING WHEN YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW REACTS TO A TRAUMATIC EVENT WILL HELP YOU BE LESS FEARFUL AND BETTER ABLE TO COPE.

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*By RAYMOND M. DE CASTRO, M.D.*

The medical profession classifies Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder as one of 11 anxiety disorders. But PTSD is different from most mental health diagnoses because it is tied to a particular life event for which the witnessing or experiencing has a potential for death or serious injury and provokes intense fear, helplessness or horror. During such events, you may think that your life or others' lives are in danger and that you have no control over what is happening.

These events could be serious accidents, such as a car wreck; natural disasters, such as earthquakes, fires, floods, hurricanes or tornadoes; sexual or physical assaults, including child sexual or physical abuse; combat or military exposure; or terrorist attacks.

The Foreign Service lifestyle has always posed some degree of risk for certain of these traumas. Some employees and families in the past reported being traumatized by evacuations from embassies under siege. Today we have larger numbers of unaccompanied tours, including some in the zones associated with the war on terror.

Most trauma survivors experience stress reactions. People may typically describe feeling relief to be alive, followed by fear and/or anger. They also often find they are unable to stop thinking about what happened. Many will exhibit excess nervous arousal, sometimes to the point of agitation. Such stress reactions are natural responses to the extreme physiological changes induced by a life-threatening event and have nothing to do with personal weakness.

Understanding what is happening when you or someone you know reacts to a traumatic event will help you be less fearful and better able to cope. The symptoms of these stress reactions may last for several days or even a few weeks, but for most people, they will slowly diminish over time.

If these symptoms worsen or don't resolve after a month, then PTSD may be developing. Some may find the symptoms of this disorder merely annoying; but for others, they can be terrifying. They may disrupt life and interfere with daily activities. Although symptoms usually start soon after the traumatic event, they may not occur until months or years later, and in some cases they come and go over many years.

### **Who Gets PTSD?**

It is far from rare to experience a traumatic event. In the U.S. general population, about 60 percent of men and 50 percent of women do so at least once in their lives. Women are more likely to experience sexual assault and child sexual abuse, while men are more likely to experience accidents, physical assault or combat, or to witness death or injury.

---

*Dr. Raymond M. De Castro, a Foreign Service psychiatrist since 1998, is director of mental health services within the State Department's Bureau of Medical Services.*

Anyone who has gone through a life-threatening event could develop PTSD due to strong biological responses that create changes in brain chemistry and function. However, most people who go through a traumatic event do not develop full PTSD, despite the early stress reaction. Approximately 8 percent of men and 20 percent of women do so. Women are more likely than men to develop the disorder after all types of traumatic events except sexual assault or abuse (when men are sexually assaulted, they are just as likely as women to develop PTSD).

While we cannot predict with certainty who will develop PTSD after a trauma, researchers have discovered some personal factors that are more commonly associated with those who do develop the condition. You are more likely to develop PTSD if you are female; suffer from another mental health problem; had an earlier life-threatening event or trauma, including being abused as a child; lack adequate support from family and friends; or drink a lot of alcohol.

There are also factors that involve the person's relation to the event itself that are seen more commonly in those who develop PTSD, such as: how intense the trauma was and how close you were to the event; if you were hurt or lost a loved one; how strong your reaction was; and how much you felt in control of events.

### **How Is the Condition Evaluated?**

While it may be tempting to identify PTSD for yourself or someone you know, the diagnosis should be made by a mental health professional. This will usually involve a formal evaluation by a psychiatrist, psychologist or clinical social worker who is specifically trained to assess psychological problems. It can be difficult to know whether distress is a normal reaction or a symptom of something more serious. Even experts may require the results of a detailed evaluation to answer this question.

Several studies have pointed out that many victims of trauma do not believe that they need help and will not seek out services, despite reporting significant emotional distress. Several potential reasons for this are:

- Some feel that they are better off than others more affected and therefore "should not be so upset."
- Others may not seek help because of pride, or out of fear that the distress indicates weakness of some sort.
- Many individuals are more apt to seek informal support from family and friends, which may not be sufficient to prevent long-term distress.

• Many people are afraid to go for help because of concerns that others will lose respect for them, or fear that it may adversely affect their careers.

Nevertheless, it is recommended that you seek assistance from your medical doctor or from a mental health professional who is skilled in the treatment of trauma if you are experiencing any symptoms that are causing distress, are causing significant changes in relationships, are impairing work function, or lead to either self-medicating with alcohol or drugs or doubts about whether life is worthwhile or manageable.

Here are some reasons why you may want to seek help:

- Early treatment is better: dealing with symptoms now might help stop them from getting worse in the future.
- PTSD symptoms can adversely affect family dynamics. You may find that you pull away from loved ones, are not able to get along with people, or are becoming angry or even violent.

***While we cannot predict  
with certainty who  
will develop PTSD,  
researchers have  
discovered some factors  
making that more likely.***

• PTSD can aggravate pre-existing physical health problems. For example, a few studies have shown a relationship between PTSD and heart trouble.

• It may not be PTSD at all: having the symptoms of PTSD does not always mean you have the condition. Some of the symptoms are also associated with other mental health problems. For example, trouble concentrating or feeling less inter-

ested in things you used to enjoy can be symptoms of clinical depression. Furthermore, different problems require different treatments.

If you do not want to be evaluated, you may choose “watchful waiting,” a wait-and-see approach. However, if your symptoms do not get better after three months and they are either causing you distress or are getting in the way of your work or home life, please talk to a health professional.

In a few cases, your symptoms may be so severe that you need immediate help. Call 911 or other emergency

### **What can the trauma survivor do to help himself/herself?**

**L**earn more about PTSD from Web sites or publications (see “Resources,” p. 34) that offer information on self-care and self-help guidance, including tips on both positive coping strategies to use and negative coping strategies to avoid.

If you do have PTSD, it’s important to get treatment. Taking steps early may help reduce long-term symptoms, so talk to:

- A mental health professional, such as a social worker in the State Department’s Office of Employee Counseling Services, or your regional psychiatrist, who can be contacted through your mission’s health unit;
- Your mission’s regional medical officer or FS health practitioner, or your private family doctor;
- A religious leader; or
- A close friend or family member who can support you and find you help.

If you prefer to seek professional help privately, you may use the mission health unit staff to see if there are local therapy resources. In the U.S., besides the State Department resources listed above, contact your insurance provider, local mental health agency, local hospital’s med-

ical referral service or psychiatric department, or a university psychology department.

For support groups in Washington, you may call Employee Consultative Services at (202) 663-1815 for assistance in attending the biweekly Unaccompanied Tour Support Group in SA-1 (Columbia Plaza). To find locations elsewhere in the continental United States, check with the Anxiety Disorders Association of America, which offers a self-help group network, or the National Alliance for Mental Illness, which has a Web site listing affiliates who provide family support groups in different states.

If the traumatic event that triggered your PTSD was work-related, the Office of Worker’s Compensation Program, administered by the Department of Labor, will pay your medical bills without the out-of-pocket expenses such as co-payments or deductibles that apply to FEP health insurance use. Time off work can be taken without consuming sick leave. The paperwork seems daunting at first, but the Office of Employee Relations in the Bureau of Human Resources can help shepherd you through the OWCP application process to expedite receipt of benefits.



## F O C U S

services immediately if you think that you cannot keep from hurting yourself or someone else.

### **How Is It Treated?**

Today, there are good treatments available for PTSD. A type of counseling called cognitive-behavioral therapy and medicines known as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors are among the most effective treatments for PTSD. Some examples of CBT are Cognitive Therapy, Exposure Therapy, and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing.

SSRIs are a type of antidepressant medicine that are effective for some anxiety disorders. These can help you feel less sad and worried; for some people they are very effective. Some examples include citalopram (Celexa), escitalopram (Lexapro), fluoxetine (Prozac), paroxetine

***Seek assistance from a professional skilled in the treatment of trauma if you are experiencing any symptoms that are causing distress.***

(Paxil) and sertraline (Zoloft). There are also other medications that have been used with some success. Talk to your doctor about which ones might be right for you.

In addition to CBT and SSRIs, some other kinds of counseling may be helpful in your recovery from PTSD, such as group therapy, brief psychodynamic psychotherapy and family therapy.

For some people, treatment for PTSD can last three to six months. But if you have other mental health problems as well, the process may last for one to two years or longer. Depression, alcohol- or substance-abuse problems, panic disorder and other anxiety disorders often occur along with PTSD. In many cases, the treatments described above will also help with the other

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disorders. The best results occur when both PTSD and the other problems are treated together rather than one after the other. About half (40 to 60 percent) of people who develop PTSD get better at some time. But about one out of three people who develop PTSD will always have some symptoms.

Getting help can make you feel more in control of your emotions and result in fewer symptoms. Since there are many types of treatment for PTSD, you and your doctor will discuss the best approach for you. You may have to try a number of treatments before you find one that works for you.

If you do not like your therapist or feel that he or she

is not helping you, it might be useful to talk with another professional.

### **How Can Family Members Help?**

PTSD can adversely affect even a tight-knit family's dynamics. The survivor may act differently and get angry easily. He or she may not want to do things you used to enjoy together. You may feel scared and frustrated about the changes you see in your loved one. You also may feel angry about what's happening to your family, or wonder if things will ever go back to the way they were. These feelings and worries are common. You may feel helpless, but there are many things you can do:

### **The Role of the Office of Medical Services**

The Office of Medical Services oversees primary care and mental health services overseas and occupational health services both overseas and in the States. In the States, MED does not provide primary care or mental health services, with the exception of Employee Consultation Services, which is the State Department's Employee Assistance Program.

In December 2003, when Iraq was still under the Coalition Provisional Authority, MED sent representatives to assess the medical effects of that environment on Foreign Service workers. Shortly thereafter, MED began providing, in association with the Foreign Service Institute's Transition Center, a High Stress Assignment Outbrief Program which was made mandatory for employees returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. This is held at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI course code MQ 950) and is done in a group format. The course is mandatory precisely to remove any fear that it would stigmatize attendees with a "mental health" label.

Furthermore, anyone who prefers to have an individualized outbrief, whether for the convenience of scheduling or to bring up more personal matters in a private setting, can do that instead (FSI course code MQ 951). These courses are also available on a voluntary basis to any employee returning from any unaccompanied tour.

So as not to stigmatize those who served, no one is forced to undergo a personal mental health screening. Instead, at the outbrief they are empowered to self-screen by means of these four steps:

1. They are given information about the more common mental health problems seen in people who serve at high-stress posts, such as normal and self-limited stress reactions, Acute Stress Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, alcohol or other substance abuse, depression and other mood disorders, and marital problems. This infor-

mation is based on self-reports from peers who attended previous outbriefs in recent years and the anonymous survey that MED and the Family Liaison Office conducted in 2007, to which 877 employees responded.

2. They are then advised about signs and symptoms that may indicate sufficient concern to warrant a professional consultation.

3. Clarification is offered about the confidentiality of medical histories and the fact that seeking help for mental health issues in itself is never cause for an automatic change in medical or security clearances. An opaque boundary between MED and both HR and DS is well established, and an individual's medical history is never revealed to either. However, employee medical clearances can affect assignments as their purpose is to make sure that any needed medical care is available at the post of assignment.

4. They are advised how to contact mental health professionals and to contact HR/ER for processing claims for workmen's compensation. They are also informed that Employee Consultation Services, (202) 663-1815, offers a biweekly support group in Washington for returnees from unaccompanied tours.

Even before deployment, these topics are introduced by MED staff to all attendees at the mandatory pre-deployment courses offered by DS. Furthermore, in Iraq we have the only mental health provider in the Department of State who is designated to provide services to the mission of one single country, with back-up support provided by our psychiatrist in Amman.

MED is currently developing a Deployment Stress Management Program and hopes to hire two to three more mental health specialists who will provide evaluation, support and, possibly, initial treatment for employees suffering from PTSD or other mental health problems upon returning from unaccompanied tours.

## FOCUS

- Learn as much as you can about PTSD. Knowing how it affects people may help you understand what your family member is going through. The more you know, the better you and your family can handle the situation.

- Offer to accompany your family member on doctor visits. You can help keep track of medicine and therapy, and you can be there to offer support.

- Tell your loved one you want to listen and that you also understand if he or she doesn't feel like talking.

- Plan family activities together, like having dinner or going to a movie.

- Take a walk, go for a bike ride or do some other physical activity together. Exercise is important for health and helps clear your mind.

***Depression, alcohol-  
or substance-abuse  
problems, panic  
disorder and other  
anxiety disorders often  
occur along with PTSD.***

- Encourage contact with friends and family. A support system will help your family member get through difficult changes and stressful times.

Bear in mind that your loved one may not want your help. Sometimes social withdrawal can be a symptom of PTSD. A person who withdraws may not feel like talking, taking part in group activities or being around other people. Give your loved one space, but tell him or her that you will always be ready to help.

In addition, he or she may feel angry about many things. Anger is a normal reaction to trauma, but it can hurt relationships and make it hard to think clearly. Anger also can be frightening. If it leads to violent behavior or abuse, it's dangerous. Go to a safe place and call for help right away. Make sure children are in a safe place as well.

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### Talking through Anger

It's hard to talk to someone who is angry. One thing you can do is set up a timeout system to provide a way to talk even while angry. Here's one way to do this:

- Agree that either of you can call a timeout at any time.
- Agree that when someone calls a timeout, the discussion must stop right then.
- Decide on a signal you will use to call a timeout. This can be a word or a hand motion.
- Agree to tell each other where you will be and what you will be doing during the timeout. Tell each other what time you will come back.

While you are taking such a break, don't focus on how angry you feel. Instead, think calmly about how you will talk things over and solve the problem.

After you come back:

- Take turns talking about solutions to the problem. Listen without interrupting.
  - Use statements starting with "I," such as "I think" or "I feel." Using "you" statements can sound accusatory.
  - Be open to each other's ideas. Don't criticize each other.
  - Focus on things you both think will work. It's likely you will both have good ideas.
  - Together, agree which solutions you will use.
- You and your family may have trouble talking about feelings, worries and everyday problems. Here are some ways to communicate better:
- Be clear and to the point.
  - Be positive. Blame and negative talk won't help the situation.
  - Be a good listener. Don't argue or interrupt, but do repeat what you hear to make sure you understand. Ask questions if you need to know more.
  - Put your feelings into words. Your loved one may not know you are sad or frustrated unless you are clear about your feelings.
  - Help your family member put feelings into words. For instance, ask: "Are you feeling angry? Sad? Worried?"
  - Ask how you can help.

- Don't give advice unless you are asked.

If your family is having a lot of trouble talking things over, consider trying family therapy. This is a type of counseling that involves your whole family. The therapist helps the whole group communicate, maintain good relationships and cope with tough emotions. Each person gets to talk about how the problem is affecting them and the whole family.

### Helping Can Be Hard

Don't forget that helping a person with PTSD can be hard on the rest of the family. You may have your own feelings of fear and anger about the trauma. You may feel guilty because you wish your family member would just forget his or her problems and get on with life. Or you may feel confused or frustrated because your loved one has changed, and you may worry that your family life will never get back to normal.

All of this can drain you, affecting your health and making it harder for you to help your loved one. If you're not careful, you may get sick yourself, become depressed, or burn out and

stop helping your loved one. So take care of yourself, even if that requires the help of others:

- Don't feel guilty or feel that you have to know it all. Nobody has all the answers and it's normal to feel helpless at times.
- Don't feel bad if things change slowly. You cannot change anyone. People have to change themselves.
- Take care of your physical and mental health. If you feel yourself getting sick or feeling sad and hopeless, see your doctor.
- Don't give up your outside life. Make time for activities and hobbies you enjoy. Continue to see your friends.
- Take time to be by yourself. Find a quiet place to gather your thoughts and recharge.
- Get regular exercise, even just a few minutes a day. Exercise is a healthy way to deal with stress.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Remember the good things. It's easy to get weighed down by worry and stress. But don't forget to see and celebrate the good things that happen to you and your family. ■

**Internet Resources**  
**National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder** [www.ncptsd.org](http://www.ncptsd.org)  
**Anxiety Disorders Association of America** [www.adaa.org/index.cfm](http://www.adaa.org/index.cfm)  
**National Institute on Mental Health** [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)  
**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Alliance** [www.ptsdalliance.org](http://www.ptsdalliance.org)  
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# RECOVERY: WHEN SURVIVING ISN'T ENOUGH

MY PTSD CAME ABOUT DUE TO MY POSTING IN IRAQ, YET STATE LEFT ME TO FEND FOR MYSELF WHEN IT CAME TO SEEKING TREATMENT.

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BY RACHEL SCHNELLER

**I**n my latest nightmare, I get into an elevator with another woman about my age. I press the button for the fourth floor, about halfway up the building. The elevator begins climbing. Instead of stopping, the elevator speeds up and keeps ascending with us trapped inside. It shoots out the top of the building, high into the air. The other woman and I look at each other, knowing we are about to die. When the elevator crashes to the ground, it will smash us beyond recognition. We join hands and say a prayer, accepting our fate. The elevator speeds to the ground and the impact is sheer pain.

But it doesn't kill me. I am burned and mangled, but somehow drag myself from the smoking wreckage. I can barely breathe. Broken bones puncture my lungs. Ambulance sirens wail in the distance, and I try to hold on a bit longer. I want to turn around to see if the other woman made it, but I can barely move and have to use all my strength just to hold on for the ambulance. On top of the agony, I am aware I face

months and years of operations and physical therapy if I am to recover.

I tell this dream to my therapist, who is treating me for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. She asks me, in a way that has become familiar over the past year of treatment, to try and identify the most disturbing aspect of the nightmare and then imagine an alternative, better ending for the dream.

The thought that pops into my head disturbs me so much that tears come to my eyes. The worst part of the dream, I tell her, is the pain I feel after the crash. The alternative I immediately think of is to die, and avoid the agony and pain of recovery. The acceptance of the end of my life and saying the prayer with the other woman was a spiritual, peaceful moment. Feeling like I might die at any moment, after all, is a feeling I grew so accustomed to during my tour in Iraq that it doesn't bother me anymore.

## Recovery Is Possible

A lot has been written about PTSD — what causes it, how many State Department personnel have it, and what the consequences of not treating it can be. Since returning from Iraq over a year ago and being diagnosed with the disorder, I've gotten a crash-course on the subject. So perhaps I can contribute to the dialog

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*Rachel Schneller joined the Foreign Service in 2001, serving in Skopje, Conakry and Basrah, where she was a Provincial Action Officer from 2005 to 2006. She currently works in the Office of Multilateral Trade Affairs in the Bureau of Economic, Energy and Business Affairs.*

in a way others cannot, by describing what it is like to recover from PTSD.

Yes, recovery *is* possible, especially with good treatment. When I think about where I was a year ago, I have no doubt about being much better. I sleep regularly through the night, and I recently read a book that was not directly related to Iraq — a first for me since returning. A year ago, there were only a few places where I felt secure: my apartment, my office and my car. Now, there are more safe than unsafe locations in my life. I still have nightmares, like the one above, but not as often as I used to, and probably not any more than most people.

The excellent treatment I have received for PTSD is in large part responsible for my recovery. The treatment is not passive, however, and it is not easy. I can honestly say it was easier to survive my tour in Iraq than to recover from it. Making it through a tour in a dangerous environment depends on luck and making split-second decisions that are immediately proven right or wrong. But recovering from the emotional and spiritual aftermath of witnessing and experiencing violence, death and suffering takes conscious, constant self-awareness and learning to discern between hundreds of moral shades of grey.

It has taken enormous amounts of energy and effort to endure and withstand PTSD treatment. To hazard a comparison to something I know nothing about, I would compare the process to learning how to walk again after a major car accident while kicking a cocaine habit. It was something I did because the only alternative I had was to go through life in a zombie-like state of misery and despair, and I didn't like that alternative.

### **Let Down by State**

My PTSD came about due to the conditions I endured while on assignment with the State Department, but State left me to fend for myself when it came to seeking treatment.

In June 2006, after having worked in Basrah for several months, I took leave to return to Washington for a few weeks. A Foreign Service National employee in my

## ***If the State Department is going to post employees to war zones, it should be prepared to deal with the mental health aftermath.***

office had been murdered, and I'd dreamed of hanging myself from my office light fixture. During leave, I asked the Medical Services Bureau for help and they referred me to an in-house social worker. While telling him about the whole horrible situation, including the dream about killing myself, I broke down in sobs.

The social worker was nice but offered me no actual treatment. He did not refer me to a psychiatrist for an evaluation; he did not

offer me medication for my depression; and he did not address my thoughts of suicide. Disappointed, but fearful of being labeled a "quitter" or worse, I chose to return to Iraq.

When I think about how poorly State treated me when I sought help, I am outraged. After all, I was in no condition to make decisions about my own well-being, any more than an alcoholic can make a well-informed decision in a liquor store. Any competent, qualified mental health care provider would have known this. I had requested help but found only more danger. It was as if the ambulance coming for me in my elevator dream not only did not stop for me, but ran over me in the process. I — and everyone else serving our country in a war zone — deserve much better.

The State Department could not have prevented me from developing PTSD as a result of my tour in Iraq, any more than it could have saved my FSN from being murdered or halted the nightly rocket attacks on our compound. In any war zone, some people going through the experience will likely come out of it with PTSD. But if the State Department is going to post its employees to war zones, it should be prepared to deal with the mental health aftermath and offer treatment to those who need it.

I completed my Iraq tour at the end of July 2006 and returned to Washington, where I began my next assignment, long-term training at the Foreign Service Institute. After all I'd been through, I was grateful to be home alive and in one piece, reunited with family and friends. But soon I just stopped functioning normally. I was unable to sleep. I started getting lost on my way home from work, waking up in a sort of fugue



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state blocks away from my apartment in Georgetown. I don't remember precisely how, but I burned myself several times so badly that I scarred — yet I didn't feel it. I only noticed the burns the next day. Rage overwhelmed me. I nearly attacked another person in one of my FSI training classes, but walked out of the class in time and had a meltdown in the bathroom. (That poor woman had no idea how close she came to being strangled by me for making a completely innocent comment.) I couldn't keep up the pretense of being normal any longer.

After that incident, I began private treatment on Aug. 24, 2006, and was diagnosed with PTSD almost immediately — though it took months before I could accept that diagnosis completely. None of what I was going through made sense to me, in fact. All I knew

*Fearful of being  
labeled a “quitter”  
or worse, I chose to  
return to Iraq despite  
my symptoms.*

was that there was something seriously wrong, because I couldn't sleep or focus on anything. Because of my constant state of rage, the only thing I wanted to do was leap on the enemy and rip him to shreds.

### **Leaving the Enemy Behind**

I thought therapy would help me figure out who the real enemies were, so I would know whom to attack. All the while, some part of me knew this wasn't right: I had left Iraq and, logically, I must have left my enemies behind. Still, I was not able to get rid of the feeling that I had to be on the lookout all the time, and that if I let my guard down I might get killed. The world had become a fundamentally dangerous place to me, and people who did not understand this or see things that way made me angry. After all, back in Iraq, people who

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acted like we were in a safe place put us all at risk and sometimes wound up dead.

After about a month of therapy, where I talked about what I had gone through in Iraq, I began Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing sessions with my therapist. In my case, however, the therapist used tones instead of eye movements. I won't go into the details of this kind of treatment because a lot of information is available on the Internet for anyone interested in EMDR. But, in essence, it involved experiencing the most traumatizing moments of my tour in detail again while listening to tones alternating from one ear to the other — which, I understand, helps the brain process the events.

The overall effect was sort of like reliving the worst days of my life over and over again, leaving me wrung out and exhausted after every session. This was by far the most difficult aspect of my treatment. There is nothing enjoyable about reliving traumatic experiences and feeling like you are about to die on a weekly basis. I managed to get through it only because my life had become so unpleasant and unlivable that there wasn't much difference.

Reliving these experiences in a room with a trained mental health professional was, however, preferable to reliving them in the middle of the night alone. Somehow the process helped me focus on the roots of the experiences without actually feeling like my life was in danger at the moment I was reliving the trauma. It helped me gain an objectivity I lacked in the middle of the night or when seized by rage. This was important because it helped me gain control over the horror and the rage and distance myself from the feelings, while still retaining the memory and a certain amount of control over the events themselves.

After about two months of EMDR treatment, my sleep improved. Instead of waking up every two hours and pacing around my apartment in a blind rage, I started sleeping for four or five hours before waking up, between 3 and 5 a.m., groggy and confused. Eventually after an hour or so, I would fall back to sleep for another hour or two before work.

Looking back, I am sure some of my other symp-

***It has taken enormous amounts of energy and effort to endure and withstand***

***PTSD treatment.***

toms — inability to focus, confusion and anger — were related to my chronic sleep deprivation. I now know that I was going through a sort of stress hormone withdrawal. I had been living on a chronic high of adrenaline and sleeping fitfully for months on end.

Living like this helped get me through my tour in Iraq, but trying to readjust to a Washington work schedule was like enduring never-ending jet lag. It's actually a form of withdrawal. There were times when, sitting in my new office trying to focus on paperwork, I could feel the adrenaline still racing through me so fast that my skin would itch and I would start to sweat and twitch like a junkie.

### **Accepting My Diagnosis**

After about three months, I finally internalized and accepted the PTSD diagnosis I had been given on the first day of therapy. I had read through a document on the condition and realized that most of the symptoms applied to me in one way or another. I don't think I could have come to this realization sooner; I wasn't able to concentrate long enough to get through a list of 17 symptoms, for one thing. For another, the danger I felt surrounding me was so real that I thought I was getting help to figure out how to convince other people of that danger too, so we could all work together to counter it. Then I wouldn't have to be so angry all the time.

But gradually, I allowed myself to accept that my version of reality, while appropriate in Basrah, was no longer appropriate in Washington. It helped to think of PTSD the way my therapist described it: a normal reaction to an abnormal situation. Living in a small compound with rockets and mortars raining down at night and my employees being targeted and killed was *not* a normal situation, and trying to conduct normal business in that sort of environment was intensely abnormal. I came out a bit warped — so what? I started giving myself a break. At least I was still alive.

In December 2006, I asked my therapist if could take medication to help me sleep. Now, when I look back at this, I see my request as a sign of progress in itself. I was looking for more options to get better. After all, I knew other people were taking medication,

## FOCUS

and I didn't see why I shouldn't if it could help. Still, it took courage to ask for medication. I had never tried any sort of drug treatment before and was apprehensive about it. But I decided that these medications existed for a reason, and people wouldn't take them unless they did some good.

Within a few weeks of starting medication, I began sleeping solidly through the night on a regular basis. I remember waking up the first time I slept for seven straight hours, about six months after returning from Iraq. I had that feeling you have after a good night's sleep — a sensation I had not had in many months. I lay there in bed with a sense of wonderment and awe, trying to remember the last time I'd had a good night's sleep. I couldn't. That morning I slowly savored a cup of coffee. It was the first coffee in

*Part of the recovery process has been accepting I'll never be who I was before going to Iraq.*

months I'd drunk for taste and pleasure rather than sucking it down because I desperately needed the caffeine to get through the day.

Sleeping well and regularly gave me such a sense of euphoria that I asked my doctor for reassurance the medications I was taking were not addictive. She assured me they were not. After not sleeping more than four or five hours at a time for so long, it was not surprising that

sleeping felt so good. My focus at work improved and my interest in my job increased, which helped take my mind off Iraq.

### **A Messy Process**

Recovery from PTSD is a messy process. It's not a straight shot, uphill-only, one-way undertaking. For me, it has been full of ups and downs. Once I finally

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began sleeping soundly through the night, I started having the nightmares I wasn't sleeping well enough or long enough to have had before.

In early 2007, I started dreaming almost nightly about being back in Iraq with the rockets and car bombs, only this time with my friends and family there, too. I dreamed of flash floods sweeping away my friends and trying to save them. Insurgents kidnapped us, and I would escape to try and rescue them, running hard and fast for hours.

My dreams were filled with helicopters, concrete barriers and gravel. Angry wild animals attacked me and the people I cared about. I was so exhausted that sometimes I dreamed about sleeping, only to wake up sweating, heart racing, clenching my hands into fists or balling up the sheets. Still, I was at least getting a full night's sleep.

Some of the hardest months for me were after most of my physical symptoms were addressed, in the spring of 2007, when the situation in Iraq took a turn for the worse, as well. Of my former employees, all but two left the country because of threats on their lives. Several of my Iraqi contacts were horrifically assassinated. I learned of their deaths by e-mail from other Iraqi friends, several times a month. My nightmares literally started coming true.

At first I felt a despair at being unable to do anything to help them, a despair so deep that I ceased being able to function. I went through the months of March, April and May in a fog. Sometimes I was so miserable I broke down sobbing at my desk in my office. But even this was a sort of progress because at least I knew why I was crying, and the senseless deaths of friends and contacts was something worth crying about.

Part of the recovery process for me has been accepting that I will never be the person I was before I went to Iraq. I am not sure I believe that anyone can spend a year in a war zone living under more or less constant threat of death by rocket, mortar or road bomb, experiencing the deaths of numerous Iraqi and American friends, and come out of that experience unchanged. And, even if it were possible, I don't think I would want to be such a person.

*Reliving the  
worst days of my life  
over and over again  
left me wrung out and  
exhausted after  
every session.*

I've also come to realize that recovery doesn't mean reverting to your old self, the person you were before the trauma. This has been the hardest part for my friends and family to accept. They keep waiting for the "old me" to come back. They seem to think that once I am better, I won't think about Iraq anymore, and I won't be bothered by it. I am touched by their concern, and their support has been absolutely necessary; but sometimes I feel they don't understand that I have to *get* better, not just *be* better. Besides, if I am not interested in trying to get my old self back, why should anyone else be?

### **Making a Difference**

I didn't go to Iraq looking for spiritual growth, but one of the side effects of serving there was that it gave me the chance to become a better person. It was making the choice to recover from PTSD that actually made me a better person.

A major part of the recovery process for me has been learning that there *are* things worth losing a night's sleep over. There are things worth getting angry over. And there are things worth fighting for. The solution is not to refrain from ever getting angry. It is to make your battles ones worth fighting, and dying, for — and to fight them without giving up.

When I first came back from Iraq, even so mundane a chore as standing in line at the pharmacy felt so dangerous to me that I usually gave up, dumped my items on a shelf and bolted before making it to the front of the line. I was preoccupied with the fear that a criminal would burst through the front door and shoot us all down like sitting ducks.

Now that I'm getting better, I have made up my mind that if that criminal ever does show up, I am going to throw myself in front of as many people as possible, push them to the ground, and try and tackle the guy. I just cannot stand the idea of watching any more people get killed or hurt around me. Bolstered by that determination, I am now able to make it to the front of the line and complete my purchases every time.

There have been other unexpected pluses to developing and recovering from PTSD, which no one ever

## FOCUS

really talks about. For instance, I used to be afraid of flying. Turbulence would make me break out in a sweat, grip the armrests so tightly my knuckles turned white, and envision a fiery plunge thousands of feet to the ground. Yet on my first airplane trip after returning from Iraq, I didn't blink an eye. Somehow, going through an actual life-or-death situation cured me of worrying about fantasy ones.

It also cured me of lots of other fears, like public speaking, intimidating colleagues and worrying about what other people might think of me. An interview with CNN about PTSD in diplomats? No sweat. Lots of things in life just aren't worth getting that upset about, which is a lesson I learned when faced with the very

***Once I finally began  
sleeping soundly  
through the night,  
I started having  
the nightmares  
I wasn't sleeping well  
enough or long enough  
to have before.***

real possibility of dying a sudden and violent death.

But it was through therapy that I learned that you don't simply start sleeping through the night again. Rather, you learn to focus on the real issues that were keeping you up at night and address them, so you can sleep the sleep of the just, not just the sleep of the heavily medicated.

It took me several weeks to think of an alternate ending to my elevator nightmare that didn't involve my death. But I have it now. The other woman in the elevator is the old me, the person I was before Iraq. Right before impact, she holds on to me and cushions me from the full force of the impact, giving me the best shot possible for survival. ■

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# NOT ONLY FOR COMBAT VETERANS

PTSD IS NOT A NEW PHENOMENON WITHIN THE FOREIGN SERVICE. NOR DO ITS EFFECTS EVER ENTIRELY DISSIPATE.

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BY KRISTIN K. LOKEN

I arrived in San Salvador in early 1979, very shortly after the country's civil war began. I later learned that these were probably the worst years to experience such a conflict, during the initial chaos and shock before the atrocities become commonplace and coping mechanisms are established.

My husband was assigned to the USAID mission. I accompanied him to post and soon found work in a part-time intermittent position in the embassy's consular section. I helped interview applicants for tourist visas and was also in charge of the American Citizen Warden System, working on evacuation planning. As the civil war heated up, I helped round up and evacuate the Peace Corps Volunteers and the Mormon missionaries once the embassy decided it was too dangerous for them to remain in El Salvador.

In late 1979, as the situation became increasingly dangerous and Americans were targeted, family members of official U.S. personnel were offered voluntary

---

*Kristin K. Loken was a Foreign Service officer with the U.S. Agency for International Development from 1980 to 2001. Since retiring from the Service, she has worked for an American NGO on women's health and peace issues, and now writes and meditates at her home in Falling Waters, W. Va.*

departure. Few decided to leave at this time. However, on March 25, 1980, the day after Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated while celebrating Mass, I was evacuated along with the remaining family members and non-essential personnel. Only staff members returned to El Salvador; family members were required to continue on to the United States under authorized departure.

Because of my job and the necessary nature of that work, I was quickly returned to post. I still vividly remember watching from my window in the embassy a few weeks later as government soldiers fired from rooftops into dozens of men, women and children conducting a peaceful demonstration. Through the warden system, I had become acquainted with many of the American citizens still residing in El Salvador, including the four American churchwomen who were raped and killed by U.S.-trained and funded Salvadoran National Guardsmen as they returned home from the airport on Dec. 2, 1980.

As both the embassy and USAID experienced greater difficulty replacing the staff that had departed our increasingly violent and dangerous post, I accepted a career appointment with USAID/San Salvador in the Health, Population & Nutrition Office. In addition to the health development and family planning programs,



we handled food and disaster assistance in that office. I worked with nongovernmental organizations that were distributing humanitarian assistance, finding temporary housing for displaced persons and assisting torture victims from both sides.

One morning in 1981, my Salvadoran counterpart, Dr. Rosa Judith Cisneros — a spectacular woman whom I had grown to admire greatly — was brutally murdered in the driveway to her house.

The previous day a photo of her accepting a family planning grant from the U.S. ambassador had appeared on the front page of a local newspaper, *El Diario de Hoy*.

Also during this period, some colleagues and I were carrying out a survey of the needs of displaced persons. As we moved by helicopter between northern rebel-held territories, we were fired on by guerilla troops. More times than I want to remember, I came upon dead and sometimes mutilated bodies in the streets of the city and along the highways outside of town. There were shootings and bombings daily.

### **Reliving the Trauma**

In late 1981, after two-and-a-half years in this war zone, I returned to Washington. It took several weeks before I realized I wasn't getting back to normal. I still jumped at loud noises and saw dead bodies on desks at work at the State Department. Strong emotions would come and go without any relevance to what was happening around me. I had regular nightmares about running away from uniformed men with guns trying to kill me. Sometimes I would also have what I called "daymares." I would encounter a person at work in a meeting and see them suddenly fall victim to some horrible trauma — a car wreck, a shooting, a bomb explosion. These daymares struck quickly, then disappeared, leaving me sitting in a meeting not knowing what I had missed.

As I tried to regain normal functioning, I noticed that my mouth wouldn't work right; I couldn't talk properly and could hardly communicate with people around me. There was a great deal going on inside my head, but it had no relevance to what was going on in the world

around me. I could answer a direct question in a few words, but then could not say anything more for long periods of time. I didn't feel sad; I didn't feel happy. Often I didn't seem to feel anything at all.

Gradually, I became aware that something serious was wrong; what I was experiencing wasn't normal. The experiences I was having — the inability to talk, the nightmares and daymares, the visual hallucinations

— none of these experiences were normal. Nor were they going away; if anything, they seemed to be getting worse.

I went to my boss and told her I thought I was going through some postwar emotional problems and asked if the State Department or USAID had some counseling services available. She said she was sympathetic but thought senior people would probably frown on my having

emotional problems, and advised that disclosing my condition might negatively affect my eventual tenuring with USAID. So it would be best to keep a "stiff upper lip." Her advice was to see a private therapist, for which she would give me as much administrative leave as I needed.

That is what I did. After a couple of sessions, the therapist told me that I was suffering from "post-traumatic shock syndrome," which is what I think they called PTSD in the early 1980s. It helped me a great deal just to know there was a name for what I was feeling and that my symptoms were, in the words of the therapist, "classic." It also helped to be told that it would eventually pass.

I continued to see the therapist for six months, though I doubt the sessions helped me much more. My own sense now is that the treatment of PTSD was not very developed in 1982. However, I did slowly begin to feel better. I started to talk again, stopped seeing dead bodies and jumping at loud noises. I started to feel real feelings. The nightmares were fewer and the daymares disappeared. Eventually, I terminated the therapy. My husband and I went into marriage counseling soon thereafter and ended up separating and divorcing. Our divorce may or may not have been related to our Salvadoran experience.

*After returning to  
Washington, it took several  
weeks before I realized  
I wasn't getting back  
to normal.*

## F O C U S

### A New Trigger

My next assignment was to work on the Lebanon program, which entailed traveling back and forth to Beirut on a regular basis. In April 1983, I had just left the city and arrived back in the U.S. when the embassy was blown up. In the bombing, I lost my mission director, Bill McIntyre, our Lebanese secretary and many other colleagues and good friends with whom I had worked for the last year. I helped with the disaster response from Washington, mostly communications with the families of injured and dead colleagues.

I noticed that many of the symptoms of the previous PTSD episode returned at this time, but I felt that if I were patient, they would pass as they had the first time. It was an especially difficult time for me because my

*Sometimes I had what I called “daymares,” in which I’d “see” a colleague in a meeting suddenly fall victim to some horrible trauma.*

husband and I were separating. I ended up taking three months of leave without pay just to get my life, my emotions and my living arrangements back together.

Taking my cue from my former boss, this time I never gave anyone the real reason for needing the leave. Other than the general outline of major events, I’ve never really been able to talk about the experiences in El Salvador with family or friends. Somehow, the topic has always felt overwhelming to me, and I never knew where to start a conversation about it. (Of course, very few people ever asked about it in any serious way.)

I have never again sought therapy for PTSD. Nor have I ever taken any medication for related symptoms, even though for several years, seeing violence in movies

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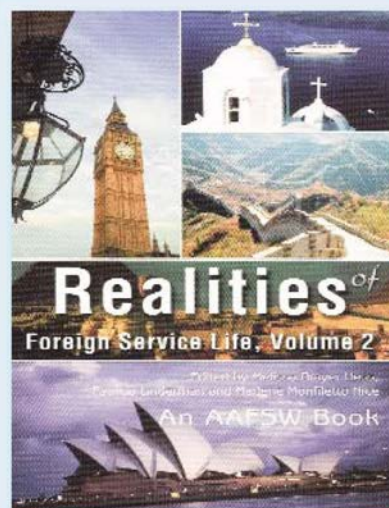
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## FOCUS

could bring back the symptoms for an evening or even a couple of days.

Painful as they were, these experiences did not keep me from seeking high-stress assignments. Following Lebanon, I worked on the West Bank/Gaza program for five years. In all the places I served, I noticed that manmade disasters (war, occupation, civil unrest) were taking a huge toll on USAID's development programs, often throwing all that money and effort right down the drain. What we needed, I came to believe, were interventions to better manage conflict so that our development investments could pay off.

With that in mind, I returned to graduate school to study conflict management, eventually obtaining a master's degree in the field. It gave me great satisfaction that during my time with the West Bank/Gaza program,

***It helped me a great deal just to know there was a name for what I was feeling.***

I designed and negotiated the first U.S.-funded Palestinian-Israeli Cooperation Program. I went on to become one of USAID's democracy officers, working to introduce conflict management into our development programs.

I eventually served again in El Salvador, from 1995 to 1997 (after the war had ended), and in Eritrea.

During my last overseas assignment with USAID, in India, I returned to the field of population/family planning.

More than two decades after I first experienced PTSD, the symptoms have for the most part passed — except when I am overcome by exhaustion, physical pain, illness or stress. Then I can feel myself slipping back into a bad place. But at least now I recognize what's happening early and know to give myself the luxury of more sleep and less pressure until I'm back to normal. ■



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# ENCOURAGING EMPLOYEES TO SEEK HELP

STATE OFFICIALLY ASSURES EMPLOYEES THAT UNDERGOING MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT WILL NOT AFFECT THEIR CLEARANCES. BUT IS THAT REALLY TRUE?

BY ANONYMOUS

I hope that this month's focus on how the State Department treats Foreign Service personnel who suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder will lead to changes that also benefit personnel dealing with other sorts of mental illnesses. After all, even for people not assigned to war zones, this can be a very stressful career.

Though I do not suffer from PTSD, my concern about the department's handling of mental health treatment began a year ago. At that time, I sought help for depression from a local psychologist whose name I got from my embassy's Web site. Concurrently, I filled out the online form to renew my security clearance.

At my first session with the psychologist, she expressed surprise that I wanted a receipt for insurance purposes. She informed me that the many embassy employees she had seen over the previous decades had not wanted their counseling sessions documented for fear that they would lose their clearances. I responded that the State Department had publicly stated a few years earlier that it encouraged its employees to seek the help they needed.

The psychologist saw me a few times before sug-

gesting antidepressant medication; I think she was trying to determine whether the depression was situational or chronic. I then called the regional psychiatrist, who agreed and wrote out a prescription.

The medication kicked in immediately. From day one, I felt lighter, happier, enthusiastic about life, more energetic and more interested in work. (While overseas, I should note, I had no trouble being reimbursed for the treatment and prescriptions. But now that I'm back in the U.S., I've discovered that I need to be pre-certified for each visit to a mental health practitioner. Otherwise, I'm penalized a considerable amount of money.)

Just after the pills arrived, I went for my security clearance interview with the deputy regional security officer. His first question was whether anything had changed since I had submitted the online form, and I mentioned my weekly counseling sessions and the antidepressants. He just nodded in a kindly fashion.

Imagine my surprise when, last April, I received an e-mail from a security officer in Washington. It demanded that I ask the regional psychiatrist to answer a set of questions fully within the next 10 days, and warned me that my medical condition could "affect [my] security clearance eligibility or suitability for employment."

---

*The author is a senior State Department Foreign Service officer whose identity is known to the Journal.*

A few days later, on May 4, 2007, I read the State Department's press guidance on PTSD (see sidebar, p. 48). Its reassuring, nonjudgmental tone differed considerably from the alarming language in the DS officer's e-mail to me.

### **A Gap Between Theory and Practice**

Although I was still waiting for the results of my security clearance update, I immediately wrote to the director general, with copies to DS officials, sharing the security officer's language with him, and offering to help the bureau develop language that was both more in keeping with HR's language and less threatening to employees.

A few days later, I was notified that my clearance had been extended for five years. I wrote again to the DG to reiterate my offer to help craft language concerning mental health counseling, and received word that DS would respond directly.

In the meantime, I mentioned this exchange of e-mails to colleagues and heard other stories along similar lines. Some felt that the questions DS was asking amounted to a sharing of treatment records, contrary to the safeguards outlined in the press guidance. None of my colleagues sensed that DS saw counseling as a positive factor in eligibility determinations, despite the department's assurances that it was.

Discouraging people from seeking help has, in my opinion, led to a Foreign Service with an unusually high percentage of people with obvious emotional problems: the guy who shoots his gun off in his backyard in the middle of the night, the couple that neglects their small children, the woman who makes her subordinates as miserable as she is, the guy who doesn't care about his dog biting people — and a lot of employees who lie to DS about having sought professional help. This seems to me to be counterproductive to fostering a Foreign Service corps that is healthy in mind as well as body.

The department's handling of mental health treat-

ment surprised me once again during my recent medical clearance exam. I learned that I would receive a Class II medical clearance because I am on antidepressants. I had assumed that treating my depression with medication would be on par with treating my osteoporosis with medication, as other people treat their diabetes, high cholesterol or high blood pressure with prescription drugs. Instead of applauding me for tackling my problem head-on, however, State seems to prefer that I go off my meds and become the unhappy, less productive, less collegial employee I was a year ago. No wonder so many FSOs are in bad moods!

Despite several follow-ups, I've heard nothing from DS about my offer to help them with their language. I have been told that DS is reviewing its investigative processes in light of recent developments in the field. I really hope that it stays focused on this, and that both DS and MED develop consistent, supportive and helpful policies that accurately reflect our times and the demands of our profession.

### **Holding on to Hope**

Colleagues have advised me to drop this issue. People I've told about this article have expressed alarm and concern about my ever getting another security clearance. The way I figure it, though, my current clearance is not up until 2012. So when I submit the paperwork to renew it, I hope to receive a response from an enlightened DS, along these lines:

Dear Colleague,

As you know, your security clearance is up for renewal. We noticed that you mentioned having had mental health counseling during the period mm-dd-yy to mm-dd-yy. Concerns about your security clearance should never deter you from seeking professional assistance — in fact, the department and DS normally treat mental health counseling as a positive factor in determining security clearance eligibility.

Nevertheless, we need the Office of Medical Services to assure us that your condition will not affect

*Discouraging people from seeking help has led to a Foreign Service with an unusually high percentage of people with obvious emotional problems.*

**M/DGHR/DS PRESS GUIDANCE**

**Friday, May 4, 2007**

MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING / SECURITY CLEARANCES

**Q: Does seeking mental health treatment following service in Iraq or Afghanistan jeopardize one's security clearance?**

Seeking mental health treatment following service in Iraq or Afghanistan does not jeopardize one's security clearance. To suggest so is not only incorrect, but does a disservice to our employees who have served so admirably in these dangerous assignments.

In fact, in October 2004, the department issued a notice to employees titled "Mental Health Counseling and Your Security Clearance," specifically stating that concerns about their security clearance should not deter any employee from seeking professional assistance.

**Q: What is our reaction to the warning issued by the**

**"Concerned Foreign Service Officers" to Foreign Service officers regarding seeking mental health care?**

The warning issued by Concerned Foreign Service Officers to Foreign Service officers regarding seeking mental health care is completely unfounded. Furthermore, the department considers this "warning," which has no basis in fact, detrimental to the health of our employees.

**Q: Are medical treatment records shared with DS?**

No, employee medical treatment records are not shared with DS. On occasion, employee conduct may result in a referral to MED for a mental health evaluation. In those instances, employees are advised that the result of the MED evaluation may be shared with DS for security clearance purposes. However, this evaluation process

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does not involve sharing medical treatment records with DS.

Background for Spokesman: DS grants (and revokes) security clearances in accordance with Executive Orders 10450 and 12968, which require the department to make a determination of an employee's ability to safeguard classified information. Under the provisions of E.O. 12968, no negative inference concerning someone's eligibility for a security clearance may be drawn solely on the basis of mental health counseling. E.O. 12968 further notes that "[s]uch counseling can be a positive factor in eligibility determinations."

To the extent that employee conduct may cause DS to refer an employee to the Office of Medical Services for an evaluation, as noted above, the role of MED is to make a "whole person" assessment as to whether there is a condition present that may affect an employee's judgment, reliability or stability.

your judgment and reliability regarding your public and professional behavior.

Thus, we would like you to speak to your regional psychiatrist, who will help us determine whether your security clearance can be renewed. The questions will be about your ability to carry out your job and its responsibilities, and whether you might in any way become a problem for the U.S., the State Department, your colleagues or yourself. DS will not learn the details of this conversation but will only receive the RMO's recommendation.

If you are able to speak to your RMO within the next 10 days, we would appreciate it. If this time period does not work, please let us know when you might be able to have the conversation. It's in all our interests for your security clearance to be renewed as soon as possible.

Thank you for looking after your mental health.

Sincerely,

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# ECHOES OF THE PAST

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MORE THAN 30 YEARS AFTER THE VIETNAM WAR, AMERICANS ONCE AGAIN ARE TILTING AT WINDMILLS TO CONFIRM OUR PRECONCEPTIONS ABOUT DEMOCRACY AND FREEDOM.

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BY DELL F. PENDERGRAST

“**A**dviser Pendergrast,” the young Vietnamese school teacher said, “Americans have suffered great casualties, but you must understand that we Vietnamese have lost many more supporting you.” Thanh and I were nursing midafternoon beers in the welcome shade of an outdoor café patio along a busy provincial highway. It was early 1971, and I was well into my second year as a civilian adviser in Tay Ninh province, which bordered Cambodia about 100 kilometers north of Saigon.

“But Mr. Thanh,” I reacted with some incredulity, “we’re supporting a free and democratic Vietnam. That really is why we are here.” A steady stream of U.S. and Vietnamese army trucks raced by, suffocating us with clouds of diesel exhaust.

Thanh smiled indulgently. Outside the classroom, he was a prominent local activist with the Dai Viet, a non-communist nationalist movement. “Independence has always been precious to us. But in Vietnam, my friend, the words freedom and democracy have a very different meaning. This is your war and not ours.”

Thanh and most Vietnamese did not share or understand America’s fixation on democracy and nationbuilding.

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*Dell F. Pendergrast was a Foreign Service officer from 1965 to 1997, serving in Belgrade, Zagreb, Saigon, Warsaw, Brussels, Ottawa and Washington, D.C. After retiring from the Service, he was director of the George J. Mitchell Scholarships program.*

Indeed, in many ways, Americans and Vietnamese did not speak the same language even when using English.

More than 30 years later, Americans once again are tilting at windmills in the Third World to confirm our preconceptions about democracy and freedom. Our mission in Iraq is even more fragile and shaky than in Vietnam during the early 1970s. Bombings and mayhem proliferate on Iraqi streets; Americans hide in fortress-like compounds and military camps; public services are haphazard in what many believe is an emerging “failed state;” the country is fragmented by sectarian and tribal rivalries.

During my 1970-1971 tenure in Vietnam, the war unfolded mainly in remote rural and border regions. The daily lives of most Vietnamese were generally unaffected. I routinely traveled unescorted across a serene Vietnamese countryside, something unimaginable by any American in Iraq today.

## Filters or Blinders?

Both in Iraq and Vietnam, Americans have been blinded by faith in exceptionalism: the tendency to view the world through the filter of our own institutions and values, even when surveying societies with vastly different histories and cultures.

This attitude is rooted in America’s origins and character. We are a nation united by ideas and not by the ethnicity, religion, culture or tribal traditions dominating other countries. The unifying ideology of the United States — a shared commitment to representative government and individual freedom — succeeded and attracted millions of immigrants seeking to share this dream. We passionately

want to believe that our experience is a template for societies trapped in repression or tradition.

As a result, Americans have difficulty accepting that religion, ethnic affiliation, family or other traditional institutions often control human behavior more than does allegiance to Western-style democracy. We also tend to forget that without the underlying values of democratic governance — compromise, tolerance, respect for majority rule and minority rights, freedom of speech and conscience — elections are meaningless, and the American model withers into irrelevance.

Our zealous commitment, however, often controls and defines reality — at least in the short term. “Those villages all voted, Dell,” my boss, a jut-jawed, ramrod-straight Army colonel declared. “Nothing else matters.” After all, the United States had invested heavily in proving that democracy worked in Vietnamese villages.

“Sir, to be honest, some of those councils were selected ahead of time by village elders. The elections were just window-dressing to appease Saigon.”

The colonel roared in response to his civilian subordinate’s unwelcome candor. “I don’t care! We reported 100-percent election success. That’s what Saigon and Washington wanted, and we gave it to them.”

From the White House to the working level in districts and provinces, a relentless propaganda of success ruled our decade-long Vietnam experience. Prefiguring our current commitment in Iraq, the crusade in Southeast Asia seized on all available evidence (especially the American weakness for statistics) to validate the nationbuilding vision. But the legendary “light at the end of the tunnel” we perceived turned out to be a roaring locomotive of harsh reality headed straight for us.

### **Change Must Come from Within**

In 2000, George Bush and his principal foreign affairs adviser, Condoleezza Rice, sharply criticized the Clinton administration’s nationbuilding efforts and rejected any U.S. role as a global policeman. The Bush administration reversed direction sharply after 9/11, however, arguing that Islamic terrorism created a new, overriding mandate to transform Middle Eastern societies. Terrorism replaced communism as the global enemy that drives, sanctions and sometimes distorts America’s worldwide mission.

Even accepting the new strategic vocation, however, does not change the practical reality we experienced in Vietnam and continue to ignore today: the United States

has limited competence and capability, especially in the short term, to transform traditional values and behavior. Our economic, political and educational programs can support modernizing, democratic trends, but the main impulse must originate in the local society, with change evolving over an extended period of time. Pretending that American resolve can accelerate or even miraculously substitute for this process only invites frustration and disillusionment. It happened in Vietnam, and history is now repeating itself in Iraq.

We Americans are idealistic, optimistic, confident. Such qualities tamed the frontier and built the most successful and enduring democracy in human history. But that same resolute determination flounders in societies with completely different cultural and historical backgrounds. In Vietnam, and now in Iraq, we have been handicapped by a paucity of diplomats and soldiers who know the language and culture.

Heavy reliance on the ubiquitous interpreters only creates another layer of potential misunderstanding and false intimacy. Without the local language — and the associated grasp of local

behavior, customs and traditions — Americans are blind men and women in dark rooms groping wildly to comprehend. As Graham Greene describes the young idealist in his classic 1955 novel, *The Quiet American*: “I never knew a man who had better motives for all the trouble he caused.”

America’s newest quagmire recalls a conversation I had a few years ago with an elderly Vietnamese man at a Borders bookstore in Tyson’s Corner, Va. We were inspecting a shelf of books about Vietnam, and our common interest led to a long discussion in the store’s café. A small, frail man with a tired, resigned look on his face, Minh had been an officer in the South Vietnamese army, spent five years in a re-education camp, and then escaped to join his family in the United States.

“You Americans never understood our country.” His English was halting, heavily accented, but fluent.

“You’re right,” I agreed. “But the Vietnamese never understood the Americans either.”

Mr. Minh sipped his tea. “Perhaps. All the talk about democracy confused my people. It really did not seem to have anything to do with them. They wanted only to be left alone and survive, the way Vietnamese have done for centuries. We were just a stage for your foreign policy. It became your war and not our war. Once you gave up and left, there was no reason to fight.”

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## ***Our mission in Iraq is even more fragile and shaky than in Vietnam during the early 1970s.***

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# SUMMER FICTION CONTEST

DEADLINE IS MARCH 1, 2008

ANDREW KIDD




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*Why should our plan to transform Iraq be any more successful than the decade-long effort to transform Vietnam?*

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### Reality vs. Idealism

America's passion, despite the best of intentions, eventually becomes the problem, especially in a foreign society engulfed by an enormous U.S. presence. No one questions the awesome power of our armed forces, irrefutably demonstrated twice in wars with Iraq. And no one underestimates the service or the sacrifice of the professional military and their families.

But the ability to win on the battlefield should not be mistaken for the capacity to reinvent another country's social, political and cultural fundamentals. We have chased this fantasy in Vietnam and Iraq with equally disappointing and tragic results. Why should our plan to transform Iraq be any more successful than the protracted effort to transform Vietnam that cost so many lives and so much treasure?

Despite the stumbling attempts at nationbuilding, our obsession with the distinctive American model always seems to cloud our judgment about a world of many different historical and cultural backgrounds.

We tend to see the world that we want rather than the world as it is. Others simply do not define freedom and democracy in the same way that we have cultivated and worked out over 230 years.

Lamentably, that lesson from Vietnam has been lost on the highway to Baghdad. ■

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Information, please contact Ms. Kasia Helbin-Travis, Program Coordinator at (202) 682-0500 x. 17 or e-mail: [prog.coord@dacorbacon.org](mailto:prog.coord@dacorbacon.org).



# “PAINTING THE SKY”: A SCHOOL GROWS IN ACEH

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IN THE WAKE OF THE TSUNAMI, A U.S. NGO COLLABORATES WITH INDONESIANS  
TO BUILD A SCHOOL THAT PROMISES TO HAVE A LASTING EFFECT.

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BY MARGARET SULLIVAN

**E**arly in January 2005, within days of the tsunami disaster in Indonesia, our phone in Alexandria, Va., rang. “Margaret, have I got a deal for you! The U.S.-Indonesia Society is starting an Aceh school project,” said longtime friend retired Ambassador Alphonse La Porta, a former Jakarta neighbor and then president of USINDO. “Would you coordinate it?”

I gulped. We first went to Indonesia in 1967, when my husband was assigned to the embassy political section, and have spent most of our professional lives in the Malay world. I taught English at the University of Indonesia and, with four children, got involved in education design through the transition of the Joint Embassy School into the Jakarta International School. I then repeated the process in Cebu, Philippines and — needing a portable pursuit, as trailing spouses do — parlayed my growing experience into a range of public education, project development and intercultural communications undertakings. But I had never built anything (well, the vice consul’s house in Kaduna, Nigeria, but that’s another story), and had never been in Aceh. Plus my Indonesian was creaky. “Yes,” I replied.

Amb. La Porta, who had been consul in Medan, the biggest city on Sumatra, filled me in on USINDO’s plan. Founded in 1994 by the former American ambassador to Indonesia, Edward E. Masters, and former Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, the society represents the best of

the long-term binational associations that are an outgrowth of individual Foreign Service engagement in countries and regions. It conducts wide-ranging public education programs such as open forums, seminars, publications, scholarly exchanges and cultural performances to foster better understanding between Americans and Indonesians — but had never done bricks and mortar.

The society’s decision to help in Aceh came in response to the catastrophic earthquake and tsunami of Dec. 26, 2004. After the earthquake fractured buildings, the tsunami scoured everything up to two to three kilometers inland along the west coast of the province on the northern end of Sumatra, the epicenter of the disaster, then continued around the tip and a short distance along the Straits of Malacca. Whole communities had been swept away, leaving 170,000 people dead and half a million displaced (out of a pre-tsunami population of about 4.2 million). Some 3,000 schools and 2,500 teachers were lost, as were about 1,000 civil servants, the backbone of provincial and local government.

Aceh, located at the northwest tip of Indonesia’s island of Sumatra, was already one of Indonesia’s poorest provinces, despite vast riches in oil and minerals. The province had been wracked by 30 years of conflict between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement, devastating much of whatever infrastructure existed, including schools. It suffered from endemic corruption (when the tsunami hit, the governor was in jail and the acting governor was in charge), and has been essentially isolated from the rest of Indonesia.

Even so, Aceh has its own proud historical memory and language, and a sense of identity as an ancient center of trade and education — the “front porch” of Islam in the country

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*Margaret Sullivan, the wife of a retired FSO, has spent four decades living in or working on issues related to Indonesia and the Malay world.*

with the world's largest Muslim population. Acehese are 98-percent Muslim, compared to 85 percent of Indonesians generally, with the added distinction that the population is deeply devout, observant and conservative, so ingrained in their faith that most are not fanatic about it.

### Launching the Project

Two months to the day after the tsunami, I deplaned in Banda Aceh (the capital of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam, the formal name of the province) to conduct a needs assessment. At first view, Aceh was, and is, quintessential Southeast Asia: ruggedly lush, with a backdrop of mountains and rice fields forming a carpet around the airport.

New arrivals would not be aware of the recent disaster if they did not know. At the airport that February morning, the remains of massive relief efforts were apparent but the scene was no longer round-the-clock frantic. Helicopters from many countries stood at the end of the airstrip, and there was a hubbub of languages among the relief workers arriving or awaiting arrivals. The abrupt opening of Aceh to the outside world is one of the lasting benefits to have come out of the disaster.

Only part of Banda Aceh was destroyed. About half of the city was above the reach of the tsunami, but not the earthquake; and the rest, at sea level, is flat. As I was being driven toward town that first time, my initial impression was one of bustle and dynamism, a frontier boom feeling. However, further into the city, we drove down streets of empty shophouses that became progressively more damaged. Toward the coast, almost everything was completely flattened rubble, an unending yellowish-gray sea out to the pristine blue ocean.

There were cement house footprints amid indistinguishable junk. Here and there were fragments of



Margaret Sullivan

*Painted on the remains of the house are the date of the tsunami and the names and ages of three children.*

standing wall. Some of these had freshly painted house numbers, the date of the tsunami, or the names and ages of children lost. The whole area was studded with small signs and flags signifying ownership. This was practical, as land records were either destroyed or not there to begin with. Reconstructing ownership and restitution (unlikely as that is) are continuing problems. In another sense, the markers were also an affirmation that life and belonging go on.

On the way to the airport to return home with several project possibilities to propose, I made a cold call on Dr. Dami M. Daud, then vice rector (and now rector) of Syiah Kuala University in Banda Aceh. Ever since his return 10 years earlier from graduate school at Oregon State University, where his daughters studied in American classrooms, he had been dreaming — or, in his phrase, “Cet langit” (literally, painting the sky) — of a replicable center for educational excellence that would serve both students and teachers, guaranteeing the future of education for generations.

Pak Darni presented his “lab school” vision, full-blown, as more than just a building. High school students would benefit from innovative teaching and modern facilities, while students in the university’s education college would have opportunities for

pre-service practice under the guidance of master teachers.

The USINDO Board opted for the lasting impact that the proposal promised. The society would collaborate with Indonesians on a project *they* wanted — a key to eventual success. Led by Pak Darni, key university staff formed the core of the project team. The university provided land on the campus — critical because obtaining land free and clear is a constant reconstruction stumbling block.

The third major partner is the Sampoerna Foundation. One of Indonesia’s leading NGOs, it had been doing educational work in Aceh for several years prior to the tsunami. Sampoerna’s field representative, Ramang Basuki, who first arrived in Aceh on the same plane as I, has been the truly irreplaceable man on the ground. By August 2005, an MOU was signed and establishment of the Syiah Kuala University Lab School was under way.

Building a school requires funds. Once the project was announced, gifts began to arrive, even from schoolchildren. In particular, there was a pledge from Do Something, an organization in New York that believes that by pooling their efforts, individual students can make a difference. These gifts were announced at a USINDO dinner in Washington for Indonesia’s



president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, in May 2005. Altogether, schoolchildren in the United States and those connected to the Jakarta International School contributed about \$300,000.

Subsequently, major corporations led by Newmont Mining AIG, Exxon-Mobil and Boeing, as well as the charitable arms of Bank Indonesia and Bank Danamon in Jakarta, provided over \$2 million. JIS trained the principals and librarians and provided engineers to monitor construction. IBM has given computers and training. Many other companies and individuals have also provided funds and much-needed equipment.

Thus, bit by bit, the package came together. And so did the school, slowly, in fits and starts, just like the world around it.

### Ideas into Reality

The central players (Pak Ramang and I are the only non-Acehnese) have been a team for nearly three years now — again an advantage that other projects in Aceh have not always had. As project coordinator, I became a commuter — making 16 round trips in 34 months. The effort involved honchoing design and construction, facilitating the requirements for turning empty space into a truly exemplary school, and coordinating the myriad details that go into the complicated partnerships that are making it possible.

We held discussions about how space affects learning and fosters positive change and, therefore, what we needed to build: larger, more flexible, light and airy classrooms in safe buildings with multiple exits that can withstand earthquakes. And because they are two-story structures, these buildings provide neighborhood safe havens should there be — God forbid — another tsunami.

The design also includes a functioning library, where students can actually use books (not the traditional

textbook storage room) and are encouraged to do independent research; a computer/language lab; and science labs. The entire school will have Internet connectivity and, at the neighborhood leaders' request, a community center that can be used for adult education after hours.

Large, low windows were the biggest point of contention (the small windows in traditional classrooms are above students' seated height). "The students will fall out." "They will fight and break them." "If they can see out, they will not pay attention to the teacher." At last, truth: "Well, in that case, we will just have to have better teachers." Pak Jalaluddin and his design team from the university engineering department translated these ideas into working designs and, ultimately, into a cluster of lovely buildings that are an elegant simplification of Acehnese traditional architecture.

Meanwhile, ongoing discussions with the university's College of Education and Training and the provincial and local education departments focused on how the school should operate so that it fits within the national education system, yet at the same time retains the special status that will allow it to be truly transformative and

innovative in a system that often is not.

A yayasan (managing foundation) was formed, mainly from the university community and provincial and city education department representatives, but with USINDO, the Sampoerna Foundation and the Jakarta International School as members, as well. The university named a principal, Ibu Syarifah, and a vice principal, Pak Nasir, both well-qualified, delightful, thoughtful and committed people. They have been central to the planning.

The school advisory committee decided that all of the teachers should be young, so that they would not be locked into old ways of teaching. Of 200 applicants for teaching positions, 13 were chosen. In June 2007, 102 students were chosen out of 650 applicants for the first class of 10th-graders. Sixty come from the immediately surrounding neighborhood to keep it a truly community-based school, serving an area that had been badly damaged and dislocated in the tsunami and the previous troubles.

Rather than taking only the brightest test takers from all over the city, the students were chosen for their range of abilities and backgrounds. The school motto is "Everyone can learn."



*Students at their lockers between class — lockers are not the norm in Indonesian schools, nor are large trash bins (so that students can be responsible for keeping the school picked up) or the habit of asking questions.*

Ultimately, the school will have 300 students in grades 10-12.

### The Next Phase

On July 16, 2007, the Indonesian flag was raised at the Lab School, and the inaugural class of the new, three-year senior high school was welcomed. That opening day was the first step of the project's next phase. Now the primary responsibility has shifted to the school community: the yayasan, the school staff, the parents and the teachers. Much remains to be worked through. Complicated and frustrating as it can be, constructing buildings is easier than creating and nurturing successful schools.

The tsunami also accelerated renewal of peace negotiations between Aceh and Jakarta, producing an agreement on Aug. 15, 2005, two days before the country's 60th anniversary of independence. The first-ever provincial election took place in Aceh in December 2006, overwhelmingly electing a former Free Aceh leader, Irwandi Yusuf, as governor.

Irwandi is actively confronting the province's immense challenges, not the least of which is integrating former insurgents into an imbalanced economy with vast resources designated for tsunami-afflicted areas and more limited resources for allocation elsewhere. Planning for the long-term sustainability of the infrastructure that has been rebuilt or is still on the drawing board is an additional challenge.

Responsibility for tsunami reconstruction will be transferred from the national government-established Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency, or BRR, to the province in May 2009. As of June 2007, while some families were still in temporary housing, many barracks had been razed; 84,387 permanent houses (of the 128,000 needed), 405 health facilities (about 125 percent of the requirement), 804 schools and 1,586 kilome-



Margaret Sullivan

*During the first week of school (no uniforms yet), students enjoy phys ed.*

ters of roads had been built. And the work continues.

### Lessons Learned

- International organizations and big charitable agencies that are experts at relief are not always good at rehabilitation and reconstruction. Donors often push for “getting things built now” — before there has been time for thoughtful planning or bringing the communities along.

- There has been too much staking out of territory as “belonging” to one NGO or another (then not necessarily following through with promised efforts), and not enough thoughtful collaboration among them. Schools, for instance, have been rebuilt but not furnished.

- Only so much money can be absorbed into the wreckage of disaster and an already poor economy at any given time. So funds remain to be spent, even though most of what was pledged has been obligated. Prodigious efforts have been undertaken and achieved — but not always producing the right thing in the right place at the right time.

- With so much money around, there is corruption — notwithstanding BRR's insistence on and active practice of transparency. Several NGOs have stopped projects to weed out

malpractice and bring miscreants to trial — which is, in and of itself, remarkable.

- The planning required is overwhelming and, of necessity, has gone by fits and starts. (So many of the basic institutions — and the people to staff them — were destroyed or not there in the first place.)

- Labor and construction material shortages, compounded by the need to bring everything in by sea or over a narrow, pot-holed highway from Medan, caused prices to skyrocket, nearly doubling early reconstruction cost estimates.

Getting to know individuals is the most rewarding aspect of spending time in Aceh — and, compared with rebuilding and changes in the landscape, the hardest to write about. Everyone has lost someone, or many someones. Yet the Acehnese are welcoming, accepting, proud, reserved and persevering. These friendships are a special blessing.

As for the lessons I've learned from the project itself: patience and a sense of humor are all-important. Things work — or don't — in their own time. Construction goes better with close monitoring, usually. Great as it is, you can't count on e-mail, particularly when you need it most. And I still have so much to learn. ■

# AFSA NEWS

American Foreign Service Association • January 2008

VOLUNTEERS STEP UP TO FILL IRAQ OPENINGS, AGAIN

## Iraq “Prime Candidate” Exercise Canceled

BY SHAWN DORMAN

Two weeks after the prime candidate exercise began — an effort to fill the 48 remaining open State Foreign Service Iraq positions for summer 2008 (out of a total of 252) — it was called off. Enough volunteers had come forward to fill all the jobs. Once again, the Foreign Service answered the call to staff the biggest U.S. mission in the world.

The two weeks between the announcement of the directed assignments exercise and the cancellation of that exercise were dominated by an often emotional debate within the State Department and a wave of

unjustified criticism of the Foreign Service in the media. A brief chronology follows:

**Oct. 26:** Friday evening, Director General Harry K. Thomas Jr. sends out an ALDAC telegram (“A Call to Service”) announcing that the State Department had identified “prime candidates” for the 48 positions in Iraq still open for summer 2008. AFSA’s companion message goes out shortly afterwards, offering to provide information and advice to those members designated as prime candidates.

**Oct. 26:** The Associated Press reports that State will initiate “the largest call-up of

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VIEWS FROM INSIDE THE SERVICE

## AFSA Opinion Poll Results Highlight Disturbing Trends

BY STEVE KASHKETT, STATE VICE PRESIDENT

AFSA’s third annual electronic opinion poll attracted a record number of respondents — nearly 4,300 active-duty State Foreign Service members at virtually every overseas post and in every domestic bureau — and provides a window into the thinking of our colleagues worldwide on the major issues facing our profession.

As was the case in our analysis of survey results in past years, the thousands of often lengthy personal comments entered by respondents were at least as interesting and revealing as the basic statistical data, which are shown in the charts.

The poll data and comments reveal a Foreign Service frustrated by the growing overseas pay disparity, struggling with Iraq staffing concerns, disturbed by perceptions of pervasive unfairness in assignments/promotions and diminishing family-friendliness in the department and largely dissatisfied with the 7th floor’s leadership in many key areas.

Overseas comparability pay continues to rank as the top priority for our members.

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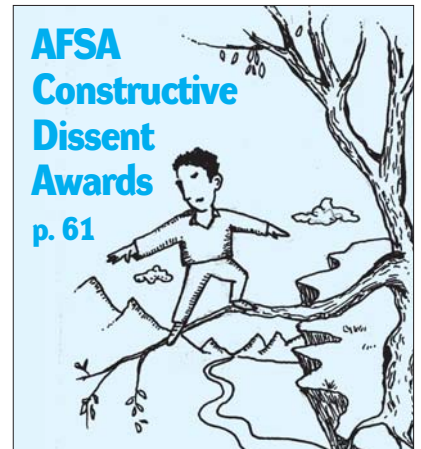
AFSA-HQ UNDER RENOVATION

## Pardon Our Progress

The AFSA headquarters building, at 21st and E Streets N.W., is being renovated. Temporary headquarters are located in Suite 1250 of State Annex 15 at 1800 N. Kent St. in Rosslyn. (The Labor Management Office in the Truman Building has not moved.) Phone and fax numbers and e-mail addresses remain the same for all AFSA staff. □

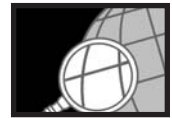
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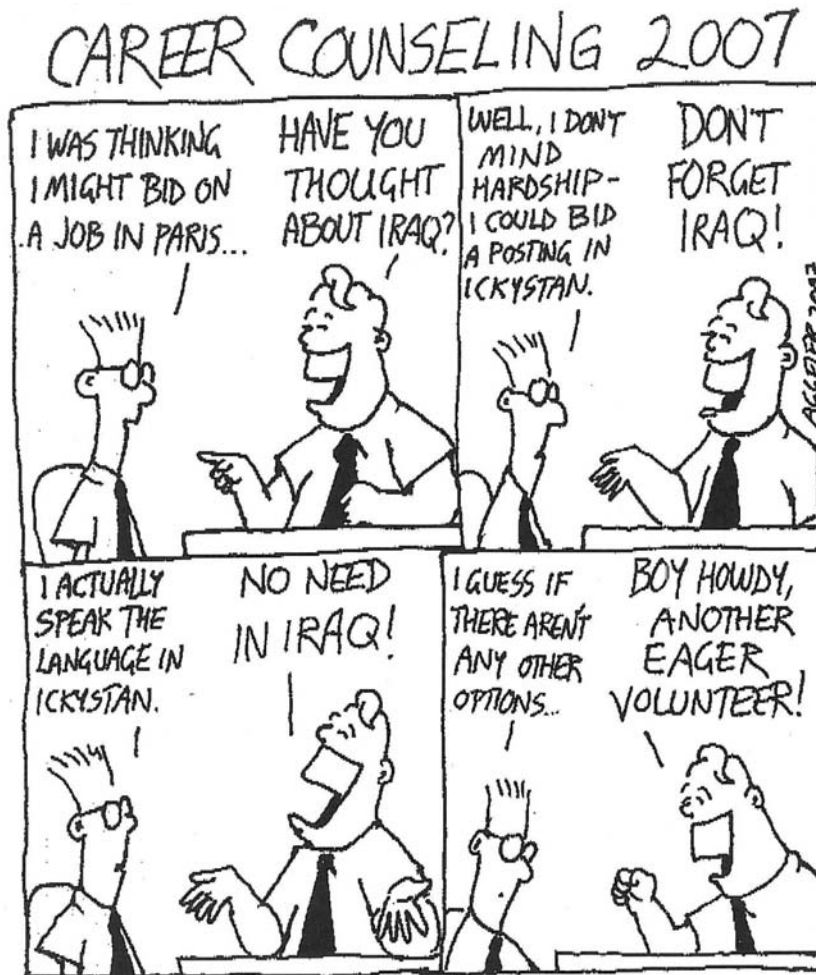


# AFSA NEWS BRIEFS



## Life in the Foreign Service

■ BY BRIAN AGGELER



## Notes from the Boards

Both Ambassador Michael Guest and Margaret Riccardelli resigned from their positions as active-duty State representatives to the AFSA Governing Board due to their retirement from the Foreign Service. For many years, Amb. Guest pushed for rights for Members of Household (and was honored in 2006 with a Constructive Dissent Award from AFSA for those efforts), but ultimately left the Service over a lack of progress. Amb. Howard Jeter resigned from his position as a retiree representative on the AFSA Governing Board in November due to scheduling conflicts.

The Governing Board appointed two new active-duty State representatives, Anne Aguilera and Shayna Steinger, and one new retiree rep, Ambassador Barbara Bodine. Aguilera is a management-cone officer who joined the Foreign Service in March 1986 and has served in San Jose, Bogota, Bridgetown, Santo Domingo, Lima, Baghdad and Washington, D.C. She is currently serving as the post management officer for India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal in the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau.

Shayna Steinger joined the Foreign Service as a political officer in 1999. She has been posted to Sanaa, Baghdad, Beirut, Jeddah and Washington. She is currently serving as a desk officer in the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau's Office of Israel and Palesinian Affairs, responsible for

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## How to Contact Us:

### AFSA HEADQUARTERS:

(202) 338-4045; Fax: (202) 338-6820

### STATE DEPARTMENT AFSA OFFICE:

(202) 647-8160; Fax: (202) 647-0265

### USAID AFSA OFFICE:

(202) 712-1941; Fax: (202) 216-3710

### FCS AFSA OFFICE:

(202) 482-9088; Fax: (202) 482-9087

### AFSA WEB SITE:

www.afsa.org

FSJ: journal@afsa.org

PRESIDENT: naland@afsa.org

STATE VP: kashkett@state.gov

RETIREE VP: pamichko@aol.com

USAID VP: fzamora@usaid.gov

FCS VP: donald.businger@mail.doc.gov

### AFSA News

Editor Shawn Dorman: dorman@afsa.org

(202) 338-4045 x 503; Fax: (202) 338-8244

On the Web: www.afsa.org/news

### Staff:

Executive Director John Mamone: mamone@afsa.org

### Business Department

Controller Twee Nguyen: nguyen@afsa.org

Accounting Assistant Jon Reed: reed@afsa.org

### Labor Management

General Counsel Sharon Papp: papps@state.gov

Labor Management Attorney Zlatana Badrich: badrich@state.gov

Labor Management Specialist James Yorke: yorke@state.gov

Grievance Attorneys Neera Parikh: parikhna@state.gov and Holly Rich: richhe@state.gov

Office Manager Christine Warren: warrenc@state.gov

USAID Senior Labor Management Adviser Douglas Broome: dbroome@usaid.gov

USAID Office Manager Asgeir Sigfusson: asigfusson@usaid.gov

### Member Services

Director Janet Hedrick: hedrick@afsa.org

Representative Cory Nishi: nishi@afsa.org

Web-site & Database Associate: vacant

Administrative Assistant Ana Lopez: lopez@afsa.org

### Outreach Programs

Retiree Liaison Bonnie Brown: brown@afsa.org

Director of Communications Thomas Switzer: switzer@afsa.org

Congressional Affairs Director Ian Houston: houston@afsa.org

Executive Assistant to the President Austin Tracy: tracy@afsa.org

Scholarship Director Lori Dec: dec@afsa.org

Professional Issues Coordinator Barbara Berger: berger@afsa.org

Elderhostel Coordinator Janice Bay: bay@afsa.org

### Governing Board:

**PRESIDENT:** John Naland

**STATE VP:** Steve Kashkett

**USAID VP:** Francisco Zamora

**FAS VP:** Vacant

**FCS VP:** Donald Businger

**RETIREE VP:** Robert W. Farrand

**SECRETARY:** FA "Tex" Harris

**TREASURER:** Andrew Winter

**STATE REPS:** Anne Aguilera, Oscar DeSoto,

David Firestein, Jim McRea,

Sandy Robinson, Shayna Steinger,

Daphne Titus, Andrea Tomaszewicz

**USAID REP:** Michael Henning

**FCS REP:** Stephen Anderson

**FAS REP:** Vacant

**IBB REP:** Al Pessin

**RETIREE REPS:** Barbara Bodine,

Herman Cohen, Harry Geisel, David Passage

Survey • Continued from page 57

Numerous respondents expressed outrage that they now have to accept close to a 20-percent cut in base salary when they leave Washington to serve overseas, while senior officers and employees of other U.S. agencies do not. A whopping 70 percent of members attached “high importance” to the effort to correct the inequity, while another 21 percent gave it “medium importance.”

With regard to Iraq, a clear majority believes that war-zone postings should remain voluntary; some 68 percent oppose directed assignments as unnecessary and undesirable. More than 2,000 FS members — including 110 currently serving in Iraq and 295 who said they had previously done tours of duty there — provided comments on ways to encourage more people to volunteer for Iraq assignments. Many themes emerged repeatedly: increasing the Separate Maintenance Allowance, getting tax exemptions for war-zone service, awarding meritorious step increases, shortening the length of a standard unaccompanied tour. But a large number of comments suggested a fundamental disagreement with the whole approach of seeking ever greater incentives to staff an escalating list of Provincial Reconstruction Teams and an expanding embassy; instead, many hundreds of employees urged a downsizing of the U.S. mission there, both for practical and policy reasons.

The survey comments reflect widespread resentment over a perceived lack of even-handedness in our assignment/promotion

The steady shift toward greater hardship and unaccompanied service has highlighted the apprehensions on managing family life during the course of a Foreign Service career.

system, an issue that ranks a close second to the growing overseas pay disparity in our members’ priorities. Numerous respondents cited glaring examples of preferential treatment of certain senior officers, people in key staff positions and inside “favorites” in certain bureaus. This mood clearly has an impact on people’s views of Secretary Condoleezza Rice’s call on the Foreign Service to do its duty by volunteering for Iraq, which many decried as selective.

The steady shift towards greater hardship and unaccompanied service has highlighted the apprehensions of many of our colleagues about their ability to manage their family life during the course of a Foreign Service career. The survey comments indicate a pervasive desire for the department to take a much more active, long-term approach to addressing the problems of family member employment overseas, the lack of status for members of household, the dwindling school options for children at many posts and the urgent need for a better support structure for families separated by unaccompanied assignments. Many respondents linked this latter issue to their willingness to serve in Iraq, as well.

This electronic opinion poll suggests one reason for declining morale: relatively few members appear to believe that the senior department leadership is working on their behalf. Only a small percentage of respondents rated as either “very good” or “good” the efforts of Sec. Rice and other senior officials to defend the Foreign Service (18 percent), to secure resources for the department and its people (14 percent), or to get Congress to authorize overseas comparability pay (12 percent).

Are you currently serving overseas or in a domestic assignment? (mandatory - must provide an answer)

Overseas		3007	70%
Domestic		1277	30%
Total		4284	100%

What is your current grade? (mandatory - must provide an answer)

FS-05 or below		451	11%
FS-04		886	21%
FS-03		1037	24%
FS-02		928	22%
FS-01		650	15%
Senior Foreign Service		332	8%
Total		4284	100%

Are you a Foreign Service generalist or specialist?

Generalist		2687	63%
Specialist		1566	37%
Total		4253	100%

If the Department fails to get volunteers for all the positions at our posts in Iraq, including Embassy Baghdad and the Provincial Reconstruction Teams around the country, how would you react to a decision to begin identifying employees for “directed” assignments?

Strongly support		306	8%
Support		996	24%
Oppose		1341	33%
Strongly oppose		1437	35%
Total		4080	100%

If you have served in Iraq or would be willing to volunteer to serve there, what factors would motivate you to do so? (check all that apply)

Patriotism/duty		1182	59%
Career enhancement		964	48%
Adventure/challenge		796	40%
Extra pay and benefits		1347	68%
Other, please specify		432	22%

If you would NOT consider volunteering for an assignment in Iraq, what factors would prevent you from doing so? (check all that apply)

Security concerns		2037	61%
Separation from family		2113	64%
Obstacles to performing assigned duties		1398	42%
Disagreement with policy		1592	48%
Other, please specify		788	24%

How much importance do you attach to our continuing efforts to obtain Overseas Comparability Pay for our members, which would bring FS overseas salaries up by more than 18% to Washington levels.

High importance		2983	70%
Moderate importance		903	21%
Low importance		270	6%
No importance		113	3%
Total		4269	100%

How would you rate the efforts of Secretary Rice and senior Department officials to get Congress to authorize Overseas Comparability Pay?

Very good		50	1%
Good		442	11%
Fair		1643	40%
Poor		1326	32%
Very poor		666	16%
Total		4127	100%

Have developments in the last few years made you more or less likely to remain in the Foreign Service for a full career?

More likely to remain		234	5%
No change		2147	50%
Less likely to remain		1877	44%
Total		4258	100%

How would you rate AFSA's effectiveness in representing the interests of our members and advocating on your behalf?

Very good		384	9%
Good		2015	48%
Fair		1410	33%
Poor		320	8%
Very poor		91	2%
Total		4220	100%

### Rank-Order Priorities

\* median score is the score above which are 50 percent of the responses and below which are 50 percent of the responses. The lower the score, the more votes for that priority.

Priority for AFSA Advocacy	Median Score	Rank
Overseas comparability pay	3.7	1
Fairness in assignments/promotions	3.8	2
Family-friendliness within the Foreign Service	4.8	3
Iraq staffing and security concerns	5.1	4
Opposition to directed assignments to war zones	5.3	5
Freedom to express dissent at State	6.2	6
Role of FS careerists in U.S. foreign policymaking	6.3	7
Unqualified political appointees	6.6	8
Members of Household	7.9	9
Excessive penalties for security infractions/investigations	7.9	10

How would you rate the job that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is doing in defending the professional Foreign Service?

Very good		99	2%
Good		684	16%
Fair		1597	38%
Poor		1170	28%
Very poor		657	16%
Total		4207	100%

How would you rate the job that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is doing in securing resources for the Department and its people?

Very good		66	2%
Good		513	12%
Fair		1531	36%
Poor		1323	31%
Very poor		769	18%
Total		4202	100%

Based on what you know of AFSA's efforts on behalf of Foreign Service members until now, do you believe that AFSA should be MORE vocal and assertive -- or LESS vocal and assertive -- in its future dealings with State management and the administration?

MORE vocal and assertive (even if it causes more friction with Management)		2805	67%
LESS vocal and assertive		56	1%
Stay the same		1346	32%
Total		4207	100%



# AFSA NEWS BRIEFS

Professional issues, while typically of less immediate import to members than “bread and butter” concerns, nonetheless remain very much on the minds of our colleagues. Nearly half of the respondents listed “freedom to express dissent at State” and “role of FS careerists in U.S. foreign policymaking” among their top five priorities for AFSA advocacy over the coming year.

Our survey results point to one very disturbing trend. In response to the question, “Have developments in the last few years made you more or less likely to remain in the Foreign Service for a full career?”, some 44 percent said they would be *less* likely to remain. Significantly, this percentage was the same for those respondents still in the entry-level ranks. This raises serious questions about the long-term health of the Foreign Service — and argues for immediate action to deal with many of the concerns highlighted above. □

## CarMax Won't Sell to FS

AFSA has learned that CarMax has a policy not to sell a car to anyone who plans to take the car out of the U.S. We have heard that the policy was initiated based on security concerns about how the cars could be used overseas. AFSA is contacting CarMax to suggest that members of the Foreign Service be exempt from this policy.

## FSN Relief Fund Needs Replenishment

The State Department's Foreign Service National Relief Fund is in need of funds with which to assist all overseas agencies' FSNs who have suffered losses due to hurricanes and other disasters. Foreign Service members may donate by check, credit card or payroll deduction (go to State's intranet site at [web.m.state.gov](http://web.m.state.gov) for details). FS retirees, FSNs and other locally-engaged employees may make check or cash contributions. Check contributions should be sent to State Department Gift Fund Coordinator Donna Bordley, Department of State, RM/CFO Rm. 7427, 2201 C Street NW, Washington DC 20520. Make checks payable to the U.S. Department of State and write “FSN Emergency Relief Fund” on the note line. Please include a return address so a letter of acknowledgement for charitable tax-deduction purposes can be sent.

### AFSA CONSTRUCTIVE DISSENT AWARDS & EXEMPLARY PERFORMANCE AWARDS

## Last Call for Nominations: Honor the Dissenters

**A**FSA needs your help in identifying and nominating Foreign Service personnel at all career levels who have demonstrated the intellectual courage and integrity to challenge conventional wisdom, to question the status quo and to stand up for their convictions, regardless of the consequences.

The open exchange of different points of view should not only be encouraged within our Foreign Service, but should be recognized and honored. As Edward R. Murrow said long ago: “We must never confuse dissent with disloyalty. When the loyal opposition dies, I think the soul of America dies with it.”

Last year, AFSA presented only two Constructive Dissent Awards, both to mid-level officers. We received no nominations that met the award criteria in the entry-level, specialist or senior-level categories.

AFSA needs your help to continue to honor loyal opposition. If you know of a deserving colleague, please don't delay. Send in your nomination now. The four awards for constructive dissent are:

- The **Tex Harris Award** for Foreign Service Specialists
- The **Averell Harriman Award** for Entry-Level Officers (FS 6-4)
- The **William Rivkin Award** for Mid-Career Officers (FS 3-1)
- The **Christian Herter Award** for Senior Officers (FE OC-CA)

Nominations for the AFSA Exemplary Performance Awards are also being accepted. These awards are:

- The **Delavan Award** for an office management specialist who has significantly contributed to post or office effectiveness and morale.
- The **M. Juanita Guess Award** for a community liaison officer who has demon-

strated outstanding leadership, dedication, initiative and imagination in assisting the families of Foreign Service employees serving abroad.

- The **Avis Bohlen Award** for a family member of a Foreign Service employee whose volunteer activities with the American and foreign communities at post have done the most to advance the interests of the U.S.

Further details on nomination procedures, additional guidelines and a nomination form can be found on the AFSA Web site at [www.afsa.org/awards.cfm](http://www.afsa.org/awards.cfm). From there, you can link to articles about the AFSA awards and find a comprehensive listing of past award winners.

Please send questions to Barbara Berger, Coordinator for Professional Issues, at [berger@afsa.org](mailto:berger@afsa.org), or by telephone at (202) 719-9700. **The deadline for submitting nominations is Feb. 29.** □

## On the Job

As we approach the summer 2008 assignment period and my own reassignment from AFSA VP to a foreign post, thoughts of a succession loom just as the FCS management team (at least the officers) is also turning over en masse. What can I tell my eventual successor about the ups and downs of being the AFSA VP for Commerce/FCS?

Within Commerce/FCS, it is well known that the AFSA VP position is a half-time job. For several years, the other half of the job has been as senior adviser to the deputy assistant secretary for international operations. Commerce/FCS is the only Foreign Service agency that has a non-full-time AFSA VP.

Having just gone through the 2007 Selection and Promotion Boards cycle, along with the “pay for performance” (or, if you prefer, “performance pay” cash awards) exercise, the first thing I can tell a successor is that this job provides virtually no chance for

promotion and little to no chance of cash awards, regardless of how well the AFSA VP performs under either of the two hats. (On the plus side, there is time-in-class relief.)

The second piece of wisdom to pass on is that the AFSA VP has excellent opportunities to provide significant and responsive support to FCS AFSA members facing problems big and small. In that task, despite the half-time status of the position, the AFSA VP receives a great deal of sup-

port from the AFSA Governing Board and the AFSA staff.

On the other hand, our own agency appears to be only half-serious about its relations with AFSA. Our 2005 proposals were finally accepted (in part) in mid-2007, but our 2006 and 2007 proposals have remained largely in limbo, with only promises of responsiveness. The AFSA VP’s relations with management may be contentious (as they were under Peter Frederick) or amicable (as they were under Chuck Ford). My experience has been that relations tend to be mostly cordial but also largely ineffectual, with a few exceptions. Our agency has maintained a dysfunctional approach to dealing with AFSA.

What about day-to-day operations and impact? The AFSA VP can bring customer service to both members and management in the same way that FCS is highly responsive to companies seeking export promotion assistance. The VP handles grievances, problems related to tenure and discipline, assignments, benefits and a host of other issues that affect our officer corps of over 200 (admittedly small compared to the thousands at State). The best way to gain a sense of the issues we deal with year-round is to visit our page of the AFSA Web site at [www.afsa.org/fcs/](http://www.afsa.org/fcs/).

The future of Foreign Commercial Service officers at the Department of Commerce is ambiguous. As I noted in one of my first VP columns (“Whither the Commercial Service?” *AFSA News*, December 2005), our budget and roles encompass numerous strains that influence decisionmakers in Washington.

The influence of AFSA on the Foreign Commercial Service is a small part of larger relationships — the administration vs. Congress, State Department vs. Commerce, and FCS within the International Trade Administration — that seem to leave commercial officers with little clout. That said, AFSA is all we have. Please keep your membership current and support my successor — AFSA is still your key advocate and your voice back home. □



## AFSA NEWS BRIEFS

Board • Continued from page 58

the West Bank and Gaza. Before entering the Foreign Service, Steinger worked as a science policy analyst at both the National Institutes of Health and NASA, where she began her federal career as a Presidential Management Fellow in 1991.

During a three-decade Foreign Service career, Barbara Bodine served as ambassador to the Republic of Yemen from 1997 to 2001, as deputy principal officer in Baghdad during the Iran-Iraq War and as deputy chief of mission in Kuwait during the 1990 Iraqi invasion and occupation. In 2003, she was seconded to the Department of Defense to return to Iraq. Since retiring from the Foreign Service in 2004, Amb. Bodine has held positions at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government and MIT’s Center for International Studies, and lectures at a number of other universities.

Josh Glazeroff left the *FSJ* Editorial Board last fall and David McFarland joined. AFSA appreciates Glazeroff’s valuable contributions to the *Journal*. AFSA also appreciates the service to the Governing Board and the membership of all the departing board members. Welcome to the new members of both boards.

### Last Call: AFSA Scholarship Applications Due Feb. 6

Children of Foreign Service employees who would like to be considered for the AFSA financial aid college scholarship program for the 2008/09 school year need to submit their applications by Feb. 6. Only tax-dependent children of active-duty, retired, separated and deceased Foreign Service members are eligible to apply. AFSA funds students who attend both domestic and overseas colleges and universities.

Academic and Art Merit Award applications also need to be submitted by Feb. 6 by Foreign Service high school students in their senior year. Please visit [www.afsa.org/scholar/](http://www.afsa.org/scholar/) for AFSA Scholarship Program details or call Scholarship Director Lori Dec at 1 (800) 704 2372, ext. 504, or (202) 944-5504.

## Defending Our Own

Where to begin? I thought of being cute: "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times . . ." but quickly dropped the idea because nothing qualified for the former. As I write in mid-November, all of AFSA's energies are being directed to explaining to a confused public the rationale behind the Foreign Service's personnel assignment system. Although the story has a happy ending, for now, it's worth retelling.

For those few retirees who may have missed the brouhaha over directed assignments, I'll boil it down: In order to staff Embassy Baghdad and the Provincial Reconstruction Teams — described by Secretary Rice as our most important diplomatic mission in the world — with some 250 of the Service's best (to meet Ambassador Ryan Crocker's request), the State Department, relying on its traditional and tested system of assigning officers based on voluntary preference, came up short of the needed 252 by some 48 volunteers. Sec. Rice declared that unless a sufficient number of FSOs stepped forward by late November, the department would be forced to direct that number of assignments to Iraq, a management tool last resorted to during the Vietnam War nearly 40 years ago.

Unfortunately, news of the Secretary's decision was first seen on the front page of the *Washington Post*, causing a furor within the Service. In order to calm the waters, the director general hosted a town meeting. The gathering became a testy exchange between the DG and the audience of some 300 FS employees about the necessity of directing assignments to what one — repeat, one — career officer injudiciously described as a "potential death sentence."

Unknown to the participants, an Associated Press reporter was present and immediately filed a story highlighting the death sentence comment. The AP report flashed across the country, igniting a torrent of comment that generally put the Foreign Service in a bad light, especially when its voluntary assignment system was compared to the uniformed military whose members are routinely ordered into harm's way.

In the rush to comment on the Foreign Service assignment system, the media, with few exceptions, focused more on the sensational than on the factual. In the days following the town meeting, AFSA President John Naland and State VP Steve Kashkett faced a barrage of inquiries from the media, the public and AFSA members. The task before Team AFSA, working nearly around the clock, was to educate an aroused public to the inherent equity and discipline of our assignment system as e-mails flew, phones lit up and TV and radio interviewers swooped down on them.

Through it all, AFSA stood squarely behind both the State

Department's right to assign its employees where they are most needed and FS employees' rights to express their preferences in this regard. An uncomfortable straddle? Not at all. The record is clear: over the past 40 years, the Foreign Service assignment system has successfully and continually staffed over 260 diplomatic posts around the globe. Many of these, including Baghdad, are in highly dangerous environments. Over 1,500 FS personnel have already voluntarily served in Iraq and Afghanistan, and 200-plus volunteers had already stepped forward to fill next summer's quota of 252.

In the days immediately following the town meeting, another 19 officers stepped forward, thus reducing the shortfall to just

over 10 percent of the total needed. Pretty good numbers if you look at the system overall: 90 percent of positions filled. The current worldwide staffing norm is only about 80 percent.

Within two weeks, enough volunteers had stepped forward to fill all 48 Iraq positions. There would be no directed assignments after all! Much ado about nothing? Yes, but for the fact that the nostrils of critics of the Foreign Service were (and I suspect still are) fully flared by this unhappy episode. John Naland's essay, "Telling Our Story," lays out the arguments for rebutting these critics as cogently as I've seen. (See [www.afsa.org/101707presupdate.cfm](http://www.afsa.org/101707presupdate.cfm).)

Perhaps tellingly, Karen DeYoung's report on the cancellation of the directed assignments exercise in the Nov. 16 *Washington Post*, concludes: "While the controversy is expected to subside for now, internal strains over personnel shortages and policy are likely to reappear as long as Iraq continues to be a dangerous diplomatic assignment and to drain resources from other posts."

Several members of Team AFSA vented their frustration to me that retirees were not heard from in this "worst of times" for the Foreign Service. They said retirees could have provided an invaluable perspective on the Service to local media outlets across America. Some of us did speak up, but perhaps too few. Others even joined in the FS-bashing by echoing charges we were hearing in the media. Next time, fellow retirees, let's do better at defending our own. □





**Prime Candidates • Continued from page 57**

U.S. diplomats since the Vietnam War.” Numerous national media report this story on Saturday morning, Oct. 27.

**Oct. 27, 30 and Nov 5:** AFSA sends out AFSAnet messages and telegrams updating members on the status of the prime candidate exercise and calling on Foreign Service members to consider volunteering for Iraq positions.

**Oct. 29:** E-mail notifications begin to go out from State to approximately 230 Foreign Service officers who have been identified for one or more Iraq jobs. They have 14 days to respond.

**Oct. 29:** AFSA begins hearing from hundreds of Foreign Service members about the prime candidate exercise. AFSA President John Naland and AFSA VP Steve Kashkett respond personally to each of the hundreds of e-mails that come in on all

sides of the Iraq staffing issue. Kashkett answers every one of the over 140 e-mails from State active-duty members identified as prime candidates. In addition, a professional staff member from the AFSA State Labor Management Office also weighs in on each prime candidate case raised.

**Oct. 31:** The DG holds a town hall meeting at the State Department to address concerns about the prime candidate exercise. The meeting turns contentious.

**Oct. 31:** An AP reporter present at this in-house meeting files a story including details of the most emotional exchanges. The story is picked up by media all over the country, and is followed by numerous op-ed pieces criticizing the Foreign Service.

**Nov. 1:** AFSA is inundated with media requests for interviews and initiates major outreach effort to correct misperceptions

about the Foreign Service and Iraq staffing. Naland appears on CNN and the NewsHour. Naland and Kashkett give several dozen interviews, including ABC, CBS, NBC and others. Both Naland and Kashkett are quoted several times in the *Washington Post* and other national media, helping to ensure more balanced coverage.

**Nov. 2:** Sec. Rice sends worldwide telegram encouraging Foreign Service officers to volunteer for Iraq assignments.

**Nov. 2:** Naland and Kashkett meet with the director general urging him not to rush to implement directed assignments. AFSA expresses confidence that enough volunteers will step forward and that directed assignments will not be necessary.

**Nov. 8:** Steve Kashkett is a guest on the Diane Rehm show along with Ambassador Thomas Krajeski (State assignments director), Ambassador Edward “Skip” Gnehm (former director general) and former FSO John Brady Kiesling.

**Nov. 10:** AFSA sends out a message, “Defending our Foreign Service in the Current Crisis,” calling on Foreign Service members to help set the record straight in the public mind by writing to their hometown newspapers. Members respond, and letters are soon published in the *Boston Globe*, *Sacramento Bee*, *Times Leader* (Wilkes-Barre, Penn.), *Bellingham Herald*, *Ocean City Today*, among others. An op-ed by Steve Kashkett in defense of the Foreign Service appears in the Nov. 20 *Washington Times*.

**Nov. 16:** The *Washington Post* and other media report that the State Department will call off the directed assignments exercise because enough volunteers came forward for the 48 open Iraq positions.

**Nov. 19:** The State Department announces that qualified candidates for all 48 positions have volunteered and cancels the directed assignments exercise.

**Nov. 19:** The AP reports that the State Department has shifted focus to filling positions in the next priority category for summer 2008 — more than 500 jobs at unaccompanied posts. If those jobs are not filled by volunteers, directed assignments may follow.

*To Be Continued ...* □

# AFSA NEWS BRIEFS

## From the Legislative Affairs Desk

As we begin 2008, the 110th Congress has a full agenda heading into the critical November elections. AFSA continues to weigh in with key decisionmakers on the issue of pay modernization. We are proactively engaging pressure points to influence the process and continue to utilize unique member stories to bridge differences. We have not given up. We look forward to working with the administration and Congress to find a solution to this growing problem.

We also continue to work on appropriations issues. The president’s emergency supplemental spending bill for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq was still pending in late November. In October, AFSA worked hard to convince lawmakers that such emergency spending for the wars should include funds to expand the Foreign Service, which is stretched too thin around the world. In essence, the diplomatic corps is facing an

emergency itself on the staffing front.

Further, the president’s Fiscal Year 2009 budget request for international affairs, known as the 150 Account, will reach the desks of lawmakers in early February following his last State of the Union address. AFSA and other organizations will collectively make the case as the budget moves forward that more Foreign Service positions must be funded, and that diplomats must be given the resources and tools they need to properly do their jobs in the field.

A host of other issues — taxes, benefits and retiree concerns — round out AFSA’s full legislative agenda. We appreciate your support. Please feel free to e-mail Legislative Affairs Director Ian Houston at [houston@afsa.org](mailto:houston@afsa.org) if you have any comments or questions. Current information on what AFSA is doing on the Hill can be found on the legislative affairs page of the Web site at [www.afsa.org/congress.cfm](http://www.afsa.org/congress.cfm).

AMB. CHAMBERLIN ON  
U.S.-PAKISTAN RELATIONS

## AFSA Launches the Adair Speaker Series on American Diplomacy

BY MARC NIELSEN, EDITORIAL INTERN

Ambassador Wendy Chamberlin, president of the Middle East Institute in Washington, D.C., inaugurated the Caroline and Ambassador Charles W. Adair Speaker Series on American Diplomacy on Nov. 14, addressing some 110 faculty and students at American University's School of International Studies. Amb. Chamberlin — who served as U.S. ambassador to Pakistan from 2001 to 2002, ambassador to the Laos People's Democratic Republic from 1996 to 1999, and as deputy high commissioner for refugees from 2004 to 2006 — spoke on “The Critical Role of the Foreign Service in Defending National Interests.”

While serving as ambassador to Pakistan in the months following the Sept. 11 attacks in 2001, Amb. Chamberlin worked closely with President Pervez Musharraf to advance the Bush administration's counterterrorism policies. In her talk, she described the challenges she faced, including managing the complex relations with the Pakistan government concerning multiple crises, including the U.S. military buildup in Pakistan related to operations against the Taliban and al-Qaida in Afghanistan.

Her description of the delicate personal relationship with Pres. Musharraf was especially timely. Offering insights into Pakistan's current leadership crisis, Amb. Chamberlin recommended that the U.S. continue to call for Pres. Musharraf to resign from the military (as he later did) and allow free and fair democratic elections. “Our relationship is with the Pakistani people and is not based on Musharraf,” she stressed.

Speaking about current U.S. relations with Islamabad, Amb. Chamberlin said,

“We don't have the influence over Pakistan that we think, and that Pakistanis fear.” She highlighted the importance of Pakistan and the role of Musharraf in the region, but condemned his suspension of the constitution. “He is not comfortable with the messiness of democracy,” she said.

The event was made possible through an endowed gift to the Fund for American Diplomacy from former AFSA President Marshall Adair and Ginger Adair. This lecture series will serve to educate students, business leaders, senior citizens and the media on the importance of diplomacy and a strong Foreign Service.

The Adair family created the endowment in 2006 in memory of Marshall's parents. Charles Adair, a retired ambassador who spent 35 years in the Foreign Service, passed away at age 92 in 2006; Caroline had passed away 10 years earlier. Carol Adair



Marc Nielsen

Ambassador Wendy Chamberlin at the podium.

Finn, daughter of Charles and Caroline Adair, attended the program on behalf of the Adair family.

The perpetual gift from the Adair family to the Fund for American Diplomacy will be used to support and expand one of AFSA's most successful outreach programs, the AFSA Speakers Bureau. The fund supports a variety of public programs that raise awareness about the importance of diplomacy and the U.S. Foreign Service. □

## AFSA NEWS BRIEFS

### New Reports Highlight State Staffing Deficit

Reports continue to accumulate documenting the deficiencies in funding and staffing of the State Department Foreign Service:

- The June 2007 “Managing Secretary Rice's State Department” report by the Foreign Affairs Council documented a 1,100-position deficit ([www.facouncil.org/reports.html](http://www.facouncil.org/reports.html)).
- The October 2007 “Embassy of the Future” report by the Center for Strategic & International Studies found a 1,015-position shortfall in current needs plus an additional 1,079-position deficit in training and related needs ([www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/embassy\\_of\\_the\\_future.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/embassy_of_the_future.pdf)).
- The November 2007 “Smart Power” report by CSIS cited a deficit of “more than 1,000” positions to meet training and related needs ([www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/071106\\_csissmartpowerreport.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/071106_csissmartpowerreport.pdf)).

An op-ed on Foreign Service staffing and funding issues by AFSA President John Naland, “Nation Lacks Bench Strength for Diplomacy,” was published in the Nov. 26 *Federal Times*. AFSA continues to urge lawmakers to make at least an initial immediate down payment toward filling these staffing gaps, either in the Fiscal Year 2008 budget or in the Iraq supplemental request. AFSA also continues to urge the administration to make the strongest possible push to obtain additional staffing resources for diplomacy.

### DACOR Scholarships

The DACOR Bacon House Foundation offers scholarships and fellowships to children and grandchildren of U.S. Foreign Service officers to study at The Hotchkiss School in Lakeville, Conn., and at Yale University. All awards are based on merit. The deadline to apply is March 14. For more information about the DACOR awards and to find out how to apply, please contact Program Coordinator Kasia Helbin-Travis at (202) 682-0500, ext. 17, or [prog.coord@dacorbacon.org](mailto:prog.coord@dacorbacon.org).

### Leadership Changes at USAID and State

In November, the Senate confirmed the nomination of Henrietta Fore for the positions of USAID administrator and director of United States foreign assistance. The Senate also confirmed Patrick Kennedy to be the under secretary of State for management, succeeding U/S Fore. AFSA looks forward to working with them.

# 2007-2008 Financial Aid Scholars

**A** FSA is awarding \$138,400 in undergraduate college need-based scholarships for the 2007-2008 school year to 53 children of Foreign Service employees. In addition to the AFSA Financial Aid Scholarships listed, AFSA administers the DACOR Bacon House Scholarships as well as scholarships in the name of other organizations, such as the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide and the Public Members Association of the Foreign Service. All these organizations provide valuable support to the scholarship program.

AFSA also offers Academic and Art Merit Awards to recognize academic and art accomplishments of Foreign Service high school seniors. Under this program, AFSA awarded a total of \$28,500 in 2007 to 25 students. These \$1,500 one-time-only awards were bestowed in May 2007, and the students were acknowledged in the July/August *Foreign Service Journal*.

We are initiating a new tradition to honor AFSA financial aid scholarship recipients in the same way. Scholars are listed here with photos where available. The students are shown in alphabetical order, with all

## Financial Aid Scholarship Recipients



**Morgan Anderson** — attending Lynn University. Recipient of the DACOR Bacon House Foundation Harriet C. Thurgood Memorial Scholarship.



**Paul Armstrong** — attending the University of St. Thomas. Recipient of the DACOR Bacon House Foundation Harriet C. Thurgood Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Clare H. Timberlake Memorial Scholarship.



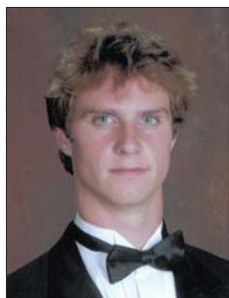
**David Bobb** — attending St. Edward's University. Recipient of the AFSA Robert Woods Bliss Memorial Scholarship, the AFSA Robert and Evelyn Curtis Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Ernest V. Siracusa Memorial Scholarship.



**Anne Byme** — attending the University of Colorado. Recipient of the AFSA Landreth M. Harrison Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Julius C. Holmes Memorial Scholarship.



**Alexandra Christoff** — attending Seton Hill University. Recipient of the AFSA Selden Chapin Memorial Scholarship, the AFSA Susan Lowe Modi Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Evelyn K. and Horace J. Nickels Memorial Scholarship.



**Quinn Dempsey** — attending the College of Charleston. Recipient of the AFSA William Benton Memorial Scholarship and the DACOR Bacon House Foundation Heyward G. Hill Scholarship.



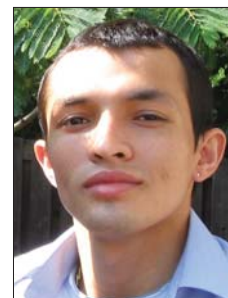
**Zachary Dubel** — attending Florida State University. Recipient of the DACOR Bacon House Foundation Heyward G. Hill Memorial Scholarship.



**Caitlin Fennerty** — attending St. John's College. Recipient of the AFSA Dorothy Osborne and Theodore Xanthaky Memorial Scholarship.



**Ryan Fennerty** — attending Yale University. Recipient of the AFSA Marcia Martin Moore Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Jefferson Patterson Memorial Scholarship.



**Diego Fietz** — attending Drexel University. Recipient of the DACOR Bacon House Foundation Heyward G. Hill Memorial Scholarship.



those who submitted photos listed in the first section. Each listing includes the name of the university the students will attend and the name of the scholarship(s) the student is receiving.

It is not too late to apply for an AFSA Financial Aid Scholarship. Applications for the 2008-2009 school year will be accepted until Feb. 6. Awards range from \$1,500 to \$3,500. To be eligible for an AFSA Financial Aid Scholarship, students must be tax dependents of Foreign Service employees, take at least 12 credits a semester, maintain at least a cumulative 2.0 grade point

average, attend an accredited two- or four-year college or university in the U.S. or overseas and show need by completing the College Scholarship Service "PROFILE." Grandchildren of Foreign Service employees are not eligible for the program.

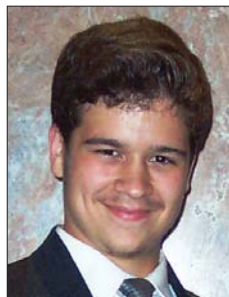
Visit [www.afsa.org/scholar/](http://www.afsa.org/scholar/) for the complete program details and to download an application. If you have any questions or are interested in establishing a scholarship in your name, please contact AFSA Scholarship Director Lori Dec at (202) 944-5504, or 1 (800) 704-2372, ext. 504.



**Uthman Claiborne** — attending North Carolina Central University. Recipient of the AFSA Albert E. Carter Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Martin G. Patterson Memorial Scholarship.



**Elliot Consigny** — attending the University of Wisconsin. Recipient of the AFSA Oliver Bishop Hariman Memorial Scholarship.



**Victor Copher** — attending Ohio University. Recipient of the DACOR Bacon House Foundation Harriet C. Thurgood Memorial Scholarship.



**Nathan Daves-Brody** — attending the University of New Mexico. Recipient of the AFSA Arthur B. Emmons Memorial Scholarship, the AFSA William Leonhardt Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Naomi Pekmezian Memorial Scholarship.



**Dylan Dempsey** — attending Saint Leo University. Recipient of the DACOR Bacon House Foundation Heyward G. Hill Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Robert E. and Florence L. Macaulay Memorial Scholarship.



**Giovanni Fietz** — attending the University at Buffalo. Recipient of the AFSA Charles B. Hosmer Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Brockman Moore Memorial Scholarship.



**Evan Fritz** — attending the University of Mary Washington. Recipient of the AFSA James Bolard More Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Elbert G. and Naomi M. Mathews Memorial Scholarship.



**Caio Geraissate** — attending Ohio State University. Recipient of the DACOR Bacon House Foundation Harriet C. Thurgood Memorial Scholarship.



**Alexandria Gilbert** — attending Queen's University, Belfast. Recipient of the DACOR Bacon House Foundation Heyward G. Hill Memorial Scholarship.

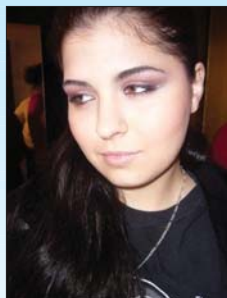


**Julia Groth** — attending California Polytechnic State University. Recipient of the AFSA Clarke Winship Slade Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Gertrude Stewart Memorial Scholarship.

## Financial Aid Scholarship Recipients



**Carlos Grover** — attending Tulane University. Recipient of the DACOR Bacon House Foundation Heyward G. Hill Memorial Scholarship.



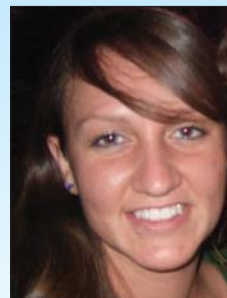
**Catherine Huyett** — attending Texas State University. Recipient of the AFSA George and Mattie Newman Scholarship, the AFSA William P. and Adele Langston Rogers Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Gertrude Stewart Memorial Scholarship.



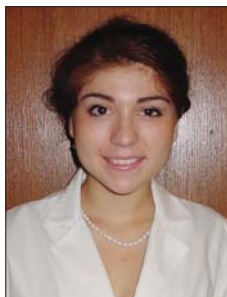
**Deanna Jefferson** — attending the University of Maryland. Recipient of the Heyward G. Hill Memorial Scholarship.



**Annaliese Johnsen** — attending Northeastern University. Recipient of the DACOR Bacon House Foundation Heyward G. Hill Memorial Scholarship.



**Rebecca Konschak** — attending the University of South Florida at Tampa. Recipient of the AFSA Elizabeth M. and William E. Cole Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Sheldon Whitehouse Memorial Scholarship.



**Celeste Pedraza** — attending the University of the Incarnate Word. Recipient of the AFSA Adolph Dubs Memorial Scholarship, the AFSA Howard Fyfe Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Col. Richard R. Hallock Memorial Scholarship.



**Irene Pedraza** — attending Saint Mary's University of San Antonio. Recipient of the AFSA Beirut Scholarship, the AFSA Betty Carp Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Vietnam Scholarship.



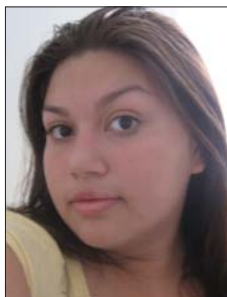
**Liz Rische** — attending St. Edward's University. Recipient of the AFSA John and Hope Rogers Bastek Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Ruth Frost Hoyt Memorial Scholarship.



**Simone Ruiz-Smith** — attending Cornell College. Recipient of the AFSA Suzanne Marie Collins Memorial Scholarship, the AFSA Lowell C. Pinkerton Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA John Campbell White Memorial Scholarship.



**Stephanie Ruse** — attending Washington University, St. Louis. Recipient of the AFSA Rose Marie Asch Memorial Scholarship, the AFSA Barbara Bell Black Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Jacq Bachman Siracusa Scholarship.



**Diana Zayas** — attending Northern Virginia Community College. Recipient of the AFSA Philip C. Habib Memorial Scholarship, the AFSA Harry A. Havens Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Elizabeth N. Landeau Memorial Scholarship.

### Scholarship recipients who did not submit photos:

**Jessica Carter** — attending Virginia Tech. Recipient of the DACOR Bacon House Foundation Harriet C. Thurgood Memorial Scholarship.

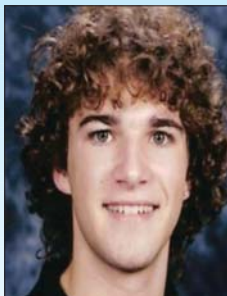
**Rebecca Christensen** — attending Brigham Young University. Recipient of the AFSA Harriet Winsar Isom Scholarship and the AFSA Paris Scholarship.

**Peter Hammon** — attending James Madison University. Recipient of the AFSA Walter K. Schwinn Memorial Scholarship, the AFSA Anna B. and John M. Steeves Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Thomas G. Weston Memorial Scholarship.

**Chad Johnson** — attending Northeastern University. Recipient of the AFSA Dorothy Osborne and Theodore Xanthaky Memorial Scholarship.

**Kareem Kabra** — attending Pennsylvania State University. Recipient of the AFSA Stephen Hubler/Carl Boyle Memorial Scholarship.

**Anthony Mignano** — attending Kansas State University. Recipient of the AFSA Louise Holscher Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Gertrude Stewart Memorial Scholarship.



**Garrett Lanzet** — attending New York University. Recipient of the AFSA Everett K. and Clara C. Melby Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Defense of the Foreign Service Scholarship.



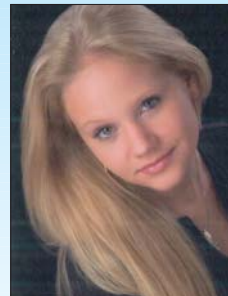
**Robin Lutjohann** — attending McGill University. Recipient of the AFSA Janet K. and Charles C. Stelle Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Edward T. Wailes Memorial Scholarship.



**Natalie McNeill** — attending the University of Delaware. Recipient of the AFSA Marc Grossman and Mildred Patterson Scholarship.



**Catherine Miller** — attending the University of Michigan. Recipient of the AFSA Prabhi G. Kavaler Memorial Scholarship, the AFSA George Shultz Scholarship and the AFSA John C. Whitehead Scholarship.



**Kristin Neuser** — attending the University of Arizona. Recipient of the AAFSW Scholarship and AFSA Louise Holscher Memorial Scholarship.



**Christian Temus** — attending the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Recipient of the AFSA Harriet P. Culley Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA John Foster Dulles Memorial Scholarship.



**Adel Terzic** — attending Virginia Tech. Recipient of the Public Members of the Foreign Service (PMA) Scholarship.



**Anne Tousignant** — attending the University of Virginia. Recipient of the AFSA Wilbur J. Carr Memorial Scholarship.



**Elaine Tousignant** — attending the University of Virginia. Recipient of the AFSA Dorothy Osborne and Theodore Xanthaky Memorial Scholarship.



**Madeline Wilson** — attending Sacramento City College. Recipient of the DACOR Bacon House Foundation Harriet C. Thurgood Memorial Scholarship.

**Bridgitte Mignano** — attending Kansas State University. Recipient of the AFSA Louis C. Boochever Memorial Scholarship, the AFSA David K. D. Bruce Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Francesca Bufano Lapinski Memorial Scholarship.

**Caitlin O'Dowd** — attending Hamilton College. Recipient of the AAFSW Scholarship.

**James Tilghman** — attending Lehigh University. Recipient of the DACOR Bacon House Foundation Heyward G. Hill Memorial Scholarship and the AFSA Dalton V. Killion Memorial Scholarship.

**Peter Tilghman** — attending Dickinson College. Recipient of the AFSA Gertrude Stewart Memorial Scholarship.

**Andrew Witt** — attending the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Recipient of the AAFSW Scholarship.

**Maggie Yoder** — attending Randolph Macon College. Recipient of the AAFSW Scholarship.



## 2008 AFSA Dues Rates

**A**FSA membership dues have been raised according to the AFSA bylaws by 2.3 percent across all membership categories. This increase reflects the 3rd-quarter Consumer Price Index published on Oct. 20, 2007, by the Department of Labor, and used by the Social Security Administration to calculate the 2008 Cost of Living Adjustment increases.

The new dues rates took effect on Jan. 1, 2008. Members paying dues via payroll deduction and annuity deduction will see a small, automatic increase in the amount deducted from their paychecks and annuities. Members who pay annually will be billed the new rate on their regularly scheduled renewal date. Membership dues account for approximately 75 percent of AFSA's total income. This revenue provides the association with a stable and predictable income source, which

allows AFSA to continue offering excellent member services and benefits.

The box below indicates the new dues rates for 2008. □

### Rates for Active-Duty Members

CATEGORY	NEW ANNUAL	NEW BIWEEKLY
FS 7, 8, 9	\$82.75	\$3.20
FS 6, 5, 4	\$156.45	\$6.00
FS 1, 2, 3	\$273.40	\$10.50
SFS	\$353.60	\$13.60

### Rates for Retiree Members

CATEGORY	NEW ANNUAL	NEW BIWEEKLY
ANNUITY UNDER \$25,000	\$63.70	\$5.30
ANNUITY OF \$25,000-50,000	\$95.40	\$7.95
ANNUITY OF \$50,000-75,000	\$127.50	\$10.60
ANNUITY OVER \$75,000	\$159.55	\$13.30
RETIREE SPOUSE	\$50.00	\$4.15

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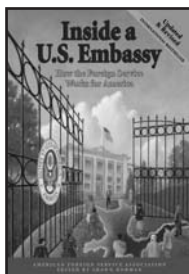
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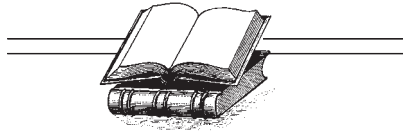
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# BOOKS

## Winning Battles but Losing the War

**Violent Politics: A History of Insurgency, Terrorism & Guerrilla War, from the American Revolution to Iraq**  
William R. Polk, HarperCollins, 2007, \$23.95, hardcover, 273 pages.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT V. KEELEY

*Violent Politics: A History of Insurgency, Terrorism & Guerrilla War, from the American Revolution to Iraq* is William R. Polk's third book in three years, all clearly stimulated by the war in Iraq. Like its predecessors, it offers uncommonly useful expertise and policy guidance to anyone who is serving in Iraq, dealing with Iraq, or just concerned about the quagmire we have fallen into there.

First came *Understanding Iraq* (2005), a guide to a country and its people and history that we knew almost nothing about before invading it. A year later, Polk and co-author George McGovern spelled out precisely what to do to end our involvement there — by the end of 2007, no less! — in *Out of Iraq: A Practical Plan for Withdrawal Now*.

Some of their more prescient and detailed recommendations included: sending home the mercenaries like Blackwater; halting construction of permanent bases in Iraq; letting the

*Polk's latest book expands the focus beyond Iraq to provide lessons about many different insurgencies.*

Iraqis decide how and to whom to sell their oil; and turning the Green Zone over to the Iraqis. Regrettably, their plan to extricate us from this disaster has been totally ignored by the administration, and by Congress as well. (Both books were reviewed in the *Foreign Service Journal*.)

Now Polk has expanded his focus beyond Iraq to provide a history of insurgencies in many places over three centuries. As he explains, the common thread among the case studies is the fact that, in nearly every case, the insurgents lose all the battles but still win the war. They are able to do so because their enemy is made up of occupiers, colonists, invaders who seek to rule or otherwise establish their hegemony; in other words, foreigners.

Insurgencies go through three stages, according to Polk. The first is political: pursuing a cause that recruits a cadre to fight against the foreigners. This force depends on a supportive population, as in Mao

Tse-Tung's famous analogy of the fish in the sea. Terrorism is often the only tactic available to them at this stage. According to Polk's calculations, this stage represents 80 percent of an insurgency, on average.

Next the insurgents create an alternative, anti-government administration in the country, a phase that lasts for another 15 percent of the struggle. Only the final 5 percent consists of traditional combat, yet that phase is what almost all books about counterinsurgency focus on.

The book's 11 chapters recount the French failures in Spain, Algeria and Vietnam, the British defeats in America, Ireland and Kenya, the Germans' losses in Yugoslavia and Greece, and the American experience in the Philippines and Vietnam. But the most instructive episode concerns Afghanistan, where the failing foreigners were by turns British, Russians and Americans. In fact, the long, painful history of that most unfortunately located territory is even more instructive than the situation in Iraq, for it resulted from even greater ignorance and miscalculation by successive foreign interveners.

Yet despite the weight of all that history, and the many indications that Iraq will be the latest entry on that long list of debacles, it appears that the Bush administration has now set its sights on Iran. Heaven help us.



Polk concludes by quoting the famous speech President Dwight Eisenhower delivered on April 16, 1953: "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. The world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. ... This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron."

More than a half-century later, the prophetic power of Eisenhower's

exhortation remains as stirring, and relevant, as ever.

*Three-time ambassador and retired Foreign Service officer Robert V. Keeley operates Five and Ten Press, a small, independent publishing company he founded to bring out original articles, essays and other short works of fiction and nonfiction that have been rejected or ignored by mainstream outlets.*

## A Welcome Reissuance

### First Line of Defense: Ambassadors, Embassies and American Interests Abroad

*Robert V. Keeley, editor; American Academy of Diplomacy, 2007, paperback, 124 pages, \$15.00*

REVIEWED BY  
STEVEN ALAN HONLEY

As we enter an election year, the many pressing foreign policy challenges on the agenda call for a public that understands the critical role of diplomacy in handling them. With that mission in mind, the American Academy of Diplomacy has reprinted its flagship publication, *First Line of Defense: Ambassadors, Embassies and American Interests Abroad*.

When the book was originally published in 2000, funded by a grant from the Nelson B. Delevan Foundation, there was little attempt to publicize it. (The *Journal* did note its publication as part of our first annual compilation of books by Foreign Service-affiliated authors, "In Their Own Write," in November 2000.) As a result, the book has not yet found a wide audience, something the Academy hopes to change.

*First Line of Defense* relates dozens of instances where chiefs of mission have intervened successfully to further U.S. interests, even sometimes at the risk of their personal safety. These include the experiences of Robert Strauss in the Soviet Union, Walter Mondale in Japan, Raymond Seitz in the United Kingdom, Frank Carlucci in Portugal, Elinor Constable in Kenya, Richard Carpenter in Spain, James Jones in Mexico, James Blanchard in Canada, Frank Wisner in India, Michael Armacost in the Philippines, Harry Shlaudeman in Venezuela, Robert Oakley in Pakistan, and Thomas Pickering at the United Nations.

Retired FSO Robert Keeley, himself a three-time ambassador (Mauritius, Zimbabwe and Greece), lets the stories he has compiled speak for themselves, which they do quite eloquently. Collectively, they demonstrate how effective diplomacy is essential in getting from policy conception to success.

Because the book offers multiple examples while remaining short and lively, it is particularly effective for use by those teaching international relations or trying to explain the diplomatic function to the public.

It is unfortunate that AAD was unable to update the book's contents or add a new introduction, but nonetheless the compilation remains useful. It is available for purchase by sending a check to:

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For more information, visit the Academy's Web site at [www.academyofdiplomacy.org/publications/fld.html](http://www.academyofdiplomacy.org/publications/fld.html). ■

*Steven Alan Honley is the editor of the Journal.*

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## IN MEMORY

**Olive Holmes Blum**, 89, wife of the late Melvin Blum, a Foreign Service officer with USIA, died on Oct. 19 at Sibley Memorial Hospital in Washington, D.C., of cardiovascular disease.

Mrs. Blum was born in Buenos Aires to American parents working as Methodist missionaries. She grew up in New York City, where she graduated from Barnard College and received a master's degree in international relations from Columbia University. She was proficient in French, German and Spanish. A world traveler, she also studied abroad, in Germany in the 1930s and Chile in the 1940s.

She had an early career in New York as a foreign policy analyst at the Foreign Policy Association and the Voice of America. During this time, she met her husband at a Liberal Party meeting they both had been drawn to out of concern over Sen. Joseph McCarthy's activities at the time.

The Blums' marriage began in New York City, in an apartment with a new baby named Danny and a cat named Gentle Jackie. In 1962, Mr. Blum accepted a job as labor attaché with the U.S. Information Agency in Bogota and then in Buenos Aires.

The family spent nine happy years in South America. They explored the continent from top to bottom — from the warm beaches of Cartagena in the

Caribbean to the sheep farms of Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip. They were active in the American community in Buenos Aires, including the Little League, church and many Foreign Service activities, through which they formed long-lasting friendships.

Returning to the U.S. in 1972, when Mr. Blum turned 60, they settled in Bethesda, Md. Mrs. Blum worked in several jobs during that period, as they put their son, Daniel, through school before retiring.

Starting in the 1990s, she also participated in the Women's Health Initiative, a long-term study of hormone therapy, diet modification and other treatments for postmenopausal women that was funded by the National Institutes of Health. She also spent about 10 years translating health surveys into Spanish for the Westat Research Corporation in Rockville, Md., where she worked until the late 1990s.

Mrs. Blum was an elder and a deacon at Saint Mark Presbyterian Church in Rockville, and was active in local and international mission programs, including Friends in Action. She went on numerous mission trips, including excursions to Greece, Ireland and Bangladesh, in addition to several journeys with her husband. The Blums also kept up with their Foreign Service friends from Buenos

Aires, attending annual "Asado" barbecues.

Following her husband's death in 1994 of complications from cancer, Mrs. Blum continued living in Bethesda, where she participated actively in community life. In 2001, she moved to the Ingleside at Rock Creek, a senior citizens' home in Washington, D.C., where she spent her final years.

Survivors include a son, Daniel Blum of Silver Spring, Md.; a sister, Leo Brown of Jamestown, R.I.; and two grandsons.



**David S. Burgess**, 90, a retired Foreign Service officer with USAID, died on Oct. 21, in Vallejo, Calif., five days after suffering a heart attack.

The Rev. Burgess was born on June 15, 1917, in New York City. His parents took him as an infant to China, where they were YMCA missionaries. In 1927, newly returned to the U.S., he attended a Giants baseball game and became a lifelong fan of the team. As a teenager, he nearly died of rheumatic fever. From that ordeal and other illnesses he acquired another lasting passion: healthy living, including jogging. He graduated from Oberlin College in 1939 with a major in history, and married Alice Stevens in 1941 while



## IN MEMORY



studying at Union Theological Seminary in New York.

Mr. Burgess took an unusual path into the Foreign Service. After being ordained as a Congregationalist minister in 1944, he worked for more than a decade with landless farmers and migrant agricultural laborers in the South and as a labor organizer and Georgia leader of the Congress of Industrial Organizations. In 1954, the CIO offered to nominate him as a labor attaché abroad, and he served in that position in India from 1955 to 1960. The family, with four (later five) children, lived in New Delhi, while he traveled widely in the country, establishing links with the Indian labor movement.

In 1961, Mr. Burgess became head of the Indonesia-Burma division of USAID in Washington. From 1963 to 1964, he served in Jakarta, heading the first Peace Corps program in Indonesia, which, due to the tense political situation, consisted almost entirely of athletic coaches. He later served as a Peace Corps recruiter in the United States. In that position he sought to sign up people with industrial skills, particularly from the automotive industry. In 1965 and 1966, he was a member of the State Department's Board of Examiners.

He resigned from the State Department in 1966 to move to Bangkok as director of the United Nations Children's Fund programs in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong. He moved back to the United States in 1972 and served as a senior officer at UNICEF headquarters in New York, focusing on fundraising. In 1979, he returned to full-time ministry, becoming pastor of two inner-city churches in Newark, N.J.

In 1990, the Burgesses moved to Benicia, Calif. There he became an

activist on housing issues, founding the Affordable Housing Affiliation and serving as its first president. The moderately priced Burgess Point apartments and townhouses in Benicia are named in his honor.

His autobiography, *Fighting for Social Justice*, was published by Wayne State University Press in 2000. In 2005, he endured a personal tragedy, the death of his eldest son Lyman from ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease).

Mr. Burgess is survived by Alice, his wife of 66 years, of Benicia, Calif.; children Laurel, John, Genie and Steve; grandchildren Sam and Anna Koritz, Rachel Steele, Katharine and Sarah Burgess, and Erica and Wesley Castro; and great-grandchildren Norman Paquette and Beatrice Koritz.

The family asks that in lieu of sending flowers, donations be made to the Affordable Housing Affiliation, 110 East D Street, Suite C, Benicia CA 94510.



**Robert T. Lucas**, 83, a retired Foreign Service officer, passed away on Oct. 15 after a brief illness.

Born in Ottawa, Ill., in 1923, Mr. Lucas enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1942 and served for three years in the Pacific theater.

In 1947, Mr. Lucas joined the Foreign Service. During his career he served at 13 posts, including the opening of the liaison office in Beijing in 1973. Other postings included Calcutta, Buenos Aires, Vienna, New Delhi, Caracas, Copenhagen, Ankara and Washington, D.C. His wife, Thelma, served as secretary and receptionist at post during several of his assignments.

Following retirement from the Service in 1981, Mr. Lucas served for

three years in Rome with the Multi-national Force and Observers, supervising implementation of the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli Treaty of Peace.

Mr. Lucas was a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Knights of Columbus. He and his wife served for a number of years as Eucharistic ministers and ministers to the sick in several Catholic churches in Florida.

Mr. Lucas was preceded in death by his wife of 54 years. He is survived by three children, five grandchildren and one great-grandchild.



**Ralph J. Ribble**, 89, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on Oct. 15 at his home in Clarksville, Texas.

Mr. Ribble was born in Roxton, Texas, one of seven children in a family of beekeepers. He grew up during the Great Depression with a widely-acknowledged talent for breeding queen bees. After taking the Civil Service exam in 1939, he was offered an appointment in 1941 as a clerk-messenger at the Department of State, then located in the Old Executive Office Building.

As Mr. Ribble later described his entry into government service to his son Richard, Mr. Percy Allen was assistant chief of personnel at that time, and he interviewed even the lowest entrants to the department. When Allen learned that Ribble had little training other than in beekeeping, he asked him to describe the entire process of raising a queen. When Ribble finished, Allen remarked that a certified beekeeper in the State Department had to be a first.

In this position, Ribble's rotating assignments included the reception entrances, from which he shuttled

## IN MEMORY



many a famous person around — including Ernie Pyle, Clark Gable, Japanese Ambassador to the United States Kichisaburo Nomura and Special Envoy Saburo Kurusu, and Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. Nelson Rockefeller, Ribble once recounted, was notorious for coming up to the desk with a cab driver at his heels wanting to be paid — because Rockefeller never carried any money.

From 1943 through 1945 Mr. Ribble served in the Navy in the Pacific theater. Returning from the war to the State Department, he worked in the Office of International Conferences until joining the Foreign Service in 1955 under the

Wriston Program. His first foreign assignments were in Rio de Janeiro and Panama City.

He returned to Washington in 1961. There he served as deputy executive director of the European Bureau and was subsequently posted to Rome in 1964. He was transferred to Mexico City in 1969. There he served as administrative counselor, counselor for consular affairs and acting deputy chief of mission.

Colleagues recall Mr. Ribble as a man who was highly respected and much admired. A modest man, he worked in the background and was not much on formality. He had a personality that attracted people to

him, from the lowest to the highest echelons, but he could also be tough when necessary.

One such occasion arose during President Richard Nixon's attendance at a conference in Puerto Vallarta in the early 1970s, when Mr. Ribble was in charge of administrative arrangements. Mexican officials had determined the best landing position for Air Force One for security, but Nixon's advance team insisted on another site for photo opportunity purposes.

"This is their country. The Mexicans know what they are doing, and you will not overrule them," friends recall Mr. Ribble telling the head of

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## IN MEMORY



the advance team, who then backed down.

He received the State Department's Distinguished Honor Award in 1971 for his integrity, judgment, common sense and ability to get things done with efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

Mr. Ribble retired to Clarksville in 1972, and passed the years as a gentleman farmer, traveler and supporter of the Texas Library Association.

Mr. Ribble's marriage to the former Katherine Johnston ended in divorce. He leaves a brother, Joe Ribble of Paris, Texas; Mrs. Katherine Johnston Ribble of San Antonio, Texas; two sons, Jim and Richard; and a daughter, Anne. ■



*E-mail your  
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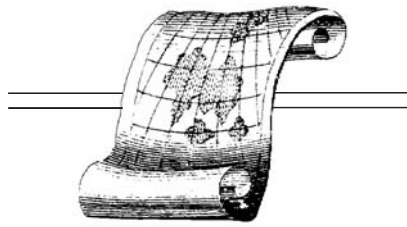
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# REFLECTIONS

## *A Cross-Cultural Friendship*

BY RACHEL MIDURA

I am the 16-year-old daughter in a Foreign Service family. Guatemalan huipiles (traditional hand-woven blouses) adorn our walls, and Zambian baskets sit on our shelves. I can't remember a time when it was different. Yet I didn't realize how unusual my life really was until after I became friends with a girl named Lana.

We had relocated to Prague just months before the new millennium, to a house within walking distance of the international school. Lana was in my fourth-grade class. She was Serbian and spoke halting English, but I was more than capable of filling any gaps in the conversation. I was drawn to her calm demeanor, and later delighted by her quick wit. When she invited me to her house, I was happy to accept.

The trip proved to be an adventure. Instead of her parents driving us — the only mode of transportation I was familiar with — we headed to the nearest bus stop. After getting off the bus, we dodged cars in a bustling main street, and hiked past apartment buildings and grocery stores. By the time we reached her front gate, I felt a heady rush of adrenaline at having done something so *independent*.

Lana's austere house brought me down to earth. I remember thinking, where are all her things? Eventually I made the connection between the starkness of her home's interior and the news footage I had seen of bombings and rallies in Belgrade. Lana and her parents were refugees: they had what they needed for a decent life, but

*Lana's austere house brought me down to earth. I remember thinking, where are all her things?*



very little beyond that.

I don't know what Lana thought of me, but she must not have seen the shallow, naïve kid I felt like in that moment, because the afternoon went perfectly. We entertained ourselves in the same way our grandparents did — no television, no video games — and that became the standard for our afternoons. Once, we spent hours writing secret messages with burnt-out matches, then passing them from her lower balcony to the one above. Another day we built a pillow fort that stretched through three rooms.

My friendship with Lana was the ultimate Foreign Service experience. For four years, we explored Prague together. If you cut through just the right patch of trees, you would come out on a rocky cliff overlooking the city. There, while we dangled our legs and basked in the rare sun, I explained the United States to her and she explained Milosevic's Serbia to me. We rode our scooters to the Hotel Praha pool, the grocery store and the park.

Lana told me once about an American bomb that had landed in sight of her house, and I was deeply shocked at being connected to a previ-

ously abstract event. I was angry that bombs happened to real people, not just faces on CNN. On Sept. 11, 2001, it was Lana who helped me understand the magnitude of what had occurred. We sat outside on the dewy grass and discussed how it felt to be hated. Together we tried to comprehend why complete strangers would want us dead, all because of what seemed like ancient history. While I had never had to face such animosity before, Lana was familiar with being written off as an "arrogant Serb."

Now I'm back in the U.S., in high school in a comfortable suburb near Washington, D.C., and Lana is back in Belgrade. As an American teenager, it's easy to turn up my iPod and tune out the world. It is easy to overlook the news from Baghdad in favor of celebrity gossip, or a long and often pointless phone conversation with a friend. Lana and I have shared plenty of phone conversations since we both moved, but our talks cover the meaning of life and the Kosovo situation as well as my homecoming dress.

For the past two years, we've been planning a trans-Europe backpacking trip. Though we face the hurdles of school, finances and a couple of thousand miles, we are both enchanted by the idea of exploring once more. ■

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*Rachel Midura is a high school junior in Reston, Va. Born in Guatemala, she has accompanied her parents (FSO Chris Midura is with the State Department) to Zambia, El Salvador and the Czech Republic.*





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