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# FOREIGN SERVICE

JOURNAL

THE MAGAZINE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS



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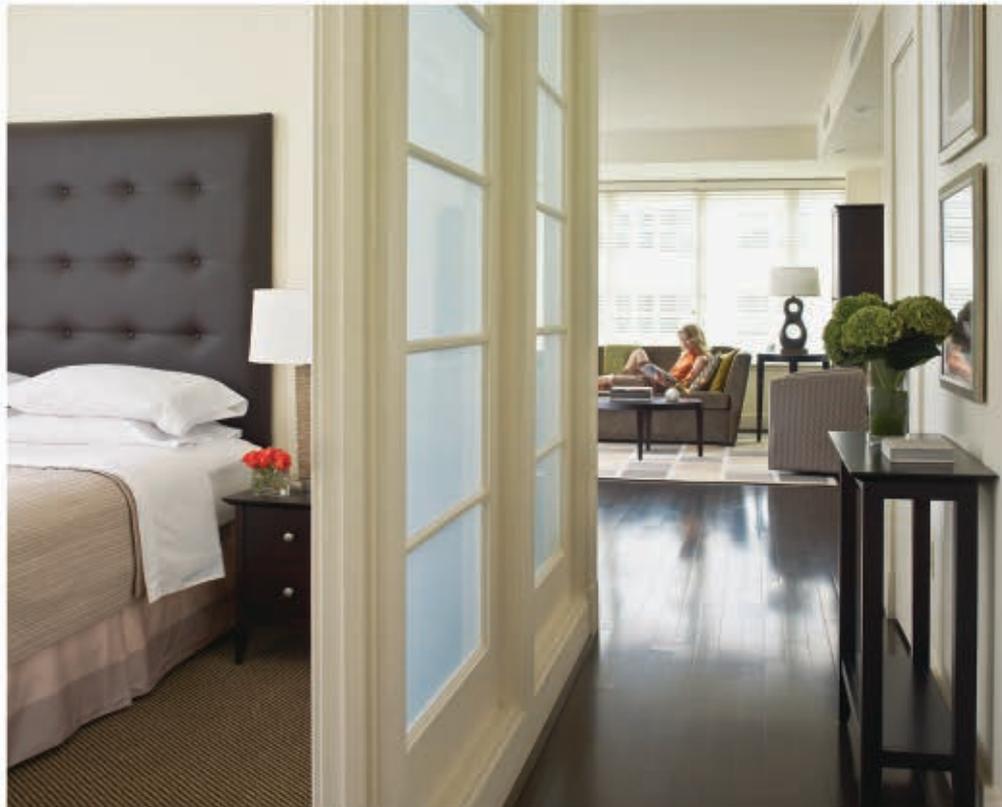
*Examining the Office of Medical Services*

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# PRESIDENT'S VIEWS

## *AFSA's Role As a Professional Association*

By SUSAN R. JOHNSON

AFSA does vital work as the union representing all Foreign Service employees of the five foreign affairs agencies, a role it has carried out since 1973. However, it has performed an equally important function as a professional association ever since its creation in 1924. It is that side of the equation I wish to highlight this month.



Specifically, AFSA is leading the charge to reinforce the relevance and effectiveness of American diplomacy and development in the 21st century, and to identify the diplomatic skills and substantive knowledge essential to meeting new challenges. We want to make sure the Foreign Service is as effective as possible at acquiring and applying essential skills and know-how like foreign-language proficiency, regional expertise, analysis, reporting, communication, negotiation, management and institutional leadership.

Toward that end, we are exploring the following questions: Is diplomacy a recognized profession in the United States, as in most other countries? If so, what are the basic requirements and content of professional formation, expectations and ethics for American diplomats? How well do we pass on knowledge of the role of diplomacy in

our own government? And are we developing a professional diplomatic service and operational cadre that are as skilled in the multilateral world as the bilateral?

To address these issues, as part of our support for the Academy of American Diplomacy's Diplomatic Professional Education and Training Project, AFSA representatives participate in the advisory group chaired by retired Ambassador Thomas Pickering. We have also set up a mid-level focus group coordinated by two AFSA State representatives to provide feedback on draft DPET materials via a SharePoint site, giving active-duty personnel an opportunity to be heard. To participate, contact Austin Tracy at [Tracy@afsa.org](mailto:Tracy@afsa.org).

Earlier this year, we surveyed two sets of active-duty members on these issues. Among other things, we asked entry-level members to say what attracted them to the Foreign Service; whether they equate the Service with diplomacy; what training best prepared them for their first assignment; what their professional expectations were; and whether their agency and the Foreign Service have communicated core values.

We posed some of the same questions to mid-level members, but also asked whether they consider themselves professionals; what that profes-

sion is and what it requires; how well their agency is preparing leaders to manage both institutional and global change; and whether they have taken required leadership and management courses (and, if so, what were their three most important "takeaways?").

AFSA received more than 1,700 responses (almost 20 percent of AFSA members in those cohorts) to the two surveys within a week. Many participants commented that "it's about time someone addressed these issues." Preliminary analyses of the survey results are available at [www.afsa.org/professionalismsurveys.cfm](http://www.afsa.org/professionalismsurveys.cfm).

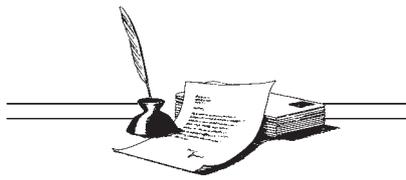
In addition, AFSA reached out to a dozen former Foreign Service officers now in academia to solicit their thoughts on an appropriate core curriculum for a one-year master's program in diplomatic studies. This could complement AAD's DPET project.

To follow up, we held a workshop at the end of June that is generating new papers, many of which will be posted on a new page on our Web site and will appear in future issues of the *FSJ*.

I invite all members to submit comments, questions and suggestions about these initiatives to [President@afsa.org](mailto:President@afsa.org), but I particularly encourage active-duty members to get involved. It is *your* future — make sure to have your say in how it develops. ■

---

*Susan R. Johnson is the president of the American Foreign Service Association.*



# LETTERS

## Interviews Matter

I really appreciated Richard Silver's article, "Why Consular Interviews Matter," in the June issue. I'm a consular-coned officer who did two straight consular tours in Yerevan and Paris before my current out-of-cone excursion. Reading the article made me miss working at the visa window.

I still remember the pep talk we got in A-100 from Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Maura Harty about how important it is to be the face of America to visa applicants. I have always taken that to heart, and I've been well served by it.

I've never done the kind of follow-up Silver did, but I've had a few "walk toward the light" interviews where I found the applicant qualified by taking some more time for an interview in what would normally have been a slam-dunk refusal. I find these situations one of the most rewarding parts of the job.

Thank you for reminding all of us why it is important sometimes to take a little more time and get it right, and how rewarding consular work can be if you look at it the right way.

*Jeff Gringer  
Economic Officer  
Embassy Islamabad*

## A Consular Case Study

After reading Edward Alden's fascinating contribution in the June issue, "Remembering Mary Ryan," I would

observe that it is a pity that State did not revoke the Christmas Day bomber's tourist visa.

However, in his sidebar, "What Went Wrong with the Nigerian Bomber," Alden does not investigate the central question: Why was a visa issued in the first place? Why was an out-of-district "tourist" (especially one from a country with such a high rate of visa fraud) "visaed" in London, instead of being told to apply in his home country where authorities knew him best?

To reduce the chances of future disasters, this case should be used by the State Department as a teaching opportunity: release the documents that accompanied this visa application, examine their soundness, and ask why the consular officer, if not Embassy London and the department itself, felt compelled to issue.

Were there letters of recommendation from institutional and governmental authorities such as congressional letters of interest? Were there affidavits of support? If so, who wrote them? If the documentation was thin, the question resonates even more loudly: Why was this visa ever issued?

The issue of terrorism aside, a Justice Department immigration official recently stated on C-SPAN that 30 to 40 percent of illegal immigrants come to the U.S. not over the Mexican border, but with visas in hand.

To this retired FSO — who has writ-

ten letters to members of Congress and op-ed columns asking that sunlight be shone on the Abdulmutallab visa case and never received a substantive reply — it appears that, on both counts of terrorism and illegal immigration, our visa defenses were down in London, if not worldwide.

Heaven forbid that they are still down.

*Richard W. Hoover  
FSO, retired  
Front Royal, Va.*

## Consular Revolution

Ann B. Sides' opening sentence in her June article, "The Consular Revolution," set the stage for her own piece and the rest of the issue. The sidebar, about a typical day 25 years ago, must have set many heads nodding as readers recalled their own consular section days that will live in infamy (for any number of reasons).

Each of the other articles provided insights that enlighten all of us on the new realities of consular work and the efforts to deal with almost unthinkable challenges. I especially appreciated the assessment of Mary Ryan, whose tenure encompassed a period when terrorism created conditions for the consular profession that demanded new skills hardly contemplated in the past.

Those of us in Mary's generation, schooled in maintaining a healthy skepticism of visa applicants' motives, could

## LETTERS

not have conceived of individuals so driven by ideology that they would become the unscrupulous suicide bombers of the 21st century. But those who knew Mary as boss or mentor will never doubt (or forget) that she was a good and faithful public servant and a leader for the Foreign Service officers and staff of the Bureau of Consular Affairs and the thousands of local employees around the world who worked for her.

*David Rabadan*  
Consular FSO, retired  
Annandale, Va.

### Try Visas

Your June issue was so hard to put down that I'd give it an "M" for "magnificent." I especially commend your focus on the relationship between consular work and public diplomacy.

As a young visa officer in Trinidad, I'd hitch a ride on the U.S. Information Service jeep with a Foreign Service National driver to go up the traces and deep into the mountains to show a film about President John F. Kennedy and commune with the elders and people of the various villages.

Many would ask, "When is Pres. Kennedy coming?" On one occasion somebody added, "If he can't come, how about Frank Sinatra?"

Long ago, yes, but as a result of that experience I'm still glad to say to one and all, "Put fun in your life; try visas!"

*Lou Riggio*  
FSO, retired  
Hollywood, Fla.

### OMS: Force Multipliers

Susan Johnson's June "President's Views" column on the importance of Office Management Specialists particularly pleased me for two reasons. Our family's Delavan Foundation funds the annual AFSA performance award for

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For further information about State Department eligibility and application procedures, FSOs may contact Linda A. Wray in HR/CDA/SL/CDT at (202) 647-3822 or by email at [wrayla@state.gov](mailto:wrayla@state.gov). Civil service employees may contact Paul N. Lawrence in HR/CSHRM/CD at (202) 663-2136 or by email at [lawrencepn@state.gov](mailto:lawrencepn@state.gov).

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an OMS, and I benefited tremendously during my 39 years in the Service from their invaluable support.

The OMS with whom I was privileged to serve as chief of mission in Kenya and in Israel, Louise Saalfrank, was a force multiplier if ever there were one. A true professional — skilled, dedicated, a manager of people and a respected colleague — she reached the ceiling of FS-3, but her contribution to American diplomacy should certainly have been recognized above that level. During her career she extended the reach of three other ambassadors, John Holdridge in Indonesia, Robert Keeley in Greece and Frank Wisner in Egypt.

*Bill Harrop  
Ambassador, retired  
Washington, D.C.*



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### If Anyone Could Be a Four-Star General

AFSA FAS VP Henry Schmick's good *AFSA News* column ("Up or Out: The Five-Stars") in the April issue invites an intriguing question: What caliber of talent would the armed services attract if they offered the following prospects?

You will survive spirited competition for appointment to one of the service academies. Subject 24/7/365 to military authority, you will undergo four years of rigorous academic training in a variety of no-nonsense disciplines, and spend summers in field maneuvers. You will be dropped at any point if you cannot cut it.

Once commissioned at 21 or 22, you will face combat, take command and leadership training, and assume higher levels of responsibility and difficulty. Your career will include frequent changes of assignment on short notice and service at remote hardship posts without family. You will remain in keen competition with your peers for training and choice assignments leading to promotion opportunities, but receive middling compensation (by American standards) for jobs of similar challenge.

If you have the stuff, and survive combat, you might, after 35 years of winnowing, reach three-star rank. After several more years you could make the short list for four stars.

But here the rules suddenly change. Half of those slots will go to political operators, big contributors to the winning presidential campaign, and family and social relations. They will be assigned to such perilous posts as Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Honolulu, Brussels and Tokyo.

Conclusion: It takes 35 years of training, experience, competition and

discipline to reach three stars. But anyone can be a four-star general.

A developed democracy would never tolerate such an absurdity, would it?

*Richard S. Dawson Jr.  
FSO, retired  
Uzes, France*

### The Foreign What?

In his June letter, retired FSO Robert Illing notes from Porto, Portugal, the ignorance regarding the Foreign Service. He could have been speaking of the part of Wisconsin where for many years we have lived in retirement. The usual response after I answer the question, "What did you do?" makes clear that the other person has us confused with the armed services.

The Department of State is almost as unknown here as its responsibility, whereas our military presence everywhere is only too well known.

*Lee E. Dinsmore  
FSO, retired  
Elcho, Wisc.*

### AFSA on the Cadillac Tax

I am astonished that folks misunderstood AFSA's stand on the "Cadillac Tax" (Retiree VP column, "Health Care Reform," June). I believe AFSA was absolutely correct in joining with other employee organizations in objection to that part of the health care reform bill. And yes, we elected the Governing Board to represent our interests in those issues that are frankly too complicated for us to have a clear understanding of them. I mean, who understood the bill? ■

*Virginia Schafer  
Ambassador, retired  
Sun City West, Ariz.*



# CYBERNOTES

## Kabul-ki Theater

A late-June furor over highly personal attacks on Obama administration officials by General Stanley A. McChrystal and his staff, as reported in *Rolling Stone* magazine ([www.rollingstone.com](http://www.rollingstone.com)), forced McChrystal to step down virtually overnight as the U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan. He was quickly replaced by Gen. David Petraeus, who promised to improve coordination with U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry and Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke.

No sooner had the dust settled from that imbroglio than a new one began. On July 25, the Wikileaks organization posted more than 75,000 classified documents on its Web site ([www.wikileaks.org](http://www.wikileaks.org)). Most of them were low-level field reports detailing the setbacks U.S. troops and officials have faced in battling an increasingly potent Taliban force. But allegations that our Pakistani allies are helping the Afghan insurgency proved explosive. Compounding the damage, Wikileaks gave the materials to the *New York Times*, *The Guardian* and *Der Spiegel* several weeks before their public release, enabling them to delve into the files.

Although most of the documents pillory the Bush administration's conduct of the war, the Obama administration has denounced the leaks for en-

In the Bush administration, we saw them seek military allies regardless of human rights abuses in pursuit of the war on terror. This administration will seek military alliances regardless of human rights abuses — in response to China.

— Sophie Richardson, Asia advocacy director for Human Rights Watch ([www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)), reacting to the Pentagon's decision to resume relations with Indonesia's special forces after a 12-year hiatus; July 23, [www.washingtonpost.com/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/).

dangerous our soldiers and local allies. At the same time, it contends that the disclosures back its new strategy for the region. Whether that claim will pass muster with an increasingly restive Congress remains to be seen, however.

Challenging as those two episodes were, they did contain at least one ray of sunshine for the administration: They overshadowed the issuance of a truly alarming 79-page congressional report: "Warlord, Inc. — Extortion and Corruption Along the U.S. Supply Chain in Afghanistan" (<http://oversight.house.gov/>).

Issued by the House Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs following a six-month investiga-

tion, the study alleges that the U.S. military is funding a massive protection racket in Afghanistan by indirectly paying tens of millions of dollars to warlords and corrupt local officials — and even Taliban members — to ensure safe passage of its supply convoys throughout the country.

As the subcommittee's chairman, Rep. John F. Tierney, D-Mass., told CBS News: "The business is war and the war is business, and you've got 'Warlord, Inc.' going on over there."

— Steven Alan Honley, Editor

## Money Talks — But Will UNESCO Listen?

In September 2008 the president of Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, set up a \$3 million fund to bankroll the UNESCO-Obiang Nguema Mbasogo International Prize for Research in the Life Sciences.

Each year, according to Obiang's plan, the fund would award \$300,000 to be shared by up to three laureates, with the goal of recognizing individuals or institutions conducting "scientific research in the life sciences leading to improving the quality of human life."

The prize was scheduled to be awarded for the first time this year. However, at a mid-June meeting of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's executive board, Director General Irina Bokova



postponed its consideration until the board's next session, set to begin on Oct. 5 ([www.unesco.org/](http://www.unesco.org/)).

Widespread concerns that an association with Equatorial Guinea's regime would tarnish UNESCO's reputation prompted the delay. Opponents cited the fact that Obiang first seized power during a 1979 coup, after which he assumed the title of president of the Supreme Military Council.

A new constitution was passed in 1982, making Obiang president of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea; he was then re-elected to that position in 1989, 1996, 2003 and 2009.

According to the country's official Web site (<http://guinea-equatorial.com>), Obiang has "reopened schools, expanded primary education, restored public utilities and roads and put the nation on the path of participatory democracy." The site also claims that the country's November 2009 elections were "democratic and free," despite the fact that Obiang received 95.37 percent of the vote.

To most outside observers, these claims are ludicrous. Reporters Without Borders ranked Equatorial Guinea at 158th out of 175 countries on its 2009 press freedom index (<http://en.rsrf.org/>). It also tied for 168th out of 180 nations on Transparency International's 2009 Corruption Perceptions Index ([www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org)).

A January report by Human Rights Watch demolishes any claim that last year's elections were free or fair, observing that Obiang put opposition leaders at a disadvantage by giving only six weeks' notice of the poll and harassing and jailing opposition party members ([www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)).

HRW also highlights the discrepancy between Equatorial Guinea's status as the fourth-largest sub-Saharan

## 50 Years Ago...

Consider that all Foreign Service officers ought to pursue, particularly in the first 10 or 20 years of their service, the effort to broaden their general educational background; that it should be the duty of the Department of State to encourage and help them in this respect; and that for this purpose there should be occasional periods of in-service educational training along the lines of those now provided for a few officers by the National War College and other service academies, but embracing all officers and not just a highly selected minority.



— George F. Kennan, testifying before the Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery of the Senate Committee on Government Operations on May 26, 1960; *FSJ*, September 1960.

African oil producer and the fact that more than 75 percent of the country's population lives below the poverty line.

The United Nations Convention Against Corruption Coalition issued a statement expressing "firm opposition to the establishment of this prize." The group calls on UNESCO to set up "clear, transparent guidelines for the creation of awards by the U.N. and all member agencies, in order to guarantee that all awards and their funding sources are in full accord with ... essential values" ([www.uncaccoalition.org](http://www.uncaccoalition.org)).

Not all critics have phrased their objections so politely. The crux of the matter, as a sardonic May 6 editorial in *The Economist* puts it, is that "setting up such prizes should pose no problem. Getting anybody to accept them may" ([www.economist.com/](http://www.economist.com/)).

For now, anyway, it seems that the international community has declined to accept the proposed establishment of the UNESCO-Obiang Prize — at least until Pres. Obiang sees fit to "improve the quality of human life" in his own country.

— Laura Caton, *Editorial Intern*

## Hail, Colombia

Since launching "Plan Colombia" in July 2000, the United States has given

more than \$7 billion to bolster the beleaguered country in its long-running struggle against drugs and violence. In a June editorial, "A Decade of Plan Colombia: Time for a New Approach" ([www.thedialogue.org](http://www.thedialogue.org)), Inter-American Dialogue President Michael Shifter assesses the strategy's troubled history. He concludes that while Colombian security has improved over the past decade, the role of U.S. involvement is debatable.

According to Shifter, "the data are simply not encouraging," because Plan Colombia's major goal — reducing the amount of coca grown in Colombia and therefore the amount of cocaine available in the U.S. — has failed.

Although the Obama administration "expresses a continuing commitment to Colombia's efforts to deal with its wide-ranging challenges," Shifter calls for a "serious rethinking" of the strategy. In particular, he asserts that its anti-drug focus is almost useless without addressing wider issues in the region.

The call to re-examine anti-drug policy comes at a delicate juncture for Colombia. On Aug. 7, former Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos was inaugurated as president, but a new administration may not lead to new policies. Recent articles from the *New*



*York Times* ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)) and BBC News ([news.bbc.co.uk](http://news.bbc.co.uk)) call Santos the “political heir” of outgoing president Álvaro Uribe and note that “Colombians have voted overwhelmingly for continuity.”

Santos faces many domestic challenges and must navigate deteriorating relationships with neighboring countries, including Venezuela (whose president, Hugo Chávez, is an outspoken critic) and Ecuador (where a warrant for Santos’ arrest was recently issued due to deaths resulting from a 2008 attack on a Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia camp in Ecuador). No matter how much popular support Santos garners, he “has four tough years ahead of him.”

It seems, however, that Santos will have a staunch ally in Washington. In early May, the Obama administration unveiled its 2010 National Drug Control Strategy ([www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov)), which includes continued aid to help Bogota pursue the war on drugs.

An April report from the Congressional Research Service, “Colombia: Issues for Congress” (<http://openers.com/document/RL32250/>), observes that overall U.S. assistance to Bogota will decrease by around 9 percent next year as program management and funding are gradually turned over to Colombia. Nevertheless, the U.S. FY 2011 budget still includes \$465 million for Plan Colombia.

Critics point to persistent corruption and human rights abuses — problems that must be addressed as U.S. aid to the country continues — as well as the questionable track record of Plan Colombia in its first decade. But for now, Shifter sees “every reason to expect that Santos will continue to make the case that Colombia needs

continued support to consolidate gains and try to prevent any backsliding on the security front.” With sustained funds and an improved approach, the Santos administration may be able not only to prevent backsliding, but to take steps forward.

More detailed information about Plan Colombia can be found on the Center for International Policy’s Web site ([www.ciponline.org/colombia/plancolombia.htm](http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/plancolombia.htm)). For general news about all things Colombian, explore *Colombia Reports*, an online publication geared to a foreign, English-speaking audience ([www.colombiareports.com](http://www.colombiareports.com)). Finally, a trove of useful background information is available on the State Department’s Web site ([www.state.gov/](http://www.state.gov/)).

— Laura Caton, *Editorial Intern*

### E-Passport Production Leaves GPO Tongue-Thaied

Security concerns about the outsourcing of passport production overseas is the focus of a recent joint investigation by ABC News and the Center for Public Integrity (<http://abcnews.go.com/>).

It turns out that many of the chips embedded in the e-Passports are produced in a factory in Ayutthaya, Thailand, an area that has been rocked by violent attacks for years and suffers from widespread corruption. The chips are then shipped to Germany, with final assembly completed in the United States.

The Center for Public Integrity cites State Department documents it says prove that U.S. officials have “downplayed the risks” of threats to e-Passports, such as the possibility that sensitive information could be intercepted by “skimming” signals sent from the e-Passports’ chips. Robert



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*CYBERNOTES*

**Site of the Month: [www.supercook.com](http://www.supercook.com)**

Both casual chefs and Wolfgang Puck-wannabes will appreciate the unique search feature of *Supercook.com*. You simply survey your pantry and enter a list of the ingredients you have on hand; the site then generates a catalogue of the recipes you can make, conveniently divided into “Starters,” “Entrees” and “Desserts.” You can sign up for a free account and save your favorite recipes. And in case you want to explore new culinary horizons, the site will even compile a suggested shopping list, so you can take full advantage of your recipe options.

Founded in 2008 by amateur chef and search-technology expert Assaf Rozenblatt, *Supercook* “wants to make life easier for everyone who cooks at home.” Rozenblatt has a self-proclaimed focus on “solving the practical problems of modern home cooks: how to waste less food, how to use up perishable or seasonal ingredients, how to keep track of everything in the kitchen, how to save time and money.” No more staring at the kitchen cupboards and wondering what’s for dinner; Supercook will give you the answer.

The site may even get you one step closer to hosting your own show on the Food Network. As *Supercook.com* explains, “by taking the suggestions Supercook offers and incorporating them into your dish, you can quickly learn how to significantly improve your dishes.”

The site is, as its orientation video brags, “where we serve your recipe search well-done.”

— Laura Caton, Editorial Intern

Sheridan, a former GPO investigator and Customs Service agent, asserts that “if [terrorists] can find a way to compromise this new e-Passport, they will.”

In response, GPO spokesman Gary Somerset declares that “there has been no security breach in the electronic passport supply chain.” Hopefully, that will remain true for future e-Passport production.

Security concerns date almost from the initial development of the U.S. Electronic Passport in 2003, and have only increased since August 2007, when e-Passports became the only type the U.S. issues.

E-Passports look like the traditional version, but contain a chip which stores information from the document’s data page, as well as a digital version of the passport photograph, an identification number and a digital signature, which is used to verify the chip’s authenticity.

The Department of State’s Web site

(<http://travel.state.gov/>) asserts that these travel documents ease travel “by allowing automated identity verification, faster immigration inspections, and greater border protection and security.” But while use of e-Passports certainly makes travel more efficient, their production may be detrimental to individual travelers’ security.

The U.S. Government Printing Office has already been working to move its operations from Thailand to Minnesota, a process it hopes to complete this year. However, this has done little to mitigate concern that “the agency lacks security plans and procedures for ensuring that blank e-Passports [...] remain safe from terrorists, foreign spies, counterfeiters and other bad actors as they wind through an unwieldy manufacturing process that spans the globe and includes 60 different suppliers” ([www.publicintegrity.org/](http://www.publicintegrity.org/)). ■

— Laura Caton, Editorial Intern



# SPEAKING OUT

*Recognizing Those Who Have Made a Difference*

BY EDWARD L. PECK

This issue of the *Journal* features coverage of AFSA's annual awards ceremony. As such, it is the ideal time and place to explain and promote one of the most commendable — yet least-known — programs in the U.S. government. In the vast galaxy of organizations, the American Foreign Service Association is the only one that encourages, recognizes and rewards the courage to speak up in an effort to improve the system from within.

The first of these honors, the Christian A. Herter Award, recognizing constructive dissent by Senior Foreign Service officers, was established in 1968. Two others followed: the William R. Rivkin Award for mid-level officers and the W. Averell Harriman Award for junior officers. And in 2000, AFSA established the F. Allen "Tex" Harris Award for advocacy and constructive dissent by Foreign Service specialists.

Any employee can nominate another — superior, co-worker or subordinate — for these prestigious awards. The criteria, full details on the nomination process and lists of past winners are all posted at [www.afsa.org/awards](http://www.afsa.org/awards).

These awards recognize "individuals who have demonstrated the courage to challenge the system from within, no matter the issue or the consequences of their actions ... the will-

*For more than  
four decades,  
AFSA has been  
alone in honoring  
the Foreign Service's  
"wave-makers."*



ingness to confront or challenge conventional wisdom, intelligently and tenaciously, by asking the tough questions and coming up with some unconventional answers." Although the language describing the awards has evolved over the years, AFSA alone has honored "wave-makers" — and for more than four decades.

Consider that fact for a moment. Doing battle with authority is certainly not a major facet of the Foreign Service's public persona. When people think of us at all, they tend to do so in terms of good manners, a carefully balanced approach, extensive use of the passive voice and, perhaps as much as anything else, conflict avoidance.

In the real world, however, only the Foreign Service, acting through AFSA, publicly commends members who are willing to advocate and pursue changes in policies or management practices. No similar program exists

in any other organization.

It is therefore a cause for concern that the number of nominations has steadily declined over the last few years. There are several possible explanations for this troubling development, but here are two.

*Confusion with State's Dissent Channel.* While both the State Department's Dissent Channel and AFSA's constructive dissent awards program have that word in their titles, they are significantly different. The originator of a Dissent Channel message puts it into the hands of department officials who have been assigned responsibility for dealing with it, effectively ending any further efforts at advocacy. The sender is protected from retaliation, but he or she is also enjoined from pursuing the matter.

In stark contrast, AFSA's constructive dissent program lies entirely outside official channels and therefore carries a potential risk for nominees, as well as nominators. This possibility may dissuade some people from participating. In fact, however, statistics show that the recognition is of considerable benefit to a Foreign Service career.

Winners of AFSA's constructive dissent awards have had a significantly higher rate of promotion than their peers, as the lists of chiefs of mission and other senior officials clearly re-



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***It is troubling that the number of nominations for AFSA's dissent awards has declined over the last few years.***

veal. There are a number of ways to become better known, and being a successful innovator is undoubtedly one of them.

*Vast numbers of other awards —for performance.* The number of official awards and honors given annually by every governmental organization has grown enormously over the years. These awards receive considerable, justified publicity, and have one thing in common: they are all performance-based, rewarding employees who have done an excellent job.

AFSA's constructive dissent awards tend to get lost in this tsunami for two compelling reasons. First, there are only four of them; and because they are entirely dependent on nominations from the field, not all are given each year. Second, they are the only awards for U.S. government employees that are not performance-based.

The basic criterion for winning an AFSA constructive dissent award is clear: you must take up the cudgels, but strictly within the system. Resigning, turning to Congress or airing your concerns publicly removes eligibility for an award.

At the same time, there is no requirement that foreign policy be the focus of the dissent, although it often

is. Almost any issue related to the Foreign Service will suffice. Nor is it necessary to prevail in one's recommendations, or even to be right, although those are obviously both very important considerations.

But the award is for advocacy and dissent, not job performance, something nominators often overlook. Submitting a glowing employee evaluation will not win the nominee a dissent award. Winners have demonstrated the courage to accept the possible consequences of placing their professional necks on the block — and done it anyway.

**Recognition and Publicity**

AFSA has increased its efforts to raise awareness of the program and the importance of advocacy and dissent in advancing the nation's interests. It has made concentrated and successful efforts to explain the program's value to senior officials and has secured high-level attendance at the annual awards ceremony, held in the Benjamin Franklin Room of the State Department.

In addition, AFSA has:

- Made greater use of social networks like Facebook;
- Moved the four plaques bearing the names of our constructive dissent award winners into the newly renovated AFSA headquarters;
- Drawn increased prominence to the awardees by having AFSA President Susan Johnson reference dissent in her remarks to each new A-100 and USAID Development Leadership Initiative class; and
- Promoted the annual AFSA awards ceremony aggressively within the membership, and among foreign affairs agencies and media outlets.

As a result of these efforts, the

## SPEAKING OUT



number of nominations went up this year, a trend that hopefully will continue. However, more can still be done. AFSA will build on the positive momentum by finding additional ways to publicize these unique awards, both within the pages of the *Journal* (and perhaps including the cover) and beyond.

For our system to function at maximum effectiveness, the individuals working in it, who are in the best position to point out its flaws, must advocate steps to correct them. All AFSA members can be part of this important effort in two ways: by speaking up and speaking out to make a difference; and by nominating someone else who has.

Winning a constructive dissent award is not the reason to take on the

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***These unique awards  
are intended to provide  
meaningful recognition  
to those willing to make  
a contribution.***

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system; making it more effective is. In that spirit, these unique awards are intended to encourage and provide meaningful recognition to those willing to make a challenging, important contribution. ■

*Ambassador Edward L. Peck, a Foreign Service officer from 1956 to 1989, was chief of mission in Iraq and Mauritania. In 1974, he won AFSA's William R. Rivkin Award for constructive dissent by a mid-level FSO, persuading the Department of State to change the rules for joint-caption telegrams to clarify and protect the chain of command from the Secretary. (He may also be the only FSO to win a grievance against the department and then go on to an ambassadorship.)*

*Amb. Peck lectured at the Foreign Service Institute on the subject of advocacy and dissent for more than 20 years. A former retiree representative on the AFSA Governing Board, he has served on the Awards and Plaques Committee for more than 30 years.*



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# TO YOUR HEALTH



Paul Levinson

THE OFFICE OF MEDICAL SERVICES NOT ONLY TREATS EMPLOYEES BUT EVALUATES THEIR FITNESS FOR DUTY. BALANCING THOSE ROLES IS A TRICKY BUSINESS.

BY SHAWN ZELLER

A Foreign Service career has never been as glamorous as the popular perception of it might suggest. And as the number of hardship posts and unaccompanied assignments continues to grow, the job of representing the United States overseas has become ever more hazardous to the health of Foreign Service employees and their family members. For instance, a survey earlier this year by the Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, found that nearly 40 percent of civilians assigned to jobs in Iraq and Afghanistan — including, but

not limited to, Foreign Service generalists and specialists — have experienced some sort of medical ailment. (The study did not define such ailments, but the fact that 90 percent of the group sought treatment for them indicates some degree of severity.)

The State Department's Office of Medical Services, familiarly known as MED, is the first line of defense against illness for Foreign Service employees, including those from other foreign affairs agencies, and their family members. It is charged with making sure employees are fit for duty when they are hired, when they leave for their assignments and when they come home, and for treating them when they are abroad. In Washington, MED provides travel-related medical services, such as immunizations, and will assist patients in emergencies. But otherwise, Foreign Service employees rely on their private physicians when they're in the United States.

Foreign Service medical providers stationed overseas provide primary care, including mental health services, to the U.S. Foreign Service community at post. Many also cover other posts in their regions through visits, e-mail and phone. They assess local health threats and evaluate local medical facilities and consultants to ensure that patients can access the best local care possible. (MED arranged for more than 800 hospitalizations overseas last year.) And when employees require urgent or emergency medical care that isn't available at post, MED approves their evacuation to the nearest medevac center overseas, or back to the United States if necessary.

Since 2002, the patient population the office serves has doubled to about 50,000, while the number of appointments at overseas health units per year has nearly tripled over that same period, from about 80,000 to more than 200,000 today. The number of Foreign Service employees evacuated from posts for medical reasons has doubled from 600 a year in 2002 to about 1,200 per year in 2009. The number of mental health evacuations it oversees has grown at a similar rate over the same period, from 38 to 74. (The highest number to date was 123 in 2007.)

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*Shawn Zeller, a regular contributor to the Journal, is a freelance writer in Washington, D.C.*

*Most AFSA members who  
responded to a recent survey  
said they are pleased  
with the medical care  
they've received.*

### **Who Is MED?**

With few exceptions, MED's employees are either Foreign Service members or locally hired. Like other Foreign Service personnel, they rotate and are assigned according to Foreign Service rules.

There are currently 210 health units at U.S. embassies and consulates throughout the world.

Slightly more than half of these, 115, are staffed by 172 Foreign Service medical providers. Their ranks include 49 Regional Medical Officers (physicians); 92 Foreign Service Health Practitioners (nurse practitioners or physician assistants); 21 Regional Medical Officer/Psychiatrists and 10 Regional Medical Technologists. (The remaining 95 health units are staffed by locally engaged medical personnel, mostly nurses.) These caregivers provide medical care to U.S. government employees under chief-of-mission authority and their families, as well as occupational health services to Locally Engaged Staff.

In Washington, D.C., MED's exam clinic provides both initial and periodic medical clearance examinations. The three travel, health and immunization clinics in the Washington, D.C., area offer advice and immunizations for those who are traveling or assigned abroad.

### **Cleared for Duty**

The Office of Medical Services wields immense power over Foreign Service careers. While a Class 1 clearance is unrestricted, a Class 2 medical clearance — which limits Foreign Service personnel to posts where they can receive treatment for a medical condition — can impede career growth and promotional opportunities.

MED's determinations can also have a big impact on the pocketbook. If a Foreign Service employee is deemed too ill to return to post, for instance, he or she will be medically curtailed, rather than evacuated — potentially incurring expenses related to follow-on care and travel.

One way FS personnel qualify for medical evacuation is when their condition can't be treated locally and it is too serious to wait until the next time they are scheduled to leave the country. For example, if someone is stationed in Kigali and finds a breast lump, she'd likely be evacuated to London or Pretoria.

If an evaluation there found that the lump was cancerous, requiring months of treatment, the employee's as-

## F O C U S

signment would be curtailed, and she would be sent to the United States or another post where treatment was available. Once that happened, the patient would no longer be eligible for per diem to cover hotels or meals, and would have to cover the cost of all medical treatment not covered by her insurance.

This past spring, the American Foreign Service Association asked members to share their opinions about the Office of Medical Services as part of a general survey of active-duty State Department members. While most respondents said they had received high-quality treatment, many raised concerns about MED's dual role: providing health care treatment to Foreign Service members while at the same time evaluating their fitness for duty. They contend that this creates an untenable conflict of interest.

*The number of Foreign Service employees evacuated from posts for medical reasons has doubled from 600 in 2002 to about 1,200 last year.*

“The bottom line is that MED's portfolio combines functions that should not necessarily be combined,” says Daniel M. Hirsch, the State Department vice president for the American Foreign Service Association. “Ultimately, the Office of Medical Services has exactly one patient: the U.S. Department of State. Where your health care needs coincide with keeping the Department of State healthy, they

are there to take excellent care of you. But where your health care needs are perceived as making State unhealthy, one of MED's roles is to tag you for removal. It's a very unclear line, and it's very subjective.”

As Hirsch notes, some agencies — with comparably important jobs — do things differently and, in his view, better. The Central Intelligence Agency, for instance, maintains two separate groups of psychiatrists: one to treat



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patients, the other to evaluate their fitness for duty. By contrast, “at State, you can’t necessarily trust your doctor. And that’s a problem,” says Hirsch.

MED, in its defense, points out that it has a critically important job in evaluating officers’ fitness for duty. Sending officers abroad to places without adequate medical care can put their lives at risk, especially if they have an underlying condition.

“We don’t want somebody going to some place where their condition can pose a danger to themselves,” explains Dr. Thomas W. Yun, the office’s medical director since early 2008.

While Yun focuses his concerns on the well-being of the patients, the State Department must also consider that officers overseas represent the United States and play crucial roles affecting U.S. relations with foreign governments and citizens. If they are sick, unstable or unable to perform their duties, it can hurt U.S. diplomacy. And if they must be pulled from duty and brought back to the States, that costs taxpayers money.

Most Foreign Service members who responded to AFSA’s survey said they accepted these facts, and were pleased with the care they received. Some even said that MED had saved their lives.

### **Success Stories**

One such person is Alex Fleming, who served in numerous overseas posts in Asia and Europe during the 1990s and the past decade.

In 1999, he was working as a management officer in Guangzhou, the southernmost consulate in China. He came down with a case of sciatica, a compression or irritation of the spinal nerve roots that can cause severe leg pain. He was rushed by car to Hong Kong, a four-hour drive, where he was treated at the Methodist hospital there.

Three years later, Fleming was stationed in Vienna, where he was diagnosed with blocked arteries. In need of bypass surgery, he was evacuated to Washington, where he underwent surgery at George Washington University Hospital. He recalls being met at the airport, being taken straight to his hotel and meeting his doctor the next morning. “It was all planned and worked smoothly,” he says.

Fleming credits MED with saving his life. And he

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Service medical providers.*

says that even in non-emergency situations, the bond that’s created by being together overseas makes for better treatment than most Americans receive at home. “I give them top grades,” he says. “All the doctors are well-qualified. They have the human touch, and they really show concern. They know your history far better than your doctor back in the States typically would.”

Yun says that while MED personnel are not meant to serve as long-term family doctors — that’s supposed to be the physicians that officers see at home — in reality, they often are. Accordingly, the department is working to improve access to medical records by making them electronic and to offer telemedicine — where patients can have appointments with a MED doctor by video conference — at remote posts.

Meanwhile, State is also working harder to make sure that employees can access the type of wellness activities that can help bolster long-term health. Last year, American Foreign Service Association President John K. Naland wrote a column for this magazine arguing that MED needed to do more to provide comprehensive wellness services to Foreign Service personnel. The department has already taken some of these recommendations to heart.

Late last year, Director General Nancy J. Powell announced that the Human Resources Bureau’s Office of Employee Relations is promoting discounted memberships at local health clubs and healthy cafeteria food choices. Additional bike racks and more employee shower facilities are being added, as well.

Even critics of MED policies who responded to AFSA’s survey acknowledge that they have had many good experiences with MED personnel. Hirsch, speaking for many of them, says: “Most of the doctors and nurse practitioners are superb, and if you have some tropical disease you got in Africa or Southeast Asia, you are much more likely to get really good care from MED than from a hospital in Washington. They’ve seen these things many times, and the vast majority of care providers in MED are highly competent and very dedicated. They are good, old-fashioned general practitioners of the highest order.”

And in some ways, MED has become more flexible in the way it handles officers who have chronic conditions or

## FOCUS

have had mental health issues in the past. In 2008, the department eased medical clearances for officers with the human immunodeficiency virus, a condition that had previously disqualified officers from many assignments. Yun says the changes became possible because of advances in HIV treatment that have made more people with the disease able to work in remote locations. He also notes that his office is constantly updating its rules for other conditions as the state of medical treatment evolves.

MED agreed this year to provide Class 1 clearances for worldwide assignment to some individuals with chronic conditions if they can manage the condition themselves and are willing to pay out of pocket for travel expenses they incur in seeking routine treatment. Yun explains that this broader policy allows those with conditions that require only periodic follow-up evaluations to receive Class 1 medical clearances.

### **Mental Health Issues: Concerns Persist**

Despite many advances in MED's handling of mental

health issues, ranging from addiction to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, the conventional wisdom among many in the Foreign Service remains that those suffering from mental illness or addiction should try to hide their ailments from MED, or risk the loss of their medical or security clearances (or both) if they don't.

While understandable, this fear ignores several changes in MED's handling of these issues and is a significant source of frustration for Yun. It's a misperception that, in his view, puts the health of Foreign Service employees at risk. "We have many examples of harm coming to the individual because he or she hid their mental health condition from the department and did not seek the care that they needed," he says.

In one such case, an individual whose long history of depression was unknown to MED committed suicide. "This individual would not have lost his security clearance had he been forthright and sought treatment," Yun says. The employee probably would have had a Class 2 medical clearance, but that would have been in his best interest.



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“For those who really need continued counseling, monitoring and treatment, why would you want to seek assignments where you could come to harm because of the unavailability of needed treatment? Who would be hurt the most: the department, MED or the individual?” asks Yun.

But the perception that serious mental health problems are on the rise among Foreign Service members serving overseas continues to strain officers’ relationships with MED, notwithstanding Yun’s insistence that the numbers don’t support it. Several Foreign Service officers who asked not to be identified said that because the diagnosis of a mental health problem can result in the department restricting or taking away security and medical clearances, some who desperately need treatment don’t seek it. Those who do, and then have their clearances pulled, feel like they are being punished for doing the right thing.

One Senior Foreign Service officer who responded to AFSA’s inquiry recalled the department’s harsh response after he revealed that he had once sought marital counseling (a subject about which inquiries by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security were subsequently barred). The counseling had been effective and the officer didn’t mention the sessions until three years after they occurred, when he checked a box on his annual five-year security update. “A juggernaut from State/MED immediately kicked in, wanting to know why we had sought counseling, who the counselor was, what her diagnoses were, where she was located, her contact info, requiring us to sign a waiver allowing her to discuss our full range of marital issues with State/MED,” he recalls. “We actually received threats from State/MED that our clearances would be pulled until we ‘cooperated.’ We acted like responsible adults and were treated like criminals for seeking counseling.”

By contrast, the same officer recalls working with a colleague overseas who was exhibiting such bizarre behavior that he began to document it. But because the colleague avoided treatment, she kept her job, he says. “She refused to meet with the regional psychiatrist. The regional psychiatrist said he could not force her to meet with him nor force her to accept treatment; nor would he remove her from post without the ability to meet with and diagnose her. So we continued to have to tolerate her bizarre behavior.”

*“The bottom line is that MED’s portfolio combines functions that should not necessarily be combined.”*

— *Daniel M. Hirsch, AFSA State VP*

### **MED and DS**

Some employees, aware that the Bureau of Diplomatic Security receives information about diagnoses from MED, believe that DS pulls patients’ security clearances, even when department doctors don’t think that step is necessary.

“State/MED continues to use admissions of mental health treatment as a way to punish individuals

who voluntarily seek out assistance for mild mental health conditions, but has no ability to police individuals in need of serious care,” says one officer. “I’m a fairly senior manager, and I tell employees who I think would benefit from mental health counseling to seek it out — but never to tell the State Department a word about it as long as State/MED and Diplomatic Security continue to treat individuals who seek care for mental health conditions as criminals.”

In addition, several respondents to AFSA’s inquiry said they’d found the process for evaluating and treating mental health issues — ranging from attention deficit disorder to depression to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder — confusing and sometimes unhelpful.

One FSO commented that she had retained her Class 1 medical clearance despite a history of alcoholism. She was pleased with the decision, arguing that she was able to set up Alcoholics Anonymous meetings even in a post that hadn’t previously had them. But she was never sure whether her clearance was the result of a friend pulling strings on her behalf, or a policy change at MED.

The ambiguity meant that many recovered alcoholics kept their former addiction very much a secret. As this FSO comments, “the more senior the officer, the more secretive they felt they had to be, sometimes not even attending AA meetings for fear of being reported. And no one wanted it on their medical record.”

Even a regional psychiatrist who works for MED says the policies sometimes confuse him. The psychiatrist long believed that officers “suffering from mild forms of depression should not have their clearances automatically yanked if the condition could be treated at post with mild medication.” After years of discussion, the psychiatrist said, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security reportedly agreed. So the psychiatrist decided to test the claim, asking a friend who was retiring to be falsely diagnosed with

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depression. “Diplomatic Security immediately pulled the guy’s clearance despite the years of discussion and reported agreement that they would not do this,” the psychiatrist said.

Yun says such cases simply don’t exist, barring an incident at post. “None of us can remember a case when an individual lost his/her security clearance because he or she received mental health treatment” in the normal security clearance review process. Yun acknowledges that there have been cases “of employees losing a security clearance because their dangerous/unstable behavior led to an investigation and mental health evaluation. But it was the former that led to the latter, not the other way around — it wasn’t the mental health treatment/evaluation that triggered the event.”

Yun also disputes the charge that MED acts harshly toward people with mental health problems in their background. “We get two complaints,” he says. “We get patients complaining, ‘You guys aren’t letting me go to this post. I know I can go.’ On the other hand, we get com-

plaints from the front office, the management at post saying, ‘Why are you guys sending us these kind of people who end up having problems and have to be curtailed?’ We try to strike a balance.”

Yun says that MED takes a flexible stance toward officers who’ve sought mental health treatment. If they can demonstrate that the condition is stable, they can still hold a Class 1 medical clearance. He also maintains that the perception that MED is quick to recommend that security clearances be taken away is vastly exaggerated. Of more than 1,100 cases of officers reporting mental health treatment on security clearance renewal forms over the last two years, not one lost his or her clearance for medical reasons, according to MED’s records.

It should also be noted that, in line with changes made by the Defense Department, State has stopped asking Foreign Service personnel renewing their security clearances whether they have had any mental health counseling related to their service in a war zone. The department also no longer inquires about whether em-

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ployees have received marital or grief counseling, regardless of where they've served.

### **How Prevalent Is PTSD?**

MED officials say they believe new screening and treatment protocols for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder have contained what was once thought to be a growing problem. (See the January 2008 *Foreign Service Journal* for in-depth coverage of the issue.) A survey three years ago found that about 15 percent of Foreign Service employees reported some symptoms of PTSD, but only 2 percent seemed to have had serious cases. In the last year, just seven officers have gone through a specialized, six- to seven-week program in Washington for PTSD that the department has established. All have returned to duty. Another two officers were enrolled in the program at press time.

MED officials say they've seen no greater prevalence of the condition among returnees from Iraq and Afghanistan. Nonetheless, the department has expanded medical services at high-stress posts, as well as before and after such assignments. The pre-departure training now familiarizes officers with the security issues they will encounter in war zones, and alerts them to the signs of stress-related conditions.

In response to a Government Accountability Office report that criticized the lack of a mandatory post-deployment evaluation, State has begun to require one, which aims to help employees recognize the symptoms of PTSD. AFSA has long argued for such a mandatory post-assignment screening, saying that a voluntary assessment stigmatizes those who agree to it.

Even among the general population, cases of PTSD are not all that uncommon. As many as 10 percent of people will suffer from it over the course of a lifetime, and the numbers are higher for soldiers who have served in war zones. The Defense Department says that about 17 percent of soldiers and Marines who served in Iraq and Afghanistan suffered from symptoms of PTSD, which can range from insomnia and irritability to persistent re-experiencing of a traumatic event, as well as depression. Moreover, in some patients the symptoms may appear soon after the traumatic event, then disappear just as quickly. For others, they may take years to surface and require years of treatment to manage.

Congress has been looking at the issue, holding hearings in 2007, last year and earlier this year to examine

MED's protocols for dealing with mental health problems, particularly Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder stemming from long-term assignments in dangerous places.

At the 2007 hearing, Rep. Gary Ackerman, D-N.Y., put into words what many FS members feel. "There seems to be widespread fear among affected employees that seeking treatment will have a seriously detrimental impact on their careers. Employees are afraid that they may lose their security clearances or medical clearances, or simply be perceived by superiors and colleagues as damaged goods." Ackerman said the department should "make crystal clear that no stigma attaches to those employees who seek support and treatment."

### **A Cautionary Tale**

Some officers who responded to AFSA's inquiry contend that MED was slow to realize the dangers of PTSD and other mental health conditions as the State Department ramped up the number of hardship and unaccompanied posts, and say that they are paying for MED's lack of vigilance.

One officer, who asked to remain anonymous, said poor treatment he received might have permanently affected his career. A military officer who joined the Foreign Service eight years ago, he considers himself highly ambitious. He is a tsunami survivor and works as a human rights officer, where he's seen the most horrifying aspects of war.

He took a slot at one of the most dangerous hardship posts in 2008 because he wanted to bring those skills to where they were needed most. And he didn't complain when he found himself working 12 to 14 hours a day while mortars and small-arms fire rained down outside.

But after he was injured in a roadside bomb attack, he sought help for the stress he was feeling. After a 10-question survey revealed that he was probably suffering from PTSD, he was referred to the regional psychiatrist stationed in a nearby country. After a phone consultation, he started to take the powerful antidepressant Lexipro.

The officer asked the psychiatrist whether there might be side effects and was told he might feel drowsy. But he soon found that he could not sleep, his blood pressure went up and he lost his appetite. He researched the drug on his own and found that all were potential side effects. (Drowsiness was not, in fact, typical.) But after consulting with a local doctor recommended by MED, he continued to take the medicine.

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Only when he returned to the United States for a break did he talk to a doctor who said Lexipro was not working. He switched to Zoloft, another antidepressant, but his condition went from bad to worse. He was evacuated and placed in a psychiatric hospitalization program in Washington.

In a meeting with the clinical director of MED, the officer was told that the odds were against him returning to post. He was crestfallen, worrying that his career was sunk and that he couldn't finish the work he'd started, but he kept his hopes up. He was told that there remained a 1-in-3 chance that he could go back.

MED provided no help, he says, in finding a psychiatrist skilled in dealing with PTSD cases, so he found one on his own. But two weeks after his discussion with the clinical director, he was told he would not be returning to post.

Soon thereafter, though, he was assigned to another country. The symptoms started coming back and he was evacuated again. He found himself living in Washington,

D.C., apart from his wife, trying to get better while filing appeals to be able to return to work. He's been granted a Class 2 medical clearance, which allows him to go to posts where he could be treated, if need be, for PTSD. But he continues to believe that if his case had been handled better at the start, all this might have been avoided.

### **Maintaining a Tricky Balance**

MED officials are eager to dispel such fears. They insist that even where mental health issues are raised in evaluating whether or not a security clearance is renewed — as is required throughout the federal government — MED takes steps to ensure that an individual's doctor is not put into a position of working against him or her.

In those proceedings, a separate physician reviews the mental health records and makes a recommendation to DS about whether those findings should preclude a clearance.

The process is more adversarial, though, when MED is called in to investigate by the Bureau of Diplomatic

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Security after an incident at post has raised questions about an officer's fitness for duty and his or her continued possession of a security clearance.

Three years ago, Concerned Foreign Service Officers, a group that has raised these issues in the past, urged colleagues to seek mental health treatment privately, rather than through the State Department. They did so on the grounds that mental health diagnoses made by MED are shared with Diplomatic Security and that State has asserted that such files are not subject to medical privacy laws.

That position has not changed, says William Savich, a spokesman for the group. "We feel that MED basically works in conjunction with Diplomatic Security and is really swayed by DS's security recommendations," he says. "It seems that sometimes that sways their medical determination, and they tend to work in secrecy and use administrative files and personnel files that should be medically confidential."

But MED officials say such advice is more likely to

get officers in trouble than if they seek treatment. "It's extremely hard, from our perspective, to lose your security clearance," says Yun. "If you don't get treatment and you have an incident, that's more likely to have an effect on a clearance than seeking treatment."

As for Hirsch's suggestion that separate, outside doctors conduct security clearance reviews, MED officials say that's not feasible — or even desirable for officers — because of the specialized work that Foreign Service personnel do and the conditions they face at post. It's best, Yun says, that doctors who know the terrain handle the evaluations.

It would seem, then, that the fears officers have about MED may well persist, despite Yun's assurances. That's something he regrets, he says, but accepts. "We're very well-liked for the caring part," says Yun. "We're not very well-liked for the company hat part."

If there's one thing that most Foreign Service employees can agree on, it is that maintaining the balance between patient care and security concerns is not easy. ■

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*Watch for the November FSJ's annual roundup of books by current and former members of the Foreign Service and their families.*

## 2010 ANNUAL FS AUTHOR ROUNDUP



# DOES STATE DISCRIMINATE AGAINST PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

WHEN THE MEDICAL CLEARANCE PROCESS  
INTERSECTS WITH PERSONNEL POLICIES,  
THE RESULTS CAN BE UNHEALTHY.

BY CAROL SHUH

I don't remember my last moment of good health. I was too engrossed in my work.

I do know that it occurred in Kigali on Feb. 12, 1988, a warm, sunny Friday afternoon. I was sitting at my desk when my concentration was broken by the thought, "Gee, I feel funny. I've felt funny for a couple of minutes." I glanced at my watch. It was 3:45, and I realized, "That tropical fever is back for the fourth time, and I'm in for three days of agony. There goes my long weekend!"

That episode led to my medical evacuation and, four months later, a medical curtailment of my first tour, as continuous pains and problems following the fever made my life miserable. Finally, in late 1991 I got the diagnosis I'd begun to suspect: the fever had precipitated a moderately bad case of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, which was only

beginning to be known then.

CFS is an unexplained illness that affects many people, though, like lupus and multiple sclerosis, women contract it more often than other segments of the population. The latest research suggests that CFS may be caused by the recently discovered XMRV virus. (Like HIV and several cancer-causing viruses, XMRV is a retrovirus. It has also been implicated in prostate cancer.)

While I've always been able to work full time (though it hasn't been easy), my condition has been bad enough that since the mid-1990s, I've had a Class 5 medical clearance, a level that precludes all overseas assignments. I have no complaint about that determination, nor about my many interactions with the Office of Medical Services through the years. I've found MED personnel to be pleasant, helpful and professional.

However, when medical issues overlap with personnel policies, especially the recruitment and assignments processes, huge problems can arise, some of which I have experienced personally. It's clear to me that the State Department's Bureau of Human Resources has not come to grips with the fact that some of its most cherished policies discriminate against people with disabilities.

This topic has been thoroughly explored through postings by numerous employees on the Secretary's Sounding Board, the department's internal online discussion forum.

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*Carol Shuh, a former Peace Corps Volunteer in Sierra Leone and biology teacher at the Universal American School in Kuwait, joined the Foreign Service in 1986 in the consular cone. Her overseas tours were in Kigali and Toronto. Since 1991 she has served in Washington, D.C., in various State Department bureaus. The views and opinions expressed in this article are solely her own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of State or the U.S. government.*

(Those with OpenNet access can visit the page titled “Provide equal opportunity in the Foreign Service for employees with disabilities,” for which 61 comments had been posted at this writing.) The problems have been raised with department management in other venues as well, notably by the Disability Action Group, an employee organization formed in 2007.

### **Evaluating Foreign Service Candidates Fairly**

So it was with special interest that I read some e-mails from DAG forwarding articles from FEDweek concerning recent legal actions related to applicants to the Foreign Service denied entry because of medical issues. When the *FSJ* called for articles about MED, I thought, “This is something that more people should know about.” I found the court records and read some additional news articles to assemble the following information. Where possible, I also contacted the plaintiffs or their lawyers for comment.

Five applicants for the Foreign Service were denied Class 1 (worldwide available, required for all new FS personnel) medical clearances in 2002 or 2003. All took legal action; and all had decisions published in 2008 or 2009.

The best known is *Taylor v. Rice*, in which Lorenzo Taylor was denied a Class 1 clearance, and thus entry into the Foreign Service, because he had been HIV-positive for 18 years. The case was scheduled for trial in 2008 when the department changed its policy to allow some HIV-positive individuals to be hired, and the case was settled out of court. (Taylor ultimately chose not to pursue a Foreign Service career.)

At the time, the department stated, “The Office of Medical Services has recently revised its medical clearance guidelines on HIV based on advances in HIV care and treatment and consultations with medical experts. The new clearance guidelines provide that HIV-positive individuals may be deemed worldwide available if certain medical conditions are met. The change simply reflects the medical advances in this area of HIV care and maintenance. While Mr. Taylor’s counsel has been made aware of the change in the guideline, it is not a term or condition of the settlement agreement.”

There are at least four other, lesser-known cases in

*While I’ve always been able to work full time (though it hasn’t been easy), I’ve had a Class 5 medical clearance since the mid-1990s.*

which the State Department received scathing criticism for discrimination against persons with disabilities. In each case, the legal system determined that MED relied on presumptions about the person’s medical needs without conducting a personal assessment of the candidate. (When I sought an official response regarding the four cases, I was told that the de-

partment is unable to comment on matters under litigation.)

One candidate, who does not wish to have her name published, had already received a Class 1 medical clearance in July 2003 when she learned she had cancer, happily at an early stage. After treatment, she informed MED of her condition, but despite declarations by two eminent oncologists that her cancer was “in complete remission with an excellent prognosis” and she had “no job limitations whatsoever,” MED changed her clearance level to Class 5. When she filed suit, the court found the department’s “refusal to accept the recommendations of complainant’s physicians or otherwise accommodate her minor medical needs . . . both callous and unreasonable,” but did not grant her relief because it determined that, her cancer being cured, she was not a person with a disability. The U.S. Court of Appeals overturned this decision in 2008, and the parties later reached a settlement that allowed for the candidate to enter the Foreign Service.

Another applicant was denied a Class 1 medical clearance early in 2002 because he had a mild form of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and had been taking Paxil on a daily basis since 1995. In its Sept. 30, 2009, decision overturning a lower ruling, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission stated that “the agency did not take complainant up on his offer to provide more medical records . . . and generally failed to conduct any further assessment of his case.” Consequently, “a reasonable fact finder could conclude that the agency discriminated against complainant based on stereotypes or misinformation concerning complainant’s OCD.” That case has also been settled.

A third candidate was denied a Class 1 clearance due to dysthymia, “a form of depression that tends to be chronic and recurring in nature but with less severe symptoms than major depression.” He had suffered two episodes of

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depression, one in 1996 for which he took medication for two months; and another in 2002, for which he took medication for six months, precipitated by such life stressors as the death of his father.

MED told the EEOC: "With complainant's history, we would be concerned that there is a very high risk of significant relapse (or worse) if he were in a difficult situation." However, the EEOC noted that "in July 2002, at the height of complainant's second depressive episode, the psychiatrist reported that he observed in complainant 'no aggressive or impulsive behavior.'" The most serious symptoms he experienced were "depressed mood, crying spells, poor body image, anxiety, hyperphagia (overeating) and frustration."

The EEOC concluded, "We find that the agency failed to conduct an individualized assessment, jumping to conclusions based on their own unfounded assumptions and

*I've found MED personnel to be pleasant, helpful and professional in dealing with medical matters.*

fears." It ordered State to offer the candidate a retroactive entry-level Foreign Service officer position, including back pay, interest and compensatory damages. The EEOC further ordered the department to conduct training for MED personnel, to consider disciplining the responsible officials, and to post a public notice.

It issued the same order in the case of a fourth candidate, who has asked that identifying information about the case not be published in this article. However, the EEOC's comments are worth noting: "The MED clearance staff did not contact complainant's physicians to investigate whether their assumptions were true or not." ... "Amazingly, two of the physicians who supposedly 'reviewed' complainant's medical record admitted that they never saw the letters from complainant's physicians which reported that no follow-up was required in the coming two years."

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Since two of these cases are presumably still within the legal process, and three have been settled without any indication of liability, I cannot draw any sweeping conclusions from them. Nonetheless, there is a strong presumption that in 2002 and 2003, MED did not assess every candidate for the Foreign Service with careful, individualized attention.

### **Has MED Changed?**

Are things different in MED now? When I asked for current information about these issues, the department responded, "In addition to the training provided by S/OCR [the Office of Civil Rights] and HR, MED has complied with the EEO training required by the referenced EEOC orders." However, there is some evidence to suggest that some employees may not have gotten the message.

Consider the following comment a candidate for entrance into the Foreign Service posted on the Secretary's Sounding Board regarding his spring 2009 experience with MED: "I have been working in Iraq for a year now as a contractor on an RRT [Regional Reconstruction Team]. ... The medical requirements for my company require a physical from my personal physician, which I passed. After being on post for six months, I applied for a Foreign Service limited post, and was given a Class 2 clearance! ...

"Despite having three physicians agree on my course of treatment [for degenerative disc disease] and ability to serve in a hardship/danger zone, one young doctor was able to derail my appointment, and attempted to engage in a debate over the treatment recommended by two specialists and a family doctor in areas [in] which he had no expert qualifications, rather than evaluate my ability to do my job."

In a phone conversation on June 23, this individual gave me permission to quote his Sounding Board posting. He added that he had even sent two medical journal articles to the doctor showing that his treatment regimen was the "Cadillac" standard of treatment for his condition, but that the doctor in MED had disputed this, as well.

His experience sounds all too much like that of the four litigants, in that his individual situation may not have been considered. However, the candidate decided not to appeal the decision, so we cannot assess whether MED's clearance decision would have stood under further scrutiny.

## *State has taken a number of steps to increase opportunity for employees with disabilities.*

Let me turn now to another problem that can arise when the medical clearance process intersects with HR's personnel policies.

### **Class 5 Equals Second Class**

By law, Foreign Service personnel may not serve continuously in domestic assignments for more than eight years without a waiver. The implementing regulation (3 FAM 2424.2b) reduces this to five years. This is colloquially known as "the 5/8 rule."

A few FS employees request 5/8 waivers every year to allow them to remain in domestic assignments due to their Class 5 restricted medical clearances. HR then asks MED whether it "supports" the employee's petition. The date and level of the medical clearance are in HR's computers, and HR can tell at a glance if the clearance is current and allows an overseas assignment (Class 1 or 2) or not (Class 5). So why is HR asking the question? Does it hope that MED will change its mind?

A far more pernicious policy is HR's unwritten rule that if an employee who is eligible to retire requests a 5/8 waiver, HR will pressure the employee to retire or switch to a Civil Service position. I experienced this pressure in 2006-2007, but I refused to acquiesce. Commenting on this, a former Foreign Service director general wrote, "If someone is never going to be able to work overseas, at a certain point I think it would be appropriate for them to consider converting to the Civil Service or retiring. Perhaps with the funding we would have by freeing up that slot we could hire another Foreign Service officer who could be assigned overseas." In other words, if the Foreign Service could get rid of a disabled person, then they could hire someone better.

MED appears to buy into this view. In October 2009, a senior official in that office told my career development officer that "I have reviewed the documentation on Ms. Shuh. This will be her third request [for a 5/8 waiver]. These are always difficult cases, and the question is at what point do we stop issuing a 5/8 waiver knowing that the patient has a medical condition that limits her from going overseas. I suppose the patient needs to decide to move from the Foreign Service to the Civil Service, and this may need to come from the DG's office. At this point MED strongly supports the 5/8 extension be granted to Carol Shuh."

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In saying that a person “needs to decide to move from the Foreign Service to the Civil Service,” the MED official shows ignorance of laws that protect employees with disabilities: “No covered entity shall discriminate ... in regard to ... the hiring, advancement, or discharge of employees, employee compensation, job training, and other terms, conditions and privileges of employment.” The Civil Service is so different from the Foreign Service, especially in their respective retirement plans, that moving from one to the other would manifestly be a change in the “terms, conditions and privileges of employment.”

In saying “this may need to come from the DG’s office,” the MED official seems to be suggesting that the director general’s office should pressure employees to make a switch. This would be contrary to law, which states: “It is unlawful to coerce, intimidate, threaten, harass or interfere with any individual in the exercise or enjoyment of ... any right granted or protected by this part.” As long as they can still do the job, FS personnel have the right to remain employed in the Service despite a disability.

Moreover, I would guess, based on the very limited data I have been able to gather, that less than 1 percent of Foreign Service members hold Class 5 medical clearances. Providing that small group (fewer than 100 people) with the “reasonable accommodation” of permission to serve only in domestic assignments should not constitute an “undue hardship” for an agency with thousands of employees.

### **Some Encouraging Signs**

On the bright side, the department has taken a number of steps to increase opportunity for employees with medical problems or disabilities. On May 6, MED sent a cable to all posts (ALDAC 10 State 046791) announcing a change to its criteria for a Class 1 worldwide-available clearance. Previously, an employee or family member who had a medical condition that was stable but required periodic evaluations would be given a Class 2 medical clearance, and would be assigned only to posts where periodic evaluations were available. Under the new criteria, such an employee

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or family member can now receive a Class 1 clearance, but the patient must take responsibility for the required follow-up, at his or her own expense, even if medical facilities are not available at the post of assignment.

This new policy offers a greater range of assignments to Foreign Service employees, while providing the department with a larger pool of people to be posted to hardship posts. All new employees and family members, as well as those with existing Class 1 clearances, will fall under the new criteria. However, those with existing Class 2 clearances may elect to remain under the old system, and be assigned only to posts with adequate medical facilities.

As part of this effort, MED will provide guidance about medical facilities available at all posts to help employees weighing their bids.

In another move showing welcome flexibility and awareness, the department has created a new division within HR's Employee Relations Office that provides one-stop services and assistive technologies to employees with disabilities: the Disability/Reasonable Accommodation Divi-

sion. Additionally, in 2001 State became the first agency to partner with the Defense Department's Computer Accommodations and Technology Program to provide assistive technology and services to employees with disabilities.

Another new creation is the Disability Leadership Committee, a group of assistant secretaries that will address disability issues cutting across bureaus. Its first meeting took place in December 2009. On July 1, the department announced the appointment of Judith Heumann as the Special Adviser for International Disability Rights. She has already met with members of the Disability Action Group.

Finally, in May the National Passport Information Center won an award from NISH, a nongovernmental organization that supports employment for people with disabilities.

So what are we to make of all this? I confess that I don't have enough data to draw any firm conclusions as to whether State has truly changed its policies toward Foreign Service employees with disabilities. I await further developments with interest. ■

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## A UNIQUE PRACTICE

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oreign Service Health Practitioners are either Nurse Practitioners or Physician's Assistants. Though the two specializations differ in terms of medical education backgrounds, they arrive at essentially the same knowledge and skill set.

We are often called "mid-level" medical providers to indicate a responsibility less than the pinnacle (physicians) and more than the base (everyone else). But I don't like that term, because it makes me imagine I am hanging in space with no firm grasp in either direction. I am a nurse practitioner, and my comments reflect that discipline.

When I joined the Foreign Service in 1999, I had no idea what I was getting into. I had enjoyed a successful private practice in a hospital setting with a group of general/vascular surgeons, but I wanted something else in my middle-aged life, and the Foreign Service seemed exotic and adventurous. It has been long enough ago that I no

PRACTICING MEDICINE IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE IS AKIN TO WORKING IN A SMALL TOWN — A VERY SMALL TOWN.

BY JUDIE PRUETT

longer remember exactly what I expected, but clearly my expectations were way off the mark.

On the other hand, I can't imagine that anyone could join the medical branch of the Foreign Service and fully realize what lies ahead. This is a unique medical practice setting, and it isn't for everyone. I have watched colleagues leave, usually because of family issues, but some because they just could not adapt to this unusual milieu.

### A Wide Range of Issues

I am usually posted to countries whose medical services are substandard to those available in the American model. This reality usually removes the option of fancy diagnostic tools or subspecialty consultants and requires falling back on the basics of diagnosis: a good patient history and physical exam, plus common sense. It also means staying current on all the options that the First World can provide and our standard of care requires.

I deal with a much wider range of issues than my colleagues in an American practice ever will. It isn't just the variety of diseases — what is a nice girl from Mississippi doing treating malaria, leishmaniasis and myiasis? — but food and water safety, biochemical threats, emergency preparedness, civil unrest, mental health issues ... and the list goes on. Though many of these issues have a direct effect on my patients, they are not patient-centered, and this has

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*Judie Pruett became a Foreign Service Nurse Practitioner in 1999. She currently serves in Prague, following assignments to Accra, Conakry, Kabul and Islamabad. She also spent two years as a worldwide rover for the Office of Medical Services. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, she worked as a hospital-based Nurse Practitioner for a private surgical practice in Biloxi, Miss. She blogs for the Society of International Nursing Scholarship at <http://mpworldview.blogspot.com/>.*

forced me to expand my definition of being a clinician.

While my U.S. colleagues might have a few co-workers or friends as patients, that categorizes all of my patients. It is an especially difficult responsibility to maintain medical objectivity alongside a personal relationship, but that's what I do every day. And when medicine, which is more art than science, fails a patient, I know that I rethink, second-guess and ruminate far more than I did in my prior practice.

One of my many responsibilities, using U.S. Department of Transportation guidelines, is to evaluate local employees who drive embassy vehicles. Ninety percent of the drivers are men who are extremely worried that they won't pass the medical examination and will be suspended from driving. Fortunately, that rarely happens.

Hypertension is usually the biggest health issue that presents in these physicals and, regardless of the actual blood pressure reading, the drivers always blame it on "white coat syndrome." Most of the time, the initial conversation goes something like this:

*Me:* I see your blood pressure is a little high today. Do you have high blood pressure?

*Driver:* No, I'm just nervous to be here.

*Me:* Really, there is no reason to be nervous. Do you take any prescription medication?

*Driver:* No, unless my doctor gives me something.

*Me:* Has your doctor given you anything recently?

*Driver:* I have those little pills I take when I need to.

*Me:* What are those pills for?

*Driver:* For when I get stressed, like now, and my blood pressure goes up, but I don't have blood pressure problems unless I'm stressed.

*Me:* How often do you take those pills?

*Driver:* Well, my doctor told me to take them every day, but I only take them when I'm stressed or I know I'm going to be nervous.

*Me:* So, you are being treated for high blood pressure?

*Driver:* Yes.

*Me:* OK, *now* we are getting somewhere!

### **Where the Personal Meets the Professional**

Practicing medicine in the Foreign Service is akin to working in a small town — a *very* small town. While a few embassy populations are quite large, with more than a thousand staff members and families, most are well below the 500 mark. I am responsible for the health needs of nearly 200 American employees and family members in Prague, plus the occupational health of about 100 local

staff members.

This means that my patients are also my colleagues and friends. It is not uncommon for me to have lunch or dinner with someone I treat in the clinic the same week. Rarely are my fellow health practitioners in a situation where we provide care for people we don't see frequently outside of the health unit, even if it is just passing in a hallway.

I have always had mixed feelings about this unusual environment, because having such a close relationship with one's patients has both advantages and disadvantages. Under this system, my feeling of responsibility is both professional and personal. My medical colleagues and I have to maintain clinical objectivity at the same time that we have a very special interest in the people we are treating.

Recently, one of my patients became very ill, requiring advanced medical care within the Czech health system. I am thankful there is such competent care available in Prague, but the length and severity of the illness have caused me many nights of tossing and turning. I worry and wonder if all the people making decisions in this case — myself included — are making the right decisions.

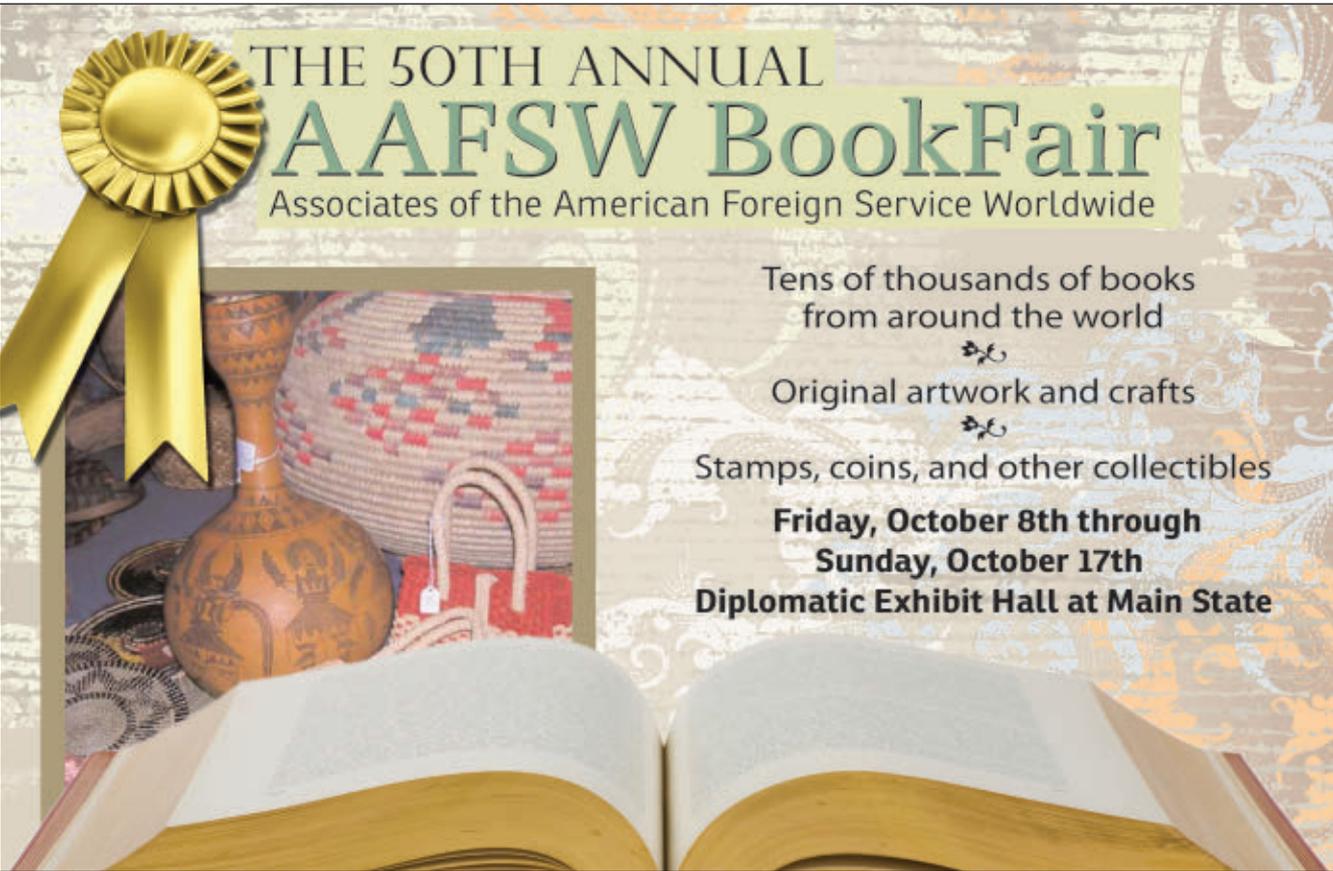
From the beginning, there has been a high chance of complications, and I am acutely aware that, if things don't go well, my embassy colleagues might look at me with a critical eye. But that isn't the cause of my fidgety sleep. I have tremendous regard for my patient, and it is that personal connection that causes the angst.

At my first post, I had to hospitalize a septic 3-year-old. The parents were on their initial overseas assignment and had been in country for exactly one month. The mother was a lovely young lady who was a good bit shorter than I. After the baby had been admitted to the hospital for the intravenous infusion of the drugs that were going to save her, the mother literally grabbed me by the shirt and pulled my face down to hers. "Don't let my baby die!" she cried.

That was the first time I felt the full force of the responsibility this practice can bring. And it wasn't the last. Fortunately, the child did well and left the hospital in less than a week, her mother having never left her side.

The Foreign Service isn't an easy lifestyle, but I enjoy a unique opportunity to experience medicine in a way not possible in the United States. I have been honored to know and work with some amazing medical practitioners in various parts of the world, to see diseases that don't exist at home and to collaborate closely with my MED colleagues.

For me, the decision to join the Service was absolutely the right one. ■



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# PAKISTAN: WASHINGTON'S BLIND SPOT IN AFGHANISTAN

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BY IGNORING CORE ISSUES AND REALITIES IN SOUTH ASIA, U.S. POLICY IN AFGHANISTAN INADVERTENTLY CONTRIBUTES TO THE VERY INSTABILITY THAT LEADERS IN WASHINGTON SEEK TO FORESTALL.

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BY MALOU INNOCENT

**B**eyond the goal of stabilizing Afghanistan and precluding terrorists from using it as a sanctuary, many policymakers, security experts and pundits insist that U.S. and NATO forces must prevent militancy in Afghanistan from spilling into neighboring, nuclear-armed Pakistan. Underpinning this argument is the assumption that if Washington were to abandon Afghanistan to its fate, militants in the region could fatally weaken the government of Pakistan and seize its nuclear weapons. However, conflating a successful territorial pacification of Afghanistan with the suppression of tumultuous security conditions in Pakistan is misguided.

Much of the confusion stems from wishful thinking under the Bush administration, which assumed that a post-9/11 Pakistan would radically alter its strategic ambitions and combat the very extremists it had previously nurtured to counter India, its primary enemy. But rather than sever ties to these militants (many of whom Pakistani governments had supported for more than 30 years) then-President Pervez Musharraf and his military corps commanders decided to ally openly with the Bush administration in the “War on Terror”

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*Malou Innocent is a foreign policy analyst at the Cato Institute and a member of the International Institute of Strategic Studies. Her primary research interests include Middle Eastern and Persian Gulf security issues and U.S. foreign policy toward Pakistan, Afghanistan and China. She has appeared on CNN, BBC News, Fox News Channel, Al-Jazeera, the Voice of America, CNBC Asia and Reuters, and has written for numerous journals and newspapers.*

and preserve their proxy assets as a hedge against Indian influence. Indeed, a new report from the London School of Economics claims that Pakistan’s military-dominated spy agency, the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence, not only funds Taliban fighters in Afghanistan but is officially represented on the militant movement’s leadership council.

The clash of competing strategic interests between Islamabad and Washington goes unanswered by present U.S. policy, even though it is one of the many underlying sources of the Afghan mission’s vulnerability. In this respect, stability in Pakistan does not require — indeed, it does not benefit from — the presence of U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan.

First, foreign troops neither resolve the ongoing rivalry between Pakistan and India nor decrease either country’s incentive to use the region as a proxy battleground. Second, Washington’s short- and long-term interests in the broader Asia-Pacific region provide policymakers with limited wiggle room for choosing sides in South Asia’s chief regional dispute. Finally, widespread suspicions that the United States and India are colluding to dismember Pakistan encourage Pakistani countermeasures in Afghanistan, thereby undermining the viability of any government in Kabul supported by New Delhi.

Long-term stability in this region will come about only after the United States scales down its Afghanistan policy to a much narrower counterterrorism mission and Pakistan is convinced that its future security does not lie in continuing its self-defeating support of Islamist proxies. To surmount this critical stumbling block, the United States must encourage the formation of a national government in Afghanistan that includes a political buy-in from Islamabad.

## The Rivalry

In the West, many defense officials, policymakers and analysts endorse a long-term commitment to Afghanistan based on the foreign policy tenet that extremists can prosper in ungoverned parts of the world and attack the United States. Another argument strengthening the belief that America and its allies must stabilize Afghanistan is the fear that Pakistan's nuclear weapons could fall into militant hands.

In the July-August 2009 issue of *The American Interest*, Stephen Biddle, a civilian adviser to the former commander of U.S. troops on the Afghan front, General Stanley McChrystal, bluntly articulated the argument that America must prevent Afghanistan's radicalism from engulfing Pakistan: "Instability in Afghanistan also poses a serious threat to the secular civilian government in Pakistan. This is the single greatest U.S. interest in Afghanistan: to prevent it from aggravating Pakistan's internal problems and magnifying the danger of an al-Qaida nuclear-armed sanctuary there."

That kind of thinking has clearly influenced the Obama administration. Speaking before the Senate Armed Services Committee last December, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates warned: "Failure in Afghanistan would mean a Taliban takeover of much, if not most, of the country and likely a renewed civil war. Taliban-ruled areas could in short order become once again a sanctuary for al-Qaida, as well as a staging area for resurgent militant groups on the offensive in Pakistan."

That Afghanistan's internal security situation presents challenges to Pakistan is correct, as far as the analysis goes. But neither Biddle nor Gates explains how those challenges necessitate America's military presence in the region or how that presence enhances Pakistan's stability. In fact, their rationale obscures several important questions: To what extent do foreign military operations in the region — and Pakistan's acquiescence to Western policies — spawn more recruits for al-Qaida-linked groups seeking to provoke a conflict between Pakistan and India? To what degree do India and America have similar vested interests in war-torn Afghanistan's resurrection? And why has Pakistan not gone after the original Afghan Taliban, much less al-Qaida, for the past nine years?

It is an open secret that hawkish elements affiliated with the ISI have taken no substantive action against Mullah Omar's Quetta Shura, the North Waziristan-based Haqqani network, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-e-Islami Group and other warlords commanding Afghanistan's insurgency from inside Pakistan. Pakistan's duplicity was vividly illustrated last February when the ISI seized Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar,

one of the Taliban's top field commanders, but Islamabad refused to extradite him to Washington. According to former U.N. envoy Kai Eide, Baradar was in communication with the Afghan government at the time of his arrest — a sign that the ISI may have sought to thwart substantive peace talks that did not have Islamabad's approval.

Additionally, U.S., Indian and Afghan intelligence officials all allege that the ISI may have had a role in the July 2008 and October 2009 bombings of the Indian embassy in Kabul. And Gilles Dorronsoro, an authority on Afghanistan at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, writes that Pakistan uses the Afghan Taliban against domestic Baluchi insurgents.

As if Pakistan's deleterious policies were not harmful enough to the Afghan mission, it is believed (though rarely discussed openly) that India's external intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing, uses consulates in Afghanistan to secretly funnel weapons to separatists in Baluchistan. C.

Christine Fair, an assistant professor at Georgetown University and a senior fellow with the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, said in an online roundtable convened by *Foreign Affairs*: "I think it is unfair to dismiss the notion that Pakistan's apprehensions about Afghanistan stem in part from its security competition with India ... Indian officials have told me privately that they are pumping money into Baluchistan."

Many in the Pakistani military allege that India assists Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas by smuggling weapons through Afghanistan. "What does an Indian consulate do in Afghanistan when there is no Indian population?" a Pakistani intelligence official asked the *New York Times*.

After six decades of mutual hostility, three full-scale wars and numerous border skirmishes, it appears that the enmity between India and Pakistan, as well as the focal point of their proxy terrorism, has shifted from the disputed territory of Kashmir to the battlefields of Afghanistan. "In Afghanistan, as well as in Kashmir," Muhammad Amir Rana argues in *The A to Z of Jehadi Organizations in Pakistan* (2004, translated by Saba Ansari), "Pakistan's intelligence agencies hit a jackpot when they realized the efficacy of covert warfare as a potent method of bleeding a stronger adversary while keeping the element of plausible deniability."

Thrusting U.S. and NATO troops into this maelstrom of competing strategic interests and covert proxy warfighting (between two nuclear-armed powers, no less) is profoundly imprudent. Strategically, however, because of Pakistan's unstinting, sustained support for extremists, some analysts argue

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### *The clash of competing strategic interests between Islamabad and Washington goes unanswered by present U.S. policy.*

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that Washington must eventually back India over Pakistan. As explained below, this proposal is enticing for several reasons. However, tensions between America's short- and long-term interests in the wider Asia-Pacific region may preclude the luxury of choosing sides.

### Zero-Sum?

Far removed from the original objective of punishing al-Qaida, some seek to perpetuate the war in Afghanistan on a number of other grounds: as a means to promote liberty abroad, as a way to save face against global jihad, and as a measure to prevent a militant takeover of Pakistan. Others argue that in the long run, Washington must distance itself from Pakistan and throw its full support behind India, America's natural ally in the region.

"[S]ome of the best arguments about why this war is necessary," says

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*It appears that the enmity between India and Pakistan, as well as the focal point of their proxy terrorism, has shifted from the disputed territory of Kashmir to the battlefields of Afghanistan.*

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*Time* magazine's Joe Klein, "must go unspoken by the president. They involve Pakistan and India ... Tensions between the two countries would es-

calate dramatically if we were to abandon the region."

*Vanity Fair* columnist Christopher Hitchens echoes the view of those who advocate siding with India: "[They] have the same enemies as we do, they were supporting the Northern Alliance before we were, [and] they will always be there long after the Taliban have gone."

On their merits, both arguments are compelling. But a significant barrier to choosing sides is that a long-term policy of engagement with India will likely make Pakistan less inclined to cooperate with the United States in the short term.

In the long term, an alliance of the world's largest democracies would be mutually advantageous, particularly given India's sizable population, burgeoning economic potential and leverage against what former U.S. National Intelligence Director Dennis Blair has called a "more military, aggressive, for-



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ward-looking” China. In the short term, however, the United States remains heavily reliant on Pakistan, which allows more than 70 percent of U.S.-NATO military supplies to travel through its territory into landlocked Afghanistan.

Moreover, Pakistan’s military relies on Pashtun militants as key informants in the tribal region, in turn providing U.S. intelligence agencies with vital counterterrorism cooperation. In this respect, America’s short- and long-term security interests may collide as much as they coalesce.

Because countries in the broader Asia-Pacific region are so firmly interlocked, a shift in U.S. policy toward one could affect seemingly unrelated policies toward another. Historically, when-

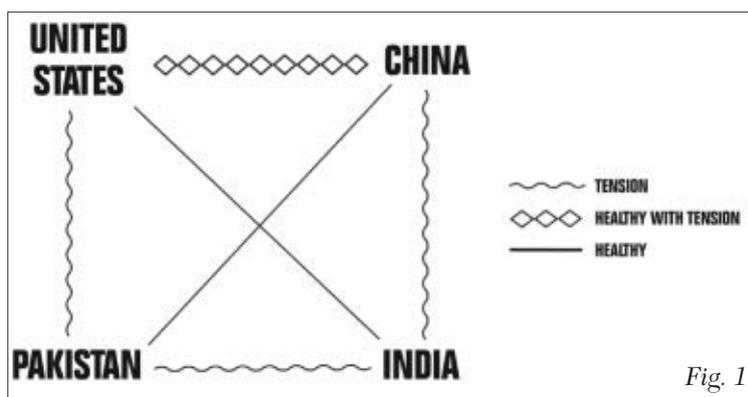


Fig. 1

ever the United States and India drew closer together, Pakistan and China did the same. Similar shifts are occurring today and could portend the emergence of two contending great power blocs in South Asia, with the United States and India on one side and China and Pakistan on the other (see Fig. 1).

An additional great power dynamic has been the revival of the India-Iran-Russia axis. Throughout the 1990s, these old partners supported Afghani-

stan’s Tajik-dominated Northern Alliance against the Pashtun-dominated Taliban backed by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Lately India, Iran and Russia have all been eager to secure their strategic and economic interests from the Hindu Kush to the Caspian Sea — independent of NATO and

the United States.

Further complicating these regional dyads is India’s growing development effort in Afghanistan. Regardless of how benign it is, this effort feeds wildly elaborate and highly dubious conspiracy theories in Pakistan that the United States and India are colluding against their country. These suspicions encourage hawkish elements in Pakistan to continue their self-defeating support of Islamist proxies.

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## Competing Visions

Since 2001, New Delhi has given the government of Afghanistan more than \$1 billion in humanitarian and development assistance, making it that country's fifth-largest donor. The Indians are constructing everything from schools, wells, roads and other infrastructure to satellite transmitters and a new parliament building in Kabul. Paradoxically, such highly visible efforts could threaten the long-term viability of any government in Kabul that New Delhi supports.

"Let's be honest with one another here," Defense Secretary Gates told reporters at a January news conference in New Delhi. "[T]here are real suspicions in both India and Pakistan about what the other is doing in Afghanistan. And so I think that focusing each country[s] ... efforts on development, on humanitarian assistance, perhaps in some limited areas of training, but with

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*No longer can U.S. policymakers remain willfully blind to the reality that present operations are pushing Pakistan toward further Balkanization.*

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full transparency toward each other in what they're doing, would help allay these suspicions."

In his August 2009 assessment of the war, Gen. Stanley McChrystal — recently replaced by General David

Petraeus as U.S. commander in Afghanistan — cited the adverse impact of India's growing power in Afghanistan. According to McChrystal, Indian political and economic influence in Afghanistan is likely "to exacerbate regional tensions and encourage Pakistani countermeasures in Afghanistan or India." He continued: "The current Afghan government is perceived by Islamabad to be pro-Indian."

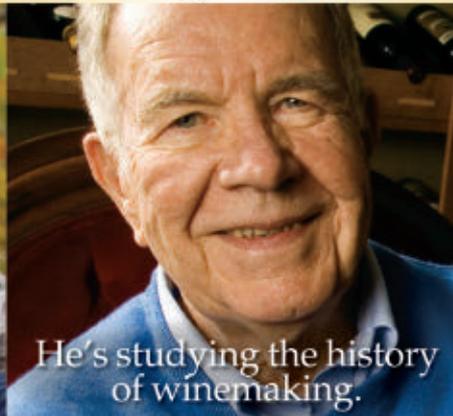
Based on recent polling data, this author's personal meetings with military officials, policymakers and politicians in Pakistan, as well as the tenor of that country's vast media landscape, it is clear that the vast majority of Pakistanis believe the Afghan war is part of a two-front military strategy concocted by India to encircle their country and seize its nuclear assets.

As Pakistan expert Saeed Shafqat told *Columbia* magazine in 2008, "People are haunted by the feeling that an

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outside hand is trying to destabilize the country, and conspiracy theories abound.” The mistrust is so pervasive that in March 2009, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Anne Patterson was forced to release a statement rebutting claims made by Interior Minister Hamid Nawaz that the United States, India and Afghanistan were fomenting the lawlessness and terrorism engulfing Pakistan.

Pakistan has long been wary of irredentist Afghan leaders stirring up trouble on its western frontier. Selig Harrison, director of the Asia Program at the Center for International Policy, explains that various Afghan governments have in the past tried to carve out of Pakistan a “Greater Afghanistan” by adjoining its Pashtun territories in the west. In response, Pakistan’s objective “was to build up surrogates opposed to the Pashtunistan concept ... with a pan-Islamist ideology.”

As alluded to by Sec. Gates and Gen. McChrystal, Islamabad’s fear of being squeezed on both sides by an economically, militarily and demographically larger adversary stokes uneasiness and encourages countermeasures. Accordingly, while the inclusion of India in the U.S.-NATO mission is understandable from a development standpoint, the move is nonetheless directly at odds with Pakistan’s longstanding objective of securing “strategic depth” in Afghanistan.

In this respect, apprehensions in Pakistan about the Afghan mission need not imply that Pakistanis perceive a stronger Afghan state as a threat to their country per se; rather, Pakistanis simply remain distrustful of the unspecified objectives America and India have for the region. In turn, Washington and Islamabad’s competing visions of Indian assistance to Afghanistan constitute a threat to the survival of the

Afghan government.

### Needed: A Comprehensive Strategy

The notion that Pakistan’s stability necessitates America’s presence in Afghanistan is based on a plethora of questionable assumptions. Worse, the policy fails to address three of the region’s underlying problems.

First, rather than pacifying the region, the Western occupation intensifies the bitter, decades-long antagonism between New Delhi and Islamabad. Second, throwing support behind either India or Pakistan — or cooperating with both countries simultaneously — will prove extremely difficult.

Finally, widespread suspicions in Pakistan that America and India are scheming to undermine its unity permit Pakistani hawks to justify their short-sighted support for Islamist prox-

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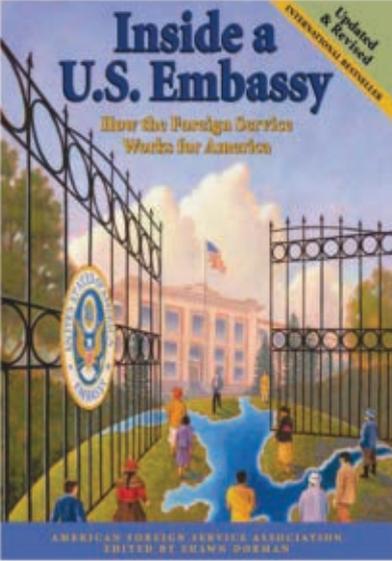
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ies, thus threatening the long-term viability of the Afghan government. Because America's presence in Afghanistan overlooks these core issues, current U.S. policy inadvertently contributes to the very instability that leaders in Washington ostensibly seek to forestall.

If America's interests lie in ensuring that the virus of violent anti-American radicalism does not infect the rest of the region, a shift in U.S. policy must be two-pronged: the foreign troop presence should be scaled down, and Western leaders should harness Pakistan's influence over extremist proxies by encouraging Islamabad to help broker a political settlement in Afghanistan (possibly best done behind closed doors).

No longer can U.S. policymakers remain willfully blind to the reality that present operations are pushing Pakistan toward further Balkanization. Its Pashtun-dominated regions along the Afghan border are almost fully Talibanized. The Baluch people, long denied economic and political rights, continue their separatist insurgency. And given the ongoing urban and political violence in Sindh, as well as Punjab, a perpetual state of internecine violence is Pakistan's likely future.

As Council on Foreign Relations Adjunct Senior Fellow Steve Simon writes: "Ultimately, the United States is caught in a vicious circle. In the face of a threatening al-Qaida hosted by the Taliban, the United States deepens its involvement in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Al-Qaida and the Taliban respond to the U.S. presence with destabilizing violence and insurgent activity.

"The United States, in turn, responds by applying more intense pressure, increasing civilian casualties and general instability — and thus weakening the governments in Kabul and Islamabad, which benefits al-Qaida and the Taliban."

Unless Washington scales down its presence in Afghanistan, its policies

could facilitate the self-fulfilling prophecy of an Islamist takeover of Pakistan.

Washington must also tackle head-on Pakistan's own contribution to the region's unfolding security challenges. Indeed, Islamabad wields significant influence over the region's major stakeholders, including its long-time ally Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Omar. Whether or not Pakistan can be persuaded that its long-term interests lie in cooperating with its northern neighbor, it is clear that only Pakistan can co-opt these insurgent networks into a broader power-sharing arrangement.

There was speculation that Kabul had already acceded to a partnership with Islamabad following the June resignations of Afghanistan's intelligence chief, Amrullah Saleh, and Interior Minister Hanif Atmar — both viewed by Pakistan as obstacles to a settlement. Pakistani officials also have indicated their willingness to deliver Sirajuddin Haqqani, an al-Qaida ally whose fighters stretch across eastern Afghanistan.

Cobbling together an Afghan government that has the support of all of its key neighbors will be incredibly difficult. However, denying al-Qaida safe havens is America's primary objective; and only with Pakistan's intervention will militant networks in the Pashtun tribal belt be prepared to break with al-Qaida.

Only by developing a comprehensive South Asia strategy will there be hope for anything more than temporary peace in the region. Periodic troop surges, increased development aid and Predator drone attacks will do little in the long run, unless regional belligerents are convinced that their security does not lie in covertly funding terrorist proxies. That strategic shift can come about only once a political door in Kabul is opened to Islamabad and overall Indo-Pakistani tensions recede.

Washington cannot dictate such an outcome, but can facilitate it. ■

## FS HERITAGE

# AMERICA'S FIRST AMBASSADOR TO ISRAEL: JAMES G. McDONALD

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MEET AN AMBASSADOR WHO SPENT THE YEARS BEFORE HIS APPOINTMENT PUBLICLY  
DENOUNCING THE POLICIES OF THE ADMINISTRATION THAT SENT HIM.

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BY FRANK BRECHER

**I**n a letter dated Sept. 24, 1951, Under Secretary of State William Phillips told Ambassador James G. McDonald: "There is a satisfaction in having been the first diplomatic representative to a country. You and I have shared this unique experience — you in Israel and I, years ago, in Canada."

Unique, indeed! How many newly appointed ambassadors confront their president at a pre-departure meeting with a memorandum naming mid-level State Department officials working against White House policy? Or have spent the preceding years publicly denouncing the record of the U.S. government regarding the very matters that they would now be concerned with as ambassadors?

An examination of McDonald's papers at Columbia University yields a most unusual story of how a 61-year-old was offered his first full-time, salaried position in government: as our first ambassador to a brand-new country. Typically, a chief of mission either comes from the career diplomatic

service or is an influential supporter of the political party in power. But James Grover McDonald (1886-1964) was neither of these. He had spent almost his whole career in the private sector, yet was not wealthy. But in 1919 he became chairman of an organization established a year earlier, the still-extant New York-based Foreign Policy Association ([www.fpa.org](http://www.fpa.org)). That position proved to be a perfect match for his talents, interests and personality.

The FPA would be McDonald's vehicle for the next 15 years, through which he built a reputation for independent, informed judgments on international and public affairs. This achievement was all the more noteworthy because he never earned a doctorate, though he had been an instructor of history at Harvard and then at Indiana University, his alma mater. In addition, his only book, *My Mission in Israel* (Simon and Schuster, 1951), would not be published until the year after he left government service. (A two-volume selection of his papers through 1945 was recently published in association with the United States Holocaust Museum under the co-editorship of his daughter, Barbara McDonald Stewart.)

As the FPA chairman until 1933, McDonald proved himself a tireless correspondent, a smooth organizer of conferences, a successful nationwide radio commentator and a determined fundraiser. His public speaking was often described as inspirational, combining a sincerely warm and sociable personality and a creative mind. No wonder that

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*Frank Brecher was a Foreign Service officer with USAID from 1961 to 1983, serving in Nigeria, Bolivia and Morocco, at the United States Mission to the United Nations and in Washington, D.C. In addition to a trilogy of books analyzing early French-American relations, he is the author of Reluctant Ally: United States Foreign Policy toward the Jews from Wilson to Roosevelt (Greenwood Press, 1991).*

by the early 1930s he was personally known to essentially all leading Americans in public life and in the financial world. For example, in 1929, he accompanied John D. Rockefeller III, who had just graduated from college, on a four-month, round-the-world tour during which the two met many political figures.

### **Early Warnings Go Unheeded**

Until 1933, Zionism was but one of many topics on the FPA's agenda. But shortly after Adolf Hitler became the German chancellor that year, McDonald interviewed him in fluent German and warned him against pursuing anti-Semitism. Hitler's blunt response that the world would thank him for his actions convinced McDonald that German Jews faced mortal danger.

He immediately began publicly appealing for preventive action to curb Hitler, both by governments and private organizations. This paved the way for his appointment as the League of Nations' first high commissioner for refugees from Germany in 1933.

As he himself knew full well, McDonald faced considerable obstacles in his new position. Because the League hoped to bring Germany back into the organization, it denied him an office and secretarial support, let alone sustained funding. Undaunted, McDonald established his headquarters in Lausanne, where he periodically regrouped and met with his board and staff as he traveled the world seeking places of refuge and financial support for threatened minorities. His main backing, of course, came from Jewish communities, among whom he became a very familiar face, especially in Western Europe, Latin America and the U.S.

After two years of frustration, McDonald stepped down from his position in December 1935. His letter of

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*James Grover McDonald*  
*was neither a career*  
*diplomat nor an*  
*influential supporter of*  
*the party in power.*

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resignation, in which he candidly laid out his detailed analysis of the problem and those responsible for it, did not really change anything. But it further solidified his image among Jews as their most admirable public advocate.

Over the next few years, he held a variety of positions. For two years he was a member of the *New York Times* editorial board (an irony, given the harsh criticism that would later be leveled at that paper for having "buried" the story of the genocide against the Jews). Next he was president of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences (although, as the editors of his published papers have noted, administration was not his strong suit).

And during World War II, he was a regular radio commentator on a national network and took up ad hoc public assignments as a member of various local and federal boards. (The \$20,000 annual salary he would later receive as ambassador to Israel was about the same level of income he'd averaged throughout this earlier period.)

Meanwhile, McDonald kept up his useful ties to the FPA as its "honorary chairman." He also retained an important public role and access to the highest levels of the U.S. government throughout the war years, as chairman of President Franklin Delano Roo-

sevelt's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees.

### **The Palestine Question**

With the accession of Harry Truman to the presidency upon FDR's death in April 1945 and the war's end, McDonald intensified his quest for a federal position. But despite support from the Jewish community and other quarters, he was not chosen to head up the 1945 survey of Jewish displaced persons in Europe. That mission was instead performed by Earl Harrison, the American representative to the Inter-Governmental Committee on Refugees.

McDonald was named as one of six U.S. members of the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry on Palestine that carried out its work from December 1945 through April 1946. A British initiative, the commission was established in response to President Truman's endorsement of Harrison's call for the immediate entrance into Palestine of 100,000 Jews languishing in camps in the British and American zones of Germany. Although the commission's recommendations were never implemented, the Jewish-American community greatly appreciated its efforts — and McDonald's role.

At a meeting with Pres. Truman in July 1946, McDonald bluntly criticized him for allowing the special State Department-led Cabinet committee handling the issue to dilute his own policies in its follow-up consultations with the British. Adamantly opposed to unconditional immigration into Palestine, London backed the Morrison-Grady Plan for partition, even though the Anglo-American Commission had already rejected it back in January. McDonald told the president that the approach would cause an unacceptable "cantonization" of the Jewish communities in Palestine and allow the British to remain there indefinitely.

Following that meeting, McDonald

sent a personal telegram to Truman expressing the hope that he had not come across as more concerned about the political fate of the Jews in Palestine than with the issue of most concern to the president — the status of some 100,000 displaced persons in Germany. He also noted that he, too, was a Midwesterner by background, and would gladly be at the president's disposal for any further assignment.

McDonald took satisfaction when Truman subsequently forestalled any further U.S. consideration of the Morrison-Grady Plan and renewed his call for the transfer of the 100,000 refugees to Palestine, doing so in what was widely perceived as a clear political move on the eve of the 1946 congressional elections, the famous "Yom Kippur" statement.

Still, by mid-1946, McDonald remained without the kind of position he had hoped to obtain. So he began to

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*Shortly after Adolf Hitler  
became German  
chancellor in 1933,  
McDonald interviewed  
him in fluent German and  
warned him against  
pursuing anti-Semitism.*

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travel the world as a paid speaker urging primarily Jewish communities to purchase bonds for the development of Palestine. In 1947, he also visited

that territory to research a book he was writing, analyzing the 30-year history of the British Mandate there. Although he quickly completed the extensive manuscript, he proved unable to publish it for lack of the 3,500 assured advance purchasers the prospective publisher demanded.

#### **A Fateful Phone Call**

Fortunately for McDonald, White House emissary Clark Clifford offered him the possibility of service as America's first special representative to Israel in a phone call on June 22, 1948. McDonald accepted the offer of a recess appointment (which did not require Senate confirmation) within the hour, partly out of a desire to counter what he saw as State Department efforts to stymie movement toward creating the Jewish state.

At his pre-departure meeting with Truman in late July, McDonald once

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again had the occasion to press him on the need to exercise stronger control over State. After McDonald presented the memorandum described at the start of this article, the president gave him a letter confirming that McDonald was indeed acting with Truman's full authority.

That document set forth the following areas of responsibility, beyond regular reports to the Department of State: "matters related to the arms embargo, the appropriate time for full recognition, and the types of assistance as may be required by and can properly be granted to the new state." The president added that he expected to be kept personally informed on those matters, which McDonald was careful to do throughout his tenure.

Just as controversy persists as to Truman's reasons for so quickly giving Israel de facto recognition in May 1948, some have questioned the appropriateness of selecting McDonald as America's first representative there. The principal charge against the president regarding the McDonald appointment is that he was pandering to Jewish voters for their financial support in the upcoming presidential election. Another criticism is that it was not in the national interest to have chosen a man so explicitly associated with the Zionist cause.

Clifford and other defenders maintained that Truman correctly understood public opinion in the U.S. as being in favor of his decisions regarding Palestine — actions that were in line with U.S. government policy in favor of the Balfour Declaration, the Palestine Mandate which incorporated that declaration, and the United Nations vote of Nov. 29, 1947. They also note that McDonald's selection was in keeping with the president's recognition of Israel and his need to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to the policy of support for the Jewish state.

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*McDonald was not only the first U.S. ambassador to Israel, but the world's first envoy there with the rank of ambassador.*

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The White House also clearly perceived the utility of having another voice to temper the unenthusiastic support it was receiving from the State Department, the consequences of which were creating a public image of an uncertain and ineffective leadership on this issue.

But the debate over who should represent the United States in Israel did not end there. Once Israel elected a constituent assembly on Jan. 25, 1949, and established a permanent government immediately thereafter, it received de jure recognition from Washington, among other capitals. This elevated the respective missions there to embassy status, and their representatives to the ambassadorial level.

Despite Truman's November 1948 election, it was far from certain that McDonald would remain at his new post. The president remained under pressure to choose a career diplomat, or at least a person less completely devoted to the Israeli cause. Some in the private sector were also pushing their own candidates, sometimes on grounds that the ambassador should be Jewish.

But on March 18, 1949, the Senate confirmed McDonald as U.S. ambassador to Israel, a position he occupied until departing Tel Aviv on Dec. 13, 1950. McDonald was not

only the first U.S. ambassador to Israel, but the world's first envoy there with the rank of ambassador. This designation leapfrogged him over the incumbent Soviet minister to become the new dean of the seven-man diplomatic corps in Tel Aviv.

### **Assessing McDonald's Tenure**

The establishment of diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level naturally did not end the deep policy disagreements between Israel and the U.S. that had characterized their relationship from the start. The major issues are familiar ones even today: the fate of the hundreds of thousands of Arab refugees from Israeli-controlled territory, and the extent to which Israel's borders should be adjusted from those outlined in the U.N.'s resolution of Nov. 29, 1947.

In fact, these two problems were so intractable that Pres. Truman sent a strong personal message to Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion threatening that "a revision" of the U.S. government's attitude toward Israel would be "unavoidable." He urged more willingness on Israel's part to repatriate a significant number of refugees and agree to territorial compensation from lands originally assigned to it for the net gains from its recent war against the Arab states having forces in Palestine (e.g., part of the Negev would go to Egypt in exchange for Israel's retention of the captured western Galilee).

Perhaps McDonald's most important contribution to the eventual solidification of the relations between Israel and the U.S. was his ability from the start to make the most of his ready and informal access to President Ezer Weizmann, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett. He used those ties to encourage flexibility in meeting the series of crises that marked the first part of his tenure. The armistices Israel signed with

each of the four major Arab states between January and July 1949 were landmarks and calming events during McDonald's period of service.

McDonald also persuaded Israel to respond more forcefully than it had originally intended against Jewish terrorist organizations following the assassination of U.N. Mediator Folke Bernadotte in the Jewish part of Jerusalem on Sept. 17, 1948 — barely a month after McDonald's Aug. 12 arrival in Israel. Similarly, by 1949 Israel evolved a more positive and open policy regarding the contributions it would be willing to make in easing the plight of the refugees, despite its security and other concerns over any large-scale repatriation without a general peace.

After stepping down as ambassador, McDonald would never again serve in public office. Instead, he resumed his work as a fundraiser for Is-

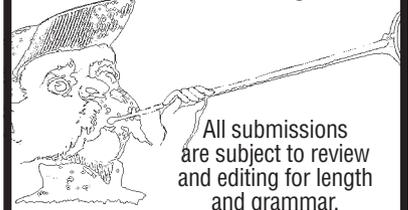
rael and a promoter of good relations between it and the U.S. until his death in 1964.

In closing, another quote from Under Secretary William Phillips serves as a telling bookend to the letter cited at the beginning. In his 1952 book, *Ventures in Diplomacy*, Phillips felt unfriendly enough toward McDonald to attribute his appointment to Israel to his pro-Zionist public stance, for which McDonald "was to be naturally acclaimed by the Jewish communities wherever he went. Very naturally also he became the first American minister to Israel."

Fortunately, more objective observers see James McDonald in a more positive light. They credit him with having served his country well and faithfully, and for pursuing his basic sense of justice for the Jewish people. ■

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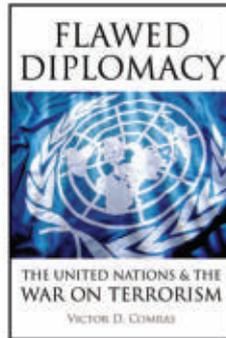
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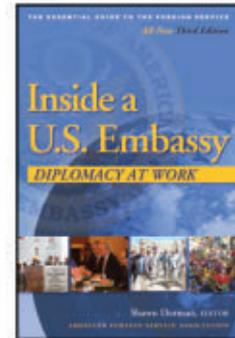
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# AFSA NEWS

American Foreign Service Association • September 2010

## AFSA HONORS COURAGE AND EXCELLENCE

### Award-Winners' Accomplishments Have Global Impact

BY ASGEIR SIGFUSSON AND FRANCESCA KELLY

**“**It is the first responsibility of every citizen to question authority.” These words, written by Benjamin Franklin and cited by AFSA President Susan R. Johnson in her introductory remarks at the AFSA awards ceremony on June 24, exemplify the spirit of the awards, particularly those recognizing constructive dissent. Director General Nancy Powell

Continued on page 56



AFSA Rep of the Year James Fox regales the crowd at the AFSA annual awards ceremony on June 24 at the State Department. To his left is AFSA President Susan Johnson, and seated to the right is AFSA Executive Director Ian Houston.

PATRICK BRADLEY

## STATESMEN OR HAGGLERS?

### Diplomatic Negotiations Are Focus of Two AFSA Book Discussions

BY FRANCESCA KELLY



Fredrik Stanton gives an engaging and thoughtful talk at AFSA, May 24.

MICHAEL LAMCONA

## A LEGISLATIVE VIEW OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE

### Nita Lowey and Andrea Mitchell Team Up for Provocative Discussion

BY FRANCESCA KELLY AND LAURA CATON

**R**epresentative Nita Lowey, D-N.Y., who chairs the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations, appeared at AFSA on June 15 to present a legislative view of the Foreign Service. The talk, part of the AFSA-Lockheed Martin lecture series, “Promoting Excellence and Deepening Impact — Resources and Skills for Diplomacy and Development in the Age of Smart Power,” was moderated by Senior NBC Correspondent Andrea Mitchell.

Rep. Lowey has a long and respected record as an appropriator and is a noted



Rep. Nita Lowey, right, listens as Andrea Mitchell frames a question, at AFSA HQ on June 15.

expert on funding for humanitarian, refugee and development programs. She is the key decision-maker on foreign assistance spending, Foreign Service staffing and

Continued on page 53

MICHAEL LAMCONA

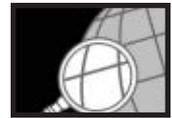
**A**FSA recently held two more events in its popular Book Notes series, in which authors are invited to discuss their foreign affairs-related books with the public at AFSA headquarters.

On May 24, author Fredrik Stanton spoke on *Great Negotiations: Agreements that Changed the Modern World* (Westholme Publishing, 2010). Though not an FSO, Mr. Stanton clearly conducted a great deal of research in diplomatic history for his book, which uses eight case studies spanning two centuries of U.S. diplomacy to elucidate the principles that make for successful — and unsuccessful — negotiations.

“Words, as much as weapons, have changed the course of history,” Stanton noted. From Benjamin Franklin’s securing of crucial French support for the

Continued on page 57

# AFSA NEWS BRIEFS



## Revised *Diplomats' Dictionary* Just off the Press

AFSA's Book of the Month is Amb. Chas Freeman's updated version of *The Diplomats' Dictionary*. For a description and ordering instructions through Amazon, go to [www.afsa.org/ads/books](http://www.afsa.org/ads/books).

## New Editorial Board Members for the *Foreign Service Journal*

Following the departure of Foreign Service Journal Editorial Board members Jeff Giauque, Ian Hopper and Rima Vydmantas, the board has appointed three new members. **Kelly Adams-Smith**, an FS-1 economic officer, recently finished an assignment as political-economic counselor in Sofia, and is beginning a Cox Fellowship. **Kathryn M. Wiehagen Leonard** is a third-tour Foreign Service officer who has served in Guatemala City and Baghdad, and is now on the Pakistan desk. **Rachel Schneller**, an FSO who has served in Skopje, Conakry and Basra, was the 2008 recipient of AFSA's William R. Rivkin Award for her work to raise awareness of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. She will work in INR.

## Welcome to New *AFSA News* Editor Amy McKeever

This marks the last issue of *AFSA News* edited by Francesca Kelly, who will soon be on her way to Vienna to join her FSO husband Ian Kelly. Starting with the October issue, Amy McKeever will be our new *AFSA News* editor. Amy comes to us with a wealth of journalistic and writing experience, including a B.A. in magazine journalism from Syracuse University and stints at *National Geographic Traveler* and Japan's *Mainichi Shimbun*, as well as an internship in public affairs at the U.S. Mission to NATO. Among her many freelance credits, she has been published in *Fodor's Travel Guides*, *State* magazine and *National Geographic Intelligent Traveler*. A self-professed "Foreign Service brat," Amy has first-hand knowledge of FS issues.

## AAFSW Celebrates 50th Art & Bookfair

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Worldwide will take place in the Exhibit Hall of the Harry S

Truman Building, opening on Friday, Oct. 8, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. for employees, spouses and escorted guests, and continuing Oct. 12-15 for this same group. During two weekends, Oct. 9-11 and Oct. 16-17, the sale is open to the general public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. VISA, MASTERCARD and personal checks will be accepted. Questions? Please call (202) 223-5796 or go to [www.aafsw.org](http://www.aafsw.org).

## Welcome-Back Picnic for Foreign Service Families

The Foreign Service Youth Foundation invites you to a "welcome back" picnic, in honor of U.S. Foreign Service families that recently returned from overseas. FSF will provide hamburgers, hot dogs and drinks. Please bring a salad, side dish or dessert to share. All U.S. Foreign Service families are invited. Come make new friends, reconnect with old friends and welcome home your colleagues. The picnic will take place on Sunday, Sept. 19, from 4 to 6:30 p.m., at Nottoway Park, 9601 Courthouse Rd., Vienna, Va. RSVP to [fsyf@fsyf.org](mailto:fsyf@fsyf.org) by Sept. 17.

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**PRESIDENT:** Susan R. Johnson

**STATE VP:** Daniel Hirsch

**USAID VP:** Francisco Zamora

**FAS VP:** Henry Schmick

**FCS VP:** Keith Curtis

**RETIREE VP:** Rebecca Houdek

**SECRETARY:** FA "Tex" Harris

**TREASURER:** Andrew Winter

**STATE REPS:** Carleton Bulkin, Mary Glantz,

Mike Haughey, Les Hickman, Joyce Namde,

Lynn Nelson, Julia Stewart, Mike Unglesbee,

Sharon White

**USAID REPS:** Michael Henning, Glenn Rogers

**FCS REP:** Rebecca Balogh

**FAS REP:** Melinda Salliards

**IBB REP:** Al Pessin

**RETIREE REPS:**

Janice Bay, Robert (Bill) Farrand, Molly Williamson



## FS Members: Good Beyond the Expiration Date?

The Foreign Service is aging. Not only are some members staying in longer, but the average age of entry-level members is rising, and a larger number are entering the Foreign Service as a second, or even third, career. AFSA frequently hears from members who support raising the age of mandatory retirement (now fixed at 65) to at least 67, the age at which employees born after 1960 become eligible for full Social Security benefits.

Surprisingly, however, AFSA does not appear to have a clear mandate to fight for this. Several member surveys conducted within the past year show AFSA's members divided almost 50-50 on the issue. For every member who sees it as a matter of basic fairness (and current limits as a form of age discrimination), there appears to be another who likes things fine the way they are, and urges AFSA not to open a "Pandora's box," potentially exposing the entire FS retirement system to review and possible tinkering.

Those in favor of retaining the current system note that, like the military, the Foreign Service benefits from a separate and unique retirement system created in consideration of the special needs and hardships of FS work. This includes the ability to retire with an immediate annuity at age 50 with 20 years of service, earlier than most other federal employees, and the right to an immediate annuity if separated for time in class at the FS-1 level.

Foreign Service families usually do not have an opportunity to establish the kind of financial and professional base that provides many federal employees in the U.S. with a solid foundation for retirement (e.g., a paid-off primary residence, a spouse with a secure job, etc.). For FS members, even more than for most Americans, retirement is the start of a new life, rather than the next step in an existing one. The ability to retire earlier is important to enable that transition.

Moreover, pensions are calculated with the understanding that the highest level of pension is tied to the maximum retirement age. Raise the age, and the pensions of those retiring younger will decrease.

Many note that FS promotions are predicated on the idea of a constant attrition from the top, and that keeping people in longer will slow the rate of promotions. This has been State's main argu-

Much of what makes a Foreign Service member effective cannot be taught in school.

ment against any change.

Some are concerned that the hardships of Foreign Service life simply wear people out faster, and make it less likely that a person above a certain age will be fully productive in overseas environments.

Those in favor of raising the retirement age disagree. In their view, the current retirement age forces many people out at the height of their professional experience, knowledge and productivity. Much of what makes a Foreign Service member effective cannot be taught in school. It comes from experience, and it makes no sense to force people out at the peak of gathering that experience.

Some consider mandatory retirement to be clear discrimination, and urge AFSA to address it before a lawsuit forces a complete reappraisal of the FS retirement system. Better for the department to choose its timing, and control the process, than for a public scandal and court mandate to provoke Congress to do it for us, they say.

Many point to the large number of When Actually Employed officers, well past the mandatory retirement age, who successfully operate in some of the most difficult and hard-to-staff posts, as evidence that age is not a deterrent to effective service.

Many employees are concerned that the current retirement age of 65 means that employees born after 1960 will be unable to receive full Social Security benefits upon retiring. Those retiring earlier face temporary reductions in overall benefits, making retirement particularly difficult for employees under the "new" (now 26 years old) retirement system. Similarly, they note that Thrift Savings Plan losses and a weak economy force many employees to work longer than they had planned.

Proponents of raising the retirement age assert that most of the drawbacks to such a move can be addressed quite easily with a little creative thought. For example, they suggest that pensions could still be calculated based on an assumption of retirement at 65. Under that scenario, the maximum payment would be available at that age, but would not increase for those staying in longer.

AFSA is eager to hear more from employees about this issue so we can act in a way that best responds to member desires. □

V.P. VOICE: RETIREE ■ BY ROBERT HOUDEK

## Going for Legislation for Re-employed Annuitants



The retiree members of the AFSA Governing Board have led an effort for more than a year to liberalize the rules for re-employment of annuitants. Why? For the good of the Service. The Foreign Service has a 15-percent shortfall in senior and mid-level officers — a shortfall that qualified annuitants can readily and quickly meet.

Retirees are a professionally ready resource, acculturated to State, with area experience and languages; yet the department can legally use retirees only on a short-term basis. Re-employed annuitants are routinely pulled from critical positions when they hit the salary or hours cap. Then the employing bureau is forced to recruit another re-employed annuitant or a considerably more expensive contractor for the same position. This is ridiculous!

Retirees are a professionally ready resource, acculturated to State, with area experience and languages; yet the department can legally use retirees only on a short-term basis. Re-employed annuitants are routinely pulled from critical positions when they hit the salary or hours cap. Then the employing bureau is forced to recruit another re-employed annuitant or a considerably more expensive contractor for the same position. This is ridiculous!

The department will hire 1,500 new Foreign Service employees over the next few years. Some will have useful professional experience, but many will be new to the Service and diplomacy. Full-time or long-term use of re-employed annuitants would make sense during a limited period of years while the new employees are trained and become experienced in our profession. Further, hiring retirees would forestall the use of large numbers of lateral entrants, a practice that has proved unsuccessful in the past.

In June 2009, Bill Farrand, my predecessor as retiree VP, wrote a letter to Deputy Secretary of State Jacob Lew asking the department to address the problem and providing suggested legislative language to do so. During a recent meeting with Dep. Sec. Lew and Under Secretary for Management Patrick Kennedy, AFSA President Susan Johnson and I were given a respectful hearing, but encountered a reluctance to seek a change from Congress — apparently because of concern about a backlash that could jeopardize what flexibility the department currently enjoys in re-employing annuitants.

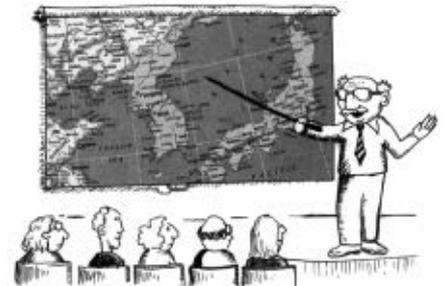
This concern, however, is hard to understand, given critical department needs and a growing consensus among foreign affairs, military and security agencies, including the State Department, about the value of re-employed Foreign Service annuitants. Military and security agencies routinely seek to employ retired FSOs, and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton recently stressed the department's need for retired annuitants.

In June the AFSA Governing Board unanimously resolved to seek congressional action on this issue. It will be an uphill slog, but we are going to push where the department is reluctant. Your thoughts on the issue and suggestions on strategy would be most welcome. □

## AFSA NEWS BRIEFS

### AFSA Book Notes Series Continues with *Guerrilla Diplomacy*

AFSA's Book Notes series will offer its next event on Sept. 20, with author Daryl Copeland discussing his book, *Guerrilla Diplomacy: Rethinking International Relations* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010). Copeland charts the course for a new kind of diplomacy, one in tune with the demands of today's interconnected, technology-driven world. Eschewing platitudes and broadly rethinking issues of security and development, Copeland provides the tools needed to frame and manage issues ranging from climate change to pandemic disease to asymmetrical conflict and weapons of mass destruction. This event will take place at 11 a.m. at AFSA HQ, 2101 E St. NW, where the book will be available for purchase. Please RSVP to [events@afsa.org](mailto:events@afsa.org).



### Elderhostel Changes Name to a More Youthful "Road Scholar"

AFSA's ever-popular educational programs, which have run under the Elderhostel banner for 14 years, now have a brand-new name: Road Scholar. This reflects a revamping of the Elderhostel brand, although no changes will be made to any programs or their content, including AFSA's programs. The new designation more aptly describes audience demographics (younger than you might think!) and program accommodations (comfortable hotels, not hostels!). The AFSA programs will continue to be administered by Bernie Alter, and all information on AFSA's program offerings may be found at [www.afsa.org/roadscholar](http://www.afsa.org/roadscholar).

V.P. VOICE: FCS ■ BY KEITH CURTIS

## Amidst Fiscal Uncertainty, Commerce Leaders Remain Committed to Growth



Storm clouds are gathering over the Hill, and the Commercial Service may get caught in a downpour. In July, the Senate Appropriations Committee agreed on a ceiling for the Fiscal Year 2011 budget. This means substantial cuts in the president's proposals. Programs like ours and related National Export Initiative efforts will be under tough scrutiny to prove we deserve a substantial increase. Our House Subcommittee (Commerce, Justice, Science) has already cut some \$20 million from the request.

Although this might make some squeamish, I prefer to look on the bright side. Both sides of the political aisle appreciate the importance of exports, job creation and the need to compete internationally. Moreover, our leadership — the Secretary, the under secretary and the director general — strongly support us and are working hard to defend the CS budget and programs.

We had our first sit-down meeting with the director general in June, and he responded aggressively and positively to almost every concern we raised. His move to free up \$2 million for post

travel and activities showed a commitment to take concrete action to relieve the pressures on the field. He strongly supports procedural reform of senior pay, is implementing round two of locality pay and has agreed to meet with us on a regular basis to respond to issues. He and the Secretary have been busy defending the Commercial Service against loose Government Accountability Office allegations of funds mismanagement.

In addition, the under secretary has led several AFSA-related events, and the Secretary has tentatively agreed to take part in the AFSA speaker series, discussing the National Export Initiative. I joked with the DG when we met that he has been out to visit more of you at post in his short tenure than I have in 20 years in the Service. He knows our issues and seeks to resolve them.

As we head into the heat of the congressional election season, it is hard to know what the forecast will bring for the Commercial Service. But at least we have the Commerce Department's leadership working hard for us. □

Nita Lowey • Continued from page 49

operational budgets for State and USAID.

Andrea Mitchell, host of the MSNBC news program "Andrea Mitchell Reports," commands respect among her peers for her in-depth knowledge of foreign affairs.

Lowey's belief in a strong Foreign Service came through clearly in her talk. Referring to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates' November 2007 speech at Kansas State University, in which he called for an "increase in spending on the civilian instruments of national security" such as diplomacy and development, Lowey expressed her own enthusiasm for "putting agencies back into their lanes."

But Lowey could make no promise that more resources for foreign affairs would be forthcoming, instead focusing on the importance of thinking strategically in tight fiscal times. It is imperative, she remarked, "that we make the most effective use of our foreign assistance dollars," so that we have a diplomatic work force ready to "get outside the walls of the embassy."

Mitchell's questions for Lowey focused on foreign affairs resources, particularly on those allocated for "hot spots" such as Afghanistan. Congress is continually evaluating U.S. involvement in both Afghanistan and Iraq, Lowey responded. "In many of our hearts, in many of our brains, in many of our committees, in many of our forums, there are ongoing evaluations." However, she continued, "There is a commitment, and an understanding that we can't just leave."

But she also underlined the critical need for economic development, pointing to growth opportunities in Afghanistan such as copper and lapis mining. To that end, her words about the future of USAID were encouraging. "We cannot afford," she stressed, "to lose the world's leading development agency."

Mitchell asked if the U.S. is at risk of ignoring Africa and other entire continents. Lowey pointed to Sec. Clinton's recent travel there, accompanied by Lowey and other legislators, which she found inspiring. But she confirmed that resources going to

Afghanistan and Pakistan are "front and center," and that ongoing situations elsewhere, unless there's a new emergency, tend to remain "on the back burner."

Yet foreign affairs dollars are also competing with domestic ones, especially in an economic downturn. "When people are out of work," said Lowey, "it's very hard for the average person to understand [funding for the Foreign Service]. They want to see domestic programs expanded."

A lively question-and-answer period followed the discussion, with Amb. Thomas Boyatt, Amb. Robert Beecroft and Lutheran College Dean Nancy Joyner among the participants.

To view and hear the full discussion, including Lowey's answers to questions on corruption, diplomatic training and the possibility of a reserve Foreign Service, go to WETA's Forum, now featuring AFSA's programs at [www.weta.org/video/forum](http://www.weta.org/video/forum). This lecture series is made possible through AFSA's Fund for American Diplomacy and the generous sponsorship of Lockheed Martin. □

## Shawn Dorman: From the Foreign Service to Foreign Service Books

BY FRANCESCA KELLY

There is no more perfect editor than Shawn Dorman for the all-new, soon-to-be-released third edition of *Inside a U.S. Embassy*. Shawn has led the very successful book project since 2002, pioneering AFSA's book publishing division established as Foreign Service Books in 2009.

A Foreign Service officer for seven years, she brought her extensive knowledge to AFSA in 2000. She served as *AFSA News* editor for eight years while also serving, from 2004, as associate editor for the *Foreign Service Journal*, a position she still holds.

Born and raised in Baltimore, Shawn's connection with the Foreign Service began with a college internship at State's Soviet desk in the late 1980s. After graduating from Cornell, she was hired by State for a Civil Service position on the desk. She took leave from that job to go to Moscow, as a nanny. There she also worked in the embassy's political section for a year, and later spent four months helping out a busy consular section in St. Petersburg. She left State for graduate school, spent a semester teaching in northern China, and earned an M.A. in Russian studies at Georgetown University.

Shawn joined the Foreign Service in 1993, figuring (correctly) that she'd be sent to one of the new countries of the former Soviet Union. After two challenging and fascinating years in Kyrgyzstan—where our brand-new embassy was in a temporary building—as general services officer and then consul, she was sent as a political officer to Jakarta.

It was, she says, an “inspiring time in Indonesia, with students leading the efforts to push for reform and democracy.” She stayed on through the 1998 evacuation (because she was the officer in touch with student groups)—sending her husband and 2-year-old son off in the middle of the night—and then “had the chance to witness the end of the 30-year Suharto regime and the peaceful tran-



HANNAH MCKENZIE

sition of power.”

From Jakarta, she went to the State Department Operations Center as a watch officer — “a fascinating assignment, because it offers a front-row seat to all that’s happening around the world.” Following the birth of her daughter, Shawn resigned from the Service in 2000.

State’s loss was AFSA’s gain. “Shawn’s profound familiarity with the Foreign Service has equipped her to perform at a consistently outstanding level,” says *FSJ*

Editor Steve Honley. “As a former FSO, she has enormous credibility precisely because she walked the walk.”

Shawn has written a number of special reports for the *Journal*, including articles on diplomatic service in Iraq, transformational diplomacy, spouse employment, Foreign Service reform and the “Total Candidate” hiring process. “It is such a pleasure to work with Shawn,” says Senior Editor Susan Maitra. “She’s a creative problem-solver and, with her dynamic grasp of AFSA’s mission, has contributed vitally to the *Journal* and other association initiatives.”

Executive Director Ian Houston agrees. “Shawn brings creativity and imagination to AFSA, but also common sense. That is a terrific combination of qualities, especially as it relates to AFSA’s future book plans.”

After 10 years, Shawn is still enthusiastic: “AFSA has enabled me to do what I’ve always wanted to do—combine an interest in foreign affairs with writing, editing and publishing. I work with some wonderful people at AFSA and in the Foreign Service, and I can feel somewhat in the loop without having to live in Baghdad or Kabul.”

Shawn is married to Shawn McKenzie (yes, they have the same first name) and lives outside Baltimore with children Gabe, 14, and Hannah, 11, along with “two dogs, a Kyrgyz cat, five dwarf hamsters, one gerbil and three frogs.” She is learning to play guitar along with her children. □

## The Overseas Pay Gap: More Progress

BY LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR CASEY FRARY

In June 2009, AFSA was pleased to report a major success in our longstanding effort to close the overseas pay gap suffered by entry-level and mid-level Foreign Service members stationed abroad. The Department of State first implemented its overseas comparability pay authority in August 2009. Other affected agencies fol-

lowed suit. This was an historic development that was particularly satisfying for AFSA, because we know it makes a direct difference for you and your family.

AFSA believed this significant development and the commitment by Congress to close a portion of the pay inequity would build the momentum that would propel

future legislative action to finish the job. Now we are pleased to report that yet another step has been made toward the goal of completely closing the gap. The second tranche, authorized in the Fiscal Year 2010 Omnibus Appropriations bill, became law on Aug. 15.

With this development, 16.52 percent of the gap has been closed (7.7 percent in August 2009 + 1.12 percent in January 2010 + 7.7 percent in August 2010). (The January 2010 percentage represents the locality pay portion D.C. workers got over

## Thriving Overseas

BY DOUGLAS E. MORRIS

and above their annual base pay increase of 1.5 percent, and would have happened anyway, so it is not technically part of closing the gap.)

While this is great news, it is important to note that the fight to secure full implementation of OCP is not over. Clearly, the progress in closing the gap has given us greater confidence to anticipate that the third and final adjustment will be implemented in August 2011. However, we cannot be certain of that until Congress authorizes payment and appropriates the necessary funds.

The fiscal situation is very tight and midterm elections are coming this fall. Some legislators have called for reductions in federal salaries; moreover, the proposed \$4 billion cut in the administration's FY 2011 budget request came entirely from the

**The progress in closing the gap has given us greater confidence to anticipate that the third and final adjustment will be implemented in August 2011.**

international affairs budget, illustrating the perception that domestic concerns come first.

AFSA will remain focused on winning full implementation of OCP and getting permanent authorizing language. We will report developments as they happen because we know that this issue is of paramount concern to our members.

Finally, AFSA thanks Deputy Secretary of State Jacob Lew as he departs the State Department, for the service he has rendered in helping move this solution forward. AFSA appreciates his support and wishes him well as he moves to his next post as director of the Office of Management and Budget.

We also appreciate the leadership of Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Under Secretary for Management Patrick Kennedy as they remain alert and focused on this and other matters. Finally, thank you to the many members of Congress who remain supportive of the Foreign Service. □

**H**umans are social animals. We crave a connection to others. While we are overseas, far from home, family and close friends, the community life at an embassy takes on an even more pronounced significance.

However, as we all know, each post is different when it comes to community life. What many of us have found is that — for a variety of reasons — the community seems to be tighter at smaller U.S. embassies in less developed nations.

Ankara, where my partner and I were last posted, was like that. There was a deep sense of connection to others, a feeling that you belonged to something greater than yourself, that you were welcomed and celebrated just by being there.

In our current post of Brussels, on the other hand, the community feeling is not as strong. For some, especially accompanying spouses, not having that instant access to a vibrant embassy community life can be rather isolating. Even with everything there is to see and do, the colors can seem faded, the food at the cafés bland, the chocolate less than scrumptious, if you are flying solo most of the time.

What is a person to do? To thrive, rather than just survive, you need to put yourself out there. You need to make that extra effort to fill your life with friends and activities. Here are some community-building suggestions.

**1. Head to the Community Liaison Office.** With the assistance of the CLO, you will be able to combat your sense of disconnection. For example, during the 2010 World Cup, the CLO in Brussels organized an event at a local sports bar that was packed with American expatriates watching the U.S. play Slovenia. This produced a treasure trove of new social connections.

**2. Accept every invitation for the first six to nine months after you arrive.** Be like Jim Carrey in “The Yes Man”: Say “yes” to

everything. (Well, maybe not *everything*: I did decline an invitation to take part in the annual Brussels Naked Bike Ride.)

**3. Check out the embassy newsletter and any other local English-language periodicals** on a regular basis for events and activities, and pursue those that interest you.

**4. Consider volunteering.** One of the first things I did in Ankara was offer to clean up the CLO library. Just by being there a couple of hours a week, I met almost the entire mission.

**5. Find something you enjoy doing, or something new you have always wanted to try — and pursue it.** You'll get to know other expats who also enjoy that activity. Wherever I go, I always seem to find fellow darts players, for instance.

A simple Internet search will produce all sorts of possibilities. For example, why not look into the American Women's Club? This organization is no longer exclusively for women, despite its name — so guys need not feel shy about contacting them. Or what about joining a church or other religious organization?

If you still haven't found what you are looking for, there's always one more option:

**6. Create your own community.** Say, for example, you love the arts, but you do not want to go to the theater or symphony alone. So you create your own “cultural group” by advertising in the embassy newsletter. Voilà! Instant community.

Though not as easy as the instant embrace by a tight-knit embassy community one experiences in smaller posts, creating a connection to others in large posts has the potential to be richer, more rewarding and loads more interesting. □

*Douglas E. Morris has lived abroad for more than 18 years in 10 countries on three continents. He is currently the editor of the Brussels Weekly, the tri-mission newsletter that is at the epicenter of expat community life in Brussels.*

## Awards • Continued from page 49

co-hosted the ceremony in State's Benjamin Franklin Diplomatic Reception Room.

AFSA first gave out an award for constructive dissent in 1968. In the years since, seven more awards have been added honoring dissent, exemplary performance and lifetime contributions to diplomacy. Although there is not always a winner in every category each year, this year eight people were honored.

**James (Jim) Fox**, of U.S. NATO, Brussels, was chosen as the AFSA post representative of the year for tirelessly advocating for mission staff in dealings with management. Upon accepting the award, Fox said, "We can accomplish our goals and still take care of our community if we work together."

**Anne Bridgman** of Embassy Bratislava received, in absentia, the Avis Bohlen Award, presented to a Foreign Service family member whose relations with the American and foreign communities at an overseas post have done the most to advance U.S. interests. In a statement read by FSO Jon Martinson, Bridgman wrote, "If it is true that in giving one receives, I've been truly blessed in my years as a Foreign Service spouse."

This year's winner of the M. Juanita Guess Award, given in recognition of outstanding service by a Community Liaison



David Zwach with AFSA President Susan Johnson, June 24.

only two days after she'd arrived.

Three of the four constructive dissent categories had winners this year. The Tex Harris Award for constructive dissent by a Foreign Service specialist was presented to **David M. Zwach**, a security engineering officer who convinced the department to approve a specialist certificate commensurate with the generalist version. In his remarks, Zwach said, "I hope one day my certificate will inspire my chil-



Sarah Genton makes remarks after accepting the M. Juanita Guess Award.

Officer who has demonstrated leadership, dedication, initiative or imagination in assisting families serving at an overseas post, was **Sarah Genton** of Embassy Madrid.

Genton says the award "honors all CLOs abroad."

The Nelson B. Delavan Award, which recognizes extraordinary contributions to effectiveness, professionalism and morale by an Office Management Specialist, was presented to **Allie L. Almero** of Embassy Kabul, who thanked her parents for their support. Almero traveled for 24 hours from Kabul to Washington for the awards ceremony and made the 24-hour return trip



Diana Putman, right, with AFSA Coordinator for Special Awards & Outreach Perri Green.

dren to serve their country as much as it inspires me."

Ambassador Thomas Boyatt, himself the recipient of the William R. Rivkin Award for constructive dissent by a mid-level Foreign Service officer in 1970, introduced the 2010 Rivkin award with some reminiscences. "Bill Rivkin was a force of nature," said Boyatt. "He loved what he did, he did it extremely well, and he was not afraid of anything."

This award went to **Dr. Diana Putman** for challenging the hierarchy at the U.S. Africa Command over proposed interventions in the area of sexual and gender-based violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. "This award goes to all women," said Putman, "who work so hard to provide a better life for their families."

**Kathryn A. Kiser** received the W. Averill Harriman Award for constructive dissent by an entry-level Foreign Service officer. While stationed in the consular section of Embassy Amman, Ms. Kiser dissented from a State Department policy that with-



Allie Almero, center, accepts her award from Ambassador William C. Harrop. AFSA President Susan Johnson is on the right. Seated are (clockwise from back row, left): Deputy Assistant Secretary for Iran John Limbert, Director General Nancy Powell, AFSA Post Rep of the Year James Fox, and Ambassador L. Bruce Laingen.

holds passports from U.S. citizens resident in foreign countries during the passport-renewal process. Unable to receive the award in person, Kiser was represented by friends Sara Revell and Vanessa Zenji.

Deputy Secretary of State Jacob Lew presented the Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award to **Ambassador L. Bruce Laingen**. Laingen joined the Foreign Service in 1949 after serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II. His FS assignments included Germany, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan; he was appointed ambassador to Malta in 1977. As chargé d'affaires in Tehran, he was one of those detained for 14 months after demonstrators took over the U.S. Embassy there in 1979.

Amb. Laingen subsequently received the State Department's Award for Valor, along with several other honors, in 1981. He retired from the Foreign Service in 1987 and later served as president of the American Aca-



F. ALLEN "TEX" HARRIS

Ambassador L. Bruce Laingen, the 2010 winner of the Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award, after the ceremony in the Benjamin Franklin Reception Room.

demy of Diplomacy.

Amb. John Limbert, who had also been held in Iran, warmly introduced Laingen. At

the lectern, Amb. Laingen devoted much of his speech to thanking the many people who have helped and inspired him over the years, mentioning that it was his wife, Penne, who started the "yellow ribbon" tradition in America. With a nod to Limbert, he mentioned that he is "still hopeful for normal diplomatic relations with Iran."

But perhaps the remark that amused the audience most was his reaction upon seeing the beauty of the reception hall. "Wow," he said, looking around him at the brocade drapes, crystal chandeliers and original portraits of the Founding Fathers. "This room makes up for a lot."

For more information, please read Editor Steve Honley's interview with Amb. Laingen in the July-August issue of the *Foreign Service Journal*, online at [www.fsjournal.org](http://www.fsjournal.org). There you will also find detailed profiles of all dissent and performance award winners. □

#### AFSA Book Notes • Continued from page 49

American Revolution, to Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev's laying of the groundwork to eliminate an entire class of nuclear weapons, he described what each party brought to the negotiating table, the stakes, and the obstacles to success and how they were overcome.

Stanton observed that diplomacy in the modern age has had great triumphs and bitter failures, from the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, which narrowly spared humanity from a nuclear war, to the Treaty of Versailles after World War I, which created problems that still confront us today. He closed his thoughtful presentation by answering questions from the audience.

For more information about Stanton's book, please refer to Patricia H. Kushlis' review in the June issue of the *Foreign Service Journal*.

On June 7, AFSA's Book Notes series featured Ambassador Richard H. Solomon, who, along with Nigel Quinney, is the author of *American Negotiating Behavior: Wheeler-Dealers, Legal Eagles, Bullies and Preachers* (USIP Press, 2010).

Amb. Solomon, who has been presi-



MICHAEL JAWCONA

Richard Solomon (center) at AFSA HQ, with AFSA President Susan Johnson and AFSA Executive Director Ian Houston, June 7.

dent of the United States Institute for Peace since 1993, remarked that "negotiation is more effective if we understand our own negotiating style and how others perceive us." He listed five dynamics that affect negotiating behavior: 1) the issues at play (political, security, economic); 2) the personality of the negotiator; 3) institutions that shape decision-making; 4) geopolitical context; and 5) the culture of the societies involved, including their history.

In writing this book, Solomon and co-author Quinney interviewed 60 foreign diplomats, asking them to describe the idiosyncrasies of Americans at the negotiating table.

What they found was both unsurprising (Americans value competition) and unexpected (Americans spend more time negotiating among themselves on an interagency basis than with

outside parties). A strong impression among foreign counterparts is that U.S. diplomats tend to feel a greater sense of urgency, due to factors such as the electoral calendar and a "can-do, problem-solving" culture.

This latter trait, usually seen as a plus, can sometimes be a minus: Americans tend to think any problem can be solved, and therefore fail to recognize situations

Continued on page 58

**AFSA Book Notes • Continued from page 57**

that call for management rather than resolution.

In addition, American negotiators are often perceived as overbearing, and their discussions tend to be “transactional in character rather than relationship-building.”

Solomon also spoke about the role of hospitality as “a much bigger part of negotiation in other countries than ours.” He got a laugh with the line, “The Chinese want to get you drunk; the Russians want to drink with you.”

Solomon ended his talk with a call for more training in negotiation for diplomats, with a particular focus on sensitivity to other cultures. A question-and-answer period followed.

WETA-TV recorded these and other AFSA events and has posted them on its Web site, at [www.weta.org/video/forum](http://www.weta.org/video/forum). Both books can be ordered online at AFSA’s Bookstore, [www.afsa.org/ads/books/policy.cfm](http://www.afsa.org/ads/books/policy.cfm). □

**AFSA NEWS BRIEFS****Former AFSA Scholarship Recipients Honor Their Mother with New Scholarship**

**S**tella Panagoulis Stutz joined the Foreign Service in 1967 and was posted to Stockholm, Amman, Tegucigalpa, London, Belgrade, Doha, Geneva and Washington, D.C. before retiring in 2005. Her last assignment was at the Bureau of Diplomatic Security field office in Miami. Stella’s children — David, Karla, Robert and Shari — all received AFSA Financial Aid Scholarships in the 1990s.

Now they have established a scholarship in their mother’s name. The Stella Panagoulis Stutz Scholarship is a tribute to her and a grateful nod to having seen the world thanks to their mother’s FS career. The first recipient of the scholarship is John Guice, son of FSO Stephen Guice.

Stutz currently spends her time with new husband Joe Robinson, and travels around the country to visit friends and family, divid-

ing her time between homes in West Virginia and Wyoming.

For more information on establishing or applying for an AFSA Financial Aid Scholarship or Merit Award, please contact AFSA Scholarship Director Lori Dec at (202) 944-5504 or [dec@afsa.org](mailto:dec@afsa.org).

**AFSA Offers \$151,100 in College Scholarship Aid**

AFSA will award need-based, financial aid undergraduate scholarships totaling \$151,100 to 71 children of Foreign Service employees for the 2010-2011 school year.

Twenty-one of these scholarships were funded by the DACOR Bacon House Foundation, totaling \$41,000; and three were funded by the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide, totaling \$6,600.

A complete listing of students and their awards is posted on AFSA’s Web site at [www.afsa.org/scholar](http://www.afsa.org/scholar). Beginning Nov. 15, applications for 2011-2012 scholarships will be available at that Web address, as well. □

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The 50th-anniversary Art & BookFair of the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW) will open on Friday, Oct. 8, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. for employees, spouses and escorted guests. The sale continues Oct. 12-15 for this same group, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. In addition, during the weekends of Oct. 9-11 and Oct. 16-17, the sale will be open to the general public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The event takes place in the Exhibit Hall of the Harry S Truman Building, with access via the C Street Entrance. VISA, MASTERCARD and personal checks accepted. Questions? Please call (202) 223-5796 or visit [www.AAFSW.org](http://www.AAFSW.org).

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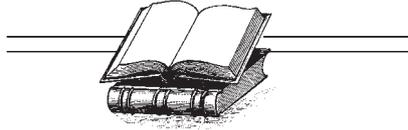


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# BOOKS

## How to Talk to Tehran

**Negotiating with Iran:  
Wrestling the Ghosts of History**  
John W. Limbert, United States  
Institute of Peace Press, 2009,  
\$14.95, paperback, 215 pages.

REVIEWED BY DAVID T. JONES

Iran has succeeded Russia as the embodiment of Winston Churchill's famous description: "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma." Ever since the country's revolutionary government held 53 U.S. diplomats — including the author of this book — hostage from 1979 to 1981, the world has sought ways to understand and deal with Tehran. And as the regime appears to be moving steadily toward obtaining nuclear weapons capability, that task becomes ever more urgent.

There may be no American better positioned than Ambassador John W. Limbert to meet that daunting challenge. Prior to joining the Foreign Service in 1973, Limbert had already earned a Ph.D. in Middle Eastern studies from Harvard and lived in Iran for several years, first as a Peace Corps Volunteer and later as an English instructor.

A fluent Farsi speaker, he has published two earlier books about the country: *Iran: At War with History* (Westview Press, 1987) and *Shiraz in*

*At the heart of the book are "14 Steps to Success" to follow when negotiating with Iranians.*

*the Age of Hafez* (University of Washington Press, 2004). He wrote *Negotiating with Iran* after retiring from the Senior Foreign Service, and before being recalled by the current administration to serve as deputy assistant secretary of State for Iranian affairs.

His opening chapter, summarizing the country's history and culture, will be especially useful to the general reader. Still, Limbert emphasizes, such background will not necessarily explain why Iranians take a particular position.

To explain, he presents four case studies of Iranian negotiating experiences: the Azerbaijan crisis of 1945-1947, the oil nationalization crisis of 1951-1953, the Embassy Tehran hostage crisis of 1979-1981 and the efforts to free Western hostages in Lebanon during the 1980s. (Casual readers might opt to skip these chapters, which are interesting but occasionally opaque.)

At the heart of the book are "14 Steps to Success" to follow when negotiating with Iranians, whether the issue at stake is diplomatic, commer-

cial or political. Limbert is a student of the "Getting to Yes" school of diplomacy, and he peppers the text with observations drawn from his experience.

Many of his 14 principles are standard operating practice, such as locating valid interlocutors, talking to officials who can actually make decisions, and crediting them with personal intelligence and an ability to define their own national interests. Others suggest ways to handle Iranian national characteristics that tend to frustrate American negotiators: vague presentations featuring "political theater and flamboyant gestures;" a susceptibility to conspiracy theories; and a tendency to overplay their hand.

Limbert argues that for 30 years both sides have been trapped in a downward spiral: by demonizing each other and expecting the worst, we get just that. While he acknowledges that re-engaging will be a difficult and time-consuming process requiring realistic expectations, he believes that progress will be possible once we start expecting success instead of failure.

In that regard, however, it may be useful to recall some Chinese history. Imperial China was comprehensively exploited and partially occupied by European powers and Japan. The United States participated only tangentially in this exploitation, but did support Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist faction throughout its civil war with the



Chinese Communists, saved his forces from annihilation, and continues to this day to prevent the People's Republic of China from seizing Taiwan. We also pressured the PRC for decades with an economic embargo that we encouraged allies to join.

Given that history, surely Beijing had no reason to view Washington amicably. Yet in the early 1970s Mao Tse-tung decided that cooperation with the U.S., at least on some issues, was more useful than the status quo. And we have proceeded on that basis for nearly 40 years.

Regrettably, Tehran has not yet moved in a comparable direction. That could simply be because Iranians are not Chinese, or it could reflect their leaders' proclivity to focus on past injustices rather than areas of common interest. Whatever the explanation, the hard-won wisdom John Limbert imparts in this volume is well worth bearing in mind as we look for a way out of the current downward spiral.

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*David T. Jones, a retired Senior FSO, is a frequent contributor to the Journal. He is the co-author of Uneasy Neighbor(s): Canada, the USA and the Dynamics of State, Industry and Culture (Wiley, 2007), a study of U.S.-Canadian relations.*

## Two Brits Tell All

### **The House on Sacred Lake, and Other Bolivian Dreams — and Nightmares**

*Margaret Anstee, Book Guild Ltd., 2009, hardcover, \$21.39, 304 pages.*

### **Dirty Diplomacy: The Rough-and-Tumble Adventures of a Scotch-Drinking, Skirt-Chasing,**

### **Dictator-Busting and Thoroughly Unrepentant Ambassador Stuck on the Frontline of the War Against Terror**

*Craig Murray, Scribner, 2007, hardcover, \$22.23, 384 pages.*

REVIEWED BY DENNIS JETT

Those who send text messages employ shorthand in place of common phrases. One popular abbreviation is TMI, which stands for "too much information." That term came to mind repeatedly while I read these two books by former British diplomats.

The countries and the personalities involved could not be more different, but both books contain some useful lessons. The first identifies the obstacles to economic development, while the other illustrates the perils of dissenting from official policy. And they both describe the challenges that can arise in the relationship between the diplomat and a host government.

*The House on Sacred Lake* is about Margaret Anstee's 50-year love affair with Bolivia. She began her career in the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, but switched to the United Nations Development Program, which assigned her to Bolivia in 1959. She has remained involved with the country ever since; the titular house is the retirement home she built on the shore of Lake Titicaca (at an elevation of nearly 13,000 feet).

Anstee reflects on her role as an economic adviser to a whole series of Bolivian presidents — but not the current one, Evo Morales, who apparently needs no advice except that of Hugo Chavez. TMI comes into play as Anstee describes in excruciating detail the challenges of obtaining title to the land, building her home and working with various contractors.

One does get a sense of just how hard it is to bring about development in a country where even someone with significant wealth and incredible connections cannot accomplish the simplest task in less than several years. The unique character of Bolivia and the frustrations on both sides of the cultural divide between its indigenous and European-origin citizens also come through with clarity.

The contrast between Anstee's lifestyle and that of the other author, Craig Murray, could not be more stark. Whereas Anstee is straitlaced and ascetic, Murray is a hard-drinking womanizer. TMI enters into his tale through his brutally honest description of his antics and their consequences. When, for instance, he falls head over heels in love with a beautiful young Uzbek woman — whom he describes as "a sexually active virgin" — he jettisons his long-suffering wife and two kids.

As if that were not enough excitement, the book's index lists a dozen entries under "womanizing and sexual adventures of" the author. (Murray's description of his fondness for drink is less graphic, but also TMI.)

On a more serious note, Murray usefully documents why Uzbekistan's government is considered one of the most repressive on earth. And as he did in his September 2007 *FSJ* article, "The Folly of a Short-Term Approach," he chronicles how Washington was willing to overlook human rights abuses, corruption and gross economic mismanagement for so long because Uzbekistan provided a military base deemed essential for the war on terror and the military efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As the British ambassador, he criticized this approach as being as un-



principled as it was shortsighted. Nor did he spare his own government the same criticism. Lamentably, the only effect he had on London's policy was to alienate the powers that be. When his behavior didn't provide sufficient ammunition for removal, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office embellished or made up allegations and eventually sacked him.

While Murray remains respected by the press, human rights organizations and what little political opposition is allowed to exist in Uzbekistan, he ended up back home with virtually no money, health problems and thoughts of suicide. But at least he still has the consolation of his Uzbek girlfriend.

The lesson Murray offers those

*Lamentably, the only effect Murray had on London's policy was to alienate the powers that be.*

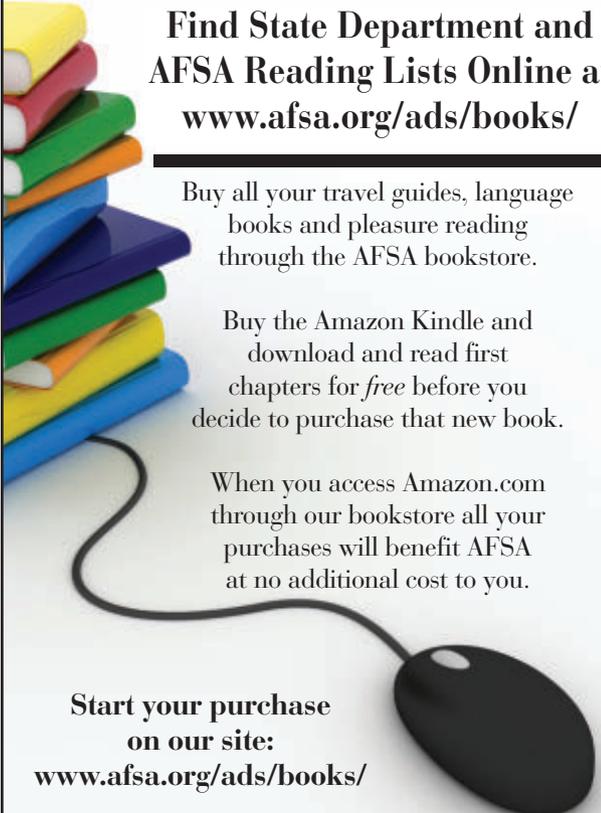
contemplating dissenting from official policy is that standing on principle can be considered going too far if the home office really wants to ignore reality. The alternatives for those with-

out a trust fund to fall back on are not pretty.

Nor should dissenters expect the support of colleagues. One retired diplomat used the Speaking Out column in the June 2003 *FSJ* to heap scorn on three FSOs who had resigned over the invasion of Iraq, dismissing their actions as mere arrogance.

While dissenters may eventually have the satisfaction of being proven right, often that is all they will have. ■

*Dennis Jett, a retired FSO, served in Buenos Aires, Tel Aviv, Lilongwe, Monrovia, Maputo, Lima and Washington, D.C. He is now a professor of international affairs at Penn State University.*



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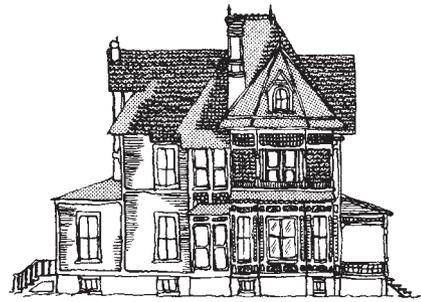
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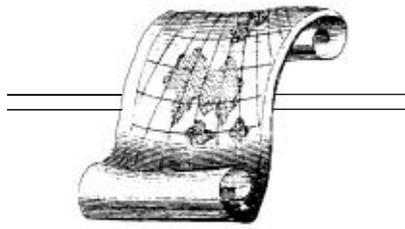
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# REFLECTIONS

## *Pop-Tart Diplomacy*

BY NINA KILLHAM

I smile at my 8-year-old son, Ben. “You’re gonna like this. I grew up eating these,” I say, placing before him, straight from the toaster, a warm Pop-Tart. Frosted chocolate fudge.

He takes a bite. His eyes widen.

“Isn’t America nice?” I say. He nods and takes an even bigger bite.

My son was born in Singapore, my daughter, Lara, in England. We have lived in London for the past 12 years, but I still want my children to love America as much as I do.

It isn’t always easy. America is not exactly high on the world’s list of favorite countries. I frequently hear, “That’s very American, isn’t it?” It’s code for: “What a pile of rubbish you’ve sent over to our shores.”

I know I’ve become entirely too sensitive. But it’s the insidiousness of it all. When my book club read *The Kite Runner*, one woman commented, “I feel he had to give it a Hollywood ending for the American audience. They don’t like subtlety.”

Some days, I return home frothing.

Why do I take it all so personally? I blame it on my background. As a former Foreign Service dependent, I grew up an unpaid ambassador and feel compelled to continue the tradition, including bristling at our bad reviews.

My husband, Andrew, knows my buttons and, boy, does he like to push them. An international relations professor, he can cite reams of statistics to

*I know I’ve become  
entirely too sensitive.*



show my beacon-on-the-hill image isn’t always correct. My children shift their eyes back and forth as he and I toss lobs over the dinner table. Luckily he’s Australian, so some of my shots are easy: “You’re making fun of *my* accent?”

I like to remind my children of my country’s fortes: Thomas Jefferson, Duke Ellington, J.D. Salinger. And I give them books about our space adventures and remind them that “The Simpsons” is an American show.

The first thing I did when both children were born was bring them to the American embassy to get their passports. It was my gift to them. Their tiny faces peered from their first passport photos. The consular officer was not very helpful with my son, however: Why was a U.K. resident trying to obtain an American passport for her Singaporean-born child?

And, yes, there are moments when, faced with a hundred TV channels of screaming, weight-challenged fellow Americans, I have to ask, “Who *are* these people?”

Which is the main difficulty. How can I represent a country with 350 million people, 50,000 miles of highway

and a hundred kinds of bagels? I can’t. But still I try.

It means something to me to be American, but how can I pass that to my children? Nationality will not be their defining feature. Oh sure, they like the friendly people they visit once or twice a year, the awesome national parks and the sensational choice of ice cream at the local Safeway.

But I doubt they will ever feel a patriotic pang. When I told them how in elementary school I put my hand on my heart and pledged allegiance to the flag, they laughed. I blushed, as if divulging some kinky sexual indiscretion.

On the way back from our latest trip to the States, my husband bought me a small American flag to wave. I grinned. He grinned back. Maybe he *does* get it, after all. I’m more consciously American, it turns out, than many of those who’ve never left the country.

Which is why, when I’m gone, I want to be sure that my children work hard, play fair and remember that a country that produced Ella Fitzgerald, the space shuttle and the Pop-Tart is truly loveable. ■

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*Nina Killham, the daughter of an FSO, is the author of three novels, How to Cook a Tart, Mounting Desire, and Believe Me. She now lives in London with her Australian husband and two trinationals children. Her Web site is [www.ninakillham.com](http://www.ninakillham.com).*

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