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CONTENTS

May 2009 Volume 86, No. 5



Cover and inside illustration
by Phil Foster

PRESIDENT'S VIEWS / 5

Stay the Course
By John K. Naland

SPEAKING OUT / 12

Hope for Gay and Lesbian
Foreign Service Employees
By Steven Giegerich

REFLECTIONS / 60

Betting on Imperialism
By Rakesh Surampudi

LETTERS / 7

CYBERNOTES / 9

MARKETPLACE / 11

BOOKS / 53

INDEX TO ADVERTISERS / 58

F O C U S O N

FAS & FCS

HOPING FOR A BREAK:

FOREIGN TRADE AGENCIES UNDER PRESSURE / 15

Despite the economic and diplomatic dividends of their work, FSOs at Agriculture and Commerce are coping with inadequate budgets.

By Shawn Zeller

NOTES FROM THE FIELD: FCS DELIVERS FOR U.S. BUSINESS / 23

FCS will continue to assist American companies grappling with a challenging economic environment.

By Aileen Crowe Nandi

FAS AT A CROSSROADS: RESHAPING AG DIPLOMACY / 27

The Foreign Agricultural Service has repeatedly reinvented itself throughout its 80-year history. The time has come for another evolution.

By Allan Mustard

EMERGING CHALLENGES:

FARM TRADE IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION / 32

Facing a range of political threats to agricultural trade, FAS must again prove the value of its work.

By Eric Trachtenberg

F S H E R I T A G E

EUGENE SCHUYLER: SCHOLAR, PATRIOT AND MAN OF LETTERS / 37

A visit by the Czarist Navy to New York City in 1863 led one of America's first Russia experts to join the U.S. Consular Service.

By Eric A. Johnson

A P P R E C I A T I O N

A LIFE DEDICATED TO SERVICE:

BRIAN DANIEL ADKINS, 1983-2009 / 41

By Charles Hornbostel

A F S A N E W S

AFSA MEETS WITH SECRETARY CLINTON / 45

DON'T FORGET TO VOTE! / 45

BRIEFS, AGGELER / 46

AFSA'S TESTIMONY BEFORE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS / 47

VP VOICE: USAID A MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY / 48

UPCOMING TRANSITION CENTER COURSES / 48

VP VOICE: FAS PARTIAL DIFFERENTIAL EQUATIONS / 49

FAMILY MEMBER MATTERS: PRESCHOOL SUBSIDIES / 50

CLASSIFIEDS / 51

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Calling All Foreign Service Authors!

The November 2009 issue of the *Foreign Service Journal* will include a list of recently published books written by Foreign Service-affiliated authors.

FS authors whose books have been published in 2008 or 2009, and have not been featured in the roundup, are invited to send a copy of the book, along with a press release or backgrounder on the book and author to:

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PRESIDENT'S VIEWS

Stay the Course

BY JOHN K. NALAND

After years of flat funding during which new mission requirements vastly outstripped staff resources, Foreign Service hiring at State and USAID is finally on the upswing. Funding provided by Congress in the 2008 supplemental appropriation and Fiscal Year 2009 budget will add about 640 additional “core” State diplomatic personnel and 450 new USAID development officers by this September.



Obviously, that is very good news. So, too, is the Obama administration’s recently released Fiscal Year 2010 budget request which, without giving details, states that it “includes funding for the first year of a multiyear effort to significantly increase the size of the Foreign Service at both the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development.”

Continued expansion is desperately needed. A blue-ribbon panel report issued last October by the American Academy of Diplomacy documented the need for 2,848 additional State positions for core diplomatic functions and a training complement, as well as for 1,250 additional USAID positions, by Fiscal Year 2014.

To achieve that goal will require adding an average of 450 new posi-

tions at State and 160 new positions at USAID each year for the next five years. In addition, AFSA also sees a strong case for expanding the Foreign Commercial Service and the Foreign Agricultural

Service.

Moreover, those hiring targets were based on a 2008 snapshot of needs that may grow even larger in the coming years as the Obama administration undertakes new foreign policy initiatives — for example, increasing civilian staffing in Afghanistan.

In AFSA’s March 20 meeting with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, she pledged to lobby hard to significantly expand Foreign Service staffing. But she noted that the federal government faces difficult budgetary choices.

As President Obama and Congress allocate budget resources, AFSA urges them to be mindful of the fact that adding 4,000 positions to our 13,000-member Foreign Service would have a far greater positive impact on national security than would adding the same number of positions to our 1.4 million-member active-duty military (which is currently undergoing a 92,000-position expansion). Many members of Congress understand this. The same is true for Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who has given a series of high-profile speeches over the past 18 months urging that more resources be

devoted to funding the civilian element of national security.

So it is vital to stay the course on efforts to expand the Foreign Service. We must not declare “victory” after just a few years of above-attrition hiring which, at best, would only serve to fill existing staffing gaps.

Instead, lawmakers also need to fund the creation of a robust training complement to allow Foreign Service members to attain advanced levels of foreign-language fluency, leadership and management ability, and job-specific functional expertise. Future budgets must also create more positions for Foreign Service members to take rotational assignments with other agencies in order to maintain our lead role in foreign policy coordination. Future budgets must give our foreign affairs agencies the “bench strength” with which to staff up the new contingencies that will inevitably arise in the coming years.

Thus, the task for the Obama administration, our supporters in Congress and AFSA over the next four years is to continue to make the case for strengthening the personnel and physical platform for diplomacy and development assistance. We must do more than fill existing staffing gaps. We must ensure that the Foreign Service has the right number of people with the right skills and experience to meet the challenges of 21st-century diplomacy. ■

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

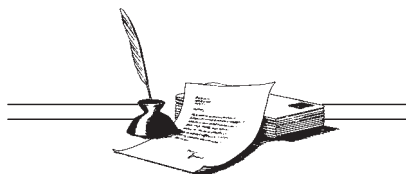


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LETTERS

Congrats for Failure?

As I read the March *FSJ* here in Kabul, I was disappointed when I got to the AFSA Annual Report, particularly the Year in Review. Granted, I have only been a paying member of AFSA for four years, but since when does any union pat itself on the back for not getting a job done?

After reading the article on the overseas pay gap detailing the failed attempt to secure equality for those serving overseas, I again ask why I pay membership dues to an organization that continues to fail at one of the most important morale issues facing the Foreign Service.

Sure, AFSA made strides toward bridging the gap by gaining support in the House and Senate, but at the end of the day, the gap is still there. If a union is going to congratulate itself for its performance, shouldn't it have accomplished the task? After all, results are what we pay for, right?

Steven D'Angelo

Special Agent, Assistant

*Regional Security Officer
Embassy Kabul*

On-the-Job Training for FS Doctors?

Thanks to AFSA President John Naland for speaking out regarding the Office of Medical Services' practices in his March President's Views column, "To Your Health." I would like to comment on MED's practice of recruiting

and assigning physicians who are not trained in tropical medicine to the most unhealthful posts in the world, on the assumption that there they will learn everything they need to know to operate effectively as an FS physician.

I am dismayed at the lack of ethics on the part of doctors who knowingly accept such positions, thereby putting Foreign Service families in danger of serious illness, or even lifelong disability.

Such practices may provide MED with a cadre of 'trained' tropical medicine physicians, but often at irreparable cost to those Foreign Service personnel and their families with the misfortune to serve at posts where such training takes place!

Terese W. White-Henry

USAID FSO, retired

Carmel, Calif.

Praise for the Global Nomad

I want to thank Mikkela Thompson for her beautiful and thoughtful remembrance and appreciation of our mutual friend, Norma McCaig ("Passage of a Global Nomad," February *FSJ*). Mikkela speaks from her own perspective as a global nomad as she honors Norma.

Norma McCaig's unfailing devotion to bringing to light what psychologists, anthropologists, interculturists and others in the field missed for so long — the unique dynamics that form the reference frame for Foreign Service kids. She helped us in so many ways in our

efforts to understand, support and educate parents. And she helped so many wonderful young people understand and appreciate the intriguing, disorienting and challenging world into which their parents introduced them.

Ray S. Leki

Director, Transition Center

Foreign Service Institute

Passage to Proceedings

As a former active-duty military officer and current FSO who grew up in the shadow of SOUTHCOM overseas in Panama, I found Ambassador David Passage's February Speaking Out column, "AFRICOM & SOUTHCOM: Reliquaria from an Earlier Era," excellent and thought-provoking. I urge Amb. Passage to forward his article to *Proceedings* magazine, an independent forum on national defense topics.

Wilbur A. Velarde

FSO

Consulate General Ciudad

Juarez

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Guard Reserve

What About USAID?

I thank Captain Sean Walsh for his article in the February *Journal* on "Improving the PRT-Military Professional Relationship." His practical advice to Foreign Service officers serving on Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq and Afghanistan will no doubt be helpful to those serving in such countries.

LETTERS



However, I was dismayed to realize several paragraphs into Walsh's article that he was speaking only to State Department FSOs. Walsh made no mention of the U.S. Agency for International Development, and did not seem to realize that he and his colleagues work side-by-side with USAID personnel on PRTs in Iraq. How can this be, I thought, hastily scanning to the end of the article to see if he would rectify this oversight.

Disappointed, I reread the article line by line, only to find that Walsh indeed wrote three pages on cooperation between the military and the Foreign Service in priority countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq, without ever mentioning USAID.

This omission seems even more

glaring coming on the heels of retired Ambassador David Passage's Speaking Out column in the same issue, which persuasively argues that "the primary executive agency for international development should always be USAID, not DOD."

I'm not sure what Walsh's oversight says about USAID-military relations, but it certainly suggests to me that we could do more to educate our military partners about our agency's role in critical countries such as these. Perhaps there's a brief synopsis of USAID that we could recommend to Captain Walsh and his colleagues, similar to Schading's *A Civilian's Guide to the Military*, which Walsh recommends all FSOs read?

Alyssa Wilson Leggoe
USAID FSO
Embassy Moscow

Global Repositioning: Déjà Vu Again

Reading Shawn Dorman's analysis in your January issue of the problems besetting the Global Repositioning Program at the heart of former Secretary Rice's Transformational Diplomacy initiative ("Global Repositioning in Perspective"), I was struck by the remarkable parallels to the effort in the late 1990s to broaden U.S. environmental diplomacy by creating a global network of regional "Environmental Hub" offices under the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs.

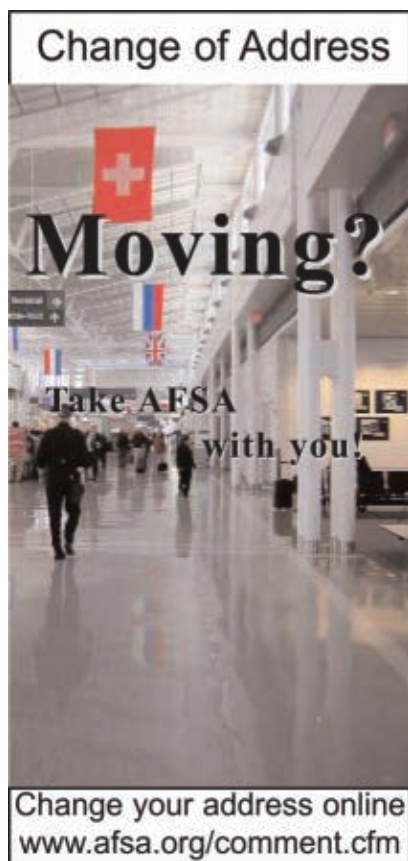
That, too, began as the bright idea of a senior political appointee, Under Secretary Timothy Wirth — one that was saluted with little counteranalysis by a compliant bureaucracy that then did its best to carry it out despite little support from the top for obtaining the needed additional resources.

As a result, the hubs, at least in their initial years, were financially orphaned by OES and dependent on the willingness of their host geographic posts and bureaus (already pinched by the post-Cold War "peace dividend") to pick up the freight. That support, in turn, depended on the interest of senior post leadership, which varied widely and at my post was nil. As the environment, science and technology counselor in Brasilia, charged with laying the groundwork to establish a hub to be staffed by a new officer on the way, I spun my wheels for nine months simply trying to get additional office space.

Once established, the Environmental Hubs faced constraints in what they could do without program money, a situation that tended to reduce many of them to modestly useful hosts for transnational conferences and networking. If they ever received serious programmatic or project budgets (I retired before that day came), they certainly lacked the manpower and training to administer them and were undertaking tasks to which USAID was far better suited — if only that agency had not been gutted by personnel reductions.

I offer three lessons from that experience. Bright ideas for major restructuring emanating from on high still require critical analysis from the career bureaucracy, even at some professional risk. Even if cogently planned, such initiatives will be severely hobbled if they amount to slogans without dollars. Finally, if we want to carry out programs or do nationbuilding, the place to start is by rebuilding our USAID component. ■

Marc E. Nicholson
FSO, retired
Washington, D.C.



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CYBERNOTES

Campaign for Foreign Assistance Reform

In an open letter to President Obama and the U.S. Congress, more than 150 prominent individuals and institutions urge that foreign assistance reform be made a priority — “because the economic and geopolitical realities of today, and the challenges of the future, demand that we use every dollar as effectively as possible to fight poverty and disease, increase prosperity, strengthen weak states and further other U.S. strategic interests abroad” (www.modernizingforeignassistance.net/network/open_letter_to_obama.php).

The open letter and broad citizen campaign behind it are a project of the Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network, a coalition of international development and foreign policy practitioners, policy advocates and experts, concerned citizens and private-sector organizations.

To follow the issue of foreign assistance reform and participate in the campaign to accomplish it, visit www.modernizingforeignassistance.net.

— Susan Brady Maitra,
Senior Editor

Taking the Pulse of Civil Society

Corruption, transparency and integrity are topics that have moved to the top of the agenda for actors in international civil society. Recent reports

As one of the developing countries, we are at the low end of the production line for the global economy. We produce products, and these products are consumed by other countries. ... This share of emissions should be taken by the consumers, but not the producers.

—Li Gao, director of the climate change department at China’s National Development and Reform Commission at a meeting in Washington, D.C., on March 17, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/7947438.stm>

from two nonprofit organizations show where countries stand in early 2009.

For the third year running, Global Integrity found that poor regulation of political financing is the leading governance problem worldwide (www.globalintegrity.org). The group’s 2008 report tracks anti-corruption practices in 57 countries. GI does not measure corruption or perceptions of corruption per se; rather, it evaluates the existence, effectiveness and citizen access to anti-corruption mechanisms at the national level.

Other key findings include continuing poor access to government information in much of the Arab world and an increasing lack of transparency in the Horn of Africa. Surprisingly, despite the fact that Eastern and Central Europe are generally perceived to have weak anti-corruption and good-governance mechanisms, states in that region are doing relatively well on the Global Integrity Index. Additional highlights from the 2008 report in-

clude a special focus on China, Iraq and Somalia. The entire report can be found at (<http://report.globalintegrity.org/>).

Another view of the health of civil society is offered by Transparency International (www.transparency.org). The Corruption Perceptions Index, Bribe Payers Index, Global Corruption Barometer and Promoting Revenue Transparency series are all aimed at raising awareness and diminishing apathy and tolerance of corruption (www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/about).

TI’s *Global Corruption Report 2008*, released last fall, highlights corruption in the water sector. More than one billion people live without access to safe drinking water and, as this report documents, corruption plays a critical role in perpetuating the crisis. *The Global Corruption Report 2009*, due out by midyear, will focus on corruption and the private sector, in addition to an annual review of anti-



corruption developments in several dozen representative countries (www.transparency.org/publications/gcr).

Founded in 1993 to curb corruption in international transactions, TI is based in Berlin and has 93 local chapters around the world. Emphasizing innovative activity to combat corruption, the organization has developed corruption-fighting tools, such as integrity pacts that aim to decrease corruption in public contracting, and offers both a “corruption fighter’s toolkit” and an anti-corruption handbook among its many informative publications. The U.S. chapter of Transparency International is accessible on the Web at www.transparency-usa.org/.

A relative newcomer, Global Integrity was founded in 1999 at the Center for Public Integrity, where its creators successfully tested their model in several projects before becoming an independent entity in 2005. GI uses innovative online collaboration tools to coordinate teams of in-country journalists, academics and social scientists and has a unique quantitative and qualitative method for assessing anti-corruption mechanisms, openness and government accountability (www.globalintegrity.org/aboutus/story.cfm). Truly an international organization, it boasts more than 650 in-country experts in 92 countries.

— Elizabeth Swift, AFSA Intern

State of Human Rights

On Feb. 25, the State Department released the 2008 edition of *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* (www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/index.htm). The congressionally mandated annual report contains detailed reviews of human rights conditions in some 200 countries.

This year the place of human rights in U.S. foreign policy received unusual attention in light of remarks made days earlier by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Official international responses also included some surprises.

In Beijing on her inaugural visit as Secretary of State, Clinton stated that human rights would not interfere with other issues such as cooperation on climate change and economic concerns. Sec. Clinton clarified later that she had discussed human rights issues with China, and would continue to do so.

Releasing the report, which declares that Beijing’s human rights record “remained poor and worsened in some areas,” Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights Karen Stewart said the sharp criticism

did not undercut Sec. Clinton’s remarks and won’t damage cooperation with China.

The International Campaign for Tibet, while citing the Clinton remark, lauded the report’s “comprehensive and coherent catalog of China’s human rights abuses in Tibet” (www.save-tibet.org). “The severity of human rights abuses in Tibet, documented here in the State Department’s own report, should compel vigorous human rights diplomacy by the Obama administration,” ICT’s Vice President for International Advocacy Mary Beth Markey said.

But other human rights groups were not satisfied. Sophie Richardson, Asia advocacy director at Human Rights Watch, promptly called for “a new approach” — citing China’s prac-

Site of the Month: Your Shot

Anyone who travels the world with a camera in hand will be interested in one of the *National Geographic* magazine Web site’s new features, the interactive “Your Shot” page at <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/your-shot/your-shot>.

Here you can submit a favorite photo of your own for possible publication in *National Geographic* and return each day to see the editors’ selection of photographs in the “Daily Dozen.” You can also get involved in the contest, voting for your pick, and peruse the archives of “Top Shots” chosen by the editors and online voters. You can download any of the thousands of fascinating images straight to your desktop. And, to the delight of puzzlers young and old, with a click of the mouse each of the images can be made into either a jigsaw or slide puzzle to solve online!

In addition, this unique page links you to *National Geographic*’s “Digital Photography Blog” and “Editor’s Pick Blog.” There you are privy to tips from the experts on taking great digital photographs and can learn from the photo editors what it takes to make a winning image.

The *National Geographic* Web site, ngm.com, is a sprawling treasure trove of information and images of our amazing world through which the curious individual could browse for hours. Whether as an entry point to explore all its myriad offerings — including history, features and maps of all kinds — or as a point of focus in itself, “Your Shot” is well worth a visit.

— Susan Brady Maitra, Senior Editor



50 Years Ago...

As things now stand, the leaders of an underdeveloped country will normally deal with 16, 18 and often more than 20 different agencies coming at them purveying various kinds of assistance. ... We have tended to close our eyes to the administrative burden which we place on the governments of the less developed countries by proliferating the independent agencies we create to 'help' them.



— Harlan Cleveland, dean of the Maxwell Graduate School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University and co-editor of "The Art of Overseasmanship," from testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations excerpted in the *FSJ*, May 1959.

tice of "segregating human rights issues into a dead-end 'dialogue of the deaf'" while cooperating on other, preferred matters. Amnesty International called on Clinton to "repair the damage" caused by her statement (www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/asia/la-fg-clinton-china-21-2009feb21,0,542695.story).

Human rights diplomacy will likely be put to the test elsewhere. The Obama administration has moved to end the four-year-old hiatus in relations with Syria. A series of congressional delegations visited the country recently, and Syrian Ambassador Imad Moustapha met with top diplomats at the State Department on Feb. 26 — a day after the department's report containing "withering criticism" of Syria's human rights record came out (www.washingtonpost.com).

The report received brickbats from the usual quarters. But although China's official response to the report was "caustic," the *International Herald Tribune's* Michael Wines observes, it was not significantly different from the reaction to last year's report, and Xinhua's statement repeated, sometimes word for word, its 2008 response to the

report (www.iht.com/articles/2009/02/26/asia/china.php).

Sharp responses from Bolivia and Venezuela were not a surprise. The Venezuelan Foreign Ministry declared the report to be "false, interventionist and of malicious intent," adding that it lacks legitimacy because the U.S. government itself has a "dismal human" rights record (www.venezuelanalysis.com/news/4251).

More significant, however, as Mark Weisbrot explains in a *guardian.co.uk* post on March 11, the center-left government of Chile joined the usual suspects this year in questioning the moral authority of the U.S. government's judging other countries' human rights practices (www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2009/mar/11/state-department-human-rights).

On Feb. 26, Chilean government spokesman Francisco Vidal acknowledged deteriorating prison conditions in Chile, but added sharply: "We do not have a Guantanamo (prison camp). Democracy does not accept a Guantanamo" (www.valparaisotimes.cl/content/view/480/388/). ■

— Susan Brady Maitra,
Senior Editor

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SPEAKING OUT

Hope for Gay and Lesbian Foreign Service Employees

BY STEVEN GIEGERICH

Most readers are well aware of the glaring inequities that Foreign Service employees with same-sex partners face throughout their careers. Several AFSA members have written eloquent Speaking Out columns in recent years highlighting the many privileges and benefits currently denied them. I am thinking particularly of USAID FSO Ajit Joshi (November 2004) and Ambassador Michael Guest (March 2008), who resigned from the Foreign Service in protest of the State Department's refusal to address such concerns.

State did take a few baby steps toward improving conditions under the previous administration, granting the same-sex partners of FS personnel access to the Security Overseas Seminar and the Rosetta Stone online language library, as well as (on a space-available basis) the Foreign Service Institute's distance-learning language courses, FAST language instruction and security-related workshops.

But even those paltry achievements came about largely due to a February 2008 letter from four members of Congress — Rep. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis., Howard Berman, D-Calif., Gary Ackerman, D-N.Y. and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Fla. — urging those and other “common-sense policy changes,” such as inclusion in travel orders; broader access to training; emergency evacuation and medevac from post

These issues have important implications for the entire Foreign Service — not just those directly affected by discrimination.

when necessary; access to post health units; and visa support, both for partners joining Foreign Service personnel overseas and for non-U.S. citizen partners accompanying them on domestic assignments.

The representatives specifically mentioned that they believed that none of those proposals were contrary to the letter or spirit of the Defense of Marriage Act, legislation passed during the 1990s to prevent the federal government from conferring any recognition on same-sex marriages.

The April 2008 response from Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs Jeffrey Bergner asserted that the State Department treats “same-sex and opposite-sex unmarried partners of U.S. government employees stationed abroad in an equivalent manner.” Um, we knew that, and that wasn't the point. The representatives' follow-up letter called this an “unsatis-

factory response” and asked once again for Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's leadership on this issue, but never got a meaningful reply.

All these issues have important economic, quality-of-life and career implications for a significant segment of the Foreign Service corps — and should concern everyone. Inaction is not only unfair, but foolish, leaving the federal government more and more out of tune with private-sector practices. Fifty-six percent of Fortune 500 companies already provide domestic partner benefits to their employees, according to data the Human Rights Campaign has compiled.

The Practical Impact of Inequality

Consider my own experience. Daniel, my foreign partner of six years, has stayed with me through an unaccompanied tour followed by three overseas transfers. We've had to pay his way to each post ourselves, and he was almost denied boarding on one occasion for not possessing a round-trip ticket. He is ineligible for home leave, R&R, elder care, emergency visitation, evacuation, etc.

Each time we move, Daniel has to cancel his local health insurance coverage, then find an appropriate local provider at our next posting (fully self-funded, of course). This arrangement is extremely expensive, often provides



substandard coverage, and is immensely frustrating.

Career sacrifices are a fact of life for all Foreign Service dependents, of course, but the hardships are magnified for same-sex partners, as employment opportunities overseas are considerably more restricted. Designated only as a Member of Household, my partner does not benefit from the bilateral work agreements that mission spouses can often use to work on the local economy. On top of that, the deck is deliberately stacked against MOHs because of a policy of giving preference to American-citizen family members and U.S. veteran candidates for mission employment.

In the case of my previous assignment in South Africa, for example, very few positions within the mission opened up that didn't require either a security clearance (disqualifying non-U.S. citizens) or local language skills (disqualifying non-natives). The few that did pop up were immediately snatched up by American-citizen family members under the preference provisions.

We were fortunate that after about eight months the stars aligned, and my partner became the last man standing for an embassy position. But the final kick in the teeth was that even though Daniel met all criteria to qualify as "not ordinarily resident" (and therefore eligible for the U.S. compensation plan), he had to accept being hired under the Foreign Service National compensation plan — which in developing countries like South Africa is significantly different. So the job paid much worse and didn't accrue time in government service for retirement purposes.

The reasons given were that he did not have a U.S. bank account (a po-

tentially fixable situation) or a Social Security number (not fixable, and for inexplicable reasons a U.S. Taxpayer Identification Number does not satisfy that requirement).

Navigating host-country visa regulations is another major hassle during every transfer. Significant research has to go into each bid to ensure that there are no surprises relating to Daniel's ability to reside with me at post. So far, we have not had to resort to declaring him as my domestic servant, though that is a common, if degrading, work-around. And, of course, my partner agrees to reside overseas without the benefit of the immunities or privileges that are routine for everyone else's family members.

The immunities issue can be a real concern in countries that are unstable, corrupt or hostile to the U.S. government. And the lack of privileges results in numerous financial hits that we have to absorb. For example, I was only entitled to purchase one vehicle under diplomatic privileges in South Africa because I was considered officially "single." The car I had to buy for Daniel (believe me, you cannot function without a second vehicle there) was subject to all local taxes and duties, and was not permitted to have diplomatic plates.

While I recognize that all Foreign Service families encounter difficulties and sacrifices living overseas, the problems are greatly magnified for officers with same-sex partners. The lack of FSI long-term language training, for example, means that most postings overseas are unappealing for Daniel (and therefore for me). Without language skills, it is much more difficult to navigate in an alien environment, making one uncompetitive for any type of work.

So Much for "Family-Friendly"

Setting aside all the unfair additional financial burdens and hassles that Foreign Service personnel with same-sex partners endure, there is the added stress that such limitations place on our lives and careers. It makes maintaining viable long-term relationships that much more difficult.

All the Foreign Service mentors I have ever known have emphasized the importance of a Washington tour for promotion into the senior ranks. But my ability to do a domestic assignment comes at a huge, deal-breaking cost to our family. My partner is a hard worker, but he doesn't hold a U.S. passport or professional qualifications that would get him an employment-based U.S. visa.

Yes, he could be authorized to remain in the U.S. under tourist status for my entire time there, or on a student visa (although that's yet another major expense and, for many people, not of interest or value). But that means no second income and a partner who is climbing the walls, with his professional life on hold for several years. And even this option disappears upon retirement. Where are we supposed to live then, if he's not allowed to reside in the United States?

Similarly, service in a place like Iraq is both noble and a potentially valuable strategy for career advancement (not to mention the significant financial incentives). It provides a linked assignment to a preferred onward posting and favorable consideration by promotion boards, and goes a long way toward establishing a corridor reputation as a team player.

For singles, the logistics of an Iraq tour are relatively straightforward. For families, the department has come up with all kinds of benefits and al-



lowances that make it feasible and attractive. But for someone in my situation, it is simply not a viable option because these same benefits and allowances are denied.

Because my partner cannot be on my orders, he is not entitled to remain behind at my current post or be placed on Separate Maintenance Allowance anywhere else. Nor would the department provide any assistance for his relocation. And because Daniel has no status in the U.S., he would not be able to relocate there (except possibly as a tourist).

It is unfair and unreasonable to expect that he find some other place in the world to live for a year; establish a new home there without any household effects; and obtain new health insurance coverage, a new job, etc. (all self-funded, of course) — and then dismantle it all within a year to rejoin me wherever my next assignment will be. Moreover, any financial gains I might accrue from serving in Iraq would be entirely offset by the huge costs of self-funding Daniel's relocation. It would be interesting to know how many officers who signed up for Iraq or Afghanistan would still have done so if they hadn't been provided these benefits for their families.

With the increasing number of unaccompanied overseas postings, and the incentives given for Iraq and Afghanistan service, it becomes harder and harder to find postings that are viable for our situation. There are still posts around the world that are workable; but in addition to the normal tendency to see fewer overseas openings as one climbs up the career ladder, increasingly those that are left are being snatched up in advance by Iraq bidders or others coming out of unaccompanied posts. So neither Washington,

***Inaction is not only
unfair, but foolish.***

Iraq nor Afghanistan works well for me — but the jobs that *do* fit our needs aren't available because I haven't punched those tickets.

Change Is Coming

I am encouraged by the words of support from President Barack Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the current congressional leadership for rectifying these longstanding inequities, but the battle is far from won. It is time for gay and lesbian federal employees to receive the legal protections and employment benefits they have so long done without. But it will take a concerted effort for these legislative and policy changes to get the necessary attention.

Upon arrival at the department, Sec. Clinton was handed a letter signed by 2,200 current and former foreign affairs agency employees and Peace Corps Volunteers asking for her full consideration in addressing these policy concerns. Supposedly "sweeping" new policy recommendations from the director general's office relating to same-sex partners are reported to be currently under her review.

Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies and AFSA have also worked together closely to lobby Congress for necessary legislative changes. To assist them in their efforts, I encourage everyone reading this to contact your congressional representatives and senators and let them know how important these changes are to the fair-

ness and cohesion of our Foreign Service. Here are two key pieces of legislation that should get to the president's desk as soon as possible:

The **Domestic Partner Benefits and Obligations Act**, introduced in December 2007, would provide federal health benefits, family medical and emergency leave, group life insurance, long-term care and retirement benefits to federal employees with same-sex partners. To qualify, employees would need to prove that they share a household and financial responsibilities with their partner.

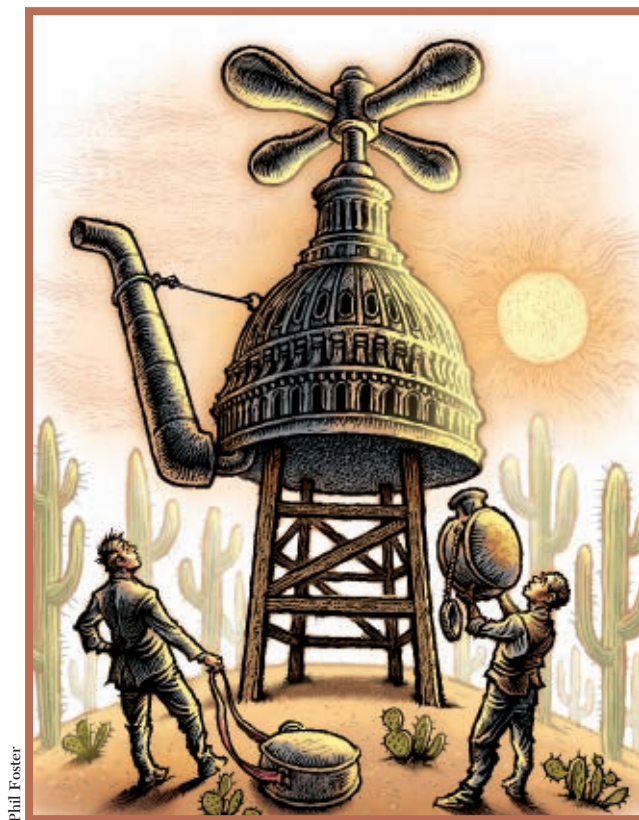
The **Uniting American Families Act**, reintroduced in both houses of Congress in February 2009 after having languished in various iterations since 2000, would allow U.S. citizens and permanent residents to petition for immigration benefits for same-sex partners under the same rules as currently apply to married couples.

If passed, these two acts would represent a major advancement for all gays and lesbians, with particular significance for Foreign Service employees. And hopefully the proposed State Department policy reforms will live up to their billing and fully address the issues highlighted already by members of Congress from both parties.

In the meantime, please use Sec. Clinton's recently established "Sounding Board" to voice support for these changes. Together, we can finally make the State Department and the other foreign affairs agencies the equitable and supportive workplaces they should be. ■

Steven Giegerich is a consular officer in Hong Kong. Since joining the Foreign Service in 1991, he has served in Pretoria, Frankfurt, MFO Sinai, Vancouver, Tashkent, Nassau and Athens.

HOPING FOR A BREAK: FOREIGN TRADE AGENCIES UNDER PRESSURE



DESPITE THE ECONOMIC AND DIPLOMATIC DIVIDENDS OF THEIR WORK, FSOs AT AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE ARE COPING WITH INADEQUATE BUDGETS.

BY SHAWN ZELLER

Americans haven't gotten much good news from Washington or from Wall Street about the state of the economy lately. But there are few more notable bright spots than the performance of American exporters — and, in turn, few more positive stories about government's ability to help than those of the Foreign Agricultural Service and the U.S. & Foreign Commercial Service.

Exports equal jobs. And with unemployment in the United States rapidly approaching double digits, those jobs

couldn't be more needed. With that in mind, both commercial officers and agricultural officers serving overseas are hoping that they will soon be hearing a lot more from the Obama administration about investing in what they do. "If there was ever a time to invest in promoting U.S. exports, today is it," says Nicholas Kuchova, a senior commercial officer assigned to Panama and 12-year veteran of the Commercial Service.

It would be a welcome change. For years, both FAS and FCS have received budget increases inadequate to maintain their services, let alone expand them. Congress's decision last year to hold off on a new budget until 2009 pushed both to the brink.

In January, then-FAS Administrator Mike Yost informed officers that the Foreign Agricultural Service was facing a \$9 million budget shortfall that would force a travel freeze and could mean furloughs. The Service has also pared back training and discretionary spending at overseas offices. It's hurt morale. "The budget issue is the elephant in the room," says Henry Schmick, vice president for the Foreign Agricultural Service at the American Foreign Service Association.

In February, the Commercial Service, facing a \$25 million deficit, ordered all posts to surrender trust funds they'd established to supplement their appropriations from Congress and also froze hiring, international travel, nonessential domestic travel, overtime, training, technology upgrades and even purchases of office supplies.

"The cuts have long ago gone beyond fat and cut into bone," says one Commercial Service veteran stationed in Central America. The February dictate meant that for even the simplest things — hosting a reception for a visiting delegation of business executives or traveling to a trade show — officers would have to count every penny.

The squeeze was alleviated somewhat when Congress passed a new spending bill in March, but officers say that much more funding is still needed.

Cut to the Bone

At the Foreign Agricultural Service, the budget has

Shawn Zeller, a Washington writer, is a regular contributor to the Journal.

*In 2008, the Foreign
Agricultural Service
influenced \$20 billion in U.S.
agricultural exports through
its trade promotions efforts.*

been stalled at Fiscal Year 2006 levels, about \$150 million, for the last four years. Meanwhile, the Service has faced rapidly increased expenses related to shared embassy costs and embassy construction, along with exchange rate losses.

The agency has managed to get by, but it has not been able to expand — a keen frustration for its officers, who have seen the good

their work does. Over the last decade, the agency's staffing has fluctuated between 772 in 1998 and 884 in 2004, with overseas staff ranging from 106 in 2000 to 123 in 2007.

One agricultural officer, speaking on condition of anonymity from his South American post, said that thanks to the budget cuts, he would not be able to bring foreign executives to U.S. trade shows. Judging by past experience, the savings of \$10,000 will cost U.S. exporters at least \$3 million in new sales, he said.

"We're a small agency and we could feast on other people's table scraps, but that also means that you get forgotten a little bit," the officer said. "Is it a matter of priorities, or is it that we are a small agency in a big bureaucracy, in which rounding down to the nearest 10 million instead of up has an enormous impact on us?"

The International Trade Administration, of which the Commercial Service is part, hasn't fared much better. Its 2009 budget of \$425 million is just 5 percent more than in 2006. The increase has been barely enough to maintain

FCS: A Quick Note on Nomenclature

During the 20th century, the U.S. government's foreign commerce function switched several times between the Departments of State and Commerce. In 1980, it moved again to Commerce, where it was named the Foreign Commercial Service. The next year it was renamed the U.S. & Foreign Commercial Service, which referred to the combined domestic and international organization. That is still the full and proper name of the service, but the abbreviated "Commercial Service" is heard far more often. Though the term "Foreign Commercial Service" is frequently used, particularly within the FS community, it does not officially exist.

— The Editors

200 officers overseas. Increasingly, senior officers say, inexperienced officers with little training are being put in charge of posts as veteran officers retire.

The Foreign Agricultural Service also has little bench strength. “A very big concern is that we don’t have flexibility to hire and train new people,” says Ambassador Suzanne Hale, the agency’s acting administrator. “Half of our Foreign Service officers are eligible to retire.”

“To me, it’s not about the immediate shortfall; it’s looking at the long term,” says Keith Curtis, AFSA’s FCS vice president. “And in the long term our personnel downward trend almost looks like a death spiral on the chart.”

The agencies’ private-sector clients are concerned as well. “As a result of FAS programs and the weak dollar, agricultural exports have doubled in three years’ time,” says Annie Durbin, executive director of the U.S. Agricultural Export Development Council. “We can put it in terms of jobs. If we lose farm jobs because we lose export opportunities and therefore exports, jobs for those individuals will have to be found somewhere else. And it will be much more difficult to do that now, in this economy.”

U.S. manufacturers share the view. “Manufacturers want commercial advocacy overseas,” says Gary Litman, U.S. Chamber of Commerce vice president for European policy and initiatives. “They think it’s essential, and they’re looking at the Europeans and Chinese stepping up commercial advocacy and thinking that the ambivalent situation right now in the U.S. isn’t serving us well.”

Doing More with Less

That’s not to say agency leaders aren’t aware of the situation. FAS’s Hale is concerned about training and hiring. And top Commercial Service officials express frustration that foreign rivals are outpacing them in promoting their businesses. “We have found that there has been a lot more focus by many foreign countries on advocacy and on trade promotion,” says William Zarit, deputy assistant secretary for international operations at FCS.

Officers at both agencies say more funding could make a big difference, rattling off numbers to show how investment in export promotion could yield huge dividends because there is so much room for growth. Of 27 million

“If there was ever a time to invest in promoting U.S. exports, today is it.”

— Nicholas Kuchova, Senior Commercial Service officer

U.S. businesses, only 250,000 export, for example. And of those that export, 60 percent only export to one market. This is the case at a time when 70 percent of the world’s purchasing power and 95 percent of its population are *outside* the United States. “Our job is to help create and sustain jobs,” Zarit says, adding that his officers now “see

and understand the importance of our mission” more than ever before.

In 2008, the Foreign Agricultural Service helped bring in \$20 billion through its trade promotion efforts for U.S. agricultural exports. At the Commercial Service, the figure was \$70 billion. The return on investment — when the jobs and follow-on economic activity generated by those exports is considered — is substantial. Some estimates place it at \$400 for every \$1 the taxpayer invests.

Even so, flat funding persists. And it continues at a time when both agencies are being asked to do more. Officers in the field say it’s hard to perform the basic match-making service both agencies provide — connecting U.S. exporters with foreign importers — when travel budgets are tight.

True, in the age of e-mail officers can interact with their U.S. clients despite distance and time-zone differences. And webinars have enabled the agencies to provide services to their clients without incurring travel costs. But the technology is a “double-edged sword,” says one commercial officer based in the Middle East. “It has helped us reach out and be far more efficient, but at the same time, [it has] increased the workload. We are just an e-mail click away from anybody. They can go on our beautiful Web site and directly send us questions, which is wonderful. But the resources needed to process that have not been made available.”

Investments in trade agencies are investments in the future. The gains are not instantaneous, officers point out, and so it’s easy for Congress to ignore the Foreign Agricultural Service and U.S. & Foreign Commercial Service at budget time. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have severely squeezed discretionary spending. And going forward, ballooning Medicare and Social Security costs pose continuing budget challenges.

“You have to look at what’s going on in the broader picture,” says Hale. “There’s just going to be pressure

throughout the government to spend money wisely and to be careful with resources.” But at the same time Hale doesn’t see a lot of waste in the Foreign Agricultural Service budget. Zarit feels similarly. “Everything that we are doing is important for our mission,” he says, adding that the Commercial Service has become one of the most efficient agencies in government and its officers are “excellent stewards of the taxpayers’ dollar.”

One point that’s often missed, Zarit says, is how important commercial officers are to small businesses. It’s easy to dismiss their work, FCS members say, when the perception is that all they do is help major U.S. companies that have the resources on their own to work with foreign governments and expand their exports.

Advantages for Small Businesses

FCS officer Nicholas Kuchova is a perfect example of a small businessman who benefited from the Commercial Service’s assistance. In the 1980s, before joining the Foreign Service, he invested in a homebuilding venture in Japan. He came to Tokyo with a U.S. crew to train them on the company’s building techniques, only to learn that Japanese import officials were refusing to release the company’s supplies.

Stuck paying for his crew while they could not work, Kuchova turned to the Commercial Service. A locally employed staffer went to bat on his behalf, and the supplies were released. “I thought that was the coolest thing ever,” he recalls. Years later, Kuchova saw an advertisement for a commercial officer and applied. He’s been working on behalf of similar small and medium-size companies ever since.

In the same way, Foreign Agricultural Service officers say that in many of the countries in which they work small businesses could never navigate the hurdles to a successful export business without government help. “When times get tough in the United States, more people look to export,” says an FAS officer in South America. “We help people to bring products into a market that is very bureaucratic and difficult to get into, and presents lots of red tape for the would-be exporter. It’s so bad that when times are good in the United States, they might just say ‘I’m not interested’; but in times like these, when people don’t have sales options back home, they are a lot more willing to

The return on investment is estimated at \$400 for every \$1 the taxpayer invests.

come and spend the time that it takes.”

Hale notes that her agency’s recent reorganization was aimed specifically at combating such non-tariff trade barriers. The new Office of Scientific and Technical

Affairs works to break down rules made by foreign governments that impede trade. Tough for huge companies to deal with, she says, those hurdles are impossible for small ones to negotiate.

The Diplomatic Dividend

At the same time, commercial and agricultural trade between countries is one of the most effective forms of diplomacy. “We are very people-to-people. When you get businesspeople talking and doing business, there is a dividend that is hard to quantify in terms of improving the relationship,” Kuchova says.

The effectiveness of trade in overcoming political conflict hit home for Stephen Anderson, a longtime commercial officer, when he was stationed in China. During his second month there, in May 1999, North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces accidentally dropped a bomb on the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, killing three diplomats. The U.S. embassy in Beijing was the target of demonstrators for a week. Returning to his office, Anderson found a paving stone on his chair that had been thrown through the window — and wondered how he could ever promote U.S. exports in such an environment.

But within a month, he was helping U.S. companies sell services to Chinese companies coping with the impending Y2K transition. Thanks at least in part to those efforts, China — and the rest of the world — averted the computer glitch. “I was hooked,” Anderson says. “It demonstrated to me that the business relationship is the foundation for peace. I became fully engaged with commercial diplomacy because, to me, that was a concrete example of how the job could overcome incredible conflict.”

Like the State Department, both FCS and FAS pursued the “transformational diplomacy” initiative of former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, moving officers from developed countries in Europe to the developing ones of Asia and Africa. They also have officers in countries vital to U.S. security interests, including Iraq and Afghanistan.

One Commercial Service officer who served in Bagh-

F O C U S

dad before the surge says it was “a different ball game” than what he’d done previously. It wasn’t easy to promote U.S. products in a war zone. He believes that from a development perspective, the work was vital to U.S. interests: “We were not just talking about helping U.S. exporters but also trying to generate commerce, period. We were helping Iraqis go to trade shows. We were helping them to export.”

Hale says that, increasingly, the FAS aims to help build trade capacity in countries not yet ready to be major U.S. trading partners. It’s an investment in future economic growth, she says, as well as a means of improving American foreign relations. “Trade relations help build good political relations,” she says.

FAS is also spending more time studying food security, Hale says. The importance of this issue — the availability of, and access to, adequate food supplies worldwide —

Commercial and agricultural trade between countries is one of the most effective forms of diplomacy.

was on display last year when commodity prices spiked, prompting riots in various foreign countries.

“It’s better for U.S. national security to have stability,” she says, noting that the Foreign Agricultural Service can play a key role in forecasting future strife.

Building Future Economic Growth

Trade also can help the United States develop the export industries of the future. Curtis, for example, has led a Commercial Service initiative to promote the sale of new green energy products overseas. He quotes Energy Department estimates that exports in the sector could increase by \$40 billion, generating 750,000 new jobs at U.S. companies, not to mention the benefits for the environment. With increased exports, green technologies will, assuredly, become less expensive to produce, accelerating their adoption. “It’s a strategic priority of the United



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States to wean us off foreign oil and tackle global warming,” Curtis says, “so this is one area where we don’t want to lose the lead.”

The Foreign Agricultural Service plays a similar role, the officer in South America says. He spends a substantial part of his time researching the widespread use of biofuels in the region. The agency is also studying the effect of climate change on global agricultural output.

And in these days of tight credit markets, FAS is providing billions in credit guarantees to help finance sales of American agricultural products. Demand has spiked in recent months. Normally, the agency guarantees an average of \$2.8 billion in sales each year. In just the first four months of FY 2009, it had nearly hit that mark.

At the same time, the Commercial Service recently began to expand its promotion of foreign investment in the United States. That will be essential to its future success, says the Chamber of Commerce’s Litman, especially in these days of tight credit markets. “We’re hearing loud and clear that in the global economy, financing is essential to the growth of American enterprise, and we need to make sure that companies working in the United States have access to finance,” he says.

Another concern is the rising tide of trade isolationism in Washington. Free trade deals have been a boon to the economy, officers say, but they remain politically controversial on Capitol Hill and in the Obama administration. During his presidential campaign, for example, Obama criticized pending deals with Colombia and South Korea and said he thought the United States should renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement to provide better protections for U.S. workers and the environment. In this winter’s stimulus legislation, Congress approved a provision requiring that recipients of stimulus funds limit their purchases to goods made by U.S. companies.

“It’s important to get the best terms you can,” says Curtis. “No one wants to lower working or environmental standards. But you also don’t want to throw the baby out with the bath water or kick off a worldwide depression like we did with the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act in 1930,” a now-notorious protectionist law.

To resolve the controversy, it may take a renewed

FAS provides billions in credit guarantees to help finance sales of U.S. agricultural products, and demand has spiked in recent months.

commitment on Congress’s part to ensure that workers displaced by trade are given the retraining they need, along with more educational efforts on the part of trade’s backers to inform skeptics of its benefits.

Hale says, for instance, that without the North American Free Trade Agreement and the establishment of permanent normal trade relations with China nearly a decade ago, U.S. farmers would have missed out on billions in exports.

The Challenges of Globalization

Foreign investment in the U.S., like free trade agreements, is controversial. The debate over both topics points up the pitfalls FAS and FCS face as they seek to adapt to rapid globalization.

“It’s not about selling a container of jeans anymore,” says Litman. The Commercial Service, for example, has debated at great length which companies it should help when a product may be assembled from components made abroad. The standard protocol has defined a U.S. product as one whose inputs are 51-percent American. But consider the difficulty, then, of factoring in the value of a U.S. design or the value of U.S. research and development.

The export of services can be even more complicated when officers must determine whom to help. When it’s a U.S.-based service provider, that’s an easy call. But should the Commercial Service help a U.S. citizen working abroad? At the moment, officers say, the policy on that is not clear, leading to different interpretations across offices. And, increasingly, U.S. companies are eager to secure Commercial Service assistance in investing abroad, a massive “political hot potato,” in the view of one longtime officer posted in Western Europe.

Implementing transformational diplomacy — moving officers out of Europe and into developing countries — was controversial, too. One officer in Europe said that the shift made little sense for a commercial agency focused on helping small and medium-size businesses to export. “You look at that and it’s not based on smart business decisions,” this officer said. “For a new American exporter, the first place they’ll start is England, France,

F O C U S

Germany or the Netherlands.”

Zarit says that the agency has gotten the message. “What we’ve found is that even in the traditional markets where we thought it’s easier for U.S. businesses to do business, they still need our help.” And while the Commercial Service is looking to expand into areas of Africa and Central Europe, it’s also well aware that American businesses need to export as much as possible to the lucrative markets of the developed world.

The Foreign Agricultural Service has faced similar transitional pains in adjusting to a reorganization launched five years ago. Washington-based officers previously assigned to promote particular commodities are now organized to promote all U.S. farm products in specific countries. The change has aided FAS officers overseas but created complications in dealing with U.S. farm

*Officers in both services
glory in a can-do, practical
culture that they say differs
from the more cerebral
one at State.*

groups, which are largely organized by commodity. “It’s thrown a big curve into the functioning of the agency and required us to re-establish how we view our core functions,” says Schmick.

Depending on the priorities of each new administration, the agency is pushed and pulled to shift emphasis among its principal activities: reporting on agricultural economics; promoting U.S. exports and helping American companies navigate bureaucratic hurdles; conducting policy analysis, for example on biofuel use in South America or the effect of climate change on food production; and providing food aid and development assistance in emerging markets. While reporting on agricultural output was once the agency’s core function, its focus has shifted as the private sector has begun to compile more accurate data.

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A Return to State?

Might FAS and FCS be better positioned if they were returned to the State Department, where both once resided? In most cases, officers say they are content where they are. Officers in both services glory in a can-do, practical culture that they say differs from the more cerebral one at State.

"If they have a successful tour, nothing happens," says one Commercial Service officer in Latin America of his State Department colleagues, with a laugh. "It's a tremendous cultural difference. I enjoy Commerce because it's a little more freewheeling. We have a specific mission to deliver an advantage to U.S. companies."

Being part of the Commerce Department, commercial officers say, provides them with an entrée and credibility with U.S. companies that a State Department affiliation would not provide. Foreign Agricultural Service officers feel similarly about their working relationship with U.S. farm groups and argue that their single-minded focus on agriculture would not be possible in the more generalist culture of State.

"We work closely with the State Department here in Washington and overseas," says Hale. But "by being part of the [Agriculture] Department, if we've got technical problems, we're very well tied in to work with the technical agencies."

The flip side of the coin, bluntly expressed by one Commercial Service officer in the Middle East, is the constant battle for resources and respect that Foreign Service officers must wage in a department dominated by civil servants. "We are a Foreign Service agency stuck in a hodgepodge department where the Foreign Service culture doesn't mesh with the Civil Service," he says.

But old veterans of both agencies say the agricultural and commercial officers of yesteryear faced a similar problem inside State because of the different nature of their missions. Moving back to Foggy Bottom would amount to trading one cultural misfit for another, they say.

One commercial officer in Europe says the best solution would be to move the Commercial Service out of Commerce and combine it with other trade-related gov-

The benefits of investing in export promotion are clear.

But by some estimates,

the United States is

now spending far less

on that than many

other countries.

ernment agencies to create a new Cabinet department. "If the U.S. government is really serious about being a stronger player in trade and investment, it really should put its experts in those areas together in one building and give them the budget to match," she said.

Charles A. Ford, a former ambassador to Honduras and Commercial Service veteran, thinks it may be time to start exploring entirely new management structures.

The first step, he says, would be a re-evaluation of the Commercial Service's mission. With that in place, he says, the agency might consider new management structures by examining innovations in private-sector corporate governance.

Hope for the Future

All the challenges and budget pressures aside, officers at both agencies remain hopeful. They say that the choice of former Washington state Governor Gary Locke as Commerce Secretary and former Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack for Agriculture bodes well, since both have first-hand knowledge of the ways in which exports boost a state's economy.

And despite Pres. Obama's skepticism about free trade, no one can doubt the enthusiasm he's created for the United States abroad. "The best part of the job is that we market America," says Anderson. "Having Obama as our president is a marketer's dream."

The benefits of investing in export promotion are clear, officers say, something they hope the politicians who control the purse strings will eventually acknowledge. "As people understand how much agriculture is dependent on trade, they will spend more attention on it," says Schmick.

More foreboding is what would be lost if they fail to do so: U.S. competitiveness. By some estimates, the United States is now spending far less on the job of promoting exports than many other countries. "The very positive message is that we can bring home jobs," says Curtis. "But you also have to remember that this is a global economy. If you don't compete internationally, then you will lose the domestic market, too." ■

NOTES FROM THE FIELD: FCS DELIVERS FOR U.S. BUSINESS

W

hen he landed in Hyderabad in July 2008 to serve as the first-ever American consul general in the city, Cornelis “Kees” Keur faced the daunting task of building a new consulate general. Fortunately, as a minister counselor in the management cone, he had already opened consulates in Shenyang and Chengdu, and had also served as consul general in Chengdu. So Keur knew what was expected in terms of logistics.

In addition, upon his arrival he had a built-in staff and support system through the U.S. & Foreign Commercial Service office that had been established there in 2000, the sole U.S. government office in the city. Commercial Specialist P. Radhakishore’s experience and contacts proved instrumental for the new consul general, enabling him to connect immediately with the key players in the community.

“While serving as consul general in Chengdu a decade ago, I used USFCS to leverage our influence throughout

Aileen Crowe Nandi currently serves as principal commercial officer in Chennai, with previous Foreign Service postings in Kolkata and Mexico City. Before joining the U.S. & Foreign Commercial Service in 2002, Ms. Nandi worked for the U.S. Trade and Development Agency. She wishes to thank her colleagues, both mentioned and unnamed, for their contributions to this article.

FCS WILL CONTINUE TO ASSIST AMERICAN COMPANIES GRAPPLING WITH A CHALLENGING ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT.

BY AILEEN CROWE NANDI

that district,” says Keur. “Since arriving in Hyderabad, I have greatly enjoyed working with the agency on the various trade missions and delegations that have come during the first six months of my tenure. Again, commercial successes are contributing to the credibility of our operations in the eyes of the local power brokers.”

Integral to the Country Team

The U.S. & Foreign Commercial Service — known as “FCS” in embassies and consulates and the “Commercial Service” within the Department of Commerce — plays an integral role in the ambassador’s country team by leading and assisting efforts to enhance commercial diplomacy, U.S. export promotion and foreign investment in the United States. Chiefs of mission rely on FCS, with its direct contacts with the local and U.S. business communities, to protect American business interests abroad.

For example, Senior Commercial Officer David Ponsar led a successful advocacy campaign in the Slovak Republic by enlisting the ambassador’s support to assist Colorado-based Aspect Energy’s appeals to overturn a ruling from the Ministry of Environment that effectively shut them out of the market. As a result, the ministry reversed its initial decision, enabling the company to continue pursuing four licenses to survey for oil and gas deposits.

In addition to working with embassy and consulate col-

leagues on advocacy projects, FCS must reach benchmarks each year in terms of export success stories and commercial diplomacy. According to its latest annual report, in 2008 the agency supported more than 12,000 business successes, amounting to almost \$70 billion in exports in nearly 200 markets around the world.

For each dollar invested in FCS, American clients realized an average of \$359 in export sales. With its mandate to broaden and deepen the U.S. exporter base, each office has export success goals, with an emphasis on assisting small and medium-size enterprises, as well as “new to export” and “new to market” companies.

These goals are important. U.S. exports were the bright spot of the economy in 2008, with a 12-percent increase to \$1.84 trillion worldwide. Additionally, December 2008 saw the lowest monthly goods and services deficit since February 2003, contributing to a 3.3-percent improvement in the annual deficit. As American exports comprised 13.1 percent of gross domestic product in 2008, their importance to the U.S. economic engine cannot be overstated.

So, for instance, while playing a role in a country team effort to sell turbines to a host country entity, FCS also serves the critical needs of U.S. companies lacking the in-house expertise or resources to begin doing business in foreign markets on their own. As American businesses reshape themselves to remain globally competitive, so the agency repositions itself to provide customized global business solutions to service individual company requirements.

Challenges and Opportunities

To meet its ambitious goals, the U.S. & Foreign Commercial Service consistently redefines its best practices, and is thus uniquely positioned to assist American firms of all sizes with their business interests, especially exports, overseas. This process of continuous adaptation presents both challenges and opportunities.

Unlike the other foreign affairs agencies, FCS must charge companies for their services, a requirement spelled out by the Office of Management and Budget. (State Department “partnership posts” that offer such customized services must also charge for them.) It uses these fee collections to cover its expenses.

Chiefs of mission rely on FCS, with its direct contacts with the local and U.S. business communities, to protect American business interests abroad.

While it is sometimes difficult to explain to American companies why they should pay for U.S. government programs, this policy has had the beneficial effect of forcing FCS to operate efficiently and effectively in the interest of its clients. All companies are sent Quality Assurance Surveys upon completion of the service, and each FCS office involved is rated on the results.

Officers aim for feedback such as that from the ACS Group, a Schaumburg, Ill.-based producer of auxiliary equipment for the plastics industry. After the company used FCS matchmaking services to identify distributors in Chile, Brazil and El Salvador, its vice president for sales and marketing reported: “I was very, very pleased with the level of service. ... Everyone should know about your services!” He also noted that these efforts saved him months, possibly even years, of business development legwork.

The issue of maintaining a sufficient income level to replenish its budget to sustain operations is all the more acute now, during what is shaping up to be a very dire budget year. Some FCS posts and offices are faring well because American exporters are exploring new opportunities in different markets, but others struggle to attract clients during the economic downturn.

How FCS Works

Part of the International Trade Administration within the U.S. Department of Commerce, FCS has approximately 253 Foreign Service officers (both career and non-career limited appointments) posted throughout the world. The director general, the head of FCS with the

The Export-Job Creation Nexus

- Exports account for 20 percent of manufacturing jobs (approximately 2.64 million positions).
- Small and medium-size enterprises constitute the vast majority of growth in new exporters.
- Small businesses create 70 percent of new jobs in the United States.
- SMEs comprise almost 97 percent of U.S. exporters, but represent only about 30 percent of the total export value of U.S. goods.

F O C U S

rank of assistant secretary, is almost always a political appointee. Like State, FCS has separate geographic regions managed by regional directors, each a Foreign Service officer serving in a headquarters assignment. Unlike at State, however, FSOs at Commerce are only a tiny fraction of the headquarters staff.

The U.S. & Foreign Commercial Service is unique among the five foreign affairs agencies in having a robust domestic network of more than 100 U.S. Export Assistance Centers. Located in most major cities across the United States, the centers traditionally make the initial contact with first-time exporters and assist them in carrying out their maiden forays into foreign markets. To facilitate better cooperation between overseas posts and the centers, all commercial officers are now required to serve one tour in a USEAC.

In 2008 FCS supported more than 12,000 business successes, totaling almost \$70 billion worth of exports in nearly 200 markets around the world.

In the past, international trade specialists and commercial officers serving in the centers encountered resistance when encouraging American companies to consider exporting. Many, particularly small and medium-size businesses, viewed the United States itself as a large, dynamic market that was more than adequate for their needs.

This view has begun to change somewhat with the progress of globalization. Still, many first-time exporters make initial sales to Canada and Mexico to bolster their confidence before exploring other markets. For instance, after the Hatco Corporation had its first success in Mexico in 2005 as a result of FCS assistance, the company reported: "We are looking forward to adapting this successful platform to many other international markets in the future."

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Yet the turbulent economic times present a paradox for U.S. exporters. Although some American firms are exploring export opportunities in new markets more seriously due to the dearth of opportunities in the domestic market, many companies struggle with justifying travel costs in the current climate. In fact, many are now opting to do business by e-mail and phone to avoid traveling.

Although akin to buying a swimsuit over the Internet, this approach can occasionally reap success: International Trade Specialist Lesa Forbes of the Miami USEAC worked with commercial specialist Chamberlain Eke in Lagos to help ER Trucks identify a list of potential distributors in Nigeria. As a result, the company exported more than \$150,000 worth of its equipment, clearing its excess inventory for these sales.

In many countries, however, particularly those with developing economies, face-to-face interaction remains critical to clinch deals. The success rate typically decreases when U.S. company representatives do not meet with potential partners. “Especially in the current difficult economic situation, special efforts are needed to convince companies to test the waters,” Senior Commercial Officer Carmine D’Aloisio explains, referring to his efforts to facilitate exports to the still-growing Indian market. “We reach U.S. firms through various direct marketing techniques and pinpoint export opportunities, potential partners and, often as importantly, what we can do to help overcome specific market access barriers.”

Until the fall of 2008, FCS India was overloaded with requests and demands from American companies, D’Aloisio says. “But now we’re strategically targeting companies who we feel could compete in the market. For example, we successfully recruited a 14-company trade mission in the solar sector by focusing on key companies that have niche products that could work in India.” He adds that finding Indian partners is only part of the solution. For the U.S. firms to succeed, FCS also needs to influence the policy and regulatory environment that will allow both Indian and foreign firms to take off.

Winning on an Uneven Playing Field

Another obstacle for U.S. firms overseas, and a focus for FCS assistance, is competition from local and third-coun-

FCS serves the critical needs of U.S. companies lacking the in-house expertise to begin doing business in foreign markets.

try companies. Local companies almost always have the home-court advantage. But in addition, some European and Asian countries subsidize their companies to undertake trade missions or pursue large infrastructure projects abroad. And alarmingly, many countries do not even come close to adhering to the principles of the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, which prohibits

American firms from giving bribes to win business in foreign markets. In fact, until a few years ago some European countries allowed their firms to list bribes and other “business development expenses” as tax deductions.

Though U.S. firms decry the uneven playing field these situations present, many have learned to be more innovative and cost-effective and to offer the best value for money. Because U.S. government programs — such as guarantees and loans from the U.S. Export-Import Bank or the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and training grants from the U.S. Trade and Development Agency — pale in comparison to what other governments offer their firms, FCS assistance is essential to help American companies win contracts in foreign markets.

In one case, the Sunnen Products Company headquartered in St. Louis utilized counseling and advocacy from FCS offices in St. Louis, Brazil and Italy to compete against its most formidable competitor, a German company, in Brazil. Despite contending with additional tariffs and a local presence (the German company had a plant in Brazil), Sunnen Products was ultimately successful in selling its high-precision honing equipment to an Italian firm in Brazil. Sunnen attests that its exports account for 30 new jobs created in the last five years, in addition to 20 jobs that would have been lost due to a relatively flat U.S. market.

In this global business environment, U.S. companies need to undertake a long-term commitment — with lots of patience — for their export strategy. FCS will continue to lead embassy advocacy efforts, finding innovative ways to respond to the needs of American companies and enhance exports. Business continues even amid global doom and gloom, and the U.S. & Foreign Commercial Service will continue to ensure that U.S. export orders are placed, shipments are sent and American companies are paid. ■

FAS AT A CROSSROADS: RESHAPING AG DIPLOMACY

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THE FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL SERVICE HAS REPEATEDLY REINVENTED ITSELF THROUGHOUT ITS 80-YEAR HISTORY. THE TIME HAS COME FOR ANOTHER EVOLUTION.

BY ALLAN MUSTARD

imes are hard — the economy is sputtering, unemployment is climbing, tax revenues have imploded, and the Foreign Agricultural Service is threatening employee furloughs. Trade problems are multiplying rapidly, and negotiators are scrambling to keep export markets open in the face of protectionist sentiment at home and abroad. The new Democratic president is pushing Congress in fresh directions in both foreign relations and international trade policy, creating new challenges for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service — just as it faces the worst budgetary shortfall in its history.

Allan Mustard joined the Foreign Service with the U.S. International Communication Agency in 1978 and has worked for the Foreign Agricultural Service since 1982. In addition to serving as minister counselor for agricultural affairs in Mexico City, he is curator and webmaster of the FAS Virtual Museum, as well as the author of a 2003 management study of FAS structure and corporate culture, and of two previous Foreign Service Journal articles. The author thanks several anonymous reviewers for helpful comments. The views and opinions expressed in this article are strictly those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect official views of the U.S. government, the U.S. Department of Agriculture or the Foreign Agricultural Service.

Does that sound familiar? It should. But the year is 1934. FAS has just closed three overseas offices due to lack of money, and has announced 24-day furloughs for all employees paid more than \$1,000 per annum. The situation is so dire that instructions are sent to Sydney to sell the used railing, shelving and linoleum of that recently closed office to cover expenses associated with breaking the lease. Yet despite the fiscal pressure, and with no additional staffing, the agency has been handed a new responsibility: collaborating with the State Department on international negotiation of agricultural tariff reductions under authority of the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act of 1934.

Seventy-five years later, we face similar challenges. In the face of a budget shortfall, FAS is expected not only to carry out its traditional mission of export promotion but to assume new responsibilities in the realms of national security, climate change and global food security. At the same time, a Congress and new administration increasingly preoccupied with domestic headaches, coupled with a stalled Doha Round, hint at a weakening of support for the liberalization philosophy that has underpinned trade policy for three-quarters of a century. Will FAS survive?

The Little Engine That Could

The single most consistent engine of economic growth

in the 20th century was trade liberalization. Started in 1934, interrupted by World War II, and culminating in creation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in 1947 and then the World Trade Organization in 1995, this policy reduced industrial tariffs from an average of about 70 percent ad valorem to around 7 percent today. The impact has been profound. According to the Peterson Institute for International Economics, U.S. annual incomes are \$1 trillion higher, or \$9,000 per household, due to increased trade liberalization since 1945. Today this impact goes unnoticed. The boon of trade liberalization is largely unappreciated.

This economic growth was accomplished without a reduction of agricultural trade barriers. The long-postponed push to liberalize trade in agricultural products came to life only in 1995, with conclusion of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture and Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. The intent, as with industrial goods, was to reduce agricultural tariffs over time; to reduce and eventually abolish export subsidies; to reduce trade-distorting agricultural supports; and to base food safety, animal health and plant quarantine measures strictly on the best available science, not protectionism.

Knowing that achievement of the equivalent task with industrial goods took the better part of 70 years, agricultural negotiators assumed that their efforts would likely take at least that long, stretching well beyond the middle of the 21st century. But such a long view is difficult to maintain in the face of a global economic meltdown, immersion in two foreign wars, and a broad realization that the climate is changing faster than we had thought.

Meanwhile, President Barack Obama's new administration appears to be signaling that international trade is not a high priority. In his February address to Congress, the president did not mention Doha or outstanding free trade agreements waiting to be ratified. Furthermore, his budget proposal cuts the Market Access Program by 20 percent.

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack advised USDA employees in a Feb. 12 all-hands letter that his top priorities are food safety and nutrition, sustainable agriculture, climate change, process improvements within

If trade is moving to the back burner, what new roles are unfolding for the Foreign Agricultural Service?

USDA and rural development. Although one-third of acreage planted to crops in the U.S. is harvested for export, trade was not mentioned.

If trade, literally the first priority listed in USDA's old strategic plan, is moving to the back burner, what new roles are unfolding for the Foreign Agricultural Service?

Old Headaches ...

Today the world is resounding with calls for food security in individual countries, as well as demands for protection from imports by domestic producers suffering from slack consumer demand and high input costs. Uncertainty associated with global climate change complicates the outlook. Is the drought in California's Central Valley an anomaly or a precursor of a longer-term trend? Last year's near-record cereal grain prices resulted in part from unusually severe droughts in Australia and Europe. Are these coincidences or a trend?

Put this picture together and it is clear that FAS's task list is about to be expanded and redefined. For starters, we will continue the traditional prognostication of crop production, but try to use this to better assess the impact of climate change. Instead of promoting trade liberalization, for the next several years we may find ourselves simply seeking to preserve the hard-won gains of the last few decades, and pushing back against those who would reimpose restrictions in the name of food security and food independence, and to protect their agriculture sectors in this period of economic stress.

Though high compared to industrial tariffs, all agricultural tariffs among World Trade Organization member-states are governed by WTO rules. While some countries may raise tariffs to the maximum allowed (many member-states apply tariffs at lower levels than the bound rates), the new frontier of agricultural protectionism has already inspired misapplication of food safety, veterinary and plant quarantine rules. Coupled with this is growth in the technical stumbling blocks to international commerce that fall under the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade. This spurred creation, during the 2006 agency reorganization, of a unit within the Foreign Agricultural Service to monitor and enforce trade agreements, as well as a unit dedicated to resolving sanitary and phytosanitary issues.

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New sanitary and phytosanitary measures based on pseudo-science and technical barriers to trade could prove to be the 21st-century version of the Smoot-Hawley Act of 1930. FAS officials in Washington and field officers abroad will have their hands full keeping trade from shrinking in the face of new non-tariff barriers, as well as both coordinating the international work of U.S. agencies involved in SPS matters (USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, plus the Environmental Protection Agency, Food and Drug Administration, and National Marine Fisheries Service) and interacting with their foreign counterparts. This part of the portfolio already accounts for about half of the work of the average FAS overseas office and will continue to grow.

... And New Challenges

Then there are the resurrected and the new agenda items. The Foreign Agricultural Service's return to national security issues, following its forced departure from that arena in April 1954, was heralded in 2003 with the posting of agricultural officers to Baghdad. They went not for the traditional FAS missions of analysis and marketing, but initially to rebuild the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture, and then to manage the work of USDA technical assistance advisers and members of Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

Today about 50 USDA employees are assigned to Iraq and Afghanistan in such areas as extension education, animal health, water and soil conservation, and conservation of biodiversity. As former Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker points out, agriculture has historically been critical to Iraq's economy, and today employs one-quarter of the work force, generating 10 percent of gross domestic product even in an economy dominated by oil. Its importance is even greater in Afghanistan, where the underperforming agricultural sector is estimated to account for 31 percent of GDP and 80 percent of employment.

In addition, as food security concerns emerge globally, FAS domestic analysts and field officers are being called on to gauge food availability not strictly for pur-

In the face of a budget shortfall, FAS is expected not only to carry out its traditional mission of export promotion but to assume new responsibilities.

poses of market development, but to predict nutritional shortfalls and assess prospects for unrest due to food shortages. This work harkens back to World War II, when for strategic reasons USDA analysts in the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations calculated food availability in Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, and forecast how much wheat should be set aside to feed homeless and displaced refugees after the war was over.

Sec. Vilsack has created a new Global Change Program Office, charged with analyzing the effects of global climate change and "representing USDA on U.S. delegations to international climate change discussions." This is a new field of endeavor for USDA and, given the global nature of climate change, for its international arm, the Foreign Agricultural Service. With our satellite imagery office in Washington and network of field offices able to monitor, report on and forecast events, on paper we are well positioned to contribute substantially to this new mandate. The Office of Global Analysis within FAS has already set up a unit to cover global climate change.

Foreign agricultural analysis is FAS's oldest core competence and historically was its strong suit. Unfortunately, the agency's in-house analytical capability was seriously eroded in the 1990s, due to overemphasis on marketing at the expense of research, and damaged further by abolition of the commodity analysis branches in the 2006 reorganization. As a result, despite the heroic efforts of a dwindling number of old-line analysts, much of the institutional analytical capacity that made FAS circulars must-reads in years past has been lost.

Today FAS struggles to meet demands for analytical services, such as a study of most-vulnerable countries during last year's global "food crisis." Increasingly, the overseas posts are burdened with analytical tasks traditionally handled in Washington — such as quantifying this year's projected drop in U.S. agricultural exports to major trading partners, an econometric task for which they are singularly ill-suited — and with serving as the agency's institutional memory. With half its Foreign Service staff already eligible for retirement, a lack of up-and-coming analytical talent due to periodic hiring freezes, and a graying Civil Service, the agency faces se-

vere difficulties just keeping up with what it is already asked to do.

New Mandates Mean New Resource Demands

The other rub is twofold — the statutory mandate and money. The agency's authorizing legislation (7 U.S. Code 5692) says the administrator of FAS is "authorized to exercise such functions and perform such duties related to foreign agriculture ... as may be required by law or prescribed by the Secretary of Agriculture." In the next section of the code (5693), Congress prescribes four functions for FAS: information-gathering, market development and technical assistance, plus operation of programs authorized under various export promotion authorities.

However, in accordance with the intent of Congress since 1954, as expressed in both appropriations and report language, all these activities are limited to creating or expanding opportunities for U.S. agricultural exports. (Oddly, trade policy and market-access duties carried out since 1934 are not mentioned in the statute, though congressional staffers have made clear to FAS's leadership that they are top priorities.)

This creates problems for an agency being told to shift away from pure export promotion, its mandate since Secretary Ezra Taft Benson swept away the old FAS a half-century ago. Aside from the predictable reluctance of dyed-in-the-wool marketers to accept a new philosophy, FAS does not yet enjoy full support for a change in its responsibilities. Congress may well balk at the request to appropriate funds for activities related to national security, global climate change and global food security. Thus, although Sec. Vil-sack has the authority to direct FAS to carry out new missions as long as they relate to foreign agriculture, the funding will not be there if Congress does not agree.

When this is coupled with the fact that the Foreign Agricultural Service is already understaffed by 200 full-time equivalents (22 percent of its authorized strength), is now experiencing its third hiring freeze since the mid-1990s, is cutting three more overseas officer slots, was forced this year to curtail all overseas travel by headquarters staff, and began the first bureaucratic steps needed to implement agencywide furloughs this fiscal year, one rapidly concludes that FAS is at a crossroads. Its headquarters is already grossly understaffed, and if the overseas offices are cut to

*FAS does not yet enjoy
the full support of
Congress for a change
in its responsibilities.*

the bone in order to cover costs in Iraq and Afghanistan, we won't have the muscle to execute any new mandates coming our way.

Is it 1934 all over again? We can only hope so. The Foreign Agricultural Service emerged from the 1930s with broader recognition of its contributions to the nation's economic prosper-

ity and deeper appreciation of its additional roles in diplomacy and security affairs. The late 20th-century FAS was forged during World War II, challenged by the need to promote prosperity and international consensus during the Cold War, and now confronts the need to adapt to a new set of demands.

Perhaps the 21st-century Foreign Agricultural Service will be reformed by the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, by the need to restore prosperity, and by the need to confront climate change and global food security. We've done it before. And we can do it again — if given the chance. ■

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EMERGING CHALLENGES: FARM TRADE IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

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or an “aggie diplomat,” nothing is more useful than ground truth. Whenever I am home, I like to go on farm calls with my brother, a large-animal veterinarian in rural upstate New York. When my brother’s customers ask about my job, I always like to explain why the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Foreign Agricultural Service matters to them. After all, these are not only my brother’s customers — they are also mine.

FAS faces the same challenge of proving its relevance. Created in 1930 and re-established in 1953, its mission has grown far beyond its original focus on trade issues and agricultural reporting. It picked up responsibility for food aid in 1941, market development in 1953, and capacity-building and agricultural development in 1993.

As FAS evolves, it must demonstrate its value both to U.S. farmers and taxpayers. But this effort is complicated by high budget deficits, the economic crisis and emerging challenges from politics, globalization and technological change.

Eric Trachtenberg currently directs the Agricultural Trade Office in Beijing. He joined the Foreign Agricultural Service in 1995 and previously served at the American Institute in Taiwan and in Moscow. The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not reflect the official positions of the U.S. government, the U.S. Department of Agriculture or the Foreign Agricultural Service.

FACING A RANGE OF POLITICAL THREATS TO AGRICULTURAL TRADE, FAS MUST AGAIN PROVE THE VALUE OF ITS WORK.

BY ERIC TRACHTENBERG

Political Issues

Political challenges to agricultural trade threaten to undermine long-term support for further liberalization. While some of these issues affect trade generally, others specifically affect agriculture and food trade.

Falling support for free trade. The ongoing economic crisis has terrified many Americans and increased hostility to globalization. The timing could not be worse — the crisis came with trade already blamed for keeping U.S. wages down and increasing unemployment. As a result, Americans increasingly see trade as a threat instead of an opportunity. According to the Pew Foundation, 78 percent of Americans said trade was good for the United States in 2002. Just 53 percent of respondents felt that way when asked last year, a drop of nearly a third.

Many agricultural producer groups have also become more skeptical about trade. As agricultural imports rose to a record \$79.3 billion in 2008, some farmers and growers felt threatened despite record exports of \$115.4 billion. Trade stakeholders were also drawn away by other temptations such as increasing payments for crops, biofuels and conservation.

Declining agricultural population and political influence. Farming is losing political clout. According to USDA’s Economic Research Service, the number of U.S. farms peaked at 6.8 million in 1935. As a result of mech-

anization, improved crops and other production-improving technology, the number of farms fell by 71 percent, to a little more than two million, by 2007.

Unsurprisingly, rural communities have become less dependent on agriculture. In 1950, almost a third of rural employment came from production agriculture, giving it an important connection to public policy.

Now farms are bigger and rural residents depend heavily on off-farm income. At the moment, only 14 percent of the rural work force is employed in farming, and 900,000 American farmers do other work at least 200 days a year. The average U.S. farmer is 57 — and getting older.

The political system is also slowly tilting away from agriculture. Although the structure of the Senate helps because many members come from farm states, the decreasing rural dependence on farming may eventually cause Congress to lose interest in the issue. This risk is increased because many key farm-state senators such as Richard Lugar, R-Ind., Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, Thad Cochran, R-Miss., and Kit Bond, R-Mo., are not young. After this generation retires, their replacements may not have the same connection to farming.

Rising non-trade concerns. Agriculture is unique because of its connections to food, rural life and the environment. These also tie agricultural trade to climate change, energy, food safety and conservation issues. The rise of non-trade concerns about agriculture stems partially from the efforts of nongovernmental organizations that have been able to use the Internet and other channels to organize, raise funds and influence the policy process. Regulatory failures in food safety have also increased these concerns.

Supporters of multifunctionality insist that agriculture deserves special support because it has a unique role to play in conservation and food production. If oil prices rise again, the diversion of cropland from food to energy could further complicate trade. Finally, growing climate change concerns have fueled interest in everything from alternative energy to locally produced products.

These changes sometimes work against trade, even though the evidence does not support such an association. For example, the food safety issue is used to create suspicion of genetically engineered products even though such

*Political challenges to
agricultural trade threaten
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liberalization.*

foods have an outstanding safety record. Since their introduction in 1996, genetically engineered foodstuffs have caused no reliably documented safety problems.

Eating local food also may not help climate change. Even if food is grown nearby, it might use more energy than a product grown more efficiently and shipped from its native environs. (An extreme illustration of

this would be growing coconut palms in Chicago.) These concerns make it increasingly difficult to enforce and support World Trade Organization standards and could allow governments to back away from their trade commitments.

The near-death of Doha. Prospects look grim for the current Doha Round negotiations, launched with great fanfare in 2001 to deepen global trade. Unfortunately, the process has broken down repeatedly, mostly because of agriculture, and has been stalled since July 2008. The biggest differences have arisen over farm production subsidies in wealthy countries, and protection for vulnerable products in developing countries.

The WTO faces another risk: that countries will accept the penalties rather than play by the rules, undermining confidence in the system. For instance, the European Union has refused to accept WTO dispute-settlement rulings on genetically engineered products and beef hormones, even at the cost of additional tariffs from the United States. And if U.S. exporters cannot get relief from the WTO, it could cause them to stop supporting the multilateral process.

The refusal of some countries to change WTO-inconsistent rules increases the risk of outright non-compliance with the organization's dispute-settlement decisions, potentially rendering the WTO irrelevant. This risk is especially high if a dispute-settlement ruling has serious political or economic consequences. And if the organization were to become ineffective, that could lead to a world of hard-to-implement, overlapping trade agreements, fewer predictable rules and higher trade barriers — with no central authority to help manage these arrangements.

To make matters worse, many of the U.S.'s most formidable competitors are actively engaged in concluding a large number of free trade agreements. Since these vastly outnumber the few FTAs the United States has in place, we risk being left out. For example, while the U.S.-South

Korea FTA has yet to come into force, China and New Zealand started implementation of free trade agreements with Seoul on Oct. 1, 2008.

The structure of the negotiations and the need for consensus lead some to believe the Doha Round may be impossible to conclude. And if that process fails and multilateral agreements can no longer change with the times, the WTO could have a gloomy future.

Still, none of this is inevitable. If the United States can build consensus at home and a cooperative relationship with other key WTO players, Doha can be saved.

The Downside of Globalization

Agricultural trade also faces challenges from the success of globalization. As production systems, supply chains and corporate ownership have all become internationalized, it becomes increasingly difficult for governments to define a successful national agricultural trade policy.

Similarly, increasingly complex trade and investment relationships between countries are making it difficult to define and promote U.S. products. Products are often shipped abroad for processing and re-exported, and U.S. companies have growing overseas investments.

It can also be difficult to decide what sectors to support through market promotion or trade policy. When a U.S. company sells an agricultural product sourced outside the United States, how is it treated? How is a product made overseas from U.S. materials defined? If a major American firm sells candy with U.S. brand names in Southeast Asia, will Washington only support the U.S.-made brands and reject the others? For that matter, *is* there a value in promoting American brands?

Increasing U.S. imports. Another challenge for trade is the large and increasing volume of imports. In 2005, imports made up 15 percent of total food volume consumed. According to USDA's Economic Research Service, the United States imports 80 percent of its seafood, 45 percent of its fresh fruit and 17 percent of its fresh vegetables. It is heavily dependent on imports for bananas, coffee, chocolate, apple juice, wine, beer, nuts and spices. And while we are less dependent on imports than most other countries, problems overseas can still significantly affect American consumers.

Prospects look grim for the current Doha Round negotiations, launched with great fanfare in 2001 to deepen global trade.

As the food safety issue illustrates, import security counts, too. Issues such as bioterrorism, salmonella in 700,000 cantaloupes grown in Mexico and Costa Rica, and melamine in Chinese pet food all affect FAS relationships overseas.

National security and food security. After the end of the Cold War, it was hoped that food would become a normal commodity traded

on international markets. But despite the sound economics behind open trade, food remains a national security issue because insecurity can cause instability and war. During a period of high food prices in 2008, the World Bank reported unrest in 33 countries, including Haiti, Bangladesh, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Senegal, Morocco, China and India.

Many countries see domestic food production as a strategic goal. The WTO Group of 10 is dominated by countries such as Iceland, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Norway, Switzerland and Taiwan that resist further agricultural trade liberalization. The G-10 members heavily subsidize agriculture and keep food prices high domestically not only to preserve rural lifestyles, create jobs and support domestic constituencies, but to ensure their supplies are never cut off. This thinking has played a role in their decisions to keep large and noncompetitive agricultural sectors alive. It has also impeded progress in the Doha Round.

Recent history has also shaken confidence in the trading system as a reliable supplier. During the 2008 food price spikes, many countries limited exports. India, Indonesia, Vietnam, China, Cambodia and Egypt all limited rice exports to keep domestic prices low. This cut tradable supplies by 3.5 percent. These "beggar thy neighbor" policies undermined reliability of imports as a source of food while preventing farmers from benefiting from high export prices. This reduced the incentive to increase food production and undermined faith in export markets.

The biotech revolution. The final challenge to trade is changing technology. Despite resistance in many quarters, the FDA approved the sale of milk and meat from cloned animals in January 2008. However, the creation of modified animals could be very controversial because mammals generally attract sympathy from the public.

With that in mind, current biotech research has mostly focused on increasing productivity. For example, the use

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of Roundup Ready soybeans allows farmers to apply an effective and environmentally friendly herbicide for weed control without damaging the crop. And novel corn varieties reduce insect infestations from pests such as rootworm. The next generation of genetically engineered products will boost yields during droughts, increase saline tolerance and provide consumers with reduced exposure to allergens, better nutrition, shelf-life and taste. Despite the manifold benefits, the challenge will be to convince overseas customers to resolve an ever-more-complex set of trade issues resulting from the introduction of these products.

Making the Case for Agricultural Trade

Although agricultural trade and FAS as a trade-supporting agency both face many challenges from politics, globalization and technology, U.S. agriculture depends heavily on exports. At the same time, the U.S. economy still benefits greatly from agricultural trade. The way to address the political problem is to make the case for trade

and ease the concerns of those most vulnerable to globalization. Helpful steps for anxious workers could include better wage insurance, child care vouchers, universal health coverage and vastly improved access to job training and education.

It is important to realize that the facts support the value of agricultural trade. The volume of agricultural exports as a share of production has been just under 25 percent in recent years — and 14 percent of all farm employment remains tied to exports. According to the ERS, in 2007 the United States exported 60 percent of food-grain production, 19 percent of feed grains, and more than 43 percent of oilseeds.

Future growth in demand for U.S. agricultural products will continue to come from overseas. The United States only has 5 percent of the world's population, and economic growth in emerging markets such as China is much higher than at home. As the Chinese middle class spreads from the coast into the interior, cities such as Chengdu, Qingdao, Wuhan, Shenyang and Tianjin, col-

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lectively populated by hundreds of millions of people, could be U.S. agriculture's next markets.

Export promotion and trade policy effectiveness create good jobs — and not just for farmers. The ERS estimates that in 2007 the \$89.9 billion of agricultural exports increased U.S. economic output by \$215.7 billion. Agricultural exports that year generated 808,000 full-time jobs, including 537,000 nonfarm jobs created by purchases of inputs, transport, food processing and other services. Jobs linked to exports tend to earn 13 to 18 percent more than jobs elsewhere in the economy. This makes agricultural trade an important contributor to the entire U.S. economy.

New Partners, New Missions

In moving forward, the Foreign Agricultural Service will need to find a way to carry out its current mission while accommodating the emerging challenges. For example, FAS may need to reshape market development programs so they reflect the complexity of globalized production systems and supply chains. Programs that require products

to be completely of U.S. origin or do not count trade that is transshipped or sent for further processing may need to be modified.

Increasing food imports and ongoing food safety issues may require FAS to allocate its resources in new ways. Related national security issues could play a larger role in the agency's activities — even beyond its current large-scale involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

FAS also needs to improve its engagement with those concerned about climate change, food safety and other issues. Better communication could improve transparency and may ultimately reduce the rejection of U.S. products overseas.

Although the challenges are substantial, they are not insurmountable — if FAS can convince its stakeholders to support change. At a time when the agency's mission faces new challenges, it is important to remember our vital connection to American farmers and taxpayers. As long as we can continue convincing our customers of the value of our work, FAS has a bright future. ■

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EUGENE SCHUYLER: SCHOLAR, PATRIOT AND MAN OF LETTERS

A VISIT BY THE CZARIST NAVY TO NEW YORK CITY IN 1863 LED ONE OF AMERICA'S FIRST RUSSIA EXPERTS TO JOIN THE U.S. CONSULAR SERVICE.

BY ERIC A. JOHNSON

Among early U.S. diplomats, Eugene Schuyler was a multifaceted star. Born in Ithaca, New York, on Feb. 26, 1840, Schuyler began his studies at Yale University at the age of 15, graduating near the top of his class in 1859 with a Philosophical Oration (a high academic honor) as well as distinction in Latin. Two years later, he became one of the first three students to earn a Ph.D. from an American university — Yale's Department of Philosophy and the Arts — before going on to help Noah Porter revise *Webster's Dictionary*.

Always hungry for new knowledge, Schuyler decided to study law, graduating from Columbia Law School in 1863. But that September, Czar Alexander II sent eight Russian Navy ships to New York — a move interpreted by the North as a show of support for President Abraham Lincoln and the Northern states at the very height of the U.S. Civil War. Schuyler befriended several of these visiting offi-



(Photographer unknown)

A portrait of Eugene Schuyler from his posthumous Selected Essays.

cers and decided to learn Russian as a result, changing his life forever. (His language teacher appears to have been one of New York City's very first Russian Orthodox priests.)

While waiting to join the U.S. Consular Service, Schuyler added yet another job to his ever-expanding portfolio in 1865 when he became a staff member and lifelong contributor to *The Nation*, which would become one of America's leading liberal magazines.

Off to Russia

After his acceptance into the U.S. Consular Service in 1866, Schuyler was assigned to be U.S. consul in Moscow, thanks to his knowledge of Russian. While waiting to make the journey, Schuyler developed an interest in Finnish after he was asked to edit the first U.S. edition of Finland's national epic — the *Kalevala* (1867) — translated by John Porter.

On his way to take up his new duties in August 1867, Schuyler met with Ivan Turgenev at Baden-Baden, Germany, and became Turgenev's first U.S. translator with the 1867 publication of *Fathers and Sons*. In addition to furnishing letters of introduction to various Russian literary figures, including Count Leo Tolstoy, Turgenev gave Schuyler the following encouragement: "I have no doubts that you will be accepted in the most cordial way: you know how much people in Russia love Americans, and an American interested in our literature has all the rights to be a welcome guest in our country."

Pursuing those literary interests, Schuyler spent a week at

Eric A. Johnson entered the Foreign Service as a specialist in 1999, then became a generalist in July 2007. Currently the public affairs officer in St. Petersburg, he previously served in Moscow, Tallinn and Washington, D.C. The author would like to thank David Siefkin, Snejana Ianeva, Elena Smirnova and Vera Sevastyanova for their help in researching this profile. The views expressed in this article are the author's own and not necessarily those of the Department of State or the U.S. government.

Tolstoy's Yasnaya Polyana estate in October 1868, where the two men went hunting together. While Tolstoy finished his work on *War and Peace*, Schuyler helped reorganize his library.

During his tour in Moscow, Schuyler was a frequent guest of Prince Vladimir Odoyevsky's literary salon, meeting many of Russia's leading writers and thinkers. Schuyler also developed a passion for exotic travel that would continue throughout his career. During the summer of 1868, he took time off to journey down the Volga to Orenburg by steamboat, before crossing the Urals by carriage and going as far as Kirgizia. And in October 1870 he visited the Grand Duchy of Finland, where his work on the English-language edition of the *Kalevala* was already well known.

Not long after Secretary of State Hamilton Fish was sworn in, Schuyler discovered to his great dismay in May 1869 that he had lost his position.

Schuyler developed an interest in Finnish after being asked to edit the first U.S. edition of Finland's national epic, the Kalevala.

Eager to remain in Russia, that November he became consul in Reval (now Tallinn, Estonia), only a few months before the post was closed as a cost-cutting measure. His next assignment was as the secretary to the U.S. legation in St. Petersburg, from April 1870 to July 1876. During his long tenure there, Schuyler spent at least 30

months as the chargé d'affaires. And since none of the U.S. ministers for whom he worked (Andrew G. Curtin, James L. Orr, Marshall Jewell and George H. Boker) knew Russian or French, Schuyler was an essential part of the mission for more than six years.

Using the capital as a base, Schuyler continued to travel extensively across Russia and Central Asia. He provided detailed information on his trips to the National Geographic Society and wrote a two-volume travelogue, *Turkestan: Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkestan, Khokand, Bukhara and Kuldja* (1876). He also somehow found time to begin research on his two-volume biography *Peter the Great, Emperor of Russia*, which would be published in 1884.

An Eventful Tenure in Constantinople

After nine years in the Russian Empire, Schuyler became the U.S. consul general in Constantinople — while also assigned to be the secretary for the legation — in 1876. Just before taking up his duties, Schuyler met Gertrude Wallace King, the daughter of Columbia College's recently deceased president, in Paris. The couple wed on July 12, 1877; it is not known whether they had any children.

Schuyler became an international figure known across Europe — and feted by the British royal family, among others — for his work in documenting Ottoman atrocities committed during the 1876 Bulgarian uprising. In fact, Schuyler's detailed report served as a basis for the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, providing the Russian Empire with "just cause" to protect fellow Slavs in the Balkans.

By February 1878, the victorious Russian Army was at the gates of Constantinople, bringing with it the U.S. military attaché to Russia, Francis Vinton Greene. For more than a month, Schuyler and Greene worked together, becoming friends.

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During his time in Constantinople, Schuyler helped the new Bulgarian leadership draft their country's first constitution. He also hosted various high-ranking American officials, including former U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant, who visited in March 1878.

It should come as no surprise that the Ottoman Empire declared Schuyler persona non grata in the spring of 1878. Expelled from Constantinople, Schuyler became consul in Birmingham, where he completed the first U.S. translation of Tolstoy's *The Cossacks* (1878). In the summer of 1879, Schuyler became the U.S. consul general in Rome.

But his achievements in the Balkans were never forgotten. On April 4, 1879, Exarch Antim I, the president of the first Bulgarian National Assembly, wrote Schuyler the following note upon Bulgaria's independence: "The free Bulgarian nation hastens to thank

*While Leo Tolstoy
finished his work on
War and Peace,
Schuyler helped
reorganize his library.*

you heartily for your great services, and to assure you that your honored name will hold an enviable place in the history of the liberation of our nation."

Schuyler's next assignments were as chargé d'affaires in Romania (1880-1882) and then as the first U.S. minister to Greece, Romania and Serbia (1882-1884), based in Athens. But in July 1884, Schuyler was forced to leave

the U.S. Consular Service when budget cuts eliminated his new position as minister. (He was not interested in working in Washington, D.C.)

Final Years

Schuyler returned to the United States in November 1884 to teach at both Johns Hopkins and Cornell universities. During his time in academia, Schuyler turned his lectures into one of the very first published studies of the U.S. diplomatic and consular services: *American Diplomacy and the Furtherance of Commerce* (1886). As early as 1881, Schuyler became a vocal advocate for the merger of the two services — a reform that eventually took place with the Rogers Act of 1924, which created the modern U.S. Foreign Service.

Because his wife had a particular fondness for Italy, the couple moved to Alassio on the Italian Riviera in March



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1886, where Schuyler continued writing and traveling. During this time, he wrote a lengthy reminiscence on his time with Count Leo Tolstoy that appeared in *Scribner's* magazine in May 1889.

When James G. Blaine became the new U.S. Secretary of State in March 1889, he tried to appoint Schuyler as his assistant secretary. But Schuyler's nomination ran into some opposition in the U.S. Senate, reportedly because of his latest book. In a May 11, 1889, letter to a friend, Schuyler wrote: "Had I known of the Senate opposition to me, I should have declined sooner for a patriotic reason: it is essential to the success of an administration that the State Department and the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations should work well together. ... The objections to me on the part of certain senators were not political, but from such petty, trifling, personal reasons,

*During his time
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first constitution.*

that, had I been in Washington, I could have stopped it all by threatening to tell the true cause." However, there is no mention of the actual cause.

Schuyler instead accepted an appointment as consul general in Cairo, arriving on Oct. 1, 1889. Egypt fasci-

nated him, and he spent all of his free time learning about its history and traveling along the Nile. In a letter to his sister dated Oct. 14, 1889, Schuyler wrote: "The moist heat at this season, when the Nile is overflowed, and the consequent flies, mosquitoes, etc., beggar all description."

As fate would have it, Schuyler contracted malaria sometime in early 1890, from which he never recovered. He died quite suddenly while convalescing in Venice, Italy, on July 16, 1890.

Upon the 1901 posthumous publication of his essays and memoirs, *Eugene Schuyler: Selected Essays*, a reviewer in the *New York Times* described Schuyler as "one of America's most brilliant scholars, patriots and men of letters." In testament to this talent, both his travelogue *Turkestan* and his biography of Peter the Great are still in print today. ■

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APPRECIATION

A LIFE DEDICATED TO SERVICE

BRIAN DANIEL ADKINS, 1983-2009

By CHARLES HORNBOSTEL

On Jan. 31, Brian Adkins became the latest Foreign Service officer, and one of the youngest, to make the ultimate sacrifice. He was honored at AFSA's Memorial Plaque ceremony on May 1 at the State Department.

Brian's life was tragically cut short by a murderer in Addis Ababa, his first posting. A brilliant, talented and dedicated officer, Brian had a promising career before him. But more than that, he was a friend, even a brother, to those whose lives he touched.

News of Brian's untimely death raced around the globe as we of his A-100 and his Pickering Fellows classes reached out to one another, to the department and to his family. In so doing, we shared our thoughts and fondest memories of the singularly exceptional individual that he was.

A Pickering Fellow

Brian's dedication to service began early. By the time he finished high school in Whitehall, Ohio, Brian had already discovered a keen interest in languages, politics and world affairs. A devout Catholic, Brian was an active member of the Knights of Columbus and followed his heart and his faith into the world. He won the prestigious Thomas Pickering Fellowship in 2001, and that was the start of his journey to a career in diplomacy.

Charles Hornbostel is a vice consul at Embassy Skopje, Macedonia, a fellow alumnus of the Elliott School and a member of the 135th A-100 class. He gratefully acknowledges the input and assistance of Brian's family, friends, classmates and colleagues in preparation of this tribute.

Both as an undergraduate and graduate student of the Elliott School of International Affairs at The George Washington University, Brian distinguished himself academically, earning magna cum laude honors and studying abroad at the Sorbonne. A classical violinist, he was a certified Suzuki Method instructor. He also distinguished himself socially, gathering around him a circle of friends attracted by his warm, caring nature, his sense of humor and his genuine joie de vivre.

While enrolled in the Master of International Trade Policy program, Brian also worked full-time as a trade analyst, first with the Department of Commerce and then for the Whitaker Group, a firm that focuses on African trade. Between his first and second years of graduate school, he served at the U.S. embassy in Tunisia. Speaking six languages by the time he graduated, including French and Arabic, Brian was well prepared for his life as a diplomat.

A Standout

Brian joined the Foreign Service on July 9, 2007, as a member of the 135th A-100 class. Just as in high school and college, Brian was an instant standout with his classmates. He served as co-chair of the budget committee and helped to ensure all of the class's service and social functions were well funded. Brian demonstrated his musical talents during skit night at The Woods retreat, lending his voice and dance stylings to "FSI Nights" (to the tune of "Summer Nights" from *Grease*) and "Foreign Service" (to the tune of "New York, New York"). He was a constant fixture at the class's many social events.

Like many entry-level officers, Brian and his classmates were sent all over the world — to five different continents, from Latin America to East Asia. In just its first tour, the

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*As Brian's far-too-short
life and career are
honored, we think of
how fortunate we are
to have known him,
to have called him friend.*

135th A-100 experienced wars, political unrest, natural disasters and the numerous hardships that the Foreign Service experience encompasses. Unafraid of such challenges, Brian pushed hard to be assigned to Addis Ababa as a rotational consular/political-economic officer.

Addis Ababa

A natural gift for foreign languages served him well as he prepared for Ethiopia. As part of his initial training, Brian received 28 weeks of Amharic, his seventh foreign language. Like all of us, he took to the training with zeal, knowing that he would soon be called upon to use his language and diplomacy skills to further U.S. goals in Ethiopia. Yet Brian did not just study Amharic — he *immersed* himself in it, spending time in the Ethiopian communities of Adams Morgan and the U Street corridor in Washington to improve his language and cultural skills.

This dedication to his craft put him in good stead when he arrived at post. His fellow officers, his supervisors and the local staff all remarked that Brian took to his assignment with dedication and thoroughly injected himself into the life of the country that was to be

his home for his first tour. He played a central role in the embassy's Consular Leadership Day, writing songs and skits for the community.

The weekend he was taken from us, he was preparing for a six-week temporary duty assignment to Rwanda. As in all things, Brian never did anything by half-measures — he was going to do it 100 percent, or not at all.

A Fitting Return Home

In the days following Brian's tragic death, the department showed just what it means to be part of a global family. His flag-draped casket traveled to Ohio with full honors.

Among those attending his funeral were Director General of the Foreign Service Harry K. Thomas, Acting Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Philip Carter, Embassy Addis Ababa's DCM Deborah Malac and Ambassador Scott DeLisi, whose first A-100 class as director of the Entry Level Division of the Office of Career Development and Assignments had been the 135th. Secretary of State Clinton called Brian's family to express the department's condolences.

As Brian's far-too-short life and career are honored, we think of how fortunate we are to have known him, to have called him friend, to have shared in his triumphs and coped along with him in his setbacks. This is the reality when someone signs up for the Foreign Service: We are called on to serve in some of the most dangerous and difficult postings in the world, but we are never alone.

Brian Adkins is survived by his parents, his sister and brother, his grandparents, a nephew and many aunts, uncles and cousins. Contributions in his memory can be made to the Brian Daniel Adkins Memorial Fund at the WesBanco Bank of Columbus, Ohio. His Legacy Web site can be viewed at <http://www.legacy.com/gb2/default.aspx?bookid=6133336981121>. ■

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- AFSA should assist members with all agencies equally
- It's time for a new generation of AFSA leadership!

CLEAN Slate members have broken barriers to race, gender, religion and orientation. They have broken new ground. They have fought for due process, fairness and justice. They have shown, through individual actions and service, that they are dedicated to improving the Foreign Service. That they are willing to fight for what is right and what is in the interests of its members. Our loyalty is to the Service and to AFSA's members. Our loyalty is to you.

With your help, we will give AFSA back to its members, reform how AFSA does business, and deliver real results to AFSA's members.

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AFSA NEWS

American Foreign Service Association • May 2009

AFSA Leaders Meet with Secretary Clinton

DISCUSSION INCLUDES OVERSEAS PAY GAP, WAR-ZONE STAFFING

In their first official meeting with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on March 20, AFSA leaders raised the membership's top concerns regarding resources, the overseas pay disparity, war-zone staffing, family-friendliness, political ambassadors and the future of USAID.

Secretary Clinton, accompanied by Deputy Secretary Jacob Lew and Under Secretary for Management Patrick Kennedy, warmly received AFSA President John Naland, State VP Steve Kashkett and USAID VP Francisco Zamora for the 30-minute discussion. Naland pledged AFSA's willingness to collaborate with the Secretary on an ambitious agenda of action items vital to the long-term health of American diplomacy. The Secretary thanked AFSA for being a strong advocate for the Foreign Service.

Surprising the Cabinet

Turning to resources and staffing, the Secretary said she and her team were 100-percent engaged and had moved quickly to persuade the White House and Congress of our needs, but acknowledged that this will be an uphill battle in the current budget environment. Naland argued that the present and future demands on U.S. diplomats will necessitate dramatic budget increases and sufficient new staffing to create the "train-



STATE DEPARTMENT FILE PHOTO

A small group of AFSA officers and staff meet with Secretary Clinton, March 20. From left: General Counsel Sharon Papp, State VP Steven Kashkett, Sec. Clinton, President John Naland and USAID VP Francisco Zamora.

ing float" that will enable the Foreign Service to acquire the languages and special skills essential to our mission.

In response to AFSA's affirmation of the growing urgency of the overseas pay gap, Sec. Clinton said she had raised this issue at the Cabinet level for the first time and that the response was one of surprise that such a problem existed. There is a consensus that the pay disparity must be fixed, but tactical disagreement exists between State and the White House over what legislative vehicle to use. State is reinforcing daily the need to act, even with the president's chief of staff.

Kashkett urged scrutiny of the size, scope and utility of war-zone staffing. He conveyed AFSA members' hope that Sec. Clinton will end the previous administration's Iraq-centric focus, which has strained our assignment and promotion systems, led to neglect of our other 265 embassies and consulates, and created a perception that important diplomatic work elsewhere in the world is not valued.

A Historic Opportunity

Pointing out that today's Foreign Service families typically spend 10 to 15 years at hardship posts, Kashkett highlighted three vital areas in which Sec. Clinton has a historic opportunity to make great strides in family-friendliness by:

- increasing substantially the professional work possibilities for family members and partners who accompany FS members overseas;
- obtaining paid maternity/paternity leave for FS employees who are now obliged to exhaust their annual and sick leave during the mandatory three-month medevac from many over-

Vote! Vote! Vote!

The AFSA Governing Board Elections Are Happening Now!

Do you find yourself complaining about the same old Foreign Service issues that never seem to change? Don't just grumble — take action! Once again you have a chance to vote, in the AFSA Governing Board elections. Exercise your right to have the best possible people representing you in Washington.

All AFSA members should have received a ballot in the mail, accompanied by a special AFSA election publication with candidates' statements. This ballot should be mailed back in the enclosed, color-coded envelope to the AFSA Election Committee, to reach us no later than June 11. Note: Ballots must be sent by postal mail in order to be counted. Please do not use fax or e-mail! If you have not received a ballot by May 11, please e-mail member@afsa.org.

Continued on page 49

AFSA NEWS BRIEFS



Last Reminder: Donate to the AFSA Scholarship Fund

In late March AFSA sent an appeal to support our Scholarship Program. Please consider making a donation to support Foreign Service youth scholarships. According to the 2008 College Board report, *Trends in College Pricing*, "over the past decade, published tuition and fees have risen at an average rate of 4.2 percent per year after inflation at public four-year institutions." A record number of children of Foreign Service employees have applied for AFSA awards for the 2009-2010 school year. Please help us to meet this increased need in the Foreign Service community so our families can afford college. For more information, please visit our Web page at www.afsa.org/scholar. To make a donation, use the appeal card that was sent to you or go to the above Web page and click on the bottom right-hand corner, "Form to Make a Donation."

Life in the Foreign Service

BY BRIAN AGGELER



"A new administration is developing new foreign policy initiatives and still your only focus is what's in it for the cows?"

Clements Launches Scholarship Program — Deadline May 15

Clements International has just launched its new Expat Youth Scholarship program. Scholarships totaling \$10,000 will be awarded to six individuals. The contest is open to all nationalities of children who have lived outside of their home country for more than two years. Applicants compete in two age categories (12-15 and 16-18) and must submit an essay and creative media presentation (photos, illustrations, etc.) in which they discuss and illustrate their lives as expat kids. For more information, please visit our Web site at www.expatyouthscholarship.com. The deadline for entries is May 15. The contest is being judged by members of the Foreign Service Youth Foundation, the Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas and Robin Pascoe (www.expatexpert.com).

AAFSW Funds AFSA Scholarships

The Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide will contribute \$1,800 for a Merit Award and \$7,700 in Financial Aid Scholarships in its name under AFSA's 2009-2010 Scholarship Program. Proceeds from AAFSW's annual Bookfair, held in October, fund these Foreign Service student awards. AAFSW is a nonprofit organization that has been representing Foreign Service spouses, employees and retirees since 1960. Visit its Web site at www.aafsw.org.

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EXCERPTS FROM

Testimony of John K. Naland

PRESIDENT, AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

BEFORE THE

House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

Chairwoman Nita M. Lowey, D-N.Y.

March 26, 2009

Chairwoman Lowey, the American Foreign Service Association is grateful for your leadership in addressing the enormous staffing gaps in the U.S. Foreign Service. Thanks to your advocacy, accompanied by the support of other members of this subcommittee, Foreign Service hiring at State and USAID is finally on the upswing after years of flat funding during which new mission requirements vastly outstripped staff resources. AFSA understands that funding provided by Congress in the 2008 supplemental appropriation and Fiscal Year 2009 budget will add about 640 additional “core” State diplomatic personnel and 450 new USAID development officers by this September.

Obviously, that is very good news. So, too, is the Obama administration’s recently released Fiscal Year 2010 budget request which, without giving details, states that it “includes funding for the first year of a multiyear effort to significantly increase the size of the Foreign Service at both the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development.”

Continued expansion is desperately needed. A blue-ribbon panel report issued last October by the American Academy of Diplomacy documented the need for 2,848 additional State positions for core diplomatic functions and a training complement, as well as for 1,250 additional USAID positions, by Fiscal Year 2014. To achieve that goal will require adding an average of 450 new positions at State and 160 new positions at USAID *each year* for the next five years.

Moreover, those Foreign Service hiring targets were based on a 2008 snapshot of unmet needs that may grow even larger in the coming years as the

It is vital for the president and Congress to stay the course on efforts to expand the Foreign Service. They must not declare “victory” after just a few years of above-attribution hiring which, at best, would only serve to fill existing staffing gaps.

Obama administration undertakes new foreign policy initiatives — for example, increasing civilian staffing in Afghanistan. In addition, AFSA sees a strong case for expanding the Foreign Commercial Service and the Foreign Agricultural Service.

In our March 20 meeting, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stressed to me her conviction that diplomacy and development are essential tools in achieving our nation’s long-term objectives. She pledged to continue to lobby hard to significantly expand Foreign Service staffing. But she also noted that the federal government is likely to face difficult budgetary choices in the next few years.

President Obama and Congress undoubtedly have tough choices in deciding how to allocate budget resources. But as they do, AFSA urges them to be mindful of the fact that adding 4,000 positions to our 13,000-member Foreign Service would have a far greater positive impact on national security than would adding the same number of positions to our 1.4 million-member active-duty military (which is currently undergoing a 92,000-position expansion).

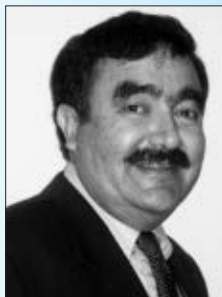
Many members of Congress understand this. The same is true for Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who has given a series of high-profile speeches over the past 18 months urging that more resources be devoted to funding the civilian element of national security.

So it is vital for the president and Congress to stay the course on efforts to expand the Foreign Service. They must not declare “victory” after just a few years of above-attribution hiring which, at best, would only serve to fill existing staffing gaps.

Instead, lawmakers also need to fund the creation of a robust training complement to allow Foreign Service members to attain advanced levels of foreign-language fluency, area knowledge, leadership and management ability, program management skills and job-specific functional expertise. Future budgets must also create more positions for Foreign Service members to take rotational assignments with other agencies in order to maintain our lead role in foreign policy coordination. Future budgets must give our foreign affairs agencies the “bench strength” with which to staff up the new contingencies that will inevitably arise in the coming years.

Thus, the task for the Obama administration and Congress over the next four years is to continue to strengthen the personnel and physical platform from which diplomacy and development assistance are conducted. We must do more than simply fill existing staffing gaps. We must assure that the Foreign Service has the right number of people with the right skills and experience to meet the challenges of 21st-century diplomacy. These investments would yield significant benefits in advancing the interests of the American people. ■

A Meeting with the Secretary



On March 20, AFSA President John Naland, State Vice President Steve Kashkett and I met with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. My accurate, though not very elegant, opening words were, “Madam Secretary, USAID has been beaten up over the past few years.” I pointed out that the environment within the agency is confusing, hypercentralized and wasteful, and that its overall mission is unclear: is it national security, poverty reduction, economic development or something else? Employees are upset with the radical organizational changes under the previous administration, especially the creation of the F Bureau at State. Morale has suffered. Lastly, I informed her that employees were anxious for news about the new administrator.

Sec. Clinton believes that USAID has become too much a contracting agency rather than an implementer.

Sec. Clinton listened patiently and then expressed her views. She agreed that USAID needs a sense of mission and pointed out that this was of great personal concern to her. However, her belief is that the Department of State and

USAID must jointly implement a unified foreign policy and that by having diplomacy and development closely allied, there is a greater chance of getting increased resources than with USAID acting alone. Sec. Clinton also pointed to the FY 2009 budget: Deputy Secretary Jack Lew successfully asked for increased funding and staff on behalf of USAID and State.

She believes that USAID has become too much a contracting agency rather than an implementer, which she feels is wasteful and strips the government of in-house expertise. Finally, she declared that no one was more interested than she in having the White House nominate the new administrator; she hopes this will happen soon.

At 30 minutes, the meeting was too short and many things were left unsaid. For example, there was no hint of how the PEPFAR (HIV/AIDS) office and the Millennium Challenge Corporation would interact with USAID in the future. The issues of mid-career hiring and Foreign Service Limited staff concerns were also not discussed. Nevertheless, I left a packet of *Foreign Service Journal* articles on these subjects and a summary report of numerous authoritative studies recommending fixes for the sad state of foreign assistance today, and requested that she read these when she had the time. In addition, I offered Deputy Secretary Lew, also at the meeting, a more detailed briefing at his convenience.

Sec. Clinton seems genuinely interested in development and has a history of public support for our foreign aid programs. What will be the effect of our meeting, if any? I do not know, but I hope that the new administration will see the need for an entirely new direction for our agency and will heed the very thorough and intelligent input from hundreds of knowledgeable experts on the topic. Our country and USAID employees deserve no less. □

Transition Center Schedule of Courses for May-June 2009

- May 4-5 Security Overseas Seminar (MQ911)
- May 8 High-Stress Assignment Outbrief (MQ950)
- May 9 Explaining America (MQ115)
- May 13-14 Mid-Career Retirement Planning (RV105)
- May 16 Protocol and U.S. Representation Abroad (MQ116)
- May 18-19 Security Overseas Seminar (MQ911)
- May 20 Legal Considerations in the Foreign Service (MQ854)
- May 22 High-Stress Assignment Outbrief (MQ950)
- May 28 Special Education Needs Workshop
- May 30 Going Overseas for Singles/Couples without Children (MQ200)
- May 30 Going Overseas for Families with Children (MQ210)
- May 30 Going Overseas Logistics for Adults (MQ220)
- May 30 Going Overseas Logistics for Children (MQ230)
- June 1-2 Security Overseas Seminar (MQ911)
- June 3 LGBT Issues in the Foreign Service
- June 4 Post Options for Employment and Training (MQ703)
- June 6 Protocol (MQ116)
- June 8-10 DCM Spouse Seminar (MQ110)
- June 8-11 Retirement Planning Seminar (RV101)
- June 12 High-Stress Assignment Outbrief (MQ950)
- June 15 Young Diplomats Day (MQ250)
- June 15-16 Security Overseas Seminar (MQ911)
- June 16 Youth Security Overseas Seminar (MQ914)
- June 18 Realities of Foreign Service Life (MQ803)
- June 24 Maintaining Long-Distance Relationships (MQ801)
- June 25-26 Regulations, Allowances and Finances (MQ104)
- June 26 High-Stress Assignment Outbrief (MQ950)
- June 29 Young Diplomats Day (MQ250)
- June 29-30 Security Overseas Seminar (MQ911)
- June 30 Youth Security Overseas Seminar (MQ914)

To register or for further information, please e-mail the FSI Transition Center at FSITCtraining@state.gov. □

Secretary • Continued from page 45

seas posts for childbirth; and

- finding ways within U.S. law to offer status and benefits to domestic partners overseas, who share all the risks and hardships of Foreign Service life.

The Secretary promised to address these problems and indicated that a proposal concerning the last item is already in the works.

After making the observation that the U.S. is the only Western democracy that routinely appoints unqualified non-career ambassadors who have no diplomatic experience, Kashkett commented that AFSA members worldwide were encouraged by the president's remarks last month and are closely watching the administration's selections for special envoys, ambassadorships and senior positions. The AFSA leaders expressed their hope that the seasoned career experts of the Foreign Service will be chosen for key jobs. The Secretary responded that she is trying to keep professional diplomats in a leadership role.

Focus on USAID

Shifting to USAID, Zamora stated that the agency has been abused for eight years and suffers from a confusing, hypercentralized and wasteful structure. Members are unsure about the overall USAID mission and concerned about the creation of the F Bureau. Sec. Clinton agreed that the agency needs a better sense of purpose and that State and USAID must collaborate to implement both diplomacy and development. USAID, she said, should not be reduced to the role of a contracting agency.

Zamora asked when a new administrator would be named. The Secretary assured him that no one is more interested in this than she is, but that the White House must finalize its decision.

While encouraged by the tone of cooperation in this initial encounter, the AFSA leaders recognize that there is much work ahead and hope that Sec. Clinton will remain engaged with the association on these personnel and career issues that directly affect the Foreign Service. □

V.P. VOICE: FAS ■ BY HENRY S. SCHMICK

Partial Differential Equations, CIPs and Dr. Seuss



Unlike other foreign affairs agencies, the Foreign Agricultural Service does not directly recruit “Ag officers” for our Foreign Service positions. Instead, our candidates work in FAS/Washington for several years before undertaking a series of exams to enter the Foreign Service. It's our “mythic journey”: persisting through trials, obstacles and endless staff meetings before winning the prize — the opportunity to write endless commodity reports at your first post.

We have several staffing problems. The first is a lack of money to hire new entry-level agricultural economists and trade specialists. And the second is our inconsistent view of what type of training a potential officer should receive once hired. We hope that the first problem will be addressed in the FY 2010 budget. FAS has a multiyear recruitment strategy, but we need the funding and desire to implement it. Unfortunately, the second problem (training and career development) is one with which FAS has always struggled.

As a small agency, our officers have one foot or hand in each of our four functional subcultures — analysis (commodity reporting), trade policy and marketing (export promotion), development (ag technical assistance) and commodity disappearance (food aid or export credits). In addition to keeping all of his or her limbs busy, the FAS officer needs to wear a white lab coat (biotech, nanotechnology, climate change, biofuels) and coordinate with all the other agencies working on those issues.

Our “mythic journey” is about persisting through trials, obstacles, and endless staff meetings before winning the prize — writing endless commodity reports at your first post.

The new hires won't be familiar with our functional subcultures. Fortunately, our “junior professionals” have organized a thoughtful two-year series of brown-bag seminars on all aspects of FAS, trade policy, the work of other federal agencies, etc. Unfortunately, these sessions are voluntary, done during the lunch break and not well supported by managers obsessed with short-term tasks. In fact, the 1965 Andrews-Phillips Report on FAS noted: “A more organized system of orientation on a group basis should be inaugurated at once.” After nearly 45 years to consider the matter, it's time to carry out that recommendation.

So, while I (“old fogey” warning) would prefer that FAS officers be farm kids with master's degrees in agricultural economics (so we can discuss partial differential equations and cross elasticities of lobbying on agricultural exports), we need to have a wider hiring pool and a better training program. We can start to address these problems by raising the profile of the Career Intern Program. The CIP, with its short-term rotations through our functional subcultures, allows us to recruit new officers with strong analytic skills who still retain a sense of “wow” about new agricultural issues — and, like Dr. Seuss, can think and color outside the lines. □

Falling Behind: The Need for Overseas Preschool Subsidies

When we were posted to Kazakhstan several years ago, we couldn't afford preschool tuition at the State Department-approved international school. So we chose the only other option we could find. Our son's preschool charged about \$15 per day for a part-time schedule — about \$3,000 for 10 months. Sure, the school itself was a bit ramshackle. Okay, it was decrepit — we wouldn't even have considered such a school in the States. There were no locks on the doors, and the playground was a work in progress. The teachers cooked lunch on a hot plate in the kitchen, and they put in a pool themselves — a wooden tub, lined with plastic, near the front door. They couldn't understand why the American parents were all horrified by that pool. (“But we watch the kids carefully! What could possibly happen?”)

Still, it was a school, and our son needed a school. The teachers loved the kids and taught them well, in Russian and English. I was happy enough with our little school, if a bit nervous about the staff's ability to prevent accidents or cope with disasters.

When our family was assigned to our current post, Beijing, I began casting about for a preschool for our son, then 4 years old. Here there are lots of schools that cater to foreigners. Unfortunately, they all charge exorbitant fees. The tuition for a preschooler at the main international school is almost \$20,000 a year — and that isn't the most expensive one. We looked and looked, but we weren't able to find a school we could afford.

We're not the only ones. On the good days, mothers here joke about choosing between saving for college or paying for preschool. On bad days, we obsess over whether our kids will be able to catch up to their more educated peers once they enter kindergarten, the year in which the State Department finally kicks in and helps fund our children's education.

One of the best things about living overseas is the educational opportunity provided to my older children. My eldest is a third-grader at one of the international schools here, and I'm grateful for every opportunity he gets at this school (even if he disagrees). The facility and the faculty are amazing, and the State Department's payment allows my son to attend.

But I'm worried about my younger kids. Without a solid preschool foundation, how can they be ready for the rigors of this school? Children of private-sector expatriates, whose companies pay for preschool, enter kindergarten far ahead of our Foreign Service kids. Kindergarten is no longer about playing, as it was a generation ago; when students are expected to learn to read in kindergarten, this developmental gap is harmful to our kids.

In short, our children need preschool to perform competitively in kindergarten. But we can't afford the international schools on a government salary.

Budgets are tight, both for State Department families and within State itself. But one way to lure families like ours to critical-needs posts such as Beijing is to subsidize the cost of preschool education. Regional educational officers, working in conjunction with Community Liaison Officers and the Family Liaison Office, could consider each post on a case-by-case basis. If it is determined that there are no safe, affordable preschool options at post, then State should kick in and subsidize the cost of preschool for the 4-year-old crowd. Think of it as a Head Start program for our youngest diplomats.

My daughter, just 2 years old, would not be immediately affected by such a policy change. My son turned 5 in September, and I promptly enrolled him in kindergarten, so this doesn't concern him, either. But my friends and neighbors here all worry about how to pay for school, and I know several families who have decided not to bid on Beijing, or have declined to extend, because they want better opportunities for their youngest kids.

If the State Department wants to make it easier to fill assignments in Beijing and other expensive cities around the world, it should consider helping families pay for their preschool education during the year before kindergarten. Such a move would boost morale, both for Foreign Service adults and the little ones who follow them from post to post. □

Donna Scaramastra Gorman is a freelance writer whose work has been published in Newsweek, the Washington Post, the Christian Science Monitor, and the Foreign Service Journal. She and her family are currently posted in Beijing, where her husband is the deputy regional security officer.

If the State Department wants to make it easier to fill assignments in Beijing and other expensive cities around the world, it should consider helping families pay for their preschool education during the year before kindergarten.

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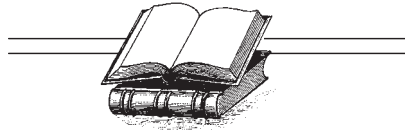
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BOOKS

They Spoke Out

Dissent: Voices of Conscience

Ann Wright and Susan Dixon
(foreword by Daniel Ellsberg),
Koa Books, 2008, \$17.95,
paperback, 178 pages.

REVIEWED BY
EDMUND MCWILLIAMS

In *Dissent: Voices of Conscience*, former U.S. Foreign Service officer (and retired Army colonel) Ann Wright and Susan Dixon, a journalist and author, review the history of opposition to the war in Iraq. As they document, this opposition came from the ranks of civilian and military officials, both in the United States and other coalition governments.

At the time of her resignation in March 2003, Wright had spent 35 years in government service, including 29 years in the military (13 years of them on active duty) and 16 at the State Department, during which she had received the State Department's Award for Heroism. She detailed her decision in a September 2003 Speaking Out column in the *Foreign Service Journal*: "Why Dissent Is Important and Resignation Honorable." (Two other Foreign Service officers who resigned in public protest of the war, John Brady Kiesling and John Brown, have also told their stories in

*These lonely, loyal
dissents — like
isolated stars in a
black firmament —
shine all the more
brightly for their
singularity.*



the *Journal*.) She thus speaks authoritatively about the crisis of conscience that impelled each of the individual dissenters whose stories she tells to act upon their principles, often at considerable professional and personal cost.

The three FSOs' resignations were widely reported in U.S. media at the time, as were resignations in the United Kingdom by Leader of the House of Commons Robin Cook and Secretary of State for International Development Clare Short. But Wright and Dixon perform a real service by compiling many other cases throughout the "coalition of the willing" that have never been publicized. Particularly striking are the whistleblowers who revealed critical official documents making plain the disingenuousness of statements by their own governments (including the Bush

administration) in the lead-up to the war. These officials endured official harassment and even prosecution as a result, sometimes undertaken at the insistence of Washington.

The personal reflections of the various whistleblowers, dissenters and resisters within the U.S. government uniformly reflect a common rationale for their actions. Virtually every letter of resignation or court martial statement cites the oath to "uphold, protect and defend the Constitution," whatever the cost. And make no mistake: the retribution meted out to dissenters has at times been extralegal and vicious.

The exemplary CIA career of Valerie Plame, wife of whistleblower Ambassador Joseph Wilson, was destroyed by U.S. government officials' illegal revelation that she was a covert CIA operative. At the insistence of U.S. officials angered by revelations of their use of information gained through horrific torture perpetrated by the Uzbek government, British Ambassador Craig Murray suffered the leaking of allegations regarding his personal life aimed at forcing his resignation. (See his account in the September 2007 *FSJ*, "The Folly of a Short-Term Approach.") And Danish military intelligence officer Frank Grevil and Australian defense official Andrew Wilkie were smeared by their own governments for revealing their

BOOKS

leaders' complicity in U.S. efforts to misrepresent the case for war.

In conclusion, Wright and Dixon observe that "(a)cts of conscience like these not only hold administrations accountable. They put future administrations on notice that there will always be some government insiders who, on behalf of their fellow citizens, will expose wrongdoing to try to prevent tragedies like the invasions of Vietnam and Iraq."

Dissent: Voices of Conscience both discourages and heartens. At a time of what many believe to have been a frontal assault on U.S. and international law and fundamental societal values, relatively few government officials demonstrated the courage to speak out. Perhaps that should not be

surprising; the State Department's Dissent Channel has been moribund for a long time, with fewer than 10 dissents a year being filed. And despite AFSA's heroic efforts to publicize its own annual awards for constructive dissent — a program that started more than 40 years ago, and remains unique — it frequently does not even receive nominations for some of the four categories.

Still, these lonely, loyal dissents — like isolated stars in a black firmament — shine all the more brightly for their singularity.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton should encourage use of the Dissent Channel by giving greater attention to submissions and greater career protection to those who dissent. The Obama

administration and Congress should also consider avenues to recognize and rehabilitate those federal employees, civilian and military, at all levels who have suffered because of their principled dissents. And AFSA members should respond to the many calls to nominate colleagues for the association's annual constructive dissent awards. Principled dissent is a tradition America needs now more than ever. ■

Edmund McWilliams, a Foreign Service officer from 1975 to 2001, received AFSA's Christian Herter Award for constructive dissent by a Senior FSO in 1998. Since retiring from the Service, he has worked with various U.S. and foreign human rights NGOs as a volunteer.



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A photograph of a sign on a table. The sign is white with black cursive text that reads: "You are invited to Join the Journal's Editorial Board!". The sign is placed on a table covered with a red patterned cloth, surrounded by various fruits including apples, oranges, and figs. In the background, there are people and a window with curtains.

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 Arlington Court Suites / 21
 Attaché Property
 Management LLC / 35
 Capitol Hill Stay / 36
 CAS/Corporate Apartment
 Specialists / 39
 Fearington Village / 35
 Pied à Terre Properties,
 Ltd. / 54

Remington, The / 36
 Suite America / 40
 Virginian Suites, The / 43

INSURANCE

AFSPA / 4
 Clements International / 1
 Hirshorn Company,
 The / 29

MISCELLANEOUS

American Public
 University / 19
 Cort Furniture / 2
 Door2Door Designs,
 LLC / 39
 Foreign Service Youth
 Foundation / 42
Inside A U.S. Embassy / 38
 St. Mary's University / 42

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 at Law / 31

Strategic Studies
Quarterly / 55

Tetra Tech / 6
 University of Kentucky –
 Patterson School of
 Diplomacy / 43

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 Cabell Reid, LLC / 59
 Executive Housing
 Consultants / 56
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 Services / 59
 Meyerson Group Inc.,
 The / 59

Peake Management,
 Inc. / 58
 ProMax Realtors / 57
 Property Specialists,
 Inc. / 57
 RE/MAX / JoAnn
 Piekney / 59
 Stuart & Maury / 56
 Washington Management
 Services / 58
 WJD Management / 56

ANNOUNCEMENTS

AFSA Legacy /
 Inside Back Cover
 CLEAN Slate / 44
 FSJ Editorial Board / 55
 Foreign Service Authors'
 Roundup / 4
 Marketplace / 11

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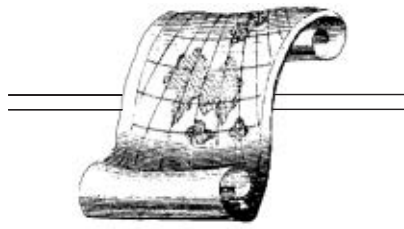
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Betting on Imperialism

BY RAKESH SURAMPUDI

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We had been formally invited by the Stewards of the Turf Club, with whom I shook hands. But beyond matters of protocol, I was happy to run into my friend Pappoo. An open and generous sort who makes sure his guests are enjoying themselves, he guided us to his box seats, where we sipped Kingfishers and Limcas in the stifling heat.

When I asked Pappoo which horses he was betting on, he told me that even though there were eight races, he would only be making one bet that day: in the fifth race, on a horse named Imperialism. It was as if the gods had scripted it: there was no question which horse I'd be backing.

On our way to the betting area, Pappoo introduced me to Wong, a close friend who was a stereotype of the many Chinese lovers of gambling I have seen around the world: a cigarette in his mouth, slight stubble on his chin and a Members Only jacket.

On the main betting floor bookmakers posted odds (on chalkboards!) that fluctuated minute by minute, and

*It was a good day
for conquerors and
plunderers.*

hopefuls waved rupees around as numbers were erased and rewritten. Pappoo explained how people avoided paying the 16-percent betting tax by placing multiple, smaller bets and asked me how much I wanted to bet. Perhaps not as confident as I assumed and willing to take the loss if Imperialism didn't come through, he covered me with his money.

We returned to the comforts of our box and settled into a slight nervousness as post time drew closer. The track is immense — 2,400 meters long — and it's not easy, even with binoculars, to see the starting gate. Soon the horses were off and running. I grinned happily and shouted "Up with Imperialism!" Win or lose, that cheer alone was worth the price of admission.

I knew we had it when Imperialism came around the final turn to our right (in India, unlike the U.S., the horses run clockwise) in second place and made his move. He charged into the inside position, pulling one length ahead as he passed in front of us. Imperialism swept the field, winning by two lengths.

We hopped down the stairs to the garden, where Wong explained the consecutive bets he had placed as the odds had inched upward. He had wagered,

in total, about 50,000 rupees (a little over \$1,000) on Imperialism, and his return must have been about \$6,000.

Winning makes the best of us immediately feel like giving gifts. Wong promised to send me, of all things, some of his wife's pork sausages.

"Most of the Indian Chinese make these sausages and they're terrible," Pappoo interjected. "They soak them in cheap Indian liquor, but Wong's wife makes the best."

"My wife soaks them in Remy Martin," Wong said with a grin.

The rest of the afternoon flew by as I explained to various people the story of Imperialism's magical run and watched a horse named Southern Empire win the next race (it was a good day for conquerors and plunderers). I spoke with businessmen about the possibility of foreign direct investment in the east, and with police officers about Muslim extremist threats from neighboring Bangladesh.

As the sun began to wane, we left the stands. Outside, trade unionists were wrapping up their weekend of marches, speeches and shouts of defiant communism. We drove home with memories of Imperialism's triumph, the "Internationale" ringing in our ears. ■

Rakesh Surampudi joined the Foreign Service in 2000. He was political-economic section chief in Kolkata from 2006 to 2008 and previously served in Pakistan, Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Washington, D.C. He is currently a cultural officer in London.

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