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# FOREIGN SERVICE

JOURNAL

THE MAGAZINE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS



## GOING IT ALONE

*How the Foreign Service Copes with Separation*

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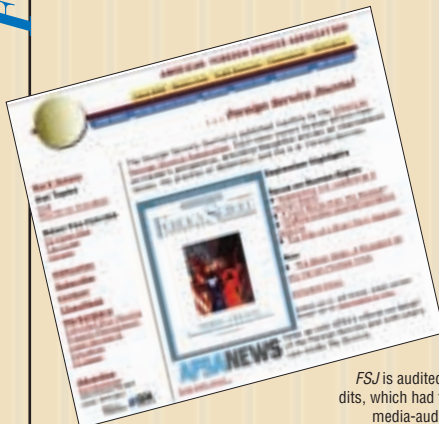
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# PRESIDENT'S VIEWS

## *To Your Health*

By JOHN K. NALAND

Availability for worldwide service is a defining characteristic of the Foreign Service. Of course, not all employees can be worldwide-available at all times during their career. Like everyone else, Foreign Service members can have bad luck with accidents or disease. Nevertheless, without a large enough corps of diplomats and development professionals available for assignment at locations with difficult climates and rudimentary medical facilities, our nation could not consistently staff our 267 embassies and consulates around the globe.

Thus, it has always surprised me that the State Department, through its Office of Medical Services, has not done more to promote health and wellness. Let me give some examples:

- Early in my career, I did a Corporate Exchange Program detail assignment with a large U.S. manufacturer. The company had just finished a major cost-cutting exercise, but still offered its employees a comprehensive and well-publicized health and wellness program. The program included regular individualized assessments to identify health risks. It also provided health club discounts, medical Web search tools and information, and weight loss and smoking cessation programs. While



MED does have some health promotion efforts, they are not comprehensive, are not well publicized, and primarily benefit only domestic employees.

- More recently, I attended the Army War College, where

students are intellectually prepared for senior leadership. Students also benefit from an executive health and fitness program aimed at ensuring that middle-aged officers are physically able to continue to serve the nation. The program seeks to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease by helping participants improve nutrition, manage stress, stop smoking, lower blood pressure and increase flexibility, strength and aerobic fitness. State offers no comparable program.

- It has been a decade since MED stopped the longstanding practice of requiring full medical examinations prior to all overseas transfers. While the current policy of self-certification may be appreciated by those of us who dislike physical exams and prefer to ignore new aches and lumps, one wonders if there has been a drop in the early detection of medical conditions among Foreign Service members. If so, that would result in more serious illnesses and increased numbers of disruptive medical evacuations from post.

- A January article in the *Foreign Service Journal* describing problems with Class 2 clearances (i.e., post-specific assignment limitations) highlights

the persistent disconnects between MED and the Bureau of Human Resources when it comes to assigning employees with medically restricted availability. AFSA frequently hears from members frustrated when MED vetoes assignments based on criteria that members do not understand or do not agree with.

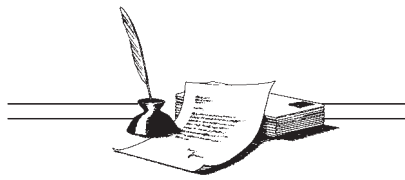
President Barack Obama has pledged to expand America's diplomatic presence "in difficult corners of the world." For that to be possible, increased focus must be placed on making sure there are enough Foreign Service members who are physically available for such assignments.

Toward that end, MED should invest in prevention, early detection and education. MED and HR should better coordinate the assignment of employees with limited medical clearances. And State should establish fitness centers at overseas posts where commercial facilities are inadequate or unsafe.

I am not a health expert. However, were MED to survey the best practices from elsewhere in government and the private sector, I have no doubt that a world-class wellness program could be crafted. Such a program would benefit not only individual employees, but would also assure that our foreign affairs agencies have sufficient numbers of worldwide-available employees to meet the foreign policy challenges of the coming years. ■

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



# LETTERS

## Thirty Years Ago in Kabul

Feb. 14, 2009, marked the 30th anniversary of the kidnapping and murder of U.S. Ambassador Adolph “Spike” Dubs at the Kabul Hotel in the center of the Afghan capital. It was the worst day in my Foreign Service career, for I knew him and served as his press and information officer. It was a time of great vulnerability for the American diplomatic community as the stability of the Marxist Taraki regime seemed very shaky. Subsequent events would prove that it was indeed destined for destruction.

In the years since Amb. Dubs led our mission in Kabul, the Afghan people have been beaten and displaced repeatedly, first by Soviet military forces occupying their country, then by vicious and bloody fights among competing factions for power inside the country, and now by resurgent Taliban forces and their allies in Pakistan and elsewhere who want to impose their totalitarian version of Islamic law. The U.S. decision to withdraw its diplomats from Kabul after the Soviet withdrawal of forces in 1989 proved to be very costly.

U.S. efforts in Afghanistan since 2001, when we reopened our embassy, have greatly expanded, but the overall situation remains fragile. More re-

sources and better strategies are needed to improve the lives of Afghans and cement our diplomatic ties. Although three decades have passed, we do not seem to be much closer to a stable government and a prosperous country. This dismaying situation would trouble Amb. Dubs just as it does many of us who know the people and the country.

We who have served there know that most Afghan people are friendly and peaceful and would rather build up their country than live under the yoke of another repressive regime. This has been the aim of American and international leaders and military and civilian forces in the country. Let us hope that in 2009 we will achieve greater progress with our Afghan allies and so honor the memory of all those Afghans and Americans who, like Spike Dubs, have lost their lives in service to our country and to the Afghan people in the quest for a better day for Afghanistan.

*Bruce K. Byers  
FSO, retired  
Reston, Va.*

## Beyond Hotel Services?

State employees are accustomed to living with the consequences of sudden decisions on overseas staffing that require them to pretend that high-level,

out-of-touch decisionmakers’ illusions can be implemented. But they generally have no idea as to why and how the new staffing programs evolved. Shawn Dorman’s “Global Repositioning in Perspective” (January *FSJ*) masterfully explains the many ways the global repositioning initiative failed to meet its goals and why the idea of American Presence Posts could not be realized.

The eloquent testimony of Ralph Falzone and others in the field shows why almost none of the program’s goals could be achieved without being substantially modified, as they were in Indonesia. Anyone hankering to implement staffing changes should be required to read this very useful article.

State needs to decide whether it is going to do more abroad than serve high-level visitors and provide and maintain facilities for the agencies that operate overseas. If so, it will need to secure funding to allow personnel to leave mission fortifications and engage local populations. A first step to get State employees outside the walls more often would be to provide funding so posts can establish dedicated units that deal with all aspects of visitors’ programs save note-taking.

To achieve meaningful change, however, future staffing initiatives need to provide for five or 10 times the 285





positions encompassed in the GRP initiative, as well as adequate funding for support and training. Otherwise, like transformational diplomacy and global repositioning, they will be remembered only as confusing slogans.

*Hollis Summers*

*FSO*

*Washington, D.C.*

### Lessons Learned?

President Obama and Secretary Clinton have promised a foreign policy “based on a marriage of principles and pragmatism, not rigid ideology” and “on facts and evidence, not emotion or prejudice.”

Let’s hope it’s not too late to undo the damage wrought by the Bush administration’s foolish rule by dogma: a tragic war of choice based on lies; broader and deeper antipathy toward the U.S., particularly in the Muslim world; hollowed-out military and diplomatic capabilities; record fiscal deficits and the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression; the erosion of democracy in our backyard; and reversals of environmental protection and worsening global climate change.

If nothing else, perhaps we might learn the following lessons:

1. An “edifice complex” does not make us more secure. The nonpartisan “Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism” recently concluded that “our margin of safety is shrinking, not growing.” This, despite our \$50 billion-per-year Department of Homeland Security, the Defense Department’s \$800 billion “Global War on Terror,” \$50 billion spent on Iraq’s reconstruction, and our \$600 million embassy in Baghdad.

2. You can’t promote democracy

abroad through the barrel of a gun, much less when you undermine it at home. The best public diplomacy is doomed to fail in promoting democracy if we’re seen violating our constitutional guarantees of due process, suppressing dissent, politicizing the judiciary, issuing flimsy signing statements to thwart congressional intent, and unilaterally trashing international conventions. Such hypocrisy fools no one and merely emboldens autocrats elsewhere.

3. You can’t promote prosperity through reckless fiscal policies. A dogmatic fixation on tax cuts took us quickly from record budget surpluses to record deficits. The Bush administration would not likely have met its own Millennium Challenge Corporation’s standards for developing countries regarding adherence “to policies that promote political and economic freedom, investments in education and health, the sustainable use of natural resources, control of corruption, and respect for civil liberties and the rule of law.”

4. “Science-based decisionmaking” must be just that, not a thinly veiled dodge to avoid hard choices on issues such as energy and climate change. Over the past eight years, non-expert ideologues systematically suppressed or altered scientific reports that ran contrary to the administration’s preconceived notions. If only they had shown the same disregard to peddlers of bogus intelligence on Iraq that they had for reputable climate scientists.

Beware of dogma. As Abraham Lincoln said in 1862, “The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present ... so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.” I look forward to the re-

turn of honest debates, dispassionate decisionmaking, transparency, the rule of law, checks and balances, and fiscal responsibility. What a shame that, given our recent history, this return to our founding principles represents “thinking anew.”

*Tim Lattimer*

*FSO*

*Embassy San Jose*

### Iran, 1979:

#### A Well-Planned Takeover

I have thoroughly digested Ambassador Bruce Laingen’s January letter regarding the opportunity for a diplomatic healing between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, I am compelled to disagree with his assertion that the U.S. embassy was overrun by “students” on Nov. 4, 1979, because he persuaded Ambassador Mehdi Bazargan and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski to meet. To believe that a minor opportunity to meet in a faraway capital would precipitate the takeover of the U.S. embassy leads me to believe that perhaps a bit of ego, along with diplomatic insider information, is involved.

As a communications officer in the telecommunications unit of the embassy in 1979, I certainly was not privy to all of the information that Amb. Laingen had. However, all electronic communications passed through our unit.

Upon my arrival in Tehran on Oct. 19, 1979, just after clearing immigration and customs (both civil and Komiteh, the armed Islamic revolutionary groups) at Mehrabad International Airport, I was met by my supervisor, who told me that my timing was impeccable. President Jimmy Carter had announced that day that he was allowing the former shah of

## LETTERS



Iran, Reza Pahlevi, to seek cancer treatment in New York City. My supervisor also stated that this could result in trouble for the U.S. embassy.

I was informed during my embassy orientation that the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was unhappy that Pres. Carter was allowing the shah into the U.S. and that Iran would “retaliate” in some manner. I was told that this retaliation could take the form of continued harassment of embassy personnel, possible assassination of individuals (considered extreme) or the hijacking of an embassy van with all on board to be held as hostages.

I was further informed that this assessment had been forwarded to Washington prior to the president’s decision to allow the former shah into the

U.S. No one anticipated the act that eventually occurred, nor do I believe that anyone believed such an event possible.

Upon being taken hostage on Nov. 4, 1979, at about 3:15 p.m., I was informed, after considerable intimidation, that the shah must be returned to Iran to stand trial, and that was why the embassy was overrun. We — at least 15 embassy employees seated around or near the dining table in Amb. Laingen’s residence — were told that we would be held hostage until the U.S. complied with this demand.

The “students” (I use that term loosely because several were in fatigues and were carrying automatic weapons as well as side arms) chose the only day and time of day when almost everyone who worked or had any business on the embassy compound would be within the embassy walls, Sunday morning. In the Islamic world, Sunday is akin to Monday in the West, the first business day of the week. I do not believe that this entire episode was the result of an encounter in Algiers three days earlier.

I will grant that during the first two weeks after the takeover there was mass confusion on the part of our captors, and they took full advantage of keeping us off-balance and afraid. I, for one, was handcuffed for the first two weeks or more, after which these were intermittently replaced with handties. (My hands were eventually untied in February 1980.)

We were not allowed to speak to each other until March 1980. We were permitted only to speak to the guards and only to request permission to go to the bathroom and so forth. Every time I went to the bathroom I was blindfolded for the duration.

My own experience leads me to be-

lieve that the meeting between Bazaragan and Brzezinski had little or nothing to do with the U.S. embassy takeover. This plan was well thought out and well executed, meaning (in my humble opinion) that the students were supported by Pasdaran and Komiteh elements.

*Clair C. Barnes*

*Foreign Service Staff Officer,  
retired*

*Leland, N.C.*

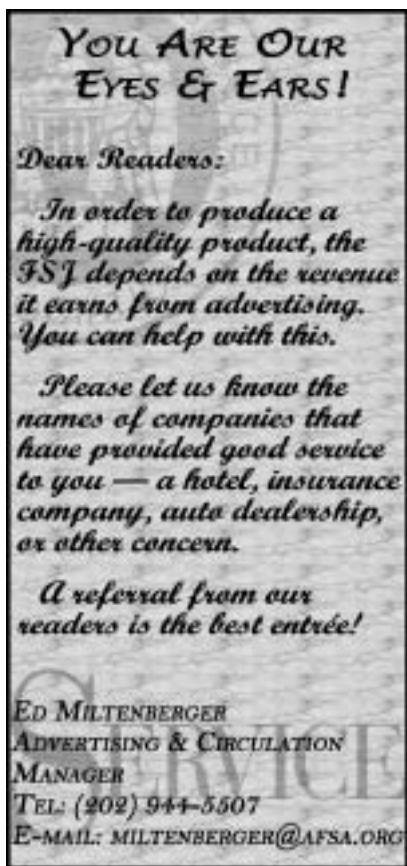
### Diversity and the Pale Male

The letter in the December 2008 *Journal* lamenting the 12-year hiatus since the last white male Secretary of State truly amazed me. Over 200 years passed before the first female or African-American was appointed to that esteemed position. That unbroken succession of “pale males,” as Teresa Chin Jones put it, was treated as normal.

Yet she seems to suggest that it is *abnormal* and, to some extent, deficient to have a stretch where eminently qualified women and members of minority groups have been selected to serve as Secretary of State. At a time when the first African-American has been elected president of the United States, we can only hope that such a trend would continue.

The author also labels as racist a remark by former Secretary Condoleezza Rice noting the rarity of seeing “somebody who looks like me” in her meetings around the department. During my own career at State, I had occasion to hear several so-called “pale male” Secretaries of State make similar comments regarding the absence of diversity. Should their observations also be considered racist?

While we have come a long way as a democratic society, we have hardly



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## LETTERS



reached the point where 12 years of diversity is a threat to white males. If it is, then we have not accomplished very much at all.

*John W. H. Gravelly*  
*Department of State,*  
*retired*  
*Washington, D.C.*

### Hills on Trade

It was disappointing that Carla Hills was tapped to contribute an article to the *Journal* on trade policy (December 2008). There are exciting opportunities for a new U.S. approach, but Hills seems wedded to the past.

She correctly acknowledges that “the gains from trade do not make every citizen a winner.” But she turns

to stale bromides when she proposes retraining programs and wage insurance as the way to help the “losers” from our trade policy.

Most American workers would be surprised to learn from Hills’ statistics that “the past 60 years of international trade has made average American households richer by \$9,000 per year.” Most feel a lot poorer — especially in recent years.

The timing for the article was particularly awkward in light of this past fall’s debacle in our financial markets. A Google name check reveals that Hills served on the board of the American International Group until the end of 2006. Given that taxpayers have provided more than \$125 billion to

rescue AIG from its wayward accounting and its greedy bets on derivatives, it is disconcerting to learn that Hills served on the committees overseeing the company’s auditing and governance. ■

*Dennis J. Ortblad*  
*FSO, retired*  
*Seattle, Wash.*

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# CYBERNOTES

## “Do More with Less” Mantra On the Way Out?

In a Jan. 13 article, *ProPublica* pointed to the State Department’s Global Repositioning Program as a “half-baked fiasco,” a “troubled” program that the new Secretary of State would have to deal with ([www.propublica.org/article/the-foreign-services-half-baked-fiasco-0113](http://www.propublica.org/article/the-foreign-services-half-baked-fiasco-0113)).

The nonprofit online newsroom spotlighted *FSJ* Associate Editor Shawn Dorman’s comprehensive analysis of the GRP, “Global Repositioning in Perspective,” written in October 2008 and published in the January issue of the *Journal* ([www.afsa.org/fsj/jan09/globalRepositioning.pdf](http://www.afsa.org/fsj/jan09/globalRepositioning.pdf)). A key feature of former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s transformational diplomacy strategy, in effect its bureaucratic expression, the GRP holds many lessons — not the least of which is that the longtime State habit of agreeing to “do more with less” may be obsolete.

In late November, the State’s Office of the Inspector General issued its own interim review of the GRP. The unclassified summary of OIG Report ISP-I-09-09 is available (<http://oig.state.gov/documents/organization/112492.pdf>).

Significantly, the OIG acknowledges that the effectiveness of the new positions was “limited” by a lack of resources and that posts that lost existing positions also lost their ability to accomplish necessary work (OIG notes

This is going to be a challenging time, and it will require 21st-century tools and solutions to meet our problems and seize our opportunities. I’m going to be asking a lot of you. I want you to think outside the proverbial box. I want you to give me the best advice you can. I want you to understand there is nothing that I welcome more than a good debate and the kind of dialogue that will make us better.

— Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at her welcoming ceremony in the State Department, Jan. 22, [www.state.gov/video/?videoid=8794088001](http://www.state.gov/video/?videoid=8794088001)

that it did not find easy cuts to make).

“If repositioning becomes regularized,” the OIG concludes, it should be done “largely through additional rather than repositioned personnel.” Is State moving toward a new mantra — “Do more with more; and if you have less, then do less”?

## Civilian Response Corps Gears Up

Recruiting for some 250 Foreign and Civil Service positions in the Civilian Response Corps, based in the State Department’s Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, is now open ([www.crs.state.gov](http://www.crs.state.gov)).

Formally launched on July 16, 2008, by former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the CRC is the expeditionary, interagency civilian reconstruction and stabilization component of the S/CRS mission (<http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2008/07/civilian-response-corps-launch-1/>). Though under discussion for several years, the Corps’ creation was made possible

when Congress included funds for 101 new position in the Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2008.

Because no single federal agency has all of the relevant expertise, the CRC is a partnership of eight departments and agencies: State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, Agriculture, Commerce, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Justice and Treasury.

Besides the full-time “active component,” or CRC-A, the Corps has a standby unit and plans to create a reserve unit. S/CRS expects to receive additional funding in the Fiscal Year 2009 budget to expand the CRC-A to 250 and standby forces to 2,000. The reserve unit will consist of another 2,000 volunteers from the private sector and state and local governments.

CRC-A officers train for, prepare and staff reconstruction and stabilization operations and conflict prevention and mitigation efforts all over the world. They must be prepared to deploy on 48- to 72-hour notice and will



focus on critical initial interagency functions in response to specific crises. They may spend up to 60 percent of their time in conflict areas on deployments averaging three months, and will attend up to eight weeks of training and exercises each year.

See the S/CRS Web site for information on the Corps' history and mission. Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization Coordinator Ambassador John Herbst's Feb. 18, 2008, official briefing also provides extensive background ([www.crs.state.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.display&shortcut=4ZM4](http://www.crs.state.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.display&shortcut=4ZM4)). The role of the U.S. Institute for Peace in the Corps' creation is described in the institute's newsletter, *Peacewatch* ([www.crs.state.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.display&shortcut=CJRF](http://www.crs.state.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.display&shortcut=CJRF)).

## A Renewed Call for Medical Diplomacy

A vigorous effort to control neg-

lected tropical diseases can be a vital weapon in the effort to combat terrorism, former Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson told an audience at the Center for Strategic and International Studies' Global Health Policy Center on Jan. 27 ([www.csis.org/component/option,com\\_csis\\_events/task,view/id,1874/](http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis_events/task,view/id,1874/)).

In his capacity as global ambassador for the Global Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases, Sec. Thompson invited the public health and foreign policy communities and the new administration to embrace medical diplomacy as a critical piece of the foreign policy agenda.

Thompson was joined by Sabin Vaccine Institute President Peter Hotez, a distinguished professor of microbiology, immunology and tropical medicine at The George Washington University School of Medicine.

Neglected tropical diseases, also known as NTDs, affect some 1.4 billion

people living on less than \$1.25 per day. They include ascariasis, trichuriasis, lymphatic filariasis, trachoma and onchocerciasis, and not only promote poverty but also destabilize communities.

In "Waging Peace through Neglected Tropical Disease Control: A U.S. Foreign Policy for the Bottom Billion," published Jan. 30 in the open-access journal *PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases*, Thompson and Hotez detail their case.

They define medical diplomacy as "the winning of hearts and minds of people in the Middle East, Asia, Africa and elsewhere by exporting medical care, expertise and personnel to help those who need it most" (<http://dx.plos.org/10.1371/journal.pntd.0000346>).

In many nations considered diplomatic "hot spots," they say, up to 50 percent of the population suffers from one or more NTD.

Medical diplomacy is also cost-efficient. "The entire at-risk populations of war-torn areas and areas of conflict in sub-Saharan Africa could be treated for one year at roughly the cost of one or two F/A-18 Hornet fighter jets," Thompson and Hotez point out.

Thompson first launched the campaign in 2004, following an eye-opening visit to Iraq, Afghanistan and Africa. As the *FSJ* observed in its December 2004 focus on the topic, globalization and the breakdown of barriers to trade, commerce and migration have helped make it an idea whose time has come.

## Darfur: Escalation or Resolution?

As the crisis in Darfur smolders on, the International Criminal Court's upcoming ruling in the case against Sudan President Omar al-Bashir, its first

### Site of the Month: wikiHow

The next time you have a random question about how to do something, you might want to start your Web research at [www.wikihow.com](http://www.wikihow.com).

A less well-known member of the "wiki" community, *wikiHow* was launched in 2005 by Jack Harrick, with the goal of creating a massive how-to manual with accurate, up-to-date instructions on every imaginable topic in multiple languages.

Currently, the site contains more than 50,000 articles written by volunteers on topics that range from repairing a broken scuba mask buckle or adding a picture to a MySpace page to becoming a bounty hunter or crocheting a cat hat.

The site is both fascinating and practical. "How to Take a Good Picture on Your Camera Phone," for example, is a lucid and succinct tutorial, while "How to Get Rid of Cockroaches" gives you everything you need to know to eliminate the pests. Alternatively, you might enjoy learning to draw a manga dog or play all the major chords on the piano.

*wikiHow* is free of cost and its owners are committed to its remaining so. The site is financed, in its managers' words, by "tasteful, non-obnoxious" advertising. It is pleasant, easy to navigate and transparent.

And, of course, *wikiHow* is also interactive: you can contribute your own expertise to the collective effort.



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## 50 Years Ago...

Early in his career every young officer should become acutely aware of the importance of establishing and maintaining mutual respect and understanding between Americans and permanent local employees. ... The morale and efficiency of many a post are directly affected by the sincerity and smoothness of this relationship.



— Editorial: "Essential Continuity and the FSL," *FSJ*, March 1959

against a head of state, may constitute a turning point.

Last July, after three years of investigation, ICC Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo charged Bashir with 10 counts of war crimes and genocide in Darfur. The court's pretrial chamber now has to decide whether to issue an arrest warrant.

Speculation is rife concerning the possible response should an indictment be forthcoming. "Anything is possible," reports IRIN, the news and analysis office of the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=82508](http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=82508)).

Backers of the ICC move insist that removing Bashir will clear the way for peace negotiations. He has categorically rejected the charges and made clear that he has no intention of bowing to international pressure.

The Sudanese president is also taking advantage of the fact that the ICC's actions are as vexing for the U.N. Security Council as they are for him. Among council members holding a veto, only France and Britain unequivocally support the ICC.

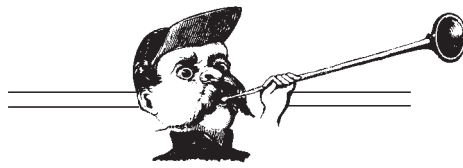
With huge investments in Sudan and also a nonsignatory to the Rome Statutes, China is opposed to further ICC action. And both the Arab League and the African Union urge postponement of the decision, as well.

The United States, which has designated the Arab-dominated Sudanese government's actions against the Fur and other African tribes in Darfur as genocide, nonetheless remains reluctant to push for an arrest warrant, both because it does not recognize the ICC and it is not a signatory to the Rome Statutes ([www.ipsnews.net/africa/nota.asp?iNews=43234](http://www.ipsnews.net/africa/nota.asp?iNews=43234)).

Meanwhile, the violence in Darfur has intensified, with threats of possible Darfur rebel attacks against cities and oil installations and a continuing offensive by government forces. The crisis that began in 2003 as a revolt against the Arab-dominated Sudanese government and the government-controlled Janjaweed militia has since seen hundreds of thousands killed and millions displaced.

For further news and analysis, see the All-Africa news service, [www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com) or the BBC (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7871138.stm>). For detailed background on Darfur, see the International Crisis Group's report ([www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3060&l=1](http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3060&l=1)). For an extensive directory of online resources on Sudan and the Darfur crisis, go to *AcademicInfo* ([www.academicinfo.net/hist/africasudan.html](http://www.academicinfo.net/hist/africasudan.html)). ■

*This edition of Cybernotes was compiled by Senior Editor Susan B. Maitra.*



# SPEAKING OUT

## *Twelve Recommendations to Improve the Security Clearance Process*

BY DANIEL M. HIRSCH

As someone who has used computers for more than 25 years, I consider myself an expert on those programs I need to do my job. But aside from a vague notion that information is changed into a binary form that corresponds to the opening and closing of circuits, I have no idea how a computer actually works.

Until a few years ago, that was analogous to my knowledge of security clearances — something I suspect is true of most Foreign Service personnel. We know that clearances are based on the results of background investigations into whether we follow the rules. But beyond that, we don't think much about them.

For me, that situation changed in 2003 when the clearance I had held for more than 20 years was suddenly suspended. Abruptly, I was brought face to face with an issue that potentially affects all of our careers.

Over the past six years, I have devoted my spare time not only to reading the applicable laws and regulations, but also to talking to experts. These range from lawyers who specialize in the subject and academics who study it, to people in State, the Central Intelligence Agency and the departments of Defense, Justice and Homeland Security, as well as members of Congress.

I am also a founding member of Concerned Foreign Service Officers, an association of current and former

*The way the Bureau of Diplomatic Security conducts security clearance adjudications raises serious concerns.*

employees of the foreign affairs agencies working to promote fairness, due process and compliance with governmentwide standards for security clearance adjudication ([www.worldcrafters.com](http://www.worldcrafters.com)). As a member of its executive committee, I have spoken to dozens of State Department employees whose clearances were at one time suspended or revoked, and have read whatever documents related to their cases those employees were allowed to have. I can now call myself a well-informed amateur scholar of the subject.

### **A Unique Process**

The first thing I learned is that the whole process is poorly understood — not only by most FSOs but also by senior employees of the very entities within the State Department charged with overseeing it, such as the Diplomatic Security and Human Resources bureaus, the Legal Adviser's Office and the Office of the Inspector General.

Some of those officials are on record as saying things that demonstrate that they view the process through a law-enforcement or disciplinary optic rather than as the unique process it is meant to be. This lack of understanding has caused irreparable damage to the careers and lives of many FSOs — and also, arguably, to our national security, when innocent people, experts in their fields, have been removed from service for unjustified reasons.

Executive Order 12968 defines a security clearance as a decision that the personal and professional history of an American citizen indicates loyalty to the United States, strength of character, trustworthiness, honesty, reliability, discretion and sound judgment, freedom from conflicting allegiances and potential for coercion, and willingness and ability to abide by regulations governing classified information. There are 13 “adjudicative criteria for review” that must be considered when evaluating a person's eligibility for a clearance.

The evaluation should include “the careful weighing of a number of variables known as the whole person concept. Available, reliable information about the person, past and present, favorable and unfavorable, should be considered in reaching a determination.”

In a disciplinary or law enforcement case, the focus is on a person's actions. Has someone broken a rule or a law?

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## 2008 Tax Guide

See page 38 in the February 2009  
*Foreign Service Journal*.

Read about the latest federal and state tax provisions affecting the Foreign Service in the AFSA News section.



## SPEAKING OUT



What did they do? But in a security clearance adjudication, the goal is not to decide whether an act was committed, but to develop and analyze a “whole person” picture of everything, good and bad, that is known about the individual, as indicators of integrity, honesty and trustworthiness.

The key components of this process are: an objective investigation that collects positive information, not just derogatory; a whole person evaluation that considers all information, positive and negative; and a requirement that factors forming the basis of a decision be “reliable.”

Unfortunately, good people sometimes do bad things. They break rules, either inadvertently out of ignorance, or on purpose but for a very good reason. Or they do bad things during a wayward youth, becoming more trustworthy when they get older. The task of the adjudicator is not merely to determine whether or not a piece of derogatory information is true, but whether it creates unmitigated doubt about a person's loyalty, integrity or susceptibility to outside pressure.

In a disciplinary matter, even ignorance of the rules is no excuse. If a rule was broken, even inadvertently, the infraction must be punished. But in a security clearance determination, that should not be the case. Accidentally breaking a rule, in ignorance, is hardly evidence of innate dishonesty.

### Causes for Concern

We in the Concerned Foreign Service Officers organization have serious concerns about the way the Bureau of Diplomatic Security currently conducts the process. We would note that some 90 percent of all U.S. government security clearance adjudications are performed either by the Office of





Personnel Management or the Department of Defense. Both agencies use specially trained personnel who are not criminal investigators or law enforcement personnel to conduct background investigations. These agents conduct the process entirely outside the employee's chain of command and usually beyond the influence of the head of the employing agency.

OPM and DOD's clearance procedures are identical and based on the *Adjudicative Desk Reference*, which is publicly available. Appeals are recorded, and those heard by the Defense Office of Hearings and Appeals are publicly available. A key component of the appeal process is a "statement of reasons" informing the employee of the exact concerns supporting a negative decision, providing the affected employee the right to respond directly to those concerns.

In contrast, DS overseas background investigations are usually conducted by special agents whose primary focus is on law enforcement and the development of a criminal indictment. In adverse action cases, DS frequently bases adjudications on investigations originally conducted to develop a criminal or disciplinary case. These fail to meet the requirement to collect positive information in addition to any that is derogatory, as well as other elements of a personnel security background investigation.

Most cases we have seen show no evidence of the required "whole person" review. Many appear based on cherry-picking of derogatory information — contrary to the whole person concept. We have also seen cases where decisions appear to be influenced by ethnic background, sexual orientation or mental health counseling. It is not unusual for DS to reopen a

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***The deliberations of  
State's Security Appeal  
Panel are not recorded  
and not available for  
consideration as  
precedents.***

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disciplinary case as a security clearance case, leading to the termination of an employee who would otherwise have received nothing more than a letter of reprimand or oral admonition. Many cases involve rules like contact reporting requirements, which are unpublished and which the employee could not reasonably be expected to know.

A particularly bothersome issue is the apparent failure to follow up on reports of investigative misfeasance by DS agents who have allegedly seized personal property without a warrant, falsified information, deliberately excluded exculpatory information and positive interview results from their reports, and even used the unregulated investigative process to settle personal scores.

There is no doubt that most DS investigations are conducted properly, and investigative misfeasance is unusual. But even so, the failure to investigate such charges is disturbing. Nearly every person we have interviewed has complained that statements made to DS investigators were not recorded accurately, were taken out of context or were distorted in written reports.

Unlike the deliberations of OPM, DOD and the Foreign Service Grievance Board, those of the State Department's Security Appeal Panel (the senior board of appeal) are not recorded and not available for consideration as precedents.

### **Improving the System**

With that background in mind, I offer the following recommendations for reforming the security clearance adjudication process.

1. Security clearance adjudications should be based on a "whole person" review of the data gathered during a background investigation performed

for that purpose. They should not be based on the results of a search for misfeasance or malfeasance. Derogatory allegations should, of course, be considered — but only in the context of a whole person review.

2. That review should be documented and the file should record not only the derogatory information relied upon, but also all positive information considered, as well as a summary of the deliberation weighing these elements.

3. Personnel security background investigations should be performed solely by people trained and employed to perform that function. PSBIs should not be performed by employees who also perform other types of investigations. If DS does not want to hire full-time background investigators, then it should create rotational positions for agents who, while in that position, will only perform PSBIs.

4. DS should adopt the practice, already generally used by OIG, of requiring all sources interviewed to sign statements confirming what they said. Where sources request anonymity, their identity could be withheld from

the subject of the investigation; but signed statements should still be available to cleared reviewers or other participants in the process authorized to review such information.

5. DS should create a competent mechanism to review investigations and pursue allegations of investigative improprieties, and should allow OIG to periodically inspect the investigative function. The scope of such a review should not be limited to the report of investigation, but should include source material and secondary interviews of sources.

6. To reduce the risk of bias, DS should establish broader mandatory training related to diversity and procedures to review and enforce compliance. Such procedures should not only seek to prevent bias based on race, but also bias based on gender, religion, sexual orientation and other differences.

7. Where DS recommends a revocation of security clearance, it should provide the employee with a clear statement of reasons that not only specifies the criteria relied upon, but also lists the reasons DS believes that, in light of the criteria, the employee is no longer eligible for clearance.

8. The decision to revoke a security clearance should be based on the same standard of reliable evidence that the Defense Department and the Office of Personnel Management apply in their respective investigations.

9. DS should accept adjudicative precedents established by DOD and OPM, as well as earlier precedents established by the State Department's own Security Appeal Panel.

10. All proceedings of the SAP should be recorded, and a written summary of deliberations and findings, sanitized as might be appropriate, should become part of an official,

## SPEAKING OUT



transparent and accessible record.

11. DS should not base security clearance determinations on regulations that the employee cannot be reasonably expected to know. If rules are unpublished, or otherwise demonstrably unavailable to the employee, failure to abide by them should not be interpreted as evidence of dishonesty or unreliability.

12. With rare exceptions for the most egregious of cases, the department should choose only one path for handling any given allegation. It should decide either to treat the case as a criminal matter to be referred for prosecution, as a disciplinary matter to be handled by HR, as a medical issue to be handled by MED, as a suitability issue to be handled by HR, or as a security clearance issue. Whatever route it chooses, it should not seek more than one bite of the apple.

The security clearance process is vital both to the security of our nation and the efficiency of the Foreign Service, yet it is also non-transparent, poorly regulated and easily abused. Because of the severe impact on the careers and livelihoods of government employees, it is imperative that adjudications be conducted fairly and equitably to protect the interests of all concerned. ■

*Daniel M. Hirsch, a Foreign Service officer since 1985, is the director of the State Department's Overseas Motor Vehicle Program. He has served in Praia, Bamako, Maputo, Belgrade, Bissau, Tashkent, Abuja, Calcutta, Bishkek, Ashgabat and Washington, D.C.*

*Mr. Hirsch is a founding member of Concerned Foreign Service Officers, an organization which promotes fairness and due process in the security clearance function.*

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## Calling All Foreign Service Authors!

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# GOING IT ALONE: EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION



**A**lthough nearly every issue of the *Foreign Service Journal* in recent years has described the impact of increasingly dangerous assignments on Foreign Service members and their families, the last time we devoted a focus section to the subject was February 2003. Understandably, our coverage then reflected the still-profound reverberations of the 9/11 attacks, as well as widespread anxiety over the Bush administration's preparations for the invasion of Iraq. But in covering the challenges of living and working in danger zones, we mainly highlighted the

growing prevalence of evacuations. Indeed, in my introduction to that focus section, I speculated that the first decade of the 21st century might one day come to be known as the “Era of Evacuations.”

Happily, I was wrong in making that prediction! Evacuations still occur, of course, and I certainly do not mean to minimize their impact. But it turns out that a different phenomenon developed after 9/11, one that fundamentally altered the nature of diplomatic service and appears to be permanent.

Many if not most of our overseas posts have always been in remote, unhealthy locations, and travel to and from them was often time-consuming and dangerous. (Examine the hundreds of names and causes of death engraved on the AFSA Memorial Plaques in the State Department’s C Street lobby if you have any doubts on that score.) Nor are armed attacks by terrorists, rebels and even host governments anything new to American diplomats, alas.

Even so, only a handful of posts were designated for unaccompanied service on an ongoing basis — until 9/11. Since that tragic day, the number of unaccompanied positions has shot up from around 200 to more than 900, and more than 20 posts are currently on the list of fully unaccompanied missions.

Despite the best intentions, the State Department was slow to respond to this sea change — and even slower to devote appropriate resources to the Family Liaison Office (which itself only came into existence 30 years ago) and other offices tasked with assisting Foreign Service employees and their families affected by prolonged separations.

Still, there has been progress, as Bridget Roddy, FLO’s unaccompanied tour support officer, explains in her overview of the department’s “Support for Unaccompanied Assignments” (p. 20). For example, her position was established in 2005, and FLO added a full-time unaccompanied tour program assistant last year. In addition to those two positions, other portfolios in FLO also support employees and family members before, during and after an unaccompanied tour. In this regard, a key objective is to work with the regional bureaus and human resource officers to encourage and facilitate Eligible Family Member hiring at unaccompanied posts, where possible.

*The number of  
unaccompanied positions  
has shot up from around  
200 to more than 900.*

Many of these programs and initiatives stem from collaborative efforts by various offices within the department, including the Family Liaison Office, and from posts overseas. Advocacy groups like Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (formerly known as AAFSW)

and AFSA, to name just two, have also played important roles. The lesson is clear: Both as an organization and as a community, we all have to work together to continue to adapt to the changing Foreign Service.

A subset of the unaccompanied tour conundrum that sometimes is overlooked is the situation of tandem couples assigned to separate posts. Making matters worse, this most often happens to entry-level families, who tend to be less familiar with how the “system” works (or does not) and the support mechanisms that are available. First-tour FSO Annie Simpkins tells her own story and offers practical tips for “Coping with Separation: Tandem Couples” (p. 29). Many of her pointers are equally applicable to other members of the Foreign Service community.

I’ve already alluded to the special challenges that evacuations pose, but FSO spouse and former FSO Kelly Armstrong gives us a comprehensive “Evacuation Survival Guide” (p. 31). Even veterans of ordered departures will find useful information therein.

Last but certainly not least, we are pleased to present a set of vignettes and reflections contributed by Foreign Service personnel and their families who have served unaccompanied tours, in response to our AFSA-net appeals for individual stories (p. 36). These accounts of prolonged separations due to, in the famous phrase, “the needs of the Service,” run the gamut from lessons learned (and not) to pleas for more attention to the issue and some poignant memories.

More than two centuries ago, Benjamin Franklin famously observed to his fractious colleagues in the Continental Congress that “If we do not hang together, we shall most assuredly all hang separately.” He was warning of the consequences of military defeat, of course. But Franklin’s metaphorical point about the importance of unity, and the need to support each other, also applies to today’s Foreign Service — whether we are serving alongside our families or are living and working thousands of miles away from them. ■

— Steven Alan Honley

# SUPPORT FOR UNACCOMPANIED ASSIGNMENTS

T

he face of the Foreign Service has changed profoundly since the 9/11 attacks: Most current members can expect at least one unaccompanied assignment during their career, generally lasting a year or longer. In 2001, the number of unaccompanied, or partially accompanied, Foreign Service positions was about 200; now there are over 900.

While most of these jobs are at posts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, there are 12 other posts designated as partially accompanied: either adult Eligible Family Members (over 21) only or adult EFMs and children under 5 (see p. 26).

The State Department is constantly looking for the best way to support unaccompanied posts' missions, their employees, and family members affected by the separation. In particular, we strive to establish effective support structures, not only at these posts but also for each employee's onward assignment, whether to another overseas post or a domestic office. We also try to make adequate resources

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*Bridget Roddy is the Unaccompanied Tours Support Officer in the State Department's Family Liaison Office. The daughter of a Foreign Service officer, she has lived in Abidjan, Vienna, the Hague, Taipei and Ottawa. She was on the "family" side of two unaccompanied tours while her fiancé served in Doha and Baghdad.*

A DETAILED LOOK AT JUST  
WHAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT  
CAN DO TO HELP.

---

BY BRIDGET RODDY

available to their family members, who not only feel disconnected from their loved ones, but who could also benefit by a community of others in a similar situation.

Many of these programs stemmed from collaborative efforts among various offices within the department, including the Family Liaison Office, and overseas posts.

Both as an organization and as a community, we all have to work together to continue to adapt to the changing Foreign Service.

## Meet FLO

The Family Liaison Office was founded in 1978 to provide advocacy, programs and services for direct-hire U.S. government employees and family members who are serving, have served or will be serving under chief-of-mission authority. In the context of providing FLO's services to families of employees serving in unaccompanied tours, in particular, we define the term "family members" very liberally to include spouses, partners, members of household, parents, tandems, siblings, fiancés, adult children, and anyone else who is important to the employee. If they are important to you, they are important to us.

There are two positions in FLO solely devoted to supporting employees and their family members before, during and after a UT. The Unaccompanied Tours Support Officer position was established in 2005, and a program

assistant position was added in 2008. We offer support through a range of services and mechanisms. These include: 1) direct phone, e-mail or in-person contact with one of the two FLO unaccompanied tour staff; 2) briefings, gatherings and training sessions; 3) information-sharing via FLO's Internet site and the HomeFrontUS Yahoo group; 4) Web-based training and information sessions; 5) help from MHN, a contracted health services company; 6) liaison with other offices and bureaus; and, 7) advocacy to improve or expand department services and resources.

We also hope that all employees and family members on unaccompanied tours will look to FLO as a source of confidential communication to answer questions on regulations and allowances and as a point of contact on unaccompanied tour-related issues.

In addition to the UT officer and program assistant, other portfolios in FLO support employees and family members affected by an unaccompanied tour. Our employment team consists of five staff members who provide support and services to family members for employment inside the mission, on the local economy and in the U.S., primarily the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. They work with family members of UT employees to assist them in their unique circumstances, to identify potential employment and training opportunities.

At some unaccompanied posts, once the employee is assigned, his or her spouse may apply for jobs designated for Eligible Family Members there. FLO works with the regional bureaus and human resource officers at post to encourage and facilitate EFM hiring at unaccompanied posts.

FLO's naturalization specialist can assist State Department employees' non-U.S. citizen spouses seeking expeditious naturalization. In some situations where the employee goes on temporary duty to an unaccompanied post and the spouse remains at the post that the employee left, the spouse does not lose eligibility. And our Crisis Management and Support Officer provides information about the post and guidance on dealing with personal challenges such as evacuations, elder care, separation/divorce and other work/life issues. These issues often become even more complex during an unaccompanied assignment, and the CMSO stands ready to provide added support.

FLO's Education and Youth Officer assists families in navigating the complex educational options for children — especially those that have been made more complex by an unaccompanied tour — and provides information on re-

lated allowances and benefits. For those families opting for boarding school, the EYO offers consultation on appropriate placement. Long-term separation from parents, especially if coupled with high anxiety, culture shock or re-entry problems, can have both immediate and delayed consequences for children. FLO's Education and Youth Officer offers guidance and referral on these topics. In addition, FLO also provides resources for families of special needs and gifted children.

### **Where Should the Family Live?**

Each individual's reasons for taking an assignment to one of the 21 fully or partially unaccompanied posts are a mix of the personal and professional. But whatever the motivation, it is important that employees and their families understand the ramifications of such an assignment — and have realistic expectations of what support is available. Even a one-year separation has a long-term impact on one's career, family relationships and, in some cases, physical and mental health and well-being.

To help the family decide where to live during the employee's tour (and also to assist the employee in understanding the allowances based on how he or she is assigned), FLO has created a decision tree that people can use to identify and compare locations based on various factors. These include proximity to friends, family and support systems; the current and prospective job situation for the spouse/partner; children's ages and school considerations; and health issues.

For example, foreign-born spouses may wish to reside with their family in a country where they know the language and have a support structure. Other family members may wish to remain in, or travel to, Washington, D.C., where they can avail themselves of FLO's services and programs, research an onward assignment at the Overseas Briefing Center, or participate in gatherings. They can also access services of the Bureau of Medical Services that may be available to them, including confidential counseling by the Employee Consultation Service and Deployment Stress Management Program. Still other families may prefer to reside elsewhere in the U.S., near relatives or friends.

### **The Allowances Quagmire**

The allowances and regulations applicable to employees serving in unaccompanied positions and their eligible family members vary greatly, depending on the method by which the employee is assigned (via permanent change of

station or temporary duty) and whether he or she is coming from overseas or Washington. But all Foreign Service employees serving PCS in unaccompanied positions may apply for a Separate Maintenance Allowance to support their EFM's in maintaining a separate household.

There are two types of SMA — voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary SMA is “for special needs or hardship prior to or after arrival at post for reasons including but not limited to career, health, educational or family considerations for the spouse, children or other family member (DSSR

262.2).” Involuntary SMA is “for the convenience of the U.S. government when dangerous, notably unhealthful, or excessively adverse living conditions warrant the exclusion of family from accompanying an employee to the post of assignment (DSSR 262.1).”

ISMA is most often sought when an employee PCSs to an unaccompanied post. In conjunction with ISMA, employees are also eligible for a Transitional Separate Maintenance Allowance when the family members occupy commercial quarters upon arrival at their ISMA location

### Helping Couples Make Sense of Unaccompanied Tours

By Ray Leki

The Foreign Service world is changing, and so are the offices within the department. Unaccompanied tours are a new reality. War-zone deployments are putting couples in a situation they may be ill-prepared to deal with. The Foreign Service Institute's Transition Center, which works closely with Foreign Service officers and their families through all phases of their careers, has made a new connection with the implementation of the High-Stress Assignment Outbrief Program, conducted jointly by the Transition Center and the Office of Medical Services.

As part of this program, the Transition Center released an unusual DVD this year that provides advice for couples. *Making Sense of Unaccompanied Tours: Insights for Couples* interweaves stories from six couples, who share strategies for navigating through the many phases of long-term separations. Each couple's decision to participate in the film demonstrated a belief in the value of shared experiences to understand evolving realities. The couples highlight the many different options available for dealing with issues in an effective, poignant and meaningful way.

This unique training tool frames stories through critical analysis of the larger issues encompassing an unaccompanied tour. What goes into making the decision? What are the challenges for each person in his/her respective location? How to communicate? How did each party anticipate the employee's return home? What were the physical and emotional components of the return home, and how did they reconnect? What expectations did the couple have of each other, and what things surprised them about integrating back into a life now different than they had left?

“I've never been a person that would sit down and speak with someone about something touchy-feely,” film participant Bill Miller admits. “But now I will very readily sit down and listen to someone and share experiences, because I know it's good for them to understand that others have gone

through very similar situations. We are experiencing things as a Foreign Service family that we have never experienced in the past, and we have to accept new ways of dealing with those things.”

Watching the film with a spouse, a partner or any family member can bring an uncomfortable, though essential, discussion out into the open, and catalyze the process of building resilience into the relationship. “I have loaned [the DVD] to two separate couples who are preparing for upcoming unaccompanied tours,” says participant Jane Petitt. “Both reported being moved by the frank honesty and comprehensive nature of the interviews. Lending out my copy of the DVD was an easy way to open real conversation about this difficult topic.”

Instructors at FSI have used this training tool to gain additional perspective and compassion for the colleagues they instruct and mentor. For those students not inclined to speak about their unaccompanied tour situations, and those instructors not inclined to ask, the film provides a valuable opportunity to look behind the scenes of an officer's professional life to the personal realities he or she is living.

“I often believed that I was the only person who wished, worried and wondered. It is comforting to know that I was not alone in that,” says Petitt. “Despite my extensive experience with unaccompanied tours, even I found the DVD interesting. There is no substitute for experience, and people can be wonderful resources for each other.”

The culmination of two years in production, *Making Sense* is available in every CLO resource library worldwide. Copies for those contemplating or going through an unaccompanied assignment may be obtained from the Transition Center at FSI (e-mail Natalya Pestalozzi at PestalozzNG@State.gov).

*Ray Leki is director of the Foreign Service Institute's Transition Center.*



## F O C U S

and when they prepare to depart that location for the employee's next foreign or domestic accompanied post (DSSR 260). ISMA rates were increased in March 2008, and the allowance is non-taxable.

There is also a mandatory 15 days of home leave (or transition leave in the case of a domestic employee serving overseas) after the employee completes a tour at one of the posts "experiencing extraordinary circumstances." These include posts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, as well as Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Juba, Sudan. This provision also applies to employees serving a 12-month TDY to Iraq and Afghanistan.

### **Forging a Sense of Community**

The first major hurdle the FLO Unaccompanied Tour Support Team faces is identifying and reaching out to all employees and family members experiencing an unac-

*There are two types of SMA — voluntary and involuntary.*

determined.

We rely on employees to fill out the Employee and Family Member Contact Information Sheet to provide us family member e-mail addresses, the primary way in which we communicate with them. When we receive ISMA notification cables we e-mail the employees to ask that they complete the form, although doing so is voluntary. In addition, when I brief all outgoing personnel to Iraq during the mandatory Foreign Affairs Counterterrorism area studies course, I always stress the importance of the contact form. The FLO director does the same in ambassadorial and DCM/principal officer seminars, and at management officer conferences.

accompanied tour so that we can offer them support and services, or help them identify other resources. Where possible, we contact them at the time of assignment to explain our services and assist families in deciding where to reside during the tour, if it has not been

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Our second major hurdle is to create an unaccompanied tours community when families are scattered not only throughout the U.S. but throughout the world. Only about 25 percent of the family members (including spouses, partners, adult children, parents, siblings) on our contact list reside in the Washington, D.C., area. Families residing at an overseas post during the separation may already have that sense of community, but even they are not always prepared for the challenges an unaccompanied assignment poses.

So how does this community connect? One mechanism is the HomeFrontUS Yahoo group. This is intended as a means for family members with a loved one serving at a high-threat, unaccompanied post to communicate with others in a similar situation. Members include parents, partners, spouses, fiancés, “friendly exes” and adult children, as well as veteran UT employees. When new members introduce themselves, they will often include their city and state; this allows group members in close proximity to find

### *The allowances and regulations applicable to employees serving in unaccompanied positions and their family members vary greatly.*

each other. People also get in touch through events sponsored by FLO. Families in the D.C. area, for example, attend an annual fall gathering and continue to stay in contact with one another.

FLO is exploring several other ways to connect this geographically dispersed community. Among the ideas we are considering are: a SharePoint site, a family-to-family (as well as peer-to-peer) mentoring/sponsorship program, and an expansion of MHN services to better utilize available technology. We hope to launch some of these initiatives during 2009.

### **Support for Families with Children**

Two initiatives that have received rave reviews from parents and children alike are our workbooks and medals programs. Through a generous donation from the Una Chapman Cox Foundation, FLO has developed age-appropriate handbooks for children with an employee parent on an unaccompanied assignment. We have sent out

### **What Is MHN?**

**D**ue to the geographic dispersal of many Foreign Service employees and family members, FLO and CLO may have limited direct contact with clients. The Web and telephone services offered through our contract with MHN, a health care network, are available to employees and family members worldwide to meet their potential needs. This is the third year that the company has had the contract to provide supplemental resources and support to the community before, during and after unaccompanied assignments.

With a password provided by FLO, MHN's portal is accessible from any computer — either in the quiet of home or at work — to learn about emotional health, health and fitness, and family and work issues. The site is available in English and Spanish and contains interactive self-assessments, articles and exercises to help manage stress, insomnia, depression and other reactions to an unaccompanied tour. There is also a specific section devoted to managing an unaccompanied tour.

For those who may wish to actually speak to a counselor, the toll-free, 24/7 MHN hot line offers assessment and referral in more than 160 languages. For Eligible Family Members and Members of Household who prefer face-to-face counsel-

ing, MHN has a network of counselors throughout the United States who will see a family member up to three times per presenting issue at no charge to the family. These services are meant to supplement the confidential counseling the State Department already provides through Employee Consultation Services, which is staffed during Washington, D.C., work hours. Some individuals may rely on family, a clergy member, good friends, their long-time doctor or a combination of these to meet their counseling needs and may not seek network assistance. Regardless of the source, it is important that people receive the support they need.

Approximately six times a year, we offer a joint FLO/MHN orientation session to familiarize employees and family members with the services offered. To accommodate the varied time zones and locations of our clients, we offer the session in the FLO offices (for those in the D.C. area) and also by simultaneous webcast and conference call dial-in that are free for participants. We use this same format for training sessions throughout the year, most recently the “Coping with the Stress of Change” program offered in December 2008. Other popular sessions have been “Parenting in a Time of Crisis” and “Building Healthy Families.”

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more than 100 books since the program began in June 2008.

The handbooks, available as downloadable PDFs on our intranet site, were written in collaboration with a contractor who is a Foreign Service spouse and mother with a doctorate in clinical psychology. The handbooks are accompanied by a CD-ROM for the parent at post and another for the parent/guardian “at home,” and contain educational information and activities to complete separately or interactively as a way for families to maintain communication and document the events that occur while one parent is away.

When parents at posts are preparing for the end of their assignments, we encourage them to request Medals and Certificates of Recognition for their children. These medals and certificates are the department’s way of saying “thank you” to the children for their sacrifice during the separation. Since the program began in May 2006, close to 800 children have been honored. At many embassies, the deputy chief of mission or ambassador works with the

Community Liaison Office to facilitate the presentation of the medals to the children (at the request of the parent) at an awards ceremony or holiday gathering. It’s a small gesture, but one that puts a smile (or an occasional tear) on the child’s face.

We also invite all children who have received these medals throughout the year to attend the annual Foreign Service Youth Awards Ceremony in Washington, D.C., in July to be recognized by the department.

### **Community Liaison Office Coordinators**

At more than 200 posts, the CLO works with management and the community to maintain high morale through orientation activities, cultural and recreational programs, dissemination of information, counseling and referral, and assistance with security, education and employment for family members. Their services are especially important at high-stress, unaccompanied posts.

There are CLOs at 10 of the 21 fully or partially unaccompanied posts. FLO is working to establish a CLO po-

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sition at all unaccompanied posts where it is feasible. A CLO must be a U.S.-citizen eligible family member of an employee assigned to post and, in the case of CLO positions at unaccompanied posts, may only apply for the job once the employee has been assigned to post.

Presently, under certain circumstances employees on TDY to Iraq and Afghanistan may elect to have their family members remain at their overseas post of assignment during their absence. When this can be arranged, the CLOs at these posts ensure that support, services and, in some cases, supplemental outreach go to families separated by the assignment. Remaining at post often minimizes disruptions to the family, allowing working spouses to maintain their employment status, ensuring that school-age children have educational continuity, and enabling families to continue to reside in embassy housing. Families with an employee on TDY should be treated no differently than if the direct-hire employee were physically residing at post.

In the fall of 2008, the CLO in Cairo, in collaboration with

*FLO is always looking  
for ways to connect this  
geographically dispersed  
community.*

management, published a booklet, "Support for Families Experiencing an Unaccompanied Tour," outlining the services and support available to separated families remaining at post. Families can use this to identify points of contact and procedures for assistance pertaining to medical needs, financial

services, mail, telephone, computer access, visas, family member employment, travel, shipping, customs, residential furniture and appliance service, and housing. Parallel guidance is issued to each management office that continues to provide support and assistance to the family.

In addition to the booklet, CLO Cairo runs a support group called "Who Moved My Spouse?" and facilitates dissemination of FLO information via conference calls and training webcasts. The CLO also maintains a list of UT families in Cairo and ensures that they remain a part of the mission community. FLO has shared both the booklet and the concept of a post-based UT support group with all CLOs around the world as a "best practice."

If a family resides on the local economy at a post to which the employee is not assigned, embassy support is limited by regulatory and legal constraints. Nevertheless, CLOs include these family members on newsletter distribution and invite them to participate in mission activities when possible. I recently heard from a family member living on the local economy about an hour from an embassy. He mentioned how lonely it was not feeling part of that embassy community. He contacted the CLO and offered to assist in planning outings. He gained a community and the community gained a valuable member.

**Other Support Mechanisms**

The Foreign Service Institute has developed new training sessions and enhanced existing courses. With the Office of Medical Services, the FSI Transition Center offers a High-Stress Assignment Outbriefing Program that is mandatory for employees returning after serving more than 90 days in Iraq or Afghanistan. "Working with Employees from High-Stress Posts," offered by the Leadership and Management School, is a briefing for the colleagues of returnees. It is available in three formats: classroom, video-conference and webinar.

In addition to FSI's new DVD, *Making Sense of Unaccompanied Tours: Insights for Couples*, families can request individualized, age-appropriate children's handbooks with

**List of Unaccompanied Posts**  
(as of Feb. 1, 2009)

**Fully Unaccompanied**

- IRAQ: Baghdad\*
- AFGHANISTAN: Kabul\*
- PAKISTAN: Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar\*
- SAUDI ARABIA: Jeddah
- SUDAN: Juba

**Adult EFM's Only**

- SAUDI ARABIA: Riyadh, Dhahran
- BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: Banja Luka
- KOSOVO: Pristina
- LEBANON: Beirut
- LIBERIA: Monrovia
- REPUBLIC OF CONGO: Brazzaville
- SUDAN: Khartoum
- CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: Bangui
- COTE D'IVOIRE: Abidjan
- CHAD: N'Djamena

**Adult EFM's and Minors under Age 5**

- YEMEN: Sanaa (no school-age children accompaniment)
- ALGERIA: Algiers

\*Adult EFM accompaniment authorized pending Under Secretary for Management's approval on a case-by-case basis (must secure employment at mission)

# FOCUS

## Resources

### Family Liaison Office

Phone: (202) 647-1076, or (800) 440-0397  
E-mail: FLO@state.gov or FLOaskUT@state.gov (for unaccompanied tours-related questions)  
Web site: [www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/) (Internet), or <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/prd/hrweb/flo/index.cfm> (Intranet)

### FLO Decision Tree

Available on FLO Internet site:  
[www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c23112.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c23112.htm)

### Children's Handbooks and Medals and Certificates of Recognition

Contact FLO: Phone: (202) 647-1076;  
e-mail: FLOaskUT@state.gov

### HomeFrontUS Yahoo Group

E-mail [HomefrontUS-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:HomefrontUS-subscribe@yahoo.com) to join

### FSI

For information on training such as *FACT Afghanistan* and *FACT Iraq*  
Web site: [www.state.gov/m/fsi/](http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/) (Internet), or <http://fsi.state.gov/> (Intranet)

### FSI Transition Center

To access the *Destination Iraq* site, Overseas Briefing Center post information and family member training courses, go to:  
[www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/](http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/) (Internet), or <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/> (Intranet)

### Training Division:

Phone: (703) 302-7268  
E-mail: [FSITCTraining@state.gov](mailto:FSITCTraining@state.gov)

### Overseas Briefing Center:

Phone: (703) 302-7277  
E-mail: [FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov](mailto:FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov)

### Career Transition Center:

Phone: (703) 302-7407  
E-mail: [FSICTC@state.gov](mailto:FSICTC@state.gov)

### *Making Sense of Unaccompanied Tours: Insights for Couples*

DVD available for couples considering or serving an unaccompanied tour. To obtain a copy, contact Natalya Pestalozzi at (703) 302-7272 or e-mail her at [PestalozziNG@state.gov](mailto:PestalozziNG@state.gov).

### *Assignment Iraq and Assignment Afghanistan*

Web sites on HR intranet

### Office of Allowances (A/OPR/ALS)

Phone: (202) 261-8700  
E-mail: [AllowancesO@state.gov](mailto:AllowancesO@state.gov)  
Web site: <http://aoprals.state.gov/>

### Employee Consultation Service (MED/ECS)

Phone: (202) 663-1815  
E-mail: [MEDECS@state.gov](mailto:MEDECS@state.gov)

### Deployment Stress Management Program (MED/DSMP)

Phone: (202) 663-1903  
E-mail: [MEDDSMP@state.gov](mailto:MEDDSMP@state.gov)

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accompanying parent CDs from FLO.

The Office of Medical Services recently established the Deployment Stress Management Program, within its Office of Mental Health Services. This program provides screening for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and assists Foreign Service Medical Practitioners in arranging specialized care. Currently two mental health providers are stationed in Baghdad, and another awaits clearance for assignment to Kabul. Regional Medical Officer/Psychiatry providers are located in 15 countries and offer a variety of family and children's services. And the Employee Consultation Service, a part of MHS, provides confidential consultations in person and by telephone.

### **Assignment Iraq, Assignment Afghanistan**

The five-day Foreign Affairs Counterterrorism area studies course is mandatory for all employees serving in Iraq, and is held almost every week. A parallel course focusing on Afghanistan is also available to employees; the first session was held in January. In addition, State's HR intranet resources have expanded to include two country-specific sites: *Assignment Iraq* and *Assignment Afghanistan*; FSI also has the *Destination Iraq* site.

New positions to boost morale and welfare at unaccompanied posts include Embassy Baghdad's first CLO coordinator position, created in the spring of 2008 to provide support to the more than 1,000 employees working in the embassy and on Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Embassy Kabul also has a CLO coordinator, who serves a community of close to 400 employees. In addition, Baghdad has two full-time social workers at post, and Kabul is also now hiring a social worker.

In 2007, State initiated an annual season's greetings program coordinated by FLO, to send donations of books, CDs, DVDs and games, along with banners signed by employees, to colleagues in those two countries. This was a way for all department employees to show their appreciation for the sacrifices made by the Foreign Service and Civil Service staff in those two war zones.

### **After an Unaccompanied Assignment**

Just as FLO's support includes that needed after an unaccompanied assignment, CLOs at the onward-assignment receiving posts may need to assist employees and their

*Reuniting with family can be difficult, but with time and patience on all sides, a new "normality" can be found.*

families with issues unique to the unaccompanied tour community. The transition into a less high-threat working environment may come with challenges — a feeling that work is menial, trouble with focusing, tiredness — not to mention potential family reintegration issues that may have an impact not only on an employee's work performance, but on the well-being of individual

members of the family or the family as a whole.

During the course of the assignment, a spouse or partner may have had to assume additional responsibilities; very young children may not recognize the parent who was away; and it may take some time to adjust to living in the family unit. Just making the physical move can be tiring! Some people may transition with ease, but for those who need extra time or support, it is important for supervisors, colleagues, friends and family members to keep an eye and ear out for any noticeable changes that may require attention.

Many employees moving on to a post overseas or to a domestic assignment find it helps to talk to a colleague who has "been through it," or to ask for extra leave before jumping right back into work. Due to the number of UT positions and the frequency of the assignment cycle, family members will often find others at post who have been on the family side of an unaccompanied tour; and it may help to talk to them about life at post and reintegration issues. Remember, what works for one couple/family may not necessarily work for another. Even months after the assignment is over, the family may still be feeling the impact of the separation, and it may be helpful to take time to reflect on the experiences — share them with a colleague or bring them to the CLO's or FLO's attention if you can suggest ways of improving the support offered.

Both sides of an unaccompanied tour come with challenges, but these can build stronger family relationships, growth, and career fulfillment. The department has come a long way in addressing these challenges. We hope to reach, support and elicit feedback from everyone who has experienced unaccompanied tours to help us identify the best ways to support our employees and families.

Will we get there? I sure hope so. And when we do, it will be in no small part due to the collaborative efforts throughout the department and the valuable feedback received from those who have "been there." ■

# COPING WITH SEPARATION: TANDEM COUPLES

T

here's a type of family separation that is not talked about as much within the Foreign Service as that necessitated by unaccompanied tours and evacuations, but still has a profound impact on many people: tandem couples serving at separate posts. Most commonly faced in first tours, this situation sometimes forces tandem officers to make difficult decisions when the needs of the Service, the jobs available and family or school requirements don't all coincide.

Joining the Foreign Service is already a complex process, and when a husband and wife both try to join at the same time — especially when one is a specialist and one a generalist, like us — it is even more difficult to secure assignment to the same post. In addition, when you are new to the inner workings of the Foreign Service, you usually don't have the skills, the contacts or the knowledge to “work” the assignment system as skillfully as your more experienced colleagues.

We are a first-tour, second-career couple just finishing a challenging and expensive two years of service at separate posts. We knew when we signed on the dotted line to join the Foreign Service that we would not always be able to live in the same city, but were hoping at least to be close.

---

*Annie Simpkins is a first-tour consular officer in Warsaw; her husband David is a first-tour specialist in Lisbon.*

BESIDES THE OBVIOUS PERSONAL DIFFICULTIES, SEPARATED TANDEM COUPLES FACE AN EXPENSIVE TOUR WITH MINIMAL FINANCIAL AID.

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BY ANNIE SIMPKINS

Alas, while Poland and Portugal are both excellent countries in which to live (and alphabetically close), they are situated at opposite ends of the European continent, with no direct flights between them.

As a consequence, our two teenage daughters live with me and only see their father on occasional long weekends and holidays. Luckily, they have been military “brats” their entire lives, so having their father absent for long periods of time was not as hard an adjustment for them as it might be for their civilian counterparts.

Still, even though my husband had been on quite a few nine-month deployments while serving in the U.S. Navy, we weren't prepared for just how expensive it would be to maintain two households and make regular visits to each other.

## Staying Together

Now that we've been there and done that, we appreciate the importance of striving to avoid having to serve at separate posts in the first place. So here are some tips for getting posted together:

- Work with both of your career development officers early and often in the bidding process, and try to get them talking to each other as soon as possible.
- Do your homework on the jobs that might be coming up as far in advance as possible — especially if, like us, you

are a specialist/generalist couple that might have problems matching up your posts.

- Explore the possibility of additional flexibility in assignments from a decision by one of you to shift to a different career field with greater availability. Obviously, this is not possible for everyone, but it can be worth exploring.

- If one of you is eligible for leave without pay, consider that option to avoid separation. Unfortunately, those Foreign Service families that can afford to give up an income for a year or two tend to be more senior and therefore less likely to need to take such a drastic step.

### Managing Separation

If you can't avoid separation, or if you make a career choice to serve separately, here are some tips to help your families cope:

- Visit each other as often as you can afford. Make airline Web sites your friend to familiarize yourself with the various deals available and, if you can, book flights early.

- The absent parent usually travels more than the other, but it is important for the other one to take the children to the other post as well, to "see what dad's house is like" or to "check out where mom works."

- Every time you get together as a family, hold a meeting and plan the next few months.

- Make sure the absent parent knows about all major school events so they can, perhaps, plan some visits around them.

- Make sure school e-mails and grade reports are sent to both parents.

- Get Vonage or Skype and call often! Video phone calls are a great, inexpensive way to keep in touch.

- If you are the parent caring for young ones, make sure to include the absent parent in all important family decisions.

- Try to schedule some time away from the children for the caregiver parent (respite care).

- Schedule some time for the children to spend just with the absent parent. At the same time, you will have to accept that you will not be able to be together for many birthdays and anniversaries. If possible, postpone the celebrations until you're together.

### Some Policies Need Changing

Separated tandem couples not only have obvious personal difficulties, but face an expensive tour with minimal financial aid. Here are some policies that adversely affect

separated tandems and should be changed:

- **R&R.** If one spouse is at a post that entitles him or her to go on R&R, while the other is at a post without that option, the non-qualifying spouse cannot accompany the rest of the family without paying out of pocket.

Children of separated couples get one trip paid each year to visit the other parent, but separated tandem husbands and wives do not get any allowance for visiting each other. Depending on how far apart you are and the airline connections, this can amount to thousands of dollars if you choose to visit each other on a regular basis.

- **Children.** Because children cannot be on both tandem spouses' orders, they have to choose which parent's orders to be on (usually the one serving where the children will attend school). If the children have to travel to their post at the start of the assignment with the non-carer parent, things get very complicated and cost construction is usually more expensive than just buying the plane tickets yourself. (And then you have to navigate the complicated process of trying to get some of these costs reimbursed.)

- **Separate Maintenance Allowance.** There is no SMA for separated tandems, so you have to operate two households, keep two cars, have lots of extra insurance and buy two of almost everything.

A final note: If you are serving your first tour apart, the second tours are also directed and you get no priority for bidding if you are serving at non-hardship posts. Although the CDOs do their best to work with you, there is still the stress of not knowing if you will serve together at your second post. This is despite the fact that most Foreign Service members would agree that serving for two years apart from your spouse and children constitutes a hardship in and of itself. Allocating some form of hardship points for those bidding under such constraints would be an effective, no-cost solution to this problem.

Fortunately, our story has a happy ending. Our children have had the benefits of learning about two cultures, not just one, and have become adept at traveling without a parent. And with some Foreign Service experience under our belt, we were better equipped to work through the assignment process when bidding on our second tours. So even though there were only three matching posts worldwide available to us in the summer of 2009, my husband and I are looking forward to serving our second tour together in Kenya. ■



# AN EVACUATION SURVIVAL GUIDE

T

Technically it's called an "ordered departure," but anyone who has been through one invariably refers to it as an evacuation. Whatever term you use, it describes the situation when, because conditions at a U.S. overseas mission are deteriorating due to security concerns or a natural disaster, all non-essential personnel and family members are ordered to leave post.

Our family has a long history with such hasty departures. In Tel Aviv, my husband and I, a tandem couple at the time, watched friends and colleagues' family members bid tearful farewells when a planned U.S. missile strike on Iraq prompted an ordered departure one week before Christmas 1998.

Then in October 2001, while we were still in the States, the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan precipitated the ordered departure of Jakarta, just days before we were

CHANCES ARE THAT MOST FS FAMILIES WILL UNDERGO AN ORDERED DEPARTURE. HERE ARE SOME TIPS ON HOW TO MAKE THE BEST OF IT.

---

BY KELLY ARMSTRONG

due to arrive at post. My 18-month-old son and I bade my husband farewell as he got on a plane for Indonesia, not knowing when we would see him again.

Fortunately, that episode only lasted a couple of months. But a year later, while I was back in the States for the birth of our second child, Embassy Jakarta was again evacuated in the wake of the October 2002 Bali nightclub bombings, and I never returned. My husband packed up all our belongings when his own tour was curtailed for health reasons in May 2003, and that's when he finally rejoined us after 10 long, uncertain months of separation.

I spent our evacuation living alone in a house with a very active 2-year-old and a newborn with undiagnosed food intolerances, who screamed in pain approximately 23 hours out of every 24. I also had a broken back — the reason my husband's tour was eventually curtailed — which made even simple tasks, like brushing my teeth, extremely painful.

But even without those additional difficulties, coping with evacuations is never easy. After all, you are required on short notice to uproot your entire family, abandon established friends and routines for weeks or months, and plunge blindly into the unknown. Where will I go? Where will I stay? How long will we be gone? Will I ever come back? Will I ever see my friends again?

---

*Kelly Armstrong, a Foreign Service officer from 1993 to 2001, served in Frankfurt and Tel Aviv, and has since lived in Jakarta, Frankfurt and Zagreb. A freelance writer, she resides in San Jose with her husband, Gary Schierman, an information management specialist at Embassy San Jose, and their three children. You can check out her latest adventures as "The Embassy Wife" at <http://kellyarmstrong.pnn.com>.*

## F O C U S

### **Be Philosophical**

Fortunately, you and your family *can* get through an evacuation. In fact, with a bit of luck and some determination, and by keeping the following principles in mind, you can even find aspects of the situation to enjoy — or at least turn to your advantage.

*The evacuation will change you.* Hopefully, the disruption will be short-lived and minimal. But just as living overseas has transformed your lives, and you will never again be who you were before, an evacuation will also change you. So view the situation as a chance to reinvent yourself and find out just what you're capable of. It's probably more than you suspect.

*Resist the temptation to sit at home and mope.* I daily fought the overwhelming urge to sit in my rental house, stare at the walls and watch the news in the futile hope that it would make time go faster. Oddly enough, it did not; but it did make my entire family more miserable.

*Don't parcel your life into four-week blocks.* An ordered departure is re-evaluated every 28 days. If the status quo continues, you'll be disheartened. And if the ordered departure is lifted, you'll have approximately 72 hours to pack and get on a plane to go back "home." Knowing that, you may find yourself avoiding longer-term commitments; for months I even refused to make an appointment to get my hair cut. Instead, always believe you'll go back to post at the end of the four weeks — but also plan to be away for awhile.

*Evacuation is hard on your spouse, too.* For my husband, a large portion of his memories of the evacuation period are of fighting his way through crowds of 50,000 angry demonstrators to get into the embassy every day and working 24/7 with only two people in his office. He had a nearly two-hour commute, each way, in bumper-to-bumper traffic. And, of course, he was separated from me, our 2-year-old and a newborn whom he hardly knew.

I was having such rough going in the States that I found it difficult to sympathize with him and the phenomenal amount of stress in his life. I'm ashamed to admit that it took me months to realize that he needed my support and encouragement just as much as I needed his.

*An evacuation can be fun!* Yes, it is a traumatic ex-

*Just as living overseas  
has transformed your  
lives, an evacuation will  
also change you.*

perience, and not something I'd wish on anyone, but it doesn't have to be completely dire. Tell yourself and your children that it's a surprise paid vacation to the States.

For instance: You have to have a place to live, and the State Department provides funds to help defray expenses. But who's to say that your abode can't be a beach house in North Carolina? Or a ski lodge in the Rockies? Is there a place you've always wanted to visit in the U.S., but time has always been too short? This may be your opportunity. And while you're at it, invite your friends and family to get a place of their own nearby.

Then there are all the little luxuries that go along with being in the States. Shop at Target every day and park in the front row of the parking lot; have someone else bag your groceries at the grocery store, after finding exactly what you were looking for (cheddar cheese! cream of mushroom soup!); go see a first-run movie in English with no subtitles; drink the tap water; and best of all, reconnect with your friends and family and create some good memories you wouldn't have been able to make otherwise.

### **Coping Mechanisms**

All that said, how do you manage to get through daily life with a smile on your face and a song in your heart in what are often very difficult circumstances?

Though the following tips mainly apply to families with children, because that's generally the most difficult situation, I believe they will help anyone who is separated from loved ones during an evacuation.

*Stay in close contact with FLO.* Check in regularly with the Family Liaison Office, which is responsible for maintaining contact with evacuees. The office is staffed with remarkably compassionate and experienced people who will go out of their way to help you. FLO will keep you abreast of what is happening, and will be the first to tell you when the evacuation is lifted. And if you have any difficulties with your allowances, schools, etc., that office is your best front-line contact. Your Community Liaison Officer, who is responsible for coordinating the evacuation from post, may also be working there.

You can contact FLO with questions *before* an evacuation, too. FLO maintains an excellent Web site with a

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comprehensive list of resources for evacuees at [www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1991.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1991.htm). The documents cover practically every aspect of evacuations, from checklists of what to bring with you and information about enrolling kids in school, to advice on when to seek counseling for yourself or your family members.

*Network with your fellow evacuees.* Your CLO should have contact information for everyone who was evacuated; make sure you have copies of that list before you depart post, if possible. Being able to pick up the phone or send an e-mail will cheer you up more than you can imagine. And if you choose to reside in the D.C. area, you may be able to get together with many of your friends and get your children together with their friends from post.

*Play the refugee card.* Never underestimate strang-

*FLO is staffed  
with remarkably  
compassionate and  
experienced people who  
will go out of their way  
to help you.*

ers' capacity for kindness, and their willingness to help those in need. Exploit that generosity shamelessly.

When I was looking for a place to rent during our evacuation, I started out by calling some real estate agents in the area, looking for a furnished, short-term rental. The first woman I spoke to said politely, "I'm sorry, but we don't deal in rentals," and was about to hang up.

I stopped her and said, with a note of unfeigned desperation in my voice, "Do you know of anyone who does? I'm a refugee here with my two small children and we need a place to stay." After I briefly explained our situation, she clucked in sympathy, and 30 minutes later called back to say she had found a completely furnished three-bedroom house two blocks from my parents' home. Even better, the owner, who was former military, was willing to negotiate

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a price that fit within my allowances.

Playing the “refugee card” also helped me enroll my oldest son in a preschool, which technically had no slots for him (they even waived the registration fee), and helped me get appointments at doctors’ and dentists’ offices that weren’t taking any new patients.

*If you can, rent an apartment or house rather than stay in a hotel or with relatives.* If the uncertainty of not knowing when you’ll go home is hard on you, it’s doubly hard when you’re living with relatives and everyone’s life is disrupted.

Especially if your gut tells you that the evacuation may drag on for a while, look for an apartment, apartment-hotel or house rather than a traditional hotel. Having a place of your own will cheer you up and will add structure and stability to your children’s lives as well.

Check with your CLO or with FLO to find out what your housing allowance is in advance, and how it will change over time. When searching for a place to stay, ask if the landlord would be willing to negotiate. It may be possible to afford something more expensive than you thought possible, even in the face of diminishing allowances, if you negotiate.

*Find child care and activities for your children.* Depending on your younger children’s needs and trauma level (and your own), it is well worth the time and effort to find a safe, trusted babysitter, day-care facility or preschool for them as soon as possible. Because I was living my life in four-week blocks, I realized almost too late that my 2-year-old needed a place of his own to make friends, one that was full of happy people, paints and puzzles — rather than a grumpy mother, suitcases and a screaming baby. I could have avoided a lot of unhappiness had I addressed his needs right away instead of trying to plan for the impossible.

The same holds true for older children. They also need a place where they can make friends and feel like they belong. Look for groups they can join to pursue activities (such as music or sports) that they were already involved with at post. Local schools and community groups can be an excellent resource for this.

*Consider homeschooling.* School-age children obviously need to continue their education. But rather

*Then there are all the little luxuries that go along with being in the States.*

than undergoing the trauma of putting your children in a new school for what may be just a few weeks, and then uprooting them again just as they get settled, consider a short stint of homeschooling, with lots of field trips around an exotic new country — the United States — thrown in for good measure. If nothing else, it

could improve the stability of your children’s uncertain lives and allow you to take advantage of the sudden, unusual flexibility that can be one of the positive results of an evacuation.

If homeschooling is not an option for your family, check the FLO Web site for additional information and recommendations for schools.

*Find good service providers.* Ask around right away for recommendations of a good doctor, dentist, hairdresser, etc., and get on their books as a patient or client. That way, when one of your children comes down with an ear infection two weeks after arrival, you’ll already have someone to call.

*Take the initiative to make new friends.* If you don’t already know people where you’ll be staying, get creative and find ways to make some new acquaintances: over coffee at Starbucks, at PTA meetings, on play-dates, or by volunteering at the library. Build relationships with people every chance you get, even if it’s just with the checker at the supermarket. They may not need you, but you certainly need them! People will be sympathetic to your plight, or, if nothing else, they’ll be intrigued. Use that to your advantage to get invited for play-dates and coffee.

Then return the favor and invite people to visit you. I once singlehandedly hosted Christmas Eve dinner for my entire extended family. As much as I dreaded it, it was the best thing I could have done: it forced me to decorate the house, kept me busy for weeks shopping and planning and, most of all, created some treasured memories for my entire family.

*Take the opportunity to renew your spirit.* Being evacuated can eat you up, body and soul, if you let it. Find help, strength and stability anywhere you can, whether you join a Bible study, attend formal religious services, or just practice yoga or simple meditation. Counseling may also be worth exploring.

*Reach out to others in need.* Volunteering to work

## F O C U S

with a charity can be healing for both you and your children. Serving those who are in situations even more difficult than your family's can help put your own life in perspective. However stressful your evacuation becomes, at least you'll probably never be sleeping in a Salvation Army shelter with a newborn, as was one young lady with whom I was involved during our evacuation.

### **Getting Back to "Normal"**

You know how hard it is to readjust your family life after a spouse has been away for a few weeks or months on a temporary duty assignment? Well, regaining equilibrium as a family following the separation imposed by an evacuation is even more complicated.

After all, TDYs are planned affairs that usually last a set amount of time. Evacuations come suddenly in

*People will be sympathetic to your plight, or, if nothing else, they'll be intrigued.*

the wake of a crisis and require an immediate, enormous, wrenching readjustment of life and perspective for all parties involved. Rejoining a family, both in the literal and the emotional senses, requires a tremendous amount of work and patience.

So be on the lookout for potential new wrinkles in all levels of your family relationships. And if you do run into problems following an evacuation, see them for what they are, so that you and your spouse can deal with the issues appropriately.

I fervently hope that no one reading this will ever be ordered to depart post. But the world being what it is, the chances of your family being faced with an evacuation are better than ever, and increasing almost daily. Still, if you are evacuated, know that it's not the end of the world — and with a bit of mental adjustment, it might even turn out to be a rewarding experience. ■

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# INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD

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*he following is a compilation of responses to the Journal's AFSAnet call for observations on the subject of unaccompanied tours from those who are having the experience today or have "gone it alone" in the past.*

— Steven Alan Honley, Editor



## “HOME IS JUST ANOTHER WORD FOR YOU”

Billy Joel was never in the Foreign Service, but he was definitely on to something with that lyric (from his song “You’re My Home”).

Suva is my first posting as a Foreign Service officer, so you might wonder what qualifies me to offer advice to couples separated due to job assignments. Well, even though I’m new to the Service, I can draw on my “past life” experience as the wife of a naval officer who was frequently deployed for long periods.

My husband of 17 years is currently an FBI special agent and is based in the United States because of his job. Our two daughters are here with me in Fiji. It is a challenging situation, but we’re making it work.

Different federal agencies treat cross-agency tandem

couples and family separations very differently. Based on my experience over the past 18 months, State is considerably more “family friendly” than the FBI’s international office. For example, I found the FSI class for “soon to be separated” couples to be excellent, and highly recommend it. Of course, the degree of family-friendliness depends a lot on your management officer at post.

Many people have tried to help us solve our current dilemma from both sides of the cross-agency divide, but the (lack of) structure of interagency communication causes significant roadblocks. There are no how-tos for cross-agency tandem placements, so if you and your partner are in different agencies, develop your strategy and make your own connections before bidding on your next post.

Toward that end, I offer the following suggestions for separated couples:

*Communicate, communicate, communicate!* Find a way to contact your partner daily at a time that is convenient (as much as possible) for both of you. We prefer talking on the phone, so I use the IVG to call my husband every workday while he wraps up the afternoon — sometimes it is nice to just hear his voice. We usually make lists of important items that need mutual agreement; and if one of us forgets to bring our list up during our daily chat, we e-mail the issue(s) as soon as possible. Of course, you or your spouse

may prefer text messaging or e-mails to phone conversations, so talk about your daily communication times and methods before you depart for post.

*“Wow, (s)he seemed really distant!”* Physical distance can sometimes create the illusion of emotional distance. Make sure you don’t invest too much energy in worrying about a bad communication day or if a day goes by without contact due to unforeseen circumstances. When we live in the same place as our partners, it is easy to see that they are just “out of sorts” for some reason not associated with the relationship. It is much harder to “see” a bad day on the phone or via the Internet. So don’t automatically assume that a bad communication day means trouble for the relationship; wait a day or two and see if things improve on their own.

*Feelings are OK, but guilt trips aren’t.* If you are having a bad day or if you are feeling particularly lonely, share your feelings. Let your partner share their feelings, as well. And try to really listen to what your partner is saying to you. If a stray hurtful comment gets out, apologize as soon as possible and agree to talk about the underlying issue when you are “face to face” — then let it go. Some discussions are just not meant to be conducted over the airwaves.

*Be flexible in celebrating special occasions.* If you can be together on the exact date of your anniversary or a birthday or holiday, wonderful! But if not, find other ways to let your partner know you remembered an important date, such as reserving a day when you *can* be together to celebrate. In 2007, our family celebrated Christmas in November, and that was just as meaningful as it would have been on Dec. 25 — because we were all together. (At the same time, keep in mind that birthdays and anniversaries are, after all, just a day.)

*Three days and a wake-up.* Always have a date planned for your next reunion. In the Navy, we counted down separations as a number of days and a wake-up. Knowing the exact day you’ll see each other again provides hope. If the “wake-up” day is changed due to external forces, just think of it as an opportunity to savor the anticipation. For instance, I have 23 weeks and a wake-up as I write!

*One week for each month apart.* When couples are sep-

arated for long periods, each partner develops a certain autonomy, taking charge of their immediate destiny. So it takes time to adjust to sharing responsibilities and get back to “normal” family life — however you and your spouse define that term. A good rule of thumb from my own experience as a Navy wife is that it takes one week for every month apart to achieve that equilibrium.

*Heather Coble*

*Embassy Suva*



## FAIR TREATMENT FOR TANDEMS, PLEASE

My husband and I are both in the Foreign Service — yet as I have pointed out to the Family Liaison Office, none of their offerings for “unaccompanied tour” family members address the issues tandem couples face. There are no programs for us, nor any extra “adjustment” days to account for the fact that we don’t have our spouses to help us. Virtually all of the materials I’ve read suggest that spouses take up a hobby or find part-time work to fill the void. I have also logged onto teleconferences designed for left-behind spouses, only to find that they, too, focused exclusively on at-home spouses. Tandems are a large percentage of the Foreign Service, so I suspect I am far from alone in my concern about this.

At my current post, management took the view that because my husband was going to Baghdad at about the same time that our daughter and I were arriving here, we only needed a house for one or two people. Our place is so tiny that there is only room for two beds — no spare rooms or spare beds at all. Worse, they did not tell us this when we were still at our previous post and could have planned for a smaller house (emergency storage is authorized for Iraq employees). In fact, post management assured us that we would get a house big enough for three or four people. When we pointed out the problem, they refused to give us a house appropriate for our family size, even when my husband was paneled for an onward assignment here.

*It astonishes me that the  
State Department still  
apparently believes that  
most Foreign Service  
families consist of an FSO  
plus an at-home spouse.*

Of course, the reverse is not true: When an FSO leaves his or her family behind at post to go to Iraq, they get to remain in their house. While that policy is certainly generous, many posts then face severe housing problems because they still have to find quarters for the employee who will be covering the vacancy.

My husband and I were willing to have him serve in Baghdad as a way of doing our part. We did not, however, expect that our sacrifice would cause increased hardship for the two of us left behind. I hate to sound like a complainer, but it astonishes me that the State Department still apparently believes that most Foreign Service families consist of an FSO plus an at-home spouse.

*Name withheld by request*



## A MIXED BLESSING

I have been in Iraq as leader of Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team-2 since March 2008 and will depart this month. My wife, Christina, is deputy coordinator of the cultural affairs officer course at FSI.

Like most people, I came to Iraq with several goals — some professional, some personal. My most important personal goal was to maintain the connection to my wife and four kids. I think I have succeeded, but barely; and I (re)learned a few things along the way.

First and most important, it's harder for the stay-behind

## LIFE IS A HOOCH

Susan Malcik was the political-economic section Office Management Specialist in Kabul from December 2003 to February 2005. A self-taught painter who works in oil and acrylics, she has exhibited her work in many group shows, including two international biennials: *Grafolies* in Abidjan in 1993 and, a year earlier, *DAK ART '92* at the Museum of African Art in Dakar.

"In My Hooch" (acrylic on canvas paper, 2003) is an interior scene of Malcik's Kabul home a few days after she moved in. At that time, everyone lived in two-unit hooches surrounding the chancery. Specially outfitted shipping containers, each unit was the width of a twin bed and 18 feet long, with a separate shower room and toilet (the ambassador had a "triple-wide"). The compound was dusty, noisy and lit at night by klieg lights on towers because of the 24/7 construction of the new chancery and apartment buildings. After a long day's work, dinner in the Marines' mess hall was often followed by a stroll around the compound, dropping in at various campfires for a beer or a sing-along. Then it was off to bed. Malcik reports that she quickly came to appreciate the comfort and privacy of Hooch E-33.

She designed "Life Is a Hooch" in 2005 for T-shirts. It depicts the community of structures that were built around the embassy in that era.





## F O C U S

spouse than for the spouse who goes away. I left on the “great adventure” and spent my time in eastern Baghdad working, with few other distractions. My wife, also an FSO, had to deal with everything else: her full-time job, two toddlers, two teenagers, an au pair, sicknesses (her own as well as the kids’), managing the house, going to kids’ events, and on and on. Friends and neighbors helped out at key moments to keep things on the rails; but, day in and day out, what she experienced was frankly far more challenging than what I faced.

Second, R&R is a mixed blessing. It was absolutely wonderful to be able to come home and chill out with my family three times, but the two weeks of hell that our two boys put my wife through after I left each time made us wonder if it wouldn’t have been better to just plow through a full year and then come back. Ultimately, I know it was better for everybody to have the leave time, but only just.

*Everybody’s service in Iraq is honorable, but in Baghdad it’s easier to maintain contact to family.*

Third, location matters. Everybody’s service in Iraq is honorable, but in Baghdad it’s easier to maintain contact with one’s family. Being on a small forward operating base away from the International Zone, my Internet connection would frequently go out, so Skype was not a reliable option. Sometimes I could get a DSN line through the Operations Center; sometimes I could get through on a scratchy cell phone connection; and sometimes there just wasn’t any hope of reaching my family.

We coped by phoning whenever we could and by sending a lot of e-mails. Talking to my teenagers twice a week was very important for me to remain connected to their busy lives, and for them to hear from me that I was safe and, yes, they did need to do their homework. Talking to my toddlers was less successful, but we found other things that worked. Before I left, we bought a small

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wooden mailbox that we designated as the boys' special mailbox, which allowed my wife to surprise them with the occasional goody "from Daddy." I took pictures of myself, uploaded them and ordered online prints sent to them at home, and took advantage of a brigade chaplain program to have a DVD recorded of me reading stories to them.

Ultimately, I am glad I came out here. This has been an extraordinary professional experience. But I will spend a few months after my return patching my family back together, and it is important to understand that that is also a necessary part of the process.

*Conrad Tribble*  
*Iraq*



### ONLY CONNECT

Separation? Never have we been more connected and in communication with one another, regardless of geo-

graphic distance. Cell phones, text messages, e-mail, Internet videocam, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter — no separation here! If anything, we are flooded with "togetherness." And, coincidentally, never have more members of two-career relationships throughout U.S. society spent more time separated and/or traveling on week-ends and holidays.

Foreign Service folk need to meet the challenge of unaccompanied tours by accepting that it is an element of 21st-century life and by remembering the history of extended separation that affected previous generations. In particular, FSOs need some judicious perspective to keep "outsiders" from concluding that the pinstripe set is whining again. Don't expect any sympathy from our military colleagues, who are repeatedly deployed to combat zones and who, even when they do come home, frequently go away on field maneuvers.

Historically, separation for military duty or civilian service outside the U.S. just "was." During World War II, millions of men left their families for overseas assignments

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## F O C U S

and didn't return for years at a time, with nothing more than "V-mail" to maintain ties. A generation ago, I spent 14 of the first 15 months of married life as an Army officer in Korea. During that period, we made do with snail mail and recorded tapes — telephone calls were too difficult and expensive to contemplate. Was I happy about it? Of course not, but I was doing important work — and glad that I had not been assigned to Vietnam where Army buddies died.

In the latter part of my career, my wife and I spent two years assigned to separate posts in Canada. Happily, we were able to see each other regularly (and my ambassador suggested that we "have a honeymoon every weekend"). But I didn't expect any sympathy for separation (even though I was caring for a teenage child by myself), any more than a couple living and working in

*I made a personal  
commitment to write a  
postcard to our youngest  
daughter each evening  
before going to bed.*

Washington and New York City would think that separation was a dire trial.

*David T. Jones  
FSO, retired  
Washington, D.C.*



### IF TROUBLE COMES, MAKE USE OF IT

Like many Foreign Service families, we have faced separated assignments due to evacuations and service at an unaccompanied post. For us, the two most memorable were my tours in Yemen from 1990 to 1991 and in Pakistan from 2006 to 2007.

On the eve of the Persian Gulf War, my wife, Fiona, returned to Scotland following a mandatory evacuation of dependents and stayed with her own family outside Inverness,

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awaiting the birth of our first child. The combination of family separation and pending war made both of us more reflective during our months apart. I turned my evening thoughts into a series of recollections on what increasingly seemed like my own improbable childhood, spent mostly in a small town in the foothills of the Himalayas where I had attended boarding school from the age of 6.

The main intent was to pass on to our yet-unborn child something of a past that seemed increasingly remote. Quite unexpectedly, these initial reflections became the catalyst for, and formed the first four chapters of, a memoir the University of Georgia Press subsequently published under the title *Some Far and Distant Place: Muslim-Christian Encounters Through the Eyes of a Child*. Without a separated assignment in Yemen, this book almost certainly would never have been written.

Fifteen years after that separation, our recognition that an unaccompanied assignment in Pakistan would allow the rest of the family to spend more than a year with a supportive family network, including grandparents, aunts, un-

cles and cousins in central Georgia, made my decision to serve in Islamabad much easier. We looked upon it as an opportunity for our three teenage children not only to see the United States for themselves, but also to connect at a deeper level with their extended family. Even a Washington assignment would not have provided the quality time with grandparents that was possible during my 14 months in Islamabad. In the end, our kids did not just “cope” with the separation; they thrived.

On arriving in Islamabad in April 2006, I made a personal commitment to write a postcard to our youngest daughter each evening before going to bed. The idea was to relate at least one event from my day and provide a regular reminder that I loved her. Catriona now has a shoebox full of several hundred numbered postcards, each featuring attractive Pakistani stamps and depicting a scene from the physically stunning local landscape.

*Jonathan Addleton*

*USAID Representative to the E.U.*

*Brussels* ■

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# THE LEPROSY CLINIC MADRAS, 1956

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MORE THAN A HALF-CENTURY BEFORE THE TERM “TRANSFORMATIONAL DIPLOMACY” WAS COINED, IT WAS THE NORM FOR AMERICAN DIPLOMATS IN THE FIELD TO BE ENGAGED IN CHANGING LIVES.

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BY SUSAN INGRAHAM

“I don’t need money, I need hands,” R. Desikan repeated, peering through thick eyeglasses that magnified his brown eyes, giving him a startled look. A college student, he was a slightly built Ayer Brahmin, even higher-caste than our good friend S. Krishnan, who was also a Brahmin, but an Ayengar, which was a step below the Ayer. India was that kind of a place; there were layers on layers of everything.

The “hands” that Desikan needed were hands to help with the work in a small roadside leprosy clinic he had established in the village of Pammal, outside of Madras (now Chennai). He was sitting in our living room, and my husband, Ed, who served as Consul General Hank Ramsey’s political officer, was protesting that he couldn’t spare his hands — but “Susan can,” he said, referring to me.

And so it developed that during our posting at the American consulate in Madras, Desikan would be waiting for me in the driveway every Tuesday afternoon. We would go out along the San Thome High Road toward Pammal, stopping

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*Susan Ingraham flew with her husband, Edward, a newly minted FSO, to their first overseas post, Cochabamba, Bolivia, on a rainy day in November 1947. They subsequently served in Hong Kong, Perth, Madras, Djakarta, Rangoon, Islamabad (during the Indo-Pakistani War) and Singapore. The mother of three grown children and the grandmother of five grown grandchildren, she and her husband now live in Bethesda, Md., where they have resided since his retirement from the Foreign Service in 1980.*

to pick up other volunteers along the way. The car I drove was a Chevrolet station wagon, green with a “solid ivory top,” as Ed described it — adding with a smile, “I’ve been in India too long!” There weren’t many other station wagons in Madras in 1956; not many cars of any sort, in fact.

## Mr. Desikan’s Mission

The volunteers we collected were mainly young men, just out of college. Desikan himself had dropped out of college when he was diagnosed with leprosy. He had been treated with an experimental pill, a drug made from “throwaway substances” left over after the sulfa drugs used to treat leprosy were manufactured; and it was, therefore, very inexpensive. Desikan distributed these pills to the villagers who assembled on Tuesday afternoons.

The clinic was a small, one-room adobe building with a doorway and a verandah that faced out toward the street. There was no electricity or plumbing. When we arrived, Desikan jumped out of the car, handed me a small broom and assigned me the task of sweeping the building, while he headed off to the village well, carefully instructing me not to follow. The villagers were unhappy about the clinic and “those diseased people” who were gathering near them — much less a casteless white woman. (Don’t let her shadow fall on you!)

Desikan returned with two buckets of water, which he poured into a large ceramic pot that could hold about four gallons. Stretching a cheesecloth over the top of the jug, he slowly poured in the water. Then he moved the two chairs and one small table out to the verandah, setting the card file on top of the table. He motioned for me to sit at the table,

and as the patients came up and called out their names, I would look up their card. He would drop one tablet on the tongue of the patient, and I would note the date on the record.

There were more than 30 patients. Some walked for many miles to reach the clinic. They stood in line quietly. Most of the patients were men, but there were a few women and a few young children. Desikan said they had a hard time getting people to come to the clinic because no one wanted to admit to having the disease. But the older people recognized the importance of the medication, probably because Desikan could point to himself as a “cured” patient. Indeed, he had not lost any fingers or toes or his nose, and neither had any of his patients.

### **The Importance of Pain**

I read as much as I could find in Madras about leprosy. I learned that the disease was not easy to catch; simple health precautions were all that was needed. The servants at our home were shocked by my work, however, and would keep the kids away from me when I returned from the clinic. I would walk right up to my bathroom and climb into the tub, scrub thoroughly and then toss in all my clothes, including my sandals, and wash everything, hanging it all out on the rooftop clothesline. This seemed to satisfy everyone.

One book I read was by Dr. Paul Brand, an Englishman and missionary doctor based at that time in Vellore. (He became an international authority in the field and subsequently won many awards for his work.) He had developed many useful tools and practices to allow lepers to maintain functionality in their limbs, including a way of rearranging the muscles and nerves of damaged hands to make them work.

When I eventually met him, Dr.

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*He would drop one  
tablet on the tongue  
of the patient, and  
I would note the date  
on the file card.*

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Brand explained the basis for many of his inventions: leprosy strikes first at the extremities, killing the nerve endings, leaving the patient without the feeling of touch. So, for instance, he developed a coffee cup that fit inside a wooden rim, with a wooden handle on the rim. A patient who has no sensation of hot or cold in his nerve-impaired hands will pick up a scalding hot tin cup of coffee, badly burning his hands.

That is the reason so many leprosy patients lose fingers and toes — not because of the disease, per se, but because they have no perception of pain and therefore unwittingly damage their fingers and toes. “Pain is a very important sensation,” Dr. Brand had said.

### **A Providential Development**

Meanwhile, news of my extracurricular activities was spreading among the wives at the consulate, and now and then one of them would join me for the junket to Pammal. Then, at a meeting of the American Women’s Club, a providential development occurred.

Madam “Clubwallah” Djadhav, a portly woman from New Delhi who was a well-known organizer and worker in women’s groups (hence “clubwallah,” one who is involved with clubs), had come to address the group on the problems of India’s poor. She talked of how they were kept out of

any type of work that would improve their station in life by the fact that they were on the very lowest rung of the caste structure. They were outcasts or, as Gandhi had renamed them, “Children of God.” They were doomed to a life of drudgery, a hand-to-mouth existence that could only be improved when they died and were reborn, hopefully, into a higher caste.

Missionary efforts had made some progress, she admitted, but the mission groups tended to quarrel among themselves and this undermined their efforts. She gave an example: Tons of powdered milk, in five-gallon cans, were sitting on the docks right now waiting to be collected by one or another of the missionary groups in South India. No one would claim the milk, and Mrs. Clubwallah worried that it would go bad.

“Too bad we can’t get it for the clinic,” I muttered to my neighbor.

There was no further discussion of the milk powder, but the next day a huge army truck pulled into our driveway. I ran downstairs just as Ragavelu, the head bearer, opened the gate. The driver asked us where he should unload the milk. I asked him carefully if he was sure it should be delivered to our house, and he showed me his “chit,” signed by Mrs. Clubwallah, with our name and address.

### **Milk for the Clinic**

“Ragavelu, what’ll we do?” I asked helplessly. But he was way ahead of me. (The servants in my house always knew what was happening before I did.) Opening the door on a small unused shed at the end of the garden, he told the soldiers to stack the tins inside. Ragavelu picked out a couple of tins that had been punctured and gave one to the truck drivers to share. Another one he said he would take to his family. All the others were placed in the little store-room, and then he locked the door.

Powdered milk was like candy to local people. I had paid a hefty price for a five-gallon tin of “KLIM,” the imported European milk powder popular during the 1950s (and “milk” spelled backwards), at the local store and was careful not to check too closely on how much we consumed and how much disappeared into the servants’ households.

“Ragavelu,” I said. “Remember, this milk does not belong to us, so we must be very sure that none of it goes missing!” With a tiny smile on his face, he assured me that no one would enter the storeroom except himself or me.

The next week, we put five five-gallon tins of KLIM into the station wagon. Desikan was delighted. We headed out to the clinic and, once there, he prodded off the lid of the first tin. Then the problem of how to transport the dried milk to the homes

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*Every patient  
managed to find a way  
to take home the  
powdered milk.*

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of the patients suddenly struck us.

Without hesitating, however, a woman stepped forward, held out a corner of her sari, and we poured about two cups of powder into it. Then a man pulled up the edge of his kurta, and we repeated the operation. Every patient managed to find a way to take home the powdered milk.

But one of our visiting American women looked on at the proceedings with horror. She was new to India,

new to the Foreign Service, and did not realize — the way the missionaries and I did — that some things were just impossible. The next day she showed up at my house with an empty “Dalda” tin. Dalda was, and still is, the trade name for ghee, the nearest thing to butter. It was a sparkling clean one-pound tin, with a tight-fitting lid. “How about giving one to each patient, and telling them to bring them back each week, empty and clean?” she said.

Excellent, but where and how could we acquire 50 or so Dalda tins? Every bit of tinned stuff that I brought home from the bazaar or from my overseas shipments went out to the kitchen and just disappeared. A brief discussion with Ragavelu settled it: the tins were sold to dealers in the bazaar, and any idiot would know that all you had to do was go down to the bazaar and ask directions to the

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“tins” — as they were called in Indian English — and buy them back.

### **Can-Do Spirit**

So the innocent newcomer went down to the bazaar and came back with a carload of tins, which she scrubbed carefully. She proudly brought them along to the clinic the following week. We handed one filled with powdered milk and tightly capped to each of the patients, instructing them to be sure to bring back the tins next week. Judging from the smiles on their faces, we concluded that would not be a problem.

But the next week, only a few patients showed up with Dalda tins. I was annoyed — our new volunteer had worked so hard securing all those tins, cleaning them and making sure that the lids fit securely. Desikan took a different view. “Just fill the tins that have come back, and we can sort out the rest later,” he said.

We followed his instructions, and had the good sense to turn a blind eye to the little charade that went on. The first filled tin was accepted gratefully and the recipient moved away from the table, with his sulfa pill swallowed and his Dalda tin filled with powdered milk. He went back toward the end of the line, opened the tin and dumped the milk powder into the corner of his kurta, and handed the empty tin to the patient in front of him. This went on until everyone had received his medication and also had received a tin filled with powdered milk.

In the car on the ride home, Desikan told us what had happened to the patients the week before. Dalda tins serve many purposes, including as a means of transport for the locally made toddy, a powerful alcoholic drink commonly consumed by the poor. When the patients walked home to their villages with the tins, the local police, who are merciless toward the poor, accosted them. The

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*We were getting  
more patients, and the  
station wagon with the  
solid ivory top attracted  
more volunteers.*

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patients surrendered the tins and fled for their lives.

So our new assistant went back to the bazaar yet again. This time she painted the cleaned cans a lovely blue. Desikan informed the police that these tins came from the leprosy clinic and were for the exclusive use of the patients; in short, they should leave them be. That worked.

### **Foreign and Local Visitors**

Visitors showed up periodically at the clinic, and some were more helpful than others. One day an American missionary, an old man whose name was not given to me, stepped forward when we opened the clinic, insisting that we begin the afternoon’s work with a prayer. Desikan came out and joined the patients, who formed a rough circle around the speaker.

The old man began a long personal prayer, asking God to look with favor on the patients and the workers. He carried on for quite some time, getting more and more emotional. “And God,” he commanded at one point, “Go out to these people’s homes, follow them home, and protect and care for them!” He was looking up to heaven and shaking his fist at God. The patients probably couldn’t understand much of what he said, but they were with him in spirit, and nodded and looked up with him.

As the only other Christian present

for this performance, I was struck by how unperturbed Desikan was at the intrusion. He stood quietly, letting it all wash over him. A Brahmin — an Ayer Brahmin, his religion had been around centuries before Christ and the missionaries. Yet he was content to let them sound off.

On another occasion, a local city official came to visit the clinic. He gave a rousing speech to a crowd of people who showed up to hear him. It was in Tamil, and I could not understand a word of it; but evidently he told them that I was a complete outsider and a foreigner, and if I could show up at the clinic, certainly the Indians could, too. There is a photo of all of us — the assembled patients, Desikan, the politician and me. I look just like everyone else in the picture.

We were getting more patients, and the station wagon with the solid ivory top attracted more volunteers. One happy day as I drove the car filled with young college kids back from the clinic, they burst into song, and we had a marvelous chorus all the way home.

### **Coda**

Years later, in 1988, I got a report. Desikan’s drug had been declared effective and was accepted as a cure for leprosy. The clinic was still in operation, and the milk powder continued to arrive at the American compound. Each new arrival at that house on San Thome High Road had become the titular head of the clinic and, although none of the succeeding memsahibs actually went out to the clinic, the milk powder was still housed in the shed, and Ragavelu managed its distribution each week.

Today, more than a half-century later, the house no longer belongs to the U.S. government and may not exist at all. I don’t know what became of the clinic, but tremendous gains have been made in India and worldwide toward eliminating leprosy. ■



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# AFSA NEWS

American Foreign Service Association • March 2009

## 2008 Annual Report ■ New Expanded Format ■ Page 54

REAFFIRMING THE ROLE OF DIPLOMACY

### AFSA Welcomes Secretary Clinton

BY FRANCESCA KELLY

If newly-confirmed Secretary of State Hillary Clinton emerged from her black official sedan on the morning of Jan. 22 with all the assurance of an international rock star, her celebrity status was confirmed by the roar that went up from hundreds of cheering State Department employees when they first caught sight of her. Greeted by Under Secretary for Political Affairs William Burns, Under Secretary for Management Patrick Kennedy and AFSA State Vice President Steve Kashkett, she stopped and shook hands with those braving the cold outside, then made her way into the building, where an even larger throng awaited her.

The glass-paneled atrium of State Department headquarters at C Street, usually spacious and airy, was so filled with people that those employees descending to the main floor had difficulty exiting the elevators. Television lights illuminated the lobby and dozens of hands reached up with cell phones and cameras to get a shot of the new Secretary. Ascending to a platform and turning to face the crowd, which was estimated at roughly 1,000 people, Sec. Clinton seemed as excited as her audience.

In opening remarks, Kashkett warmly welcomed the Secretary on behalf of both Foreign Service and Civil Service employees at State, who he noted were ready to become her “foreign policy brain trust.” The employees standing before her, Kashkett pointed out, “are a proud, patriotic, highly skilled corps of professionals ... [and] some of our country’s greatest

experts on every region of the world and every complex issue confronting the United States abroad.” His words of welcome were interrupted several times by cheers and applause from the crowd.

Under Secretary Burns then formally introduced the Secretary, and she took the

**Continued on page 53**



AFSA State VP Steve Kashkett (right) officially welcomes Secretary Clinton on her first day at the State Department, Jan. 22, while AFSA President John Naland (left) looks on.

SEC. CLINTON APPOINTS SPECIAL ENVOYS

### President and VP Visit State Dept. on Second Day in Office

Only a few hours after Secretary Clinton arrived at her new workplace on Jan. 22, President Barack Obama and Vice President Joseph Biden paid a highly publicized visit to the Department of State. Sec. Clinton had barely settled into her office before heading upstairs to the Benjamin Franklin Room to greet, alongside the new president and vice president, a select group of correspondents, foreign diplomats, White House staffers and department employees.

Covered live on major television networks, the State Department visit, on Pres. Obama’s second day in office, was seen as not only an affirmation of the president’s commitment to a more expanded role for the Foreign Service but also as a strong signal to foreign governments that the new U.S. administration will focus on diplomatic solutions to worldwide challenges. “Today you will see an example of the kind of robust diplomacy that the president intends to pursue,” Sec. Clinton stated. Wasting no time, she and Vice President Biden introduced two newly appointed special emissaries to troubled regions: former Senator George Mitchell, to be special envoy for Middle East peace, and former Ambassador Richard Holbrooke as special representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In his own remarks, Pres. Obama declared: “The State Department is going to be absolutely critical to our success in the years to come; you individually are going to be critical to our success; and we want to send a signal to all kinds of young people who may be thinking about the Foreign Service, that they are going to be critical in terms of projecting not just America’s power, but also America’s values and America’s ideals.” □

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### AFSA News

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**PRESIDENT:** John Naland

**STATE VP:** Steve Kashkett

**USAID VP:** Francisco Zamora

**FAS VP:** Henry Schmick

**FCS VP:** Keith Curtis

**RETIREE VP:** Robert W. Farrand

**SECRETARY:** F.A. "Tex" Harris

**TREASURER:** Andrew Winter

**STATE REPS:** Anne Aguilera,

David Firestein, Susan Malcik,

Sandy Robinson, Shayna Steinger,

Elaine Tiang-Chu, Daphne Titus, Andrea

Tomaszewicz, Christopher Tremann

**USAID REP:** Michael Henning

**FCS REP:** Rebecca Balogh

**FAS REP:** Kathryn Ting

**IBB REP:** Al Pessin

### RETIREE REPS:

Janice Bay, Herman Cohen,

David Passage, Jonathan Sperling

V.P. VOICE: **USAID** ■ BY FRANCISCO ZAMORA

**AAFSW Reconstitutes Forum Committees**

In January, Foreign Service employees, family members and past and present Family Liaison Office staff met in a forum sponsored by the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide to discuss making the FS bureaucracy more family-friendly.

After a lively discussion of ideas sent in from all over the world, the AAFSW forum decided to concentrate on three areas:

- Improving access to information by family members, by enabling home computer access to unclassified information regarding pertinent subjects such as post reports, training and the availability of part-time employment.
- Facilitating EFM employment, both by centrally funding positions from State and by increasing allowances for professional book shipments and space for spouses who wish to work from home.
- Creating more humane maternity/paternity policies for Foreign Service members and family members.

AAFSW encourages people to continue to send their ideas for making the Foreign Service more family-friendly to Forum Chairs Judy Felt at [JaJuFelt@aol.com](mailto:JaJuFelt@aol.com) and Ann La Porta at [a\\_laporta@yahoo.com](mailto:a_laporta@yahoo.com). Please indicate if you would be willing to work on a committee.

**Do We Have Your Correct Address?**

AFSA Governing Board elections are coming up, and we'll be sending out ballots to AFSA members in April. Please make sure that we have your correct mailing address. To update your address, visit us online at [www.afsa.org/addressChange.cfm](http://www.afsa.org/addressChange.cfm) or send an e-mail to [member@afsa.org](mailto:member@afsa.org).

**The Foreign Service's Poor Cousin**



It is hard not to feel neglected when compared to State Department employees. USAID Foreign Service officers, from the start of their employment, are treated like poor cousins. In spite of the fact that these new employees have been selected from thousands of highly qualified applicants, they are made to feel lucky to have been offered a job at all. Many are experiencing real financial hardship, forcing them to borrow from family and banks just to survive their Washington stay.

AFSA has been fighting the tendency of the agency to do business "on the cheap" on the backs of our employees. While we can point to several successes, much more must be done. For example, due to our advocacy, salaries for entry-level officers are no longer restricted to the FS-6, step 1 level, but can be set at step 14, which can translate into as much as a \$20,000 increase. We have also influenced the agency to pay for expenses involved in the initial interview process in Washington, whereas in the past interviewees "ate the cost." In addition, the agency has responded to our requests to restart the Student Loan Reimbursement Program, which provides thousands of dollars of relief for new officers burdened by student loans.

All of this is good, of course, but there is still a long way to go to achieve parity with the State Department. During the USAID town hall meeting on Jan. 7, which was netcast worldwide, Administrator Henrietta Fore and Gene George, head of human services, committed the agency to compensation parity with the State Department for USAID employees. An e-mail question submitted during the event from an FSO in Liberia pointed out that State Department employees in certain countries were receiving increased differentials in salary through the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential, a program no longer available to USAID officers. The administrator expressed her concern over that inequity and promised to address it. Mr. George stated that USAID is trying to reinstitute this benefit by summer 2009 at all posts where it is offered by the State Department.

However, other areas still need attention to bring the agency in line with the State Department. For example, while State A-100 entry-level officers receive per diem benefits, new USAID officers in the junior officer intake program are denied them. Instead, the agency provides them with locality pay, justifying this by claiming these new employees are assigned to Washington. In reality, this arrangement saves the agency money and forces the new officers to subsidize the government during their time here. Given that we plan to bring in close to 1,000 new officers during the coming years, we need to change this unfair system. We cannot afford the enormous morale issues engendered by these miserly policies.

The new administration is in a unique position to correct some of these longstanding problems. In so doing, they can clearly underscore their support for our most valuable asset: human resources. □

Many are experiencing real financial hardship, forcing them to borrow from family and banks just to survive their Washington stay.



## Why FAS Adopted the Foreign Service System

Although agricultural reporting, export expansion and U.S. wine promotion activities can be traced back to the third-ranked officer of the U.S. mission to France in 1784 (Thomas Jefferson, serving under Deputy John Adams and Minister Benjamin Franklin — imagine those country team meetings!), the Foreign Agricultural Service has only existed since 1930. From 1930 to 1939, FAS had about 10 agricultural commissioners posted overseas. In 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the Foreign Service officers from FAS and FCS to merge with those from State in order to have a unified overseas presence in the run-up to World War II.

In the early 1950s, following “encouragement” from agricultural commodity groups working with Congress, the agricultural attachés returned to FAS. “In 1954, when FAS was taking permanent shape, the agricultural attachés became civil servants instead of Foreign Service officers. This led to a number of problems,” Allan Mustard observed in his article, “An Unauthorized History of FAS” (May 2003 *FSJ*). “First, rotational authority (the ability to ‘stretch’ or ‘shrink’ into assignments) is, of course not inherent to the Civil Service. This sometimes made matching the right person to the right job impossible for bureaucratic reasons.” In addition to the assignment difficulties, overseas benefits did not accrue for FAS attachés, and some foreign countries would not grant them diplomatic privileges or standing.

In the late 1970s, after AFSA became a union and started working on the Foreign Service Act of 1980, FAS became convinced it was time to join the Foreign Service. Director General of the Foreign Service Harry Barnes urged Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz and FAS to consider joining the effort to convince Congress it was time for a total rewrite of the Foreign Service rules.

In 1977, Richard “Dick” Smith (at that point deputy administrator for management and attachés, and later FAS administrator) organized a three-day seminar in Williamsburg for all senior FAS managers to discuss whether or not to adopt a Foreign Service personnel system. Following a heated discussion, there was a consensus to join with State and other foreign affairs agencies to develop the Foreign Service Act of 1980.

While the Foreign Service Act brought a number of benefits to agricultural officers (along with mandatory retirement and selection-out processes), it also became a point of confusion to our FAS Civil Service colleagues. The two personnel systems have fundamentally different views: the Foreign Service has a “rank in person” approach, while the Civil Service uses “rank in job.” The Foreign Service system eases the problem of placing officers overseas because shrinks and stretches are easily handled, while the more rigid Civil Service approach to promotion and career advancement is simpler to implement and understand.

The “rank-in-person” approach eases slightly the administrative task of assigning officers overseas; it provides some benefits; and the up or out system sparks a feeling of urgency (or stress) to shine at all times.

Many of the FAS Civil Service concerns about the FS approach are not really about the specifics, but rather the administrative burden of having two separate personnel systems within one small agency that also has to handle a large rotation of agricultural officers returning from overseas posts.

Many of the current issues were identified in the 1965 Stanley Andrews report to then-Administrator Raymond “Ray” Ioanes. That study noted that the key concerns were communication with the field, orientation training for the attachés, and “staffing in a very broad sense.” The latter includes the rotation of officers to and from overseas positions. All those issues persist today, whether or not the agricultural attachés are FSOs or Civil Service employees.

So, what to make of the Foreign Service system for FAS? The “rank in person” approach eases slightly the administrative task of assigning officers overseas; it provides some benefits; and the up-or-out system sparks a feeling of urgency (or stress) to shine at all times. It has also served as a false point of conflict within FAS; the “Washington placement” issue exists whether or not agricultural officers are FSOs or Civil Service employees. Should FAS stick with the Foreign Service system? In the words of a recent candidate, “You betcha.”

*This short article is based heavily on the FAS historical research that the (usually) Honorable Allan P. Mustard, agricultural minister counselor in Mexico City, has done over the course of his career. FAS employees can read much more on the FASTNET Virtual Museum Web pages. □*

mike to give an enthusiastic off-the-cuff pep talk to her new employees. She predicted “a great adventure,” yet also acknowledged the challenges that lie ahead. Promising an environment that promotes teamwork, she continued, “There is nothing that I welcome more than a good debate and the kind of dialogue that will make us better.” It was one of several pronouncements that garnered enthusiastic applause.

With an exuberant, “And now, ladies and gentlemen, let’s get to work,” Sec. Clinton ended her remarks and began her first day at the State Department.

The ceremony was hosted by AFSA, working in collaboration with department management and the American Federation of Government Employees. The full text of both Steve Kashkett’s welcome remarks and Secretary Clinton’s response can be found online at [www.afsa.org/state/012309/afsanet.cfm](http://www.afsa.org/state/012309/afsanet.cfm). □

## AFSA NEWS BRIEFS

### Governing Board Welcomes Susan Malcik

Susan Malcik has joined the AFSA Governing Board as a State representative. Ms. Malcik’s international experience began in 1980 as a Peace Corps Volunteer in The Gambia. From there she accompanied her FSO spouse Ed Malcik to postings in Douala, Bombay, Bridgetown, Dakar, Abidjan, Djibouti and Berlin, working in a wide variety of positions including as a B&F assistant, CLO and ambassador’s self-help fund coordinator. After becoming a direct-hire Office Management Specialist in 2003, she has since served in Kabul, Stockholm and in the GSO section of the Administrative Management Training Division at FSI. She is currently a staff assistant in the Operations Center. □

## Secretary Clinton Addresses USAID Employees

The day after Secretary of State Hillary Clinton greeted State Department employees, she was welcomed enthusiastically by USAID employees, as well as AFSA, AFGE and agency management. The event took place at the Ronald Reagan Building on Jan. 23, Sec. Clinton’s second day of work.

AFSA USAID Vice President Francisco Zamora delivered welcoming remarks, citing Secretary Clinton’s “keen interest in development activities” and recalling meeting the Secretary when she inaugurated a health clinic for women and children in Egypt. Zamora pointed with pride to the fact that 75 percent of USAID postings are in hardship locations and that, by the summer of 2009, nearly half of the agency’s FSOs will have served unaccompanied tours in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan or Iraq. He also expressed the hope that the new administration would streamline foreign



AFSA USAID VP Francisco Zamora (left) welcomes Sec. Clinton (center), as USAID Acting Administrator Kent Hill (right) looks on.

assistance, eliminating “confusion and waste.”

In her response, Sec. Clinton was quick to point to her strong belief that development “is truly an equal partner, along with defense and diplomacy, in the furtherance of America’s national security.” The Secretary’s own experiences working in developing nations came to the fore in her remarks, and she addressed head-on Zamora’s comments about streamlining foreign aid programs, saying it was “ironic that our very best young military leaders ...

“Development experts have to go through miles of paperwork to spend 10 cents. It is not a sensible approach.”

— Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

are given unfettered resources through the Commander’s Emergency Response Program to spend as they see fit to build a school, to open a health clinic, to pave a road; and our diplomats and our development experts have to go through miles of paperwork to spend 10 cents. It is not a sensible approach.”

The complete text of the Secretary’s address to USAID employees can be found at [www.afsa.org/usaaid/012609afsanet.cfm](http://www.afsa.org/usaaid/012609afsanet.cfm). □

## AFSA, State Department in Media Spotlight

The arrival of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at the State Department, followed just hours later by a visit from President Obama and Vice President Biden, drew unusually heavy media coverage to both AFSA and the State Department. Live television coverage of both events was handled by CNN, MSNBC and other major networks, and articles popped up in the country’s largest newspapers the next day. The *Washington*

*Post*, the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Federal Times* are among the many newspapers that carried front-page articles. Excerpts from AFSA State VP Steve Kashkett’s welcome remarks were incorporated into articles in the *Washington Post* and other news sources, and he was interviewed on NPR. AFSA President John Naland was quoted in several major newspapers, as well as in *Time* magazine. □

# AFSA Annual Report 2008

## Turning the Tide

BY JOHN NALAND, AFSA PRESIDENT

**A**FSA's task in 2008 was to stop the damage being done to the career Foreign Service and to prepare for a counteroffensive in 2009 to regain lost ground.

### Looking Back

AFSA halted several negative trends during 2008. After years of stagnant funding for diplomacy, AFSA overcame budget gridlock between Congress and the lame-duck president by successfully advocating for \$25 million to expand Foreign Service staffing. Elsewhere, in the wake of the State Department's 2007 self-inflicted public relations disaster concerning Iraq staffing, AFSA convinced State during the 2008 bidding season to treat employees with respect instead of subjecting them to unnecessary threats, paving the way for all war-zone positions to be quickly filled by volunteers.

With only intermittent support from the Bush administration, AFSA also pushed our bill to close the overseas pay gap through both the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Although final passage was blocked by the opposition of one senator, we did make significant progress against difficult odds and established a strong position from which to move forward with the new Congress and new president.

Laying the groundwork for greater success in 2009, AFSA met with top advisers to the two presidential candidates and later met several times with Obama transition team members to explain the resource and management needs of diplomacy and development assistance. We helped draft a blue-ribbon panel report calling for hiring 4,735 additional diplomats and development professionals. That report drew compliments from key lawmakers and

from members of the incoming Obama administration. Throughout the year, AFSA had success in getting major media outlets to report on the unmet needs of the Foreign Service.

During 2008, as in every year, AFSA's 27-member professional staff provided expert support to hundreds of individual members (active-duty and retired) worldwide. We undertook a major renovation of our headquarters building. Our *Foreign Service Journal* continued to generate reader



to review what AFSA has done for you lately. If some issue that is important to you is not mentioned, please contact your AFSA constituency vice president so we can tell you what the association has accomplished on your behalf. (See "How to Contact Us" on page 50.)

### Looking Ahead

AFSA's task in 2009 will be to use the association's growing influence to convince the new Congress and new president to address the pressing needs of the Foreign Service — including significantly increasing staffing and finally passing legislation to close the overseas pay gap. We hope to work with the new management teams at each foreign affairs agency to implement long-overdue measures to improve conditions of employment. We will continue to defend the Foreign Service against unfair outside criticism without shying away from supporting reforms that are needed to make the Service a more effective agent of U.S. international engagement in the 21st century. As always, AFSA will continue our traditional member-focused advocacy and legal assistance on behalf of active-duty and retired members.

Thus, we expect 2009 to be a busy and productive year. At midyear, the current 25-member AFSA Governing Board that has served you since July 2007 will give way to the new board that you elect this spring. On behalf of the outgoing board, I thank you for your support, encouragement and feedback. The next Governing Board will need that same backing to continue AFSA's vital work to defend and advance the interests of the U.S. Foreign Service. □

AFSA's task in 2009 will be to use the association's growing influence to convince the new Congress and new president to address the pressing needs of the Foreign Service — including significantly increasing staffing.

praise for its coverage of professional and foreign policy topics. We maintained our long tradition of providing valuable scholarships to Foreign Service children. Our public outreach program involved many Foreign Service retirees in explaining the importance of U.S. diplomacy to tens of thousands of citizens nationwide. And we kept our members informed by way of frequent update reports distributed via multiple channels.

Details on these and other routine, but vital, activities can be found throughout this annual report. Please take a few minutes



### Briefing the Next Administration

AFSA's transition planning began in summer 2008 with meetings with senior foreign policy advisers to the two nominees for president. AFSA also played a key role in drafting and publicizing an October 2008 blue-ribbon panel report that urged the next president to hire more diplomats and development professionals. After the election, AFSA met with Obama transition team members at State, USAID, Commerce and IBB to explain the resource and management needs of the Foreign Service. We provided supplementary written documentation to assist the teams in briefing the new agency leadership. Throughout the year, we educated lawmakers and the media to prepare the ground for the Obama administration's budget requests for international engagement.

— John Naland, AFSA President

AFSA represented a number of employees in meetings with the House Government Oversight Committee on matters relating to Blackwater as well as other issues.

We met with management at the various agencies to negotiate or consult on a variety of regulations, including changes to the promotion and assignment precepts, the Diplomatic Security Bureau's new fitness-for-duty regulations, security clearance revocation regulations and contact reporting requirements.

Finally, we helped hundreds of employees with questions and/or problems regarding retirement benefits, entry-level salaries, allowances, bidding rules, workers' compensation, medical clearances and domestic partnership benefits.

AFSA's Richard S. Scissors Legal Defense Fund continued to grow. Since its

### Labor Management

AFSA's four attorneys and two labor management specialists continued to provide grievance and other assistance to our members at State, USAID, FCS, FAS and IBB. In 2008, we assisted approximately 250 individuals with grievances over such issues as low ranking, selection out, denial of tenure and promotion, prejudicial performance appraisals, denial of allowances, discipline matters, etc.

AFSA filed a class action grievance on behalf of 68 members of the Senior Foreign Service whom the department failed to compete for performance pay, in violation of the regulations. At press time,

we are awaiting a decision from the Foreign Service Grievance Board.

We assisted about a dozen employees whose security clearances had been suspended or proposed for revocation, as well as scores of employees who had been proposed for discipline for such things as security infractions, misuse of government vehicles and credit cards, violation of the department's policy on consensual sexual relationships, misuse of the pouch, misuse of government credentials, driving under the influence, failure to follow instructions, lack of candor and workplace violence.

[AFSA filed a class action grievance on behalf of 68 members of the Senior Foreign Service whom the department failed to compete for performance pay.](#)

inception in 2007, employees and retirees have donated approximately \$20,000. The Legal Defense Fund permits AFSA to retain private counsel in those cases that are of significant institutional importance to the union and our members. In 2008, contributions were used to try to preserve an employee's right to challenge his separation for cause before the Grievance Board after he was forced to resign from the State Department to work at another federal agency. The issue before the board was whether the employee voluntarily quit and gave up his right to challenge his separation or was "constructively" discharged. The case was settled, but a confidentiality clause does not permit discussion of the terms.

— Sharon Papp, General Counsel

### AFSA Headquarters Renovation

Throughout 2008, the AFSA headquarters at 2101 E Street NW underwent a long-overdue renovation. This activity created unique challenges for the professional staff, but service to our members and their interests — our number-one priority — was never compromised. It was the focus on this banner that allowed us to navigate creatively through the building renovation challenge. In 2009, staff will reoccupy the headquarters. We welcome all members and friends to visit us then.

— Ian Houston, Acting Executive Director



# AFSA Annual Report 2008

## YEAR IN REVIEW

### Legislative Report

In 2008, AFSA continued to be a strong, trusted and respected voice on Capitol Hill as we advocated on a variety of issues of importance to the Foreign Service community.

#### The Overseas Pay Gap

AFSA was consistently aggressive in working toward getting Congress to correct the overseas pay gap in 2008. Despite the great odds of moving anything forward in the late days of the 110th Congress, we have successes to highlight.

AFSA brokered a bipartisan agreement in the House Foreign Affairs Committee that resulted in the passage of a bill to solve the problem, in addition to raising the death gratuity benefit for Foreign Service personnel killed overseas. In the House, we had direct discussions with key leaders at critical junctures. We built up House co-sponsors on the bill, going office-to-office and relying on our members to capitalize on trips that members of Congress and staff took overseas. Never before had the HFAC passed a bill solely focused on correcting the pay problem, an indication of our success in elevating the discussion of this acute problem in Congress.

In the Senate, we convinced key senators to offer a companion bill to the House version. These efforts, coupled with our close relationships with key members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, allowed us to get the bill passed out of the SFRC. By the close of 2008, in the last days of the congressional session, we were in a good position for passage; but, unfortunately, certain senators exercised a procedural right to block the Senate pay gap bill over cost concerns and disagreement over the importance of fixing the problem. We waged a final aggressive push that consisted of mobilizing scores of constituent calls to the blocking senators, but they were not willing to relinquish their holds on the bill, and that ended our chances.

Despite this disappointment, AFSA is



OFFICE OF CHARLES RANGEL

Pictured left to right: AFSA Legislative Director Ian Houston, AFSA President John Naland, House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., AFSA State VP Steve Kashkett and State Governing Board Representative Daphne Titus.

proud of the strategic and focused leadership that enabled us to get as far as we did.

#### Funding for Diplomacy and Staffing

AFSA has consistently focused on the vital need to augment the Foreign Service ranks and find creative solutions to funding that increase in personnel. AFSA was very effective in 2008 in our efforts to advance this priority. We made convincing arguments that the Foreign Service was critically underfunded and that a lack of appropriated funds over the last several years had resulted in a fiscal emergency. We secured key meetings early in the process and made specific suggestions to senior congressional appropriators and their staffs.

As a result of that direct advocacy, \$25 million for staffing and training was locked into the president's Fiscal Year 2008 supplemental spending request for Iraq and Afghanistan. We then shifted to ensuring that the president's call for a significant increase in Foreign Service positions in the Fiscal Year 2009 budget request was funded.

We made substantive contributions in 2008 to the American Academy of Diplomacy and Henry L. Stimson Center landmark study, which detailed specifically what human and financial resources the State Department, the Foreign Service and USAID need to accomplish their missions. We then helped bring these arguments to Congress. The specific appropriations bill that was to fund these addi-

tional positions and provide greater resources was, unfortunately, not completed by Congress in 2008, but we are hopeful that our efforts will bear fruit when the new 111th Session wraps up the pending budget process in 2009. In engaging on these fronts, we have advanced our broader goal of bringing to our fellow citizens a greater awareness, knowledge and respect for what the Foreign Service does.

#### Other Legislative Fronts

AFSA also engaged on issues of critical importance to USAID. Particular areas of focus in 2008 included advocating for agency operating expenses and increased staffing, and strongly expressing our concerns about the pitfalls related to mid-level Foreign Service hiring at USAID and how this well-intentioned initiative potentially undermines the career Foreign Service.

We also forged partnerships with outside organizations and humanitarian and development nongovernmental organizations in an effort to raise our profile in this community. And we offered key insights as the debate on foreign assistance reform heated up.

AFSA tackled many other priority issues during the year, such as retirement benefits, maternity leave questions for federal employees, tax issues specifically affecting civilians working overseas and serving in combat zones, and ambassadorships for political appointees.

— Ian Houston,  
Legislative Affairs Director

### Public Outreach

The career Foreign Service faced a serious public affairs image problem in the aftermath of State's lamentable "town hall meeting" in October 2007, which left broadly negative nationwide media and public perceptions that most FSOs are unwilling to serve in danger posts like Iraq and Afghanistan.

AFSA responded in 2008 with a steady outreach campaign to counter these negative stereotypes, including more than 70 articles, letters, op-eds and AFSA interviews published in national media, defending the courage and dedication of the career Foreign Service in volunteering for the most dangerous assignments around the world.

Prime examples include AFSA President John Naland's appearance on "The News-hour with Jim Lehrer" and an interview from his home on a CNN special, "The New Diplomats," as well as State VP Steve Kashkett's vigorous defense of the Foreign Service's courage and dedication on NPR's "Diane Rehm" show.



ANN THOMAS

Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte presents award to High School Essay Contest winner Alicia Constant.

AFSA played a crucial role in the landmark October 2008 study, "A Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future: Fixing the Crisis in Diplomatic Readiness," released jointly by the American Academy of Diplomacy and the Stimson Center. Cited in numerous media reports and articles, the report documented the crucial need for increased funding and staffing for the Foreign Service.

During the year, AFSA programmed over 470 retiree speakers in more than 100

universities, colleges, World Affairs Councils and policy forums in 44 states and Washington, D.C. All speakers were provided with AFSA talking points and requested to emphasize the critical role of the Foreign Service and U.S. diplomacy and to exhort audiences to contact their members of Congress and insist upon increased funding

for U.S. diplomacy.

AFSA also sponsored its ninth National High School Essay Contest, with more than 250 students participating. The winner was congratulated by Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte.

— Tom Switzer, Director of Communications

### Elderhostel

The Elderhostel program continued its expansion in 2008. Three new courses were offered during the year, all filled to capacity. AFSA offered 11 weeklong programs in four locations (Washington, St. Petersburg, Tucson and Chautauqua), in addition to 10 one-day programs in Washington, D.C.

AFSA was also chosen by Elderhostel headquarters in Boston to participate in a new pilot project to bring programs into retirement communities. AFSA participated in five such programs in Silver Spring, Md., and Canton, Mass.

Throughout the year, just over 1,300 people participated in AFSA's Elderhostel programs nationwide. Some of our speakers included Ambassadors Elizabeth Jones, James Collins, Kenton Keith and Thomas Hubbard. At the end of 2008, Administrator Janice Bay retired after four successful years at the helm. She has been succeeded by Bernard Alter.

— Ásgeir Sigfússon, USAID Office Manager

### Scholarship Program

The 2008 AFSA Scholarship Program awarded Academic and Art Merit Awards totaling \$35,700 to 26 high school seniors, and bestowed Financial Aid Scholarships totaling \$152,574 on 69 undergraduate college students for the 2008-2009 school year. The Martha and George Newman Financial Aid Scholarship received a bequest totaling over \$650,000 from the couple's estate. Finally, the AFSA Scholarship Fund made a \$37,500 donation to the Federal Employee Education and Assistance Fund (with a 100-percent match by FEEA) to help begin to pay for the college education of children of Foreign Service employees who lost their lives in terrorist attacks.

— Lori Dec, Scholarship Administrator



Janet Bayless presents Newman Trust donation to AFSA. From left: Chairman of AFSA Committee on Education Amb. C. Edward Dillery, Scholarship Director Lori Dec, Treasurer Andrew Winter, Bayless, AFSA President John Naland and Amb. Thomas Boyatt.

JOHN MAWONE

# AFSA Annual Report 2008

## YEAR IN REVIEW

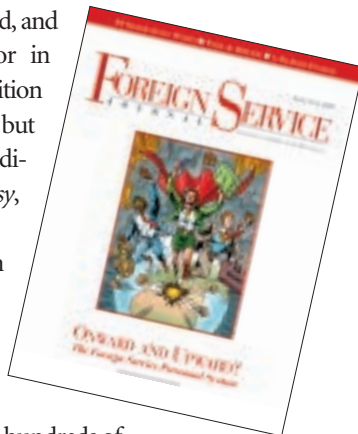
### Foreign Service Journal

The *Journal* welcomed Alicia J. Campi as its new business manager in March, replacing Andrew Kidd, and Francesca Kelly became *AFSA News* editor in September. Shawn Dorman, who had held that position for eight years, remains the *Journal's* associate editor, but is focused on putting together the new, expanded edition of AFSA's best-selling book, *Inside a U.S. Embassy*, slated for publication in late 2009.

More than 850 people, three-quarters of them active-duty AFSA members, took an online reader survey between May 1 and June 25. A majority of respondents (53 percent) were very satisfied with the *Journal* overall, and another 39 percent said they were somewhat satisfied. Participants also provided hundreds of written comments on the magazine's coverage, format and other matters.

BPA Worldwide's audit of the *Journal's* circulation found that it has topped the 15,000 mark for the first time, a figure that should make the magazine even more attractive to potential advertisers. Sixty percent of subscribers are active-duty employees of the five foreign affairs agencies. The remaining subscribers are Foreign Service retirees, Civil Service employees and members of the public; libraries, universities and other institutions; and all members of Congress and various senior foreign affairs officials.

— Steven Alan Honley, Editor



### Retiree Task Force Targets Re-employment

In 2008, the AFSA Retiree Task Force began developing a proposal for legislation to waive both the salary limitations and the hours limitations on re-employment of Foreign Service annuitants for one- and two-year assignments of critical importance to the department's mission.

There is a 15-percent shortfall in the permanent work force of 11,300 Foreign Service personnel. Although this work force is augmented by 1,300 to 1,500 re-employed annuitants, they are only permitted to work on a short-term basis. Despite the fact that re-employed annuitants have critically needed training, skills and experience, they currently cannot be used to fill the persistent and critical longer-term, mid-level staffing gaps of one and two years that the department now faces.

— Bonnie Brown, Retiree Coordinator

### Awards and Plaques

Through the Fund for American Diplomacy, AFSA bestowed awards this year in several different categories: lifetime contributions to American diplomacy, constructive dissent, exemplary performance and outstanding professional contributions, as well as the AFSA Rep of the Year award. AFSA award winners are nominated by colleagues. The fund also sponsors the Sinclair Award, which recognizes outstanding accomplishment in the study of difficult foreign languages and their associated cultures. The winners of this award are nominated by language instructors at the FSI School of Language Studies. For a complete list of the 2008 award winners please visit AFSA on the Web at [www.afsa.org](http://www.afsa.org).



AFSA President John Naland, with Deputy Secretary John Negroponte, Diana Negroponte and Director General Harry Thomas, opening the Plaque Ceremony on May 2.



AFSA honored two fallen diplomats in 2008, Steven Thomas Stefani IV and John Michael Granville, adding their names to the AFSA Memorial Plaques. □

2008 Constructive Dissent and Performance Award winners, June 19. From right: Amb. Jeffrey Feltman, Rachel Schneller, Luke Zahner, Victor Williams, Virginia Gregory, Craig Gerard and Megan Myers (for Julie Eadeh).

### State: A Broad Range of Activity

**A**FSA's efforts at the Department of State in 2008 covered a broad range of issues of intense concern to our members, but the focal point remained the unique problems and challenges associated with sustaining our two largest diplomatic missions in active war zones.

As we entered our sixth year of staffing Afghanistan and Iraq, we could count thousands of our members who had already volunteered for tours of duty there, and could proudly point to the Foreign Service's willingness to "step up to the plate" for combat zone duty. We could confidently say that not a single directed assignment to either embassy or to the provincial reconstruction teams in the two countries had been necessary. Yet the Foreign Service nonetheless began 2008

**Our focal point remained the unique problems and challenges associated with sustaining our two largest diplomatic missions in active war zones.**

under a cloud of bad press, hostile public opinion and congressional skepticism as a result of the department's ill-advised "prime candidate" exercise for Iraq staffing in the fall of 2007, followed by its mishandling of the publicity surrounding that exercise.

AFSA undertook a campaign to set the record straight,

to restore the image of the Foreign Service and to persuade senior State officials to take a different approach to the Iraq/Afghanistan assignment cycle in 2008. We gave a series of high-profile media interviews, placed op-eds and helped dozens of our members worldwide to publish letters to the editor of their hometown newspapers. More importantly, we set forth a detailed blueprint for department management to use in recruiting volunteers for Foreign Service positions in the two war zones. This blueprint relied on positive encouragement rather than coercion, appealed to our members' sense of duty, and allowed time for the natural dynamic of the Open Assignment process to generate willing bidders. In the end, the department adopted AFSA's approach, and all Iraq and Afghanistan positions for summer 2009 were filled by the early fall of 2008.

Other aspects of war-zone service that AFSA repeatedly raised throughout the year with 7th-floor principals, with the director general's office and with key State bureaus included honoring promises made to Iraq and Afghanistan volunteers for onward assignment consideration, ensuring that extended war-zone temporary duty service is reflected in employees' HR folders and supporting families separated by unaccompanied tours. In January, AFSA hand-delivered a letter signed by 100 FS members in Iraq to House Ways & Means Committee Chairman Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., urging legislation to provide income tax exemptions to

federal civilian employees serving in combat zones. And proper recognition and treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among those returning from high-threat posts remained a frequent subject of discussion between AFSA and M/MED.

Beyond the complex problems surrounding war-zone service, the AFSA State office:

- Pressed for fairness in the assignment process and argued for even-handed application of fair share requirements and the 5/8-Year Rule, while still allowing for waivers in cases of demonstrable special circumstances and humanitarian need;
- Consulted closely with HR in revamping the Foreign Service entry process, introducing a Qualifications Evaluation Panel and modifying the written exam;
- Assisted members assigned overseas seeking employment for their family members or status/recognition for their domestic partners;
- Lobbied for more flexible rules for Foreign Service women who currently must exhaust their annual and sick leave when facing mandatory medical evacuation from overseas posts for pregnancy and childbirth;
- Negotiated new foreign contact reporting rules as well as modifications to Foreign Affairs Manual regulations in dozens of other areas;
- Held quarterly meetings with the senior leadership of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security to address concerns of personnel assigned to Iraq, DS investigative procedures and security clearance suspensions;
- Addressed a severe backlog in issuance of PCS travel orders and lack of responsiveness by HR technicians, as well as complaints from members regarding heavy-handed attempts by the Charleston Financial Services Center to collect alleged outstanding debts, sometimes more than a decade old, from employees' travel or medevac vouchers;
- Conducted an electronic survey of the opinions of the entire State Foreign Service on a wide range of career-related subjects, drawing completed responses from nearly half of total Service members (5,700 out of 11,500).

As always, over the course of the year, the AFSA State vice president and the professional staff of the State Labor Management Office fielded requests from hundreds of members for assistance with individual problems; represented members in hundreds of grievances, disciplinary cases, DS investigations and security clearance cases; and fielded over a thousand requests for information or advice on a wide variety of issues.

— Steve Kashkett, State VP

## USAID: Highlights of a Busy Year

The AFSA USAID office staff was very busy working on members' behalf this past year. Although it is impossible to list all activities and accomplishments in detail in the space of this short article, highlights are detailed below. Our activities can be classified broadly as those dealing with general work conditions and benefits, lobbying Congress and the new administration, and providing individual assistance to our members.

In the first category, AFSA worked with USAID management to expand or establish benefits. We were pleased that the Student Loan Reimbursement Program was reinstated by the agency and that many of our FSOs signed up for it. We also insisted that entry-level officers receive more realistic, higher salaries, which can result in an increase of as much as \$20,000. In another success, those interviewing for USAID positions are now reimbursed for their expenses while in Washington, thus making it more affordable for them to apply for these jobs.

We worked alongside AFSA headquarters staff to urge Congress to provide our employees with equitable benefits such as overseas pay parity, which Senior Foreign Service officers already receive. Although we were able to move the issue farther than at any time, unfortunately we were not successful. But the work will not go to waste; the new administration has strong support for correcting this problem. Our meetings with the Obama transition team provided a good vehicle for informing them of this and many other issues that will ultimately improve working conditions for our members and the agency as a whole.

Another little-known fact is that we enjoy close working rela-

The AFSA USAID staff informed, advised, counseled and intervened with Human Resources on a multitude of matters related to FSO careers.

tionships with think-tanks and nongovernmental organizations that influence the implementation of U.S. development policies. These "other players" lobby the government on issues that ultimately affect the working conditions of our employees. We make sure they have our views and interests in mind.

The most important part of AFSA's work at USAID is our direct service to members. The AFSA USAID staff informed, advised, counseled and intervened with Human Resources on a mul-

titude of matters related to FS careers. In several cases, we were successful in preventing employees' unfair separation from the agency. In other instances, we helped employees improve their performances through advice and counseling. AFSA also helped in many other areas, such as retroactive post differential and medical evacuation benefits; assignments; abusive supervisors; payroll issues; security investigations; and travel benefits. We negotiated favorable agreements for seven grievances, and were able to avoid many other potential grievances by negotiating informally with the agency.

In 2009, we will try to achieve the goals that have eluded us so far. Most important will be the pay equity issue. We would also like to see USAID FSOs receive the same benefits as State employees, such as the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential, per diem during Washington-based training and better financial support for the expenses incurred by new FSOs.

As always, our office is open to provide individual assistance to our members and we encourage you to stop by, call us or send us an e-mail. We are here to serve you.

—Francisco Zamora, USAID VP



AFSA USAID VP Francisco Zamora (left) and USAID Rep Michael Henning at the AFSA Memorial Plaque Ceremony, May 2. USAID FSO John Michael Granville, who was killed in Khartoum, was honored at the ceremony.

### Foreign Commercial Service: A Period of Transition

The past year was a transition period for FCS AFSA leadership. Both our VP and representative positions changed hands, and there was a gap of several months in the VP position. The main issue at the AFSAwide level was the push to close the overseas pay gap. The director general's office agreed to be supportive of the effort. The legislation to do so is currently stalled in Congress after nearly passing.

We focused extensively on new work plans proposed by management and responded to issues raised by proposed new work plans for nontraditional limited officer positions in Market Access and Compliance, the National Institute of Standards and the Patent and Trademark Office. For the new officer plans, we amalgamated extensive comments from the field and provided them to management, which is now reviewing our comments and suggestions.

The plans are necessary to properly reflect new performance measures. We expect to move ahead expeditiously on this issue, but

We now believe we have established a firm ground for increased communication with management, HR personnel and the incoming administration.

have advised management that we believe these plans are best implemented at the start of the review year rather than the end.

We worked on an officer survey earlier in the year and have consulted informally with management on liberalization of the seven-year rule for domestic tours by new officers. We have a substantial list of grievance cases, which are being worked on by AFSA lawyers, and we have worked to make the senior award, recognition and pay process more efficient. Most of these issues are

continuing into 2009.

We now believe we have established a firm ground for increased communication with management, human resources personnel and the incoming administration through frequent and regular meetings with HR and the FCS director general. We had an excellent meeting with the president-elect's transition team at Commerce and plan to push our resource issues with them and on the Hill with the new Congress.

— Keith Curtis, FCS VP

### Foreign Agricultural Service: A Set of Interesting Issues

An interesting, at times surprising, and obviously unfinished set of issues events popped up in 2008.

**Contract:** Thanks to our strong team of FAS AFSA advisers, we made detailed proposals on 15 articles. However, it now appears we may decide to focus on just

In 2009 the number of returning FSOs will more than double.

Article 25 — Foreign Service Selection Boards and Precepts — and roll the rest of the contract over for a few more years.

**Assignment of Returning Officers:** The 2008 process worked fairly well, but it only had to place seven returning FSOs. In 2009 the number of returning FSOs will more than double. We are therefore discussing

how to set up a wider pool of positions, perhaps by allowing Civil Service employees to participate by putting their jobs into the pool for at-grade rotations. Details remain to be finalized.

**ATO Grievance:** Our grievance on the assignment of three Civil Service employees to Agricultural Trade Office positions in the first bidding round has been submitted. The goal is to ensure that management complies with past practices and negotiated procedures for all assignments.

**Transition:** We look forward to working with, educating and re-educating the new set of administrators on the importance of the Foreign Service to USDA's mission, as well as the joys of administering the Foreign Service personnel system.

— Henry Schmick, FAS VP

#### Key Years in AFSA's History

- 1918 American Consular Association was formed.
- 1924 Consular Corps and Diplomatic Corps combined to form the Foreign Service. The ACA reconstituted itself as the American Foreign Service Association "for the purpose of fostering an esprit de corps" among Foreign Service employees.
- 1968 AFSA established headquarters at 2101 E Street NW in Washington, D.C.
- 1972 AFSA filed for exclusive trade union status for the Foreign Service, competing against the American Federation of Government Employees. State and USAID voted AFSA as their union.
- 1980 The Foreign Service Act was passed, incorporating reforms urged by AFSA.
- 1992 USIA re-established AFSA as its exclusive representative.
- 1993 The Foreign Agricultural Service and the Foreign Commercial Service joined AFSA.

## International Broadcasting Bureau: Agreements Reached

After protracted negotiations, AFSA reached agreement with the agency on how to make permanent the time in class/time in service freeze for current Voice of America FS Class 1 correspondents. The freeze was put in place about 10 years ago to ensure that FP-1 correspondents were not TIC-ed out en masse for lack of promotion opportunities. The new regulations will ensure that no correspondents “who were tenured career members of the Foreign Service as of October 1, 2006” will be separated due to TIC or TIS.

As of January 2009, we believe all issues and language have been settled and we hope to sign the MOA changes very soon. The package also includes some other changes to the evaluation and promotion process.

As those negotiations draw to a close, we are attempting to start

The new regulations will ensure that no correspondents “who were tenured career members of the Foreign Service as of October 1, 2006” will be separated due to TIC or TIS.

a discussion with IBB on some other FS correspondent issues, including the lack of promotions to the Senior Foreign Service for many years and the grade classifications of our positions. During the past year, we have not had any issues regarding our Foreign Service technicians, other than some individual concerns.

In December, AFSA President John Naland and I, along with representatives of other IBB unions, met with the IBB transition team co-leader, and longtime

VOA/IBB official, Woody Demitz, to put our concerns on the map as the new administration prepared to take office.

If anyone in the IBB AFSA bargaining unit has any questions or concerns, individual or broad, please feel free to contact me at [apessin@voanews.com](mailto:apessin@voanews.com).

— Al Pessin, IBB Representative

## Retirees: Assistance on a Host of Issues

AFSA Retiree Coordinator Bonnie Brown provided assistance to retiree members on more than 350 retiree benefits issues in 2008. Although members had a broad range of issues, they most frequently had concerns about FEHBP benefits, annuities, Medicare B and WAE employment.

On the legislative and regulatory side, there was no movement in Congress on the Windfall Elimination Provision and Premium Conversion legislation. There were, however, some failed efforts to alter FEHBP benefits that, working with other retiree associations, AFSA tracked and brought to the attention of its members.

We formed a Retiree Task Force, composed of Hank Cohen, Janice Bay and David Passage and staff members Janet Hedrick, James Yorke and Bonnie Brown, working under my leadership to increase retiree membership. Retirees need an organization like AFSA to “watch our collective backs” and monitor threats to federal benefits in times of financial crisis.

The Task Force is also working to develop legislation to facil-

In the future we intend to focus more and more on informing and preparing active-duty members for a smooth retirement.

itate more extensive re-employment of annuitants to carry out assignments critical to the department.

AFSA President John Naland travelled to Florida, Texas, North Carolina and California to meet with Foreign Service retiree association members and give interviews to local media outlets.

AFSA co-sponsored three Job Transition Seminar receptions for retirees with DACOR at the Foreign Service Institute in 2008. AFSA presented a lunchtime program during the seminar, where retirees were given the opportunity to ask questions about retirement benefits.

In *Foreign Service Journal* retiree columns and the *Retiree Newsletter*, Bonnie Brown and I wrote about many of the complex issues facing retirees and those approaching retirement. In the future we intend to focus more and more on informing and preparing active-duty members for a smooth retirement. Toward that end, the *Retiree Newsletter* is now being sent electronically to all members 55 and older.

— Bill Farrand, Retiree VP



## AFSA Board of Governors

Back row, from left: Christopher Tremann (State Rep), Andrea Tomaszewicz (State Rep), Jonathan Sperling (Retiree Rep), Michael Henning (USAID Rep), Anne Aguilera (State Rep), David Passage (Retiree Rep), Al Pessin (IBB Rep), Sandy Robinson (State Rep) and Henry Schmick (FAS VP).

Front row, from left: Francisco Zamora (USAID VP), John Naland (President), Daphne Titus (State Rep), Susan Malcik (State Rep), Steve Kashkett (State VP), Janice Bay (Retiree Rep), Kathryn Ting (FAS Rep) and Keith Curtis (FCS VP).

Not pictured: Rebecca Balogh (FCS Rep), Hank Cohen (Retiree Rep), Robert Farrand (Retiree VP), David Firestein (State Rep), F.A. "Tex" Harris (Secretary), Shayna Steinger (State Rep), Elaine Tiang-Chu (State Rep) and Andrew Winter (Treasurer).



AUSTIN TRACY

## The Foreign Service Journal Editorial Board



SHAWN DORMAN

From left: Board Chair Ted Wilkinson, George Jones, Jim DeHart, Jeff Giauque, David McFarland, Julie Gianelloni Connor, Governing Board Liaison Al Pessin and Stephen Buck.

Not pictured: Joseph Bruns, Laurie Kassman and Yvette Malcioln.

www.afsa.org



### AFSA ON THE WEB

The total number of visitors to the AFSA Web site continued to surpass the one-million mark in 2008, with each user staying longer and visiting more pages than in previous years. Each month visitors returned to the site, with consistent favorites being the *Foreign Service Journal*, AFSA's essay contest pages and *Inside a U.S. Embassy* pages. This year saw an increase in the number of hits on the president and retiree vice president pages.

AFSA sent 65 AFSAnet messages in 2008. The AFSAnet listserv continues to be one of AFSA's best vehicles for reaching members quickly. With 8,485 subscribers at year's end, AFSAnet remains a great way to keep current on issues of concern to the Foreign Service. To sign up, visit [www.afsa.org/forms/maillist.cfm](http://www.afsa.org/forms/maillist.cfm).

# AFSA Annual Report 2008

## Staff

### Finance and Administration

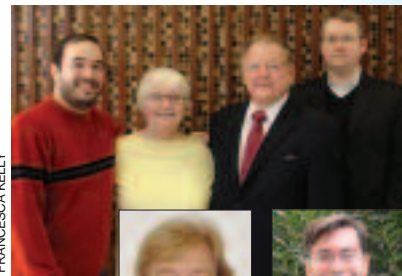


AUSTIN TRACY

From left: Controller Kalpna Srimal, Account Assistant Cory Nishi. Not pictured: Executive Director John Mamone.

- Accounting
- Financial Management
- Staff Recruitment & Supervision
- Building Administration
- Board and Committee Support

### Outreach Programs



FRANCESCA KELLY

From left: Executive Assistant to the President Austin Tracy, Retiree Affairs Coordinator Bonnie Brown, Director of Communications Tom Switzer, USAID Office Manager Asgeir Sigfússon. Inset, left: Elderhostel Administrator Janice Bay. Inset, right: Legislative Affairs Director Ian Houston. Not pictured: Professional Issues Coordinator Barbara Berger.

#### Public Outreach

- Speakers Bureau
- Elderhostel
- Memorial Plaques
- Foreign Service Day
- Diplomats Online
- AFSA Awards

#### Congressional Affairs

- Lobbying
- Tracking Legislation
- Hill Testimony
- Grassroots Campaigns

#### Retiree Services

- Member Inquiries
- Retiree Newsletter
- Retiree Directory

### Foreign Service Journal



HANS MULDER

From left: Editor Steven Alan Honley, Business Manager Alicia Campi, AFSA News Editor Francesca Kelly, Associate Editor Shawn Dorman, Advertising & Circulation Manager Ed Miltenberger, Senior Editor Susan Maitra. Not pictured: Art Director Caryn Suko Smith.

- Editing
- Writing
- Design
- Advertising
- Subscriptions and Sales
- *Inside a U.S. Embassy*

### Member Services



AUSTIN TRACY

From left: Administrative Assistant Ana Lopez, Membership Services Director Janet Hedrick, Membership Representative Michael Laiacona.

- Member Recruitment
- Post Reps
- Insurance Programs
- Address Changes
- AFSAnet Listserv
- AFSA Web Site
- Member Inquiries
- Member Records
- Fundraising

### Labor-Management



AUSTIN TRACY

From left: Labor Management Specialist James Yorke, Grievance Attorney Neera Parikh, Labor Management Attorney Zlatana Badrich, General Counsel Sharon Papp, Office Manager Christine Warren, Senior Labor Management Adviser Doug Broome, Grievance Attorney Holly Rich.

- Negotiations
- Protecting Benefits
- Grievance Counseling
- OIG & DS Investigations
- Member Inquiries
- Informing the Field

### Scholarships



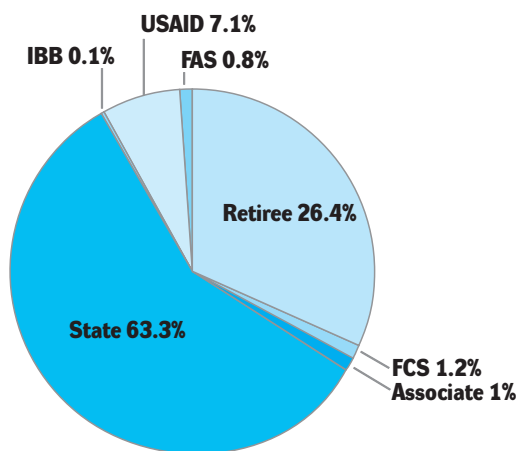
SHAWN DORMAN

Scholarship Administrator Lori Dec.

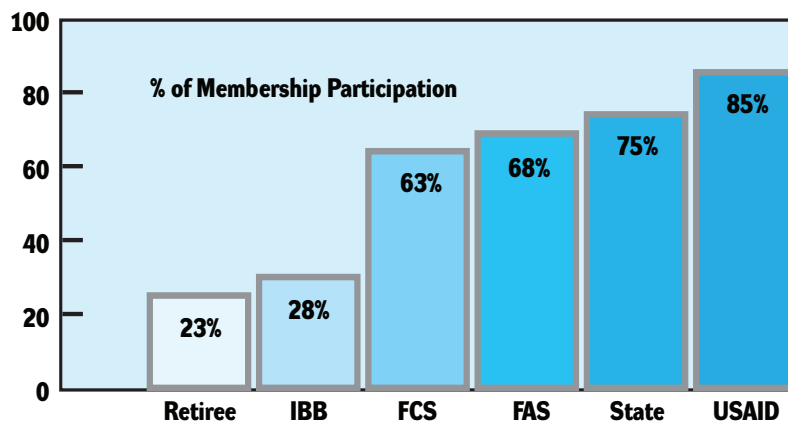
- Financial Aid
- Merit Awards
- Art Merit Awards
- Committee on Education

# AFSA Annual Report 2008

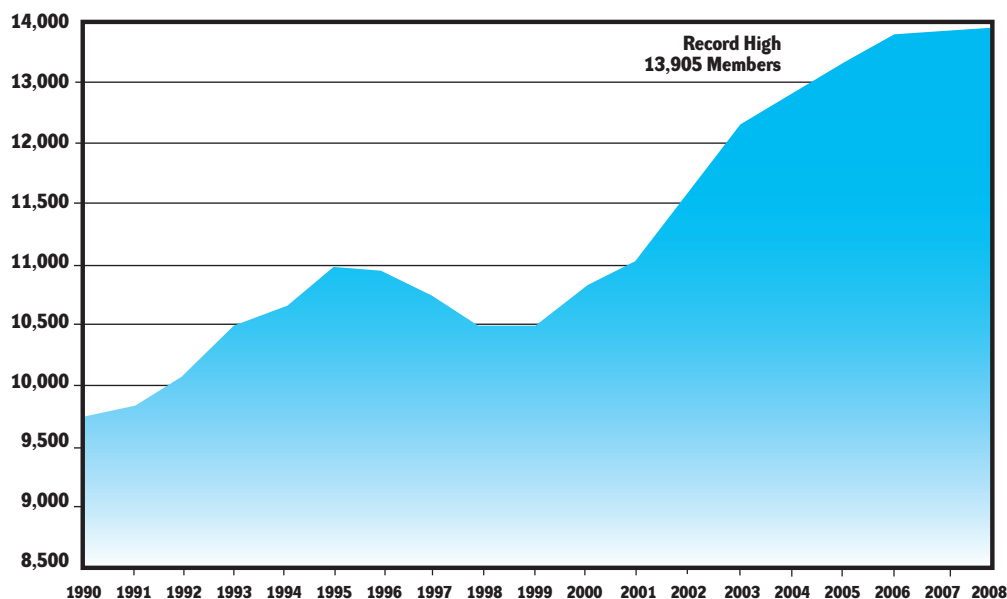
## Membership by Constituency December 2008



## Membership Participation by Constituency December 2008



## Total Membership 1990 to 2008



### AUDIT REPORT for AFSA

AFSA's audited financial statements for 2008 will be available on the AFSA Web site ([www.afsa.org](http://www.afsa.org)) in May.

## 2008 Budget in Brief

INCOME	EXPENSES
Dues.....2,621,000	Membership Programs .....1,305,789
Foreign Service Journal Advertising.....560,000	Foreign Service Journal .....969,118
Insurance Programs .....22,000	Legislative Affairs .....157,681
Legislative Action Fund.....40,000	Professional Programs and Outreach.....447,711
Other.....25,500	Scholarships .....451,188
Professional Programs and Outreach.....267,646	Administration .....576,844
Scholarships .....452,549	Contributions to Endowment and Reserves .....80,364
<b>TOTAL</b> .....3,988,695	<b>TOTAL</b> .....3,988,695

# AFSA Annual Report 2008

## AFSA BY THE NUMBERS IN 2008

9	AFSA press releases.
33	New lifetime members.
65	AFSANets sent.
70	AFSA interviews, articles, letters, op-eds published in media nationwide.
78	Percentage of posts that have an AFSA representative.
250	Students participating in AFSA's National High School Essay Contest.
470	AFSA Speaker programs nationwide.
8,485	Subscribers to AFSANet listserv.
13,905	AFSA members at year's end.
30,500	Total academic and professional audiences attending AFSA programs nationwide.
37,500	The size in dollars of the donation made to FEEA (with a 100-percent match by FEEA) to pay for the college education of FS children who lost parents in terrorist attacks.
188,274	The amount of scholarship assistance provided to 95 Foreign Service children (in dollars).
652,177	The amount of a bequest added to the Martha and George Newman Scholarship (in dollars).

## Benefits of AFSA Membership

**LABOR MANAGEMENT RELATIONS:** AFSA negotiates the regulations affecting employees' careers. We work to make the Foreign Service a better place in which to work, live and raise a family. Our network of AFSA post representatives provides on-site assistance to overseas members.

**CONGRESSIONAL ADVOCACY:** AFSA is your advocate before Congress on issues affecting the careers of active members and the annuities of retired members.

**OMBUDSMAN:** We work to resolve member problems with pay, allowances, claims, annuities, health care, and many other issues.

**VOICE OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE:** As the professional association of the Foreign Service since 1924, AFSA works to strengthen our profession and is ever vigilant for threats to the career Foreign Service.

**GRIEVANCE REPRESENTATION:** AFSA's legal staff provides hands-on assistance with grievance proceedings when your rights are violated.

**OUTREACH:** AFSA communicates the views of the Foreign Service on professional issues to the news media and directly to the general public.

**FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL:** Our monthly magazine offers provocative articles that will keep you current on developments in the foreign affairs profession.

**AFSA NEWS:** AFSA's monthly newsletter, inside the *Foreign Service Journal*, highlights issues affecting your daily life.

**AFSA WEB SITE:** Our online member area includes a member directory and member forums.

**AFSANET:** Regular e-mail updates keep you current on issues of importance to the Foreign Service community.

**LEGAL SERVICES:** We offer free legal advice and representation on employment issues, including security and OIG investigations, discipline cases and security clearance proceedings.

**INSURANCE PROGRAMS:** You can choose among competitively priced insurance programs designed for the Foreign Service community, including professional liability, long-term care, accident, dental and personal property/transit.

**AFSA SCHOLARSHIPS:** Approximately 100 merit-based and financial-need scholarships are granted every year to Foreign Service family members. Since 1926, AFSA has awarded approximately \$4,450,000 in scholarships.

**AFSA AWARDS:** This unique awards program honors constructive dissent and outstanding performance.

**RETIREE NEWSLETTER:** This bimonthly newsletter is exclusively for retired members.

**DIRECTORY OF RETIRED MEMBERS:** This invaluable annual listing, by state, of contact information for retired members is provided to all retired AFSA members.

**MAGAZINE DISCOUNTS:** AFSA members are eligible for special discounts on subscriptions to major foreign affairs journals.

**ESPRIT DE CORPS:** We work to build a sense of common cause and professional pride among all Foreign Service members: active-duty and retired; generalists and specialists; entry-level and senior.

**AFSA MEMORIAL PLAQUES:** Established in 1933, and maintained by AFSA, these plaques in the Truman Building lobby honor members of the Foreign Service who lost their lives overseas in the line of duty.



## AFSA Core Values

### THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

Established in 1924.

#### MISSION

To make the Foreign Service a more effective agent of United States international leadership.

#### VISION

We work to make the Foreign Service a better-supported, more respected, more satisfying place in which to spend a career and raise a family.

— **RESPONSIVENESS:** We listen to our members and actively promote their interests.

— **EFFECTIVENESS:** We act with a sense of urgency, get results, and make a difference.

— **INTEGRITY:** We demonstrate openness, honesty, and fairness in everything we do.

— **EFFICIENCY:** We carefully expend our resources where they can have maximum impact.

— **COMMUNITY:** We foster teamwork, respect each other, and enjoy our time together.

— **COURAGE:** We encourage responsible risk-taking in order to achieve results.

— **PATRIOTISM:** We are faithful to the grand and enduring ideals that gave our nation birth.

— **EMPOWERMENT:** We trust each other to give our best efforts guided by these core values.

# CLASSIFIEDS



## LEGAL SERVICES

**WILLS/ESTATE PLANNING** by attorney who is a former FSO. Have your will reviewed and updated, or new one prepared: No charge for initial consultation.

**M. Bruce Hirshorn, Boring & Pilger, P.C.**  
307 Maple Ave. W, Suite D, Vienna, VA 22180. Tel: (703) 281-2161.  
Fax: (703) 281-9464.  
E-mail: mbhirshorn@boringandpilger.com

**EXPERIENCED ATTORNEYS REPRESENTING** FS officers in grievances, performance, promotion and tenure, financial claims, discrimination and disciplinary actions. We represent FS officers at all stages of the proceedings from an investigation, issuance of proposed discipline or the initiation of a grievance, through to a hearing before the FSGB. We provide experienced, timely and knowledgeable advice to employees from junior untenured officers through the Senior FS, and often work closely with AFSA. Kaijarvi, Chuzi & Newman. Tel: (202) 331-9260.

E-mail: attorneys@kcnlaw.com

## LEGAL SERVICES

**ATTORNEY WITH 28 years'** successful experience SPECIALIZING FULL-TIME IN FS GRIEVANCES will more than double your chance of winning: 30% of grievants win before the Grievance Board; 85% of my clients win. Only a private attorney can adequately develop and present your case, including necessary regs, arcane legal doctrines, precedents and rules. **Call Bridget R. Mugane** at

Tel: (301) 596-0175 or (202) 387-4383.

E-mail: fsatty@comcast.net

**Free initial telephone consultation.**

## TAX & FINANCIAL SERVICES

**ATTORNEY, FORMER FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER:** Extensive experience with tax problems unique to the Foreign Service. Available for consultation, tax planning and preparation of returns:

**M. Bruce Hirshorn, Boring & Pilger, P.C.**  
307 Maple Ave. W, Suite D, Vienna, VA 22180. Tel: (703) 281-2161.  
Fax: (703) 281-9464.

E-mail: mbhirshorn@boringandpilger.com

**PLACE A CLASSIFIED AD:** \$1.40/word (10-word minimum). First 3 words bolded free, additional bold text 85¢/word. Header or box-shading \$12 each. Deadline for text: 5 weeks ahead of publication date.

Adv. Mgr. Tel: (202) 577-3588.

Fax: (202) 647-0265.

E-mail: classifieds@afsa.org

## TAX & FINANCIAL SERVICES



**FREE TAX CONSULTATION** for overseas personnel. We process returns as received, without delay. Preparation and representation by Enrolled Agents. Federal and all states prepared. Includes "TAX TRAX" unique mini-financial planning review with recommendations. Full planning available. Get the most from your financial dollar! **Financial Forecasts Inc.**, Barry B. De Marr, CFP, EA, 3918 Prosperity Ave. #230, Fairfax, VA 22031  
Tel: (703) 289-1167. Fax: (703) 289-1178.  
E-mail: finfore@aol.com

**PROFESSIONAL TAX RETURN PREPARATION:** Forty years in public tax practice. Arthur A. Granberg, EA, ATA, ATP. Our charges are \$95 per hour. Most FS returns take 3 to 4 hours. Our office is 100 feet from Virginia Square Metro Station. Tax Matters Associates PC, 3601 North Fairfax Dr., Arlington, VA 22201. Tel: (703) 522-3828.  
Fax: (703) 522-5726.  
E-mail: aag8686@aol.com

## SCHOLARSHIPS

**STATE DEPARTMENT FEDERAL CREDIT UNION'S** scholarship competition has begun! Pick up an application at any SDFCU branch office or print one out online at [www.sdfcu.org](http://www.sdfcu.org). All application materials must be received by Friday, April 10, 2009.

## MORTGAGE

**BUYING OR REFINANCING A HOME?** Jeff Stoddard has specialized in home finance for FSOs for over 7 years.

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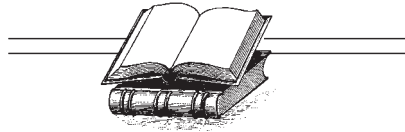
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# BOOKS

## Unintended Consequences

**Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and U.S.-Indonesian Relations, 1960-1968**

Bradley R. Simpson, *Stanford University Press*, 2008, \$48.00, hardcover, 376 pages.

REVIEWED BY  
EDMUND MCWILLIAMS

Dr. Bradley R. Simpson's *Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and U.S.-Indonesian Relations, 1960-1968* should be important reading for those with foreign policy responsibilities in the new Obama administration. This exhaustively researched and richly documented history of American engagement with Indonesia during a critical period is a cautionary tale about means and ends — and unintended consequences.

Simpson, an assistant professor of history and international studies at Princeton University, draws on a hoard of recently declassified U.S. government documents to reconstruct this detailed history. He closely examines Washington's policy from the perspective of political, security and economic objectives during the turbulent years before and after the violent overthrow of President Sukarno by General Suharto.

He makes especially effective use of

Embassy Jakarta's reporting and analysis during the period to illuminate policymakers' intentions and prejudices, placing them in the context of the diplomatic and budgetary challenges posed by the Vietnam War. As Simpson explains, the growing costs of that conflict shaped attitudes and options for both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. At the same time, American commitment to the economic "modernization" of Indonesia ultimately found expression in a decision to support a corrupt and brutal military.

The author sets the stage for his account with a well-researched review of Washington's efforts to dismember Indonesia in the late 1950s, an extraordinarily ill-conceived and poorly executed misadventure that few Americans remember — but few Indonesians have forgotten. He then reconstructs the policy considerations that led the Kennedy administration to support Sukarno's demand that the Dutch turn over the western part of the island of New Guinea to Indonesian control.

This Cold War-driven calculation not only rebuffed a NATO ally, but betrayed the democratic aspirations of the local Papuan people. Their hope for self-rule was ignored and ultimately dashed by means of a United Nations-approved, Indonesian-organized referendum that was immediately recognized as blatantly fraudulent. Washington would repeat this

pattern in failing to support a British initiative to defeat Sukarno's "Konfrontasi," a military policy aimed at blocking establishment of Malaysia.

Simpson then gives us a carefully documented but horrifyingly vivid account of the massive 1965-1966 purge of Indonesians alleged to be members or supporters of the Communist Party. The U.S. role in this slaughter of hundreds of thousands, and the detention of as many or more people for years under life-threatening conditions, underscores Washington's willingness throughout the Cold War to abandon principle and ignore international law in the service of geostrategic objectives. The Central Intelligence Agency's provision of small arms to the local military for the purpose of arming Muslim and nationalist youth engaged in killing alleged communists constitutes but one example of direct complicity in one of the greatest slaughters of the 20th century.

The author makes a compelling case that Washington's empowerment of the Indonesian military to assume control of economic and political institutions led directly to its "dual function" — a direct role in governance that the military remains reluctant to relinquish a decade after the 1998 collapse of Suharto's "new order" had revealed the "myth of developmental success and poverty reduction."

As the author notes, Indonesians "still wrestle with the bitter legacy of

the choices forged in Jakarta and Washington during these fateful years.” A concluding chapter tracing that legacy is particularly valuable for policy practitioners today, as they review the Bush administration’s embrace of foreign militaries as partners in “the war on terror” — even when their subordination to civilian control, accountability before the law and respect for human rights are all dubious at best.

*Edmund McWilliams, a Foreign Service officer from 1975 to 2001, was political counselor in Jakarta from 1996 to 1999, and received AFSA’s Christian Herter Award for constructive dissent by a Senior FSO in 1998. Since retiring from the Service, he has volunteered with various U.S. and foreign human rights NGOs.*

## Parallel Wars

**The Tragedy of Vietnam, Again**  
*Christopher Noble, BookSurge, 2008, \$17.99, paperback, 422 pages.*

REVIEWED BY DAVE HOWARD

What influences social responsibility, political accountability and individual social commitment? Such profound yet practical questions, which I suspect most Foreign Service members ponder throughout their careers, prompted Christopher Noble to write *The Tragedy of Vietnam, Again*. This memoir brings together recollections of the myriad individual, social and political events of the mid-to-late 1960s that influenced the mind of a sensitive young man.

Chris Noble has never forgotten that he comes from a New England family with a long history of social commitment. That tradition began in the early days of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, inspired acts of heroism during the Revolutionary War, and continued through distinguished military service during World War II and the Korean War. Imbued with that legacy of patriotic sacrifice, he spent his formative years attending college in Iowa, where he also absorbed the values of the Midwest.

Like thousands of other American youngsters at that time, the author was drafted into the military in 1964 and received orders that eventually sent him to Vietnam. There, as a medical platoon leader, Noble aspired to live up to the connotations of his

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## BOOKS

surname by helping others. At the same time, the young medic accepted a duty to protect himself, his fellow soldiers and his supplies at all times, even when that required using deadly force.

The author explains how he and his fellow medics operated in the field and recounts the deeds of U.S. soldiers who not only saved the lives of fellow soldiers but those of the enemy. He places a great deal of emphasis on the camaraderie that forms among soldiers on the battlefield.

Along the way, Noble describes the daily rigors of army life with colorful interjections of humor. There are also inspirational stories about overcoming fear, as well as horrific battle scenes in which he and his comrades endure insane conditions and must overcome

overwhelming obstacles.

A quarter-century after completing his own service in Vietnam, the author watched with dismay as American troops were ordered to invade Iraq in 2003. That connection explains why I recommend this book so highly to my Foreign Service colleagues, six years after that war began.

Noble raises troubling but important questions about the visibility and effectiveness of the “do-gooders” in our country. Where is this generation’s version of the street protesters who rocked cities with outcries against the Vietnam War? What patriotism do we display other than “Support Your Troops” bumper stickers on the random vehicle? In short, whatever happened to social responsibility?

Noble also touches on the subject of the media that played such a critical role during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s in challenging traditional views of the Vietnam War and of the Vietnam veteran. In his opinion, today’s media outlets have surrendered to the political regime.

And he challenges our national leaders’ reasons for supporting (or opposing) the Iraq War, and the credibility of their commitment to supporting and caring for its veterans.

As his memoir’s title implies, he draws a series of disturbing parallels between the two conflicts — evidence that some things never change. ■

*Dave Howard, an FSO since 2004, is currently a financial management officer in Bangkok.*

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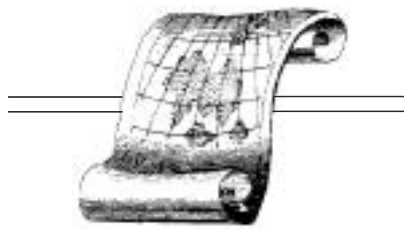
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# REFLECTIONS

## *Precious Time*

BY JOHN K. NALAND

Nothing concentrates the mind like getting an assignment to an unaccompanied post. A friend who served in Baghdad several years ago told me that she was happy to deploy with only three months' advance notice ("less time to worry"). I, on the other hand, was glad to have my assignment confirmed a full year in advance. I am set to transfer to Basra, Iraq, in June.

My first priority was to take care of my family, which will remain behind in our Arlington, Va., house. I certainly do not doubt my wife's ability to manage our home, our two young daughters and loyal dog during my yearlong absence. Over the years, Barbara has been in the Foreign Service and the Civil Service, and has worked as a family member in embassy Part-Time, Intermittent, Temporary positions. So she knows her way around the bureaucracy and is plenty resilient.

But why leave her with, for example, a 25-year-old cooling system that could give up the ghost any day (most likely in mid-August)? So I resolved to do as much as I could to get our house into shape before I departed.

I recently learned another reason behind my maintenance impulse: According to the Myers-Briggs gurus, my type (INTJ) responds to stress by seeking to impose order on the world.

CNN also played a key role in fixing up our house. Soon after I volunteered for Iraq, the fact that the AFSA president had taken that step was reported in the media. When the network called asking to do a story about

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day counts.*



the impact on my family, I enthusiastically accepted. A zillion stories have been done in recent years about uniformed military families left behind, so I thought it was high time that the Foreign Service got some recognition.

A team came out to our house one Monday morning (after, as you might imagine, my wife and I spent the entire weekend cleaning up the place). The producer walked into our World War II-era Colonial and said, "Let's film a family scene in the kitchen." But as soon as he saw that postage-stamp-sized room, he immediately said, "Well, how about if we film in the dining room?"

Given that accurate assessment of the limitations of our old kitchen, my wife and I resolved to plunge ahead on the major remodeling job that we had talked about ever since we bought our house 10 years earlier. If you have ever dealt with a contractor on a major remodeling, then you know that it is a very involved process that takes your mind off all your other concerns for months on end.

Our renovation is now complete, so I am starting to focus on other aspects of preparing for my upcoming unaccompanied tour. I have signed up for

the pre-deployment training available to me — including the 3.5 hours (yes, hours) of Arabic-language training that is apparently deemed sufficient to lead a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Iraq.

Because I have always made time for my family, there is no need for me to radically increase the amount of attention that I show them. But I am very much aware that every day counts. Brief R&R visits aside, I am going to miss one year of my marriage, one year of my daughters' grade-school education and a significant percentage of my dog's lifespan (he, unfortunately, will have no idea why, one day, I stop coming home).

Of course, I will be with my family in spirit and intend to call and e-mail frequently. But it will not be the same as being there. My family understands and accepts the reasons why I have volunteered for this major dislocation in our intertwined lives. I just hope that the personal cost is balanced by my being able to do some good where I am headed.

I also hope that more Americans come to recognize the sacrifices being made by today's Foreign Service families in this new era of widespread unaccompanied tours. Toward that end, maybe CNN could return next winter to interview my family while I am gone. If so, our kitchen will be ready. ■

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*John K. Naland, an FSO since 1986, is president of the American Foreign Service Association.*



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